

PLAYER ADVANCEMENT POLICY

Applies from July 1st, 2020



FOOTBALL
TASMANIA

CONTENT

1. Rationale.....	2
2. Scope.....	2
3. Phases of Development – Competition Levels.....	3
4. Advancement of Players.....	5
5. Conditions for Player Advancement.....	6
6. Monitoring and Penalties.....	9
Appendix 1 Definitions.....	11

1. RATIONALE

Football Tasmania is committed to the safe development of players, particularly in the youth and junior age groups. The Company is also strongly supportive of FFA's vision for the game in Australia and is obligated to the adoption of the principles, structures and recommendations contained in the National Football Curriculum (v2), the National Building Blocks and the National Competition Review.

In line with the three documents listed above and specifically related to the adoption of the 5 Core Outcomes of the National Competition Review and the Building Blocks designated in the National Football Curriculum, Football Tasmania will require, as from February 1st 2018, that all players registered with any FT affiliated club, association or organisation, who participate in football competitions conducted in the State of Tasmania, meet strict guidelines related to age groups and the associated levels of competition.

The development of players in a structured and logical manner is a high priority for Football Federation Australia and its affiliated Member Federations. The current inconsistencies in quality and approach to Youth Development in Australia are due to factors such as the diversity and self-interest of clubs and the limited knowledge, experience and skills of coaches. At present, many players are missing essential years in the junior and youth development areas because clubs and coaches believe that the best way to develop players is to push them into higher levels of the game too soon. This is not only developmentally dangerous – the correct environment for establishing appropriate perception, decision and execution is lost – but also physically, emotionally and socially challenging for youth players in an adult environment.

Football Tasmania is also acutely aware of the population base, player-pool size and the regional diversity of the State. Whilst acknowledging that there are some specific challenges faced by clubs and Associations across the State in regard to fielding teams, the promotion of youth players to senior teams to fill numbers, under the guise of 'player development', is not considered acceptable.

2. SCOPE

This Policy shall apply to all Associations, Clubs and Schools that are affiliated to Football Federation Australia through Football Tasmania.

3. PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT - COMPETITION LEVEL

3.1. DISCOVERY PHASE

The U6 & U7 age groups form a part of the Discovery Phase of Development. Coaching and training at this age is firmly based on players discovering the game through play and game-based activities.

Competition formats are 4-aside. The Mini-Roos National Playing Formats and Rules provide more details.

3.2. SKILL ACQUISITION PHASE - JUNIOR FOOTBALL

The age groups that form a part of the Junior Football fall into three categories.

- i. The Under 12 age group (players who have turned 11 years of age at the start of the calendar year). Competition for players in this category shall be conducted under 9-a-side football regulations. The offside law is applicable, however, in some regions the infringement is not immediately penalized and other conditions to allow play to continue are in place.
- ii. The Under 11 & Under 10 age groups also play 9-a-side football but the offside law does not apply.
- iii. The Under 8 & Under 9 age groups play 7-a-side matches. The offside law does not apply.

Competition formats for the U6 to U11 age categories are set out under the MiniRoos National Playing Formats and Rules. The U12 competition is governed by local association rules.

Associations, schools and other bodies affiliated with Football Tasmania **must** conduct matches for the development of players under the specific conditions set down for the defined age groups. The elements of competitive sport (including winning and losing matches, respect for opponents and respect for match officials) are viewed as important and players should be educated to understand them as they relate to their individual performance and not the match result. Adult team staff and supporters are viewed as being role models for this developing these behaviours.

Training for players in the Discovery Phase and the Skill Acquisition Phase should be game-related and focus on developing enjoyment and individual skill development through activities that are movement based and provide repetition. Opportunities for success and failure are supported with positive coach feedback.

3.3. GAME TRAINING PHASE – YOUTH FOOTBALL

Football Tasmania consider the Game Training Phase as the most appropriate for the development of youth players older than 13 years but who are yet to reach their 16th birthday.

The focus is on preparing the players for senior football (Performance Phase) by teaching them to apply the functional game skills in a team setting by developing tactical awareness, perception and decision-making through a game-related approach to training.

The Company shall provide opportunities for organised competition for players of both genders in this Phase, either independently or in conjunction with regional bodies.

Developing behaviours, attitudes and strong relationships by individuals and groups both on and off the field of play is essential at this level. Involvement with club-based programs as well as Football Tasmania run high-performance programs for identified, potentially talented players is important. Clubs hold a high level of responsibility for the correct development and advancement of players based on the player's individual development needs.

3.4. PERFORMANCE PHASE - SENIOR FOOTBALL

The Phase of player involvement, nominally 16 years of age and above, where the focus is on preparing teams for a competition environment where winning becomes the main objective. Training is based on solving football problems that coach has identified from match analysis. Football Conditioning becomes a key element of the program.

The Company shall, at its discretion, provide a variety of competition levels for both genders in each of the geographical areas of the State where football is played and controlled by FT as required to service the requirements of the stakeholders in those regions. Competition Rules will set the cut-off date for eligibility for these senior level competitions.

4. ADVANCEMENT OF PLAYERS

It is the desire of the National Technical Department of Football Federation Australia that football is developed, learned and played in the most appropriate environment. The environment includes factors related, but not limited, to social development, physicality of competition, off field care and management and particularly level of coach expertise. Players will gain the most appropriate level of development when all factors that are a part of the footballer's growth are catered for and monitored appropriately.

Players sometimes experience inappropriate 'pushing' from parents, coaches and clubs, telling the player they are 'talented'. As these judgments of talent are being made at such an early age, often by people without sufficient knowledge, experience or understanding of the developmental stages of player development, Football Tasmania has adopted a strong position on the need to ensure all youth players receive the most appropriate development in the game by remaining in the specific developmental phase for the most appropriate period of time.

The early advancement of a player from any Phase of their football development should only be considered when it can be clearly demonstrated that the player's football development is substantially hindered by remaining at the current level and that enhancement at another level is under the supervision of an appropriately qualified, certified and experienced coach, supported by medical staff that are correctly trained and regularly available to assist the coaching staff.

Any advancement shall be for the purpose of providing for the player a training and competition level that appropriately considers the player's technical, tactical, physical and social developmental needs.

Training should remain developmentally focused. There should not be a focus on conditioning (a major consideration with senior football), other than core and joint stabilization and there should be an adjustment to the amount of playing time for the youth player if they are permitted to participate in senior football to prevent overuse injuries.

In previous years the full-time programs conducted by FT had teams of youth players participating in senior competitions. The minimum standards applied to these teams and players relating to coaching, medical support, program documentation and player welfare were very high. These standards are those that FT is aiming to encourage clubs to attain. Since the end of the fulltime programs, and with the return of players to club environments, many youth players have been moved to senior teams where the focus is firmly set on winning matches and where high emphasis is placed on physical conditioning without the appropriate conditions to match the needs of the player's development and welfare being in place.

As from May 1st, 2020, the following requirements for the advancement of players to senior football competitions shall be in place.

5. **CONDITIONS FOR PLAYER ADVANCEMENT**

All Youth players are considered to be in either the Skill Acquisition or Game Training Phase of their football development. This determination is made on a range of factors, including the player's football competencies, mentality and social and emotional development. It should not focus solely on their biological age. Club Technical Directors, coaches and parents must look beyond biological age and physicality when making judgments on a player's capacity to participate in competitive matches.

Clubs must be far more conscious of, and committed to, the provision of quality coaching, medical support and off-field player development assistance at every level of the game.

Advancement beyond Youth Football to Senior Football competitions

Where a Club or Association wishes to advance a player or players, the environmental elements that support an improved experience for the player(s), other than just a higher grade for competition, must be evident. These elements include improved coaching levels, medical care and player education.

5.1. Players who have turned 16 years of age or where the player's 16th birthday falls prior to August 31st of that playing season for male players and prior to December 31st in that year for female players, the player may play in Senior Football competitions without restriction.

***Please note that in 2020, due to the restructure of competitions as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the date set for male and female players alike is December 31st, 2020.**

5.2. Players younger than 16 years of age

1. A player who has turned 15 years of age may progress as high as the U18 level of competition, **where such a competition is available**, without formal assessment.

Progression for players beyond the U18 level must be by the process set out in 5.3 (below).

2. **Players younger than 15 years of age**

It is strongly recommended that no player 14 years of age or younger play above an Under 16 Youth or Senior Youth Girls level of competition.

This shall apply to all regular season, cup or other sanctioned FT competition matches, pre-season matches or other such matches where senior footballers are present and actively engaged in the practice/match.

5.3. Application for Variation to the Player Advancement Policy 5.2

All applications for a variation to the Player Advancement Policy Rule 5.2 shall be governed by the following:

- (a) Where the person responsible within a Club or Association for player development (Club TD, Club FD or Club Academy Manager) holds a current FFA Pro-Diploma or Advanced A Coaching Licence the determination of an appropriate level of advancement for players shall lie with them.

In such cases it is strongly recommended that any 'in-house' approval is supported by documentation consistent with that which is required for all other situations. Notification of any elevation of players to senior football shall be confirmed in writing to the Technical Director of Football Tasmania prior to the participation of the player in any senior football competition.

- (b) Where the person responsible within a Club or Association for player development (Club TD, Club FD or Club Academy Manager) holds a current coaching licence below an FFA Advanced A Licence the determination of the suitability for a player's advancement shall be made by the Technical Director of Football Tasmania in conjunction with one of Football Tasmania's medical advisors.

The following documentation must be provided as a part of any application for variation under 5.3 (b). It is strongly recommended that it is also provided and kept by those making determinations under 5.3 (a).

1. A player for whom a variation to the Player Advancement Policy is being sought must be registered in Play Football in line with Football Tasmania Registration Regulations. The player's name and FFA number must be provided.
2. A written application for variation to the Player Advancement Policy must be sent to the Technical Director of Football Tasmania by email (technical@footballfedtas.com.au) a minimum of three weeks prior to the date for which first involvement in senior football is being sought.

Such application shall include:

- (a) A letter signed by the Club Secretary or General Manager
- i. acknowledging the club's awareness of the application and recognising the potential risks associated with advancement;
 - ii. listing the adults (over 18 years of age) who, as club staff, will engage on a regular basis with the player in the provision of services that are related to the player's development. The list shall also detail the Working with Children number for each adult listed (coaches, managers, medical staff);
 - iii. detailing the medical support provided by the club for training and match events the player will attend.

- (b) A signed letter from the player's (club's) Technical Director (separate to the Club letter) outlining:
 - i. the developmental benefits for the player as a consequence of advancement including a summary of the player's current performances and challenges, details of the positional roles the player may undertake;
 - ii. the level of coach accreditation of the coach to which the player will be advanced;
 - iii. the training (frequency) schedule for the player;
 - iv. an indication of other training and match options available for the player to benefit their development;
 - (c) a signed letter of consent from the player's parent/guardian which shall include:
 - i. their acknowledgment of the higher risks associated with participating as a youth player in senior competitions and declaration that they understand that, whilst the club and FT will take all reasonable steps to ensure a safe environment, no action for liability as a result of injury, other than that which is applicable due to a lack of duty of care, shall be brought against either the club or Football Tasmania;
 - ii. a musculo-skeletal assessment report, which shall include risk assessment tests for hamstrings, ACL and ankles, for the player, provided by a qualified, practicing physiotherapist;
3. The Club/player must provide Football Tasmania with any other information requested in relation to the application.
 4. The process detailed above shall apply to all players including those in FFA or FT Identified Player Programs.

5.4. Determination of Application for Variation

All decisions in relation to the Application for Variation under section 5.3 (b) are at the discretion of the FT Technical Director and the appointed Medical Officer for FT and are not appealable.

Players seeking variation to the Player Advancement Policy may be approved to play at competition levels that meet the developmental requirements of the individual.

In conjunction with the player's club's Technical Director, upon review of the documentation supplied in the Application, if a variation to the Policy is approved, an agreement detailing the conditions of the variation shall be prepared. Such an agreement for advancement of the player shall be forwarded to the player's club's Technical Director and shall include notification to the

player's parents and the player's club and shall only be for the period specified and under any conditions that may be detailed.

5.5. Advancement within Youth Football competitions

Clubs wishing to advance an individual player from one team within a Youth Football competition to a team at a higher level within a Youth Football competition may do so without a request for approval provided that such movement meets the Competition Rules, is within the spirit of the competition and has strong consideration for the environment as mentioned in 5 (above).

Clubs **MUST** be aware of their duty of care to youth players especially at the age for this advancement and must modify and/or provide appropriate playing time, coaching standards, medical support and social experiences.

5.6. No team at the club

Where a club is unable to provide a competition environment within Youth Football for a player under the age of 15 years at their club, the player, with the assistance of the club, should be referred to other local clubs for that playing season. Communication between clubs to assist players in finding appropriate playing environments is advised. Assistance from the State Technical Director should also be sought in these circumstances.

5.7. Players in Junior Football competitions

Football Tasmania strongly advises that players in the Under 12 age category prioritise competing in small-sided game competition formats with their Junior Association before competition within a youth structure.

Considerable evidence indicates that longer-term developmental benefits, many of which are football related, are evident in players who have participated in modified football environments in their junior years.

Players at the Under 12 age group in Junior Football may progress to Youth Football in circumstances where individual development will benefit from participating in youth (Game Training Phase) football. Factors that should be considered when assessing potential benefits extend beyond just physical capacity and must carefully consider emotional and social circumstances.

Such advancement shall only be approved where the coach of the team to which advancement is being made holds, as a minimum, a Skill Training Certificate, however the Advanced C Youth Licence is preferred as the level of coaching accreditation.

Such movement shall only be to the first age group/level of competition available in the player's club's geographical region and shall only be approved where no other competing player, in the league into which advancement is requested, is more than two years of age older than the age of the player for whom the request is being made. For clarification, an u12 player (11 years of age on January 1st) may move as high as an u14 competition (ie. they cannot play in a competition in which a player, eligible for an u15 competition, participates).

Notification of such elevation must be submitted in writing to technical@footballfedtas.com.au at least one week prior to the first match in which the player shall participate and shall include the player's name, date of birth, FFA number, the name and coaching qualification of the coach along with the coach's Working with Vulnerable People certification number.

5.8. Players in MiniRoos Football Competition

No player who is 10 years of age or younger on January 1st shall be permitted to play in any officially conducted, regular season youth competition.

It is highly recommended that all MiniRoos players remain in their designated competition age group.

6. MONITORING AND PENALTIES

- 6.1.** Competition team sheets will be monitored by Football Tasmania. Where an organisation (club, school or Association) is found to have breached the Player Advancement Policy, the Competition Manager of Football Tasmania shall inform State's Technical Director who shall contact the organisation's nominated person (Club TD, Head Teacher) to advise of the breach. It shall be the responsibility of this person to follow up the matter internally and ensure that no subsequent breach occurs.
- 6.2.** Where the same player is found to be in breach of this Policy on subsequent occasions, the notification of the breach shall again be communicated along with a notice of points deduction. 3 points shall be deducted from the team for which the ineligible player competed regardless of the match result.
- 6.3.** Where an organisation is found to have breached the Player Advancement Policy on multiple occasions, the State Technical Director shall require a meeting with the designated organisation representative to be held and an explanation of the breaches be presented. Furthermore, the organisation shall be required to provide suitable evidence that further breaches shall not occur. Based upon the information provided the State Technical Director may recommend that the Federation impose further sanctions which may include, but are not limited to:
- the deduction of points from the team for which the player competes;
 - the deduction of points from the organisation's senior team in the gender in which the player participates;
 - the suspension of the player from competition for a period of time (but not exceeding 2 matches);
 - the imposition of a monetary fine to a maximum of \$500 for each offence.

APPENDIX 1 Definitions**FFA**

Football Federation Australia (FFA) is the governing body of football in Australia and is a member of Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the international governing body for football. Information regarding FIFA is available at www.fifa.com

FT

Football Tasmania (FT) is the governing body of football in the State of Tasmania and is a member of Football Federation Australia.

The National Football Curriculum

FFA's documented plan for player and coach development

Building Blocks

FFA's guide to the stages of player development

National Competitions Review (NCR)

FFA's review of all aspects of competitions conducted by FFA, the Member Federations and State League clubs around Australia at Youth League, State League and Hyundai A-League level.

Discovery Phase

The Phase of player development, nominally 4 years of age to 7 years of age, where the focus is on players discovering their (im)possibilities and building a love for the game. There is no formal coaching rather organised, fun football activities.

Skill Acquisition Phase

The Phase of player development, nominally between the ages of 9 years and 13 years of age, where the focus is on the development of the 4 Core Skills of Striking the Ball, First Touch, Running with the Ball & 1 v 1.

Game Training Phase

The Phase of player development, nominally between the ages of 13 years and 16 years of age, where the focus is on preparing the players for senior football by teaching them to apply the functional game skills in a team setting using the 1-4-3-3 as the preferred formation as well as developing tactical awareness, perception and decision-making through a game related approach to training.

Performance Phase

The Phase of player involvement, nominally 16 years of age and above, where the focus is on preparing teams for a competition environment where winning becomes the main objective. Training is based on solving football problems, based on match analysis. Football Conditioning becomes a key element of the program.

State Technical Director

The person employed by Football Tasmania to oversee the technical development of the game within Tasmania in line with the policies, procedures and philosophy of Football Federation Australia.

Club Technical Director

The person who is suitably experienced and accredited, appointed by a club affiliated with FT, to oversee the implementation of the technical aspects of a club's football program in line with the policies, procedures and directives set by FFA and FT.

Association Technical Director

The person who is suitably experienced and accredited, appointed by a Regional Association affiliated with FT, to oversee the implementation of the technical aspects of the Association's football program in line with the policies, procedures and directives set by FFA and FT.

Coach

The person appointed (employed) by a Federation, club, team or Association to undertake educational, player development and team preparation duties appropriate to the developmental phase of the player or teams for which responsibility is assigned and to manage the training and competition environment for players to ensure that the age and development stage appropriate outcomes are realized.

Player

A person participating in the game of football with any club, Association or Federation.

Parent/Guardian

The person who is legally responsible for another person.