



# HAMPTON ROVERS AMATEUR FOOTBALL CLUB



Team Balancing and Placement Document

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## POLICY BACKGROUND

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The most important thing is that the child first and foremost must be happy with their team allocation. Ideally, parents should also be happy and every endeavour will be made to accommodate that.

The purpose of adopting this policy is to give the teams the very best opportunity to compete at a level that both stimulates the boys development as well as giving them the opportunity of being competitive within the division. The policy should be developed keeping friendship groups in mind as best as possible. It could also be argued that at the ages we are discussing, boys make friends quite easily and it is good for them to be exposed to different boys.

### THE SMJFL ENVIRONMENT

All Parents, Players and Coaching staff should be aware that the SMJFL (the league in which we play) operates its under-age teams in a number of divisions between the ages Under 9 through to Under 13 being – East, West, South, North, Blue & Gold with East being the “highest”, and Gold the “lower”.

In Under 14 and above, the divisions are renamed Division 1 through 4, with 1 being the “highest”.

Each individual club has limited control on a year-to-year basis over what division its teams are entered into. The League does make a genuine attempt to allocate teams to the appropriate division based on that teams results in the previous year. Thus a Premiership (or Lightning Premiership) team of the previous year is likely to see that team graded into the next highest grade, and a team that has not enjoyed any success in a particular division is likely to be given the opportunity in a “weaker” division the following year.

Given that the Rovers success finds them typically fielding multiple teams in each age group, there is a need to ensure the method for forming the teams in each age group is clear.

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## SOLUTION

To support this philosophy, the Club has decided that:

- Refinement of the existing Team Balancing Policy is needed;
- It needs to start at U9's so players can be moved gradually into appropriate teams, noting that Team Grading by SMJFL begins at U9 level;
- All teams above Under 9 should train together at the beginning of the season until individual teams are formed in accordance with this Policy;
- Teams in the same age groups should be encouraged to train together so all boys are familiar with each other. Larger numbers allow more flexibility with training drills. Team groups can be separated as coaches see fit;
- Movement between teams after team establishment will be as per this policy.

## TEAM PLACEMENT AND BALANCING POLICY

### UNDER 9

The Junior Committee in conjunction with the Under 9 coaches will determine the placement of children in relevant teams. This will be done with the following special considerations:

- Experienced children – those with at least one year of U9 football prior to the relevant year, but not based on assessed skill – will be spread across all U9 teams for the relevant year;
- Teams destined to play in the ‘higher’ divisions will have more experienced children placed in them. Each ‘lower’ team will have fewer experienced children placed in them;
- Experience will not equate to ‘skill’ and there will be no attempt to allocate children based on assessed skill;
- First year children will be spread across all teams with parent preferences considered by not overriding clubs policy;
- Selection will consider the nomination of the ‘special friend’ – as provided on registration and will be accommodated where possible;
- Consideration will be given to maintaining same team groups for second year U9 players.

Whilst flexibility will be encouraged, the final decision will rest with the club.

### UNDER 10

The Junior Committee in conjunction with the Under 10 coaches will determine the placement of children in relevant teams at their sole discretion. This will be undertaken using a similar approach to Under 9 selection:

- Experienced children will be those who have played 2 years of Under 9 football, but will not be determined based on assessed skill;
- Teams destined to play in the ‘higher’ divisions will have more experienced Third Year (ie two years of U9 football) children placed in them. Each ‘lower’ team will have fewer experienced children placed in them;
- Second Year (one year of U9 football) children will be spread across all teams;
- Spreading of children between teams will be done in small groups to ensure the retention of friendships established in Under 9.

## UNDER 11

In general, team groupings formed in Under 10 will be carried forward into Under 11.

Nevertheless, should any parent or child feel that they (the children) would be happier, more comfortable or in any way better off playing in another division, a request can be made to the coach/s of the Under 11s to request a change. Such a change can be requested either *up* to a higher division, or *down* to a lower division.

Where children are coming to the club as new Rovers players in Under 11, these children will be placed in a suitable team to ensure numbers in the teams are as balanced as possible. Placement of these children shall be undertaken by the Coaches, in consultation with the Junior Match Committee.

Once a move has been made it is the policy of the club that we will not move that child again at any time in the season, simply in order to accommodate some arbitrary selection criteria or enhance any teams chance of winning a particular game or premiership. Similarly the Club will not entertain any obvious request by a child or parent to play in a “weaker” team simply to give that child a greater chance of winning individual honours, such as a Best & Fairest award.

Note that there is no facility within the Under 11 Age Groups to initiate changes to teams by Coaches and/or committee based on skills.

## UNDER 12 AND ABOVE

All final team placements established using the process below must be approved by the Junior Match Committee.

### TEAM PLACEMENT

Where more than one team exists, initial nomination of teams at the beginning of the year shall consider the following:

- Should any parent or child feel that they (the children) would be happier, more comfortable or in any way better off playing in another division the club will accommodate, where possible, a move from one division to another, either “up or down”.
- Should the coaches of the teams determine if an individual player is playing, or likely to play, in a team that is not commensurate with his/her ability, they shall at their discretion endeavour to re-locate that player to another team that is consistent with his/her playing ability following consultation with the player & his/her parents;
- Children transferring to the club from elsewhere at this level shall be assessed by the Coaches to ensure they are placed in a suitable team whilst still ensuring numbers in the teams are as balanced as possible. It is important to note that children transferring to the club shall have the same priority for team placement as children who have been with the club in the previous year;
- Any such transfer and/or placement must consider the well-being of the child in considering the appropriate team for the child;
- All players re-registering from previous years will be guaranteed a place at the club (if registered by the clubs registration day), but not necessarily in the same team. Newly registered players will be considered for team placement in the same manner as players re-registering from previous years;
- The determination of teams should not be undertaken with the purpose of *team stacking* or facilitating the creation of *super teams*.

### FREE MOVEMENT BETWEEN TEAMS

The SMJFL allows free movement of players within teams of the same age – specifically allowing an unlimited number of players may be rotated from a lower division team to a higher division team per round; whilst allowing no more than two (2) players to be rotated from a higher division team to a lower division team per round.

HRAFC will fully exploit this rule by adopting the following when initially creating teams for each grade in Round 1: The Junior Match Committee in consultation with the Coaches shall undertake the following prior to Round 1:

- A number of the total playing group will be nominated in the higher division team, based on the expectation that this group will be part of the higher division for the entire year;

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- The remaining players will be nominated in the lower grade team and will be potentially freely rotated between the higher and lower grade teams during the year;
  - All players nominated in the lower division shall be given the option to nominate to participate in the higher grade during the year. Where the coaches or the Junior Match Committee believe that such a nomination is inappropriate given the higher division is not commensurate with his/her ability, the nomination shall be denied and the player shall remain in the lower grade, but can be reviewed during the year;
  - All players nominated for the higher division shall be potentially considered for rotation back to the lower division at any time during the year based on the SMJFL rules;
  - Each week, the coaches of the teams shall determine the makeup of the teams for that week;
  - The club is cognisant that teams across respective age groups all need to share success. As such the club does not necessarily promote the Higher division team at the expense of the lower division team, but looks to field a competitive team in the highest division wherever possible, however, an even spread of winning across teams is preferred.

## SUPPORTING THE POLICY

A number of measures will be taken by the club to support the implementation of this policy:

### TRAINING

Every endeavour will be made to have age-group teams train together at the beginning of the year prior to Team Formation. Where more than one team will ultimately be formed, such training will be led by all age-group coaches for that year.

Where possible, every endeavour will be made to ensure age-groups train together once the year begins. The objective is that the children in the age groups extend their social group, and parents within the group become more familiar with all parents of that age group.

### JUNIOR MATCH COMMITTEE

The Junior Match Committee is a formally constituted sub-committee of the Junior Committee, headed by the Vice President Football. The Senior Club's Coaching Coordinator/Liaison will provide input to the Junior Match Committee as is determined by the Junior Match Committee.

### TEAM SELECTION FINALISATION

In accordance with SMJFL policy, free movement between teams of the same age group from Under 13s and above shall be allowed, and will be managed by the relevant coaches.

In the Under 9 to Under 12 age groups, once teams are formed and finalised prior to Round 1, no movement between teams will be allowed unless initiated as per the Grievance Process, or at the discretion of the Junior Match Committee.

### GRIEVANCE PROCESS

Where any Parent and/or child have any concern or issue with the team formation undertaken under this Policy may raise a grievance with the Club in accordance with the Club's Grievance Process. Every endeavour will be made by the Junior Committee in accordance with that process to ensure the grievance is resolved as reasonably and quickly as possible, in the best interests of all concerned.

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## TEAM PLACEMENT IN SMJFL DIVISIONS

Where the Junior Match Committee determines that a team will not be competitive in its SMJFL Division (up until Round 4), every effort will be made by the Junior Committee to have the team placed in a SMJFL Division in which it will be competitive.