

Junior Player Grading Policy

Introduction

Mundingburra Aitkenvale Olympic Football Club (MAOFC) have developed this document to help parents & players understand how grading will take place and how it will affect them. Please read this entire document and feel free to contact the club about any aspect of the policy, as the club committee will review this policy yearly.

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1. Objective

The fundamentals of the grading policy are designed to ensure that:

- Players, coaches and parents alike, have FUN, enjoy the season, and return to the club year after year.
- All players have the maximum opportunity to play in a competitive environment, appropriate to their skill and ability.
- Players learn from their peers and develop an appreciation and love of the game.

2. Background Information

A new player age policy was introduced by Queensland Football in 2012 so in conjunction with this change the grading policy was developed to encourage club growth at MAOFC. The following factors were considered in the development of the MAOFC Junior Player Grading Policy:

- Grade junior players into a team that best suits their ability in order for them to gain the most enjoyment from the whole football experience and play with other children of similar ability.
- Secondly it will allow the grading committee to nominate the team into a division that will best suit the ability of the team as a whole and allow them to be competitive in that division.
- Strive to field two or more teams in any particular age group
- Promote the growth of females over the next few years with a target of having 3-5 competitive junior female teams.

Grading will be carried out using a set of skills tests, both individual and game related. The children will be assessed according to their performance exhibited during these exercises and games. Once a player has been graded into a team and the grading procedure has been finalised they cannot change teams. If any player or parent is not satisfied with the grading that the player receives they may, in writing make a submission for a review of the grade given. On completion of grading and when the Grading Committee has reached its final decision, the player will be notified in accordance with this policy.

3. Parent Information

MAOFC recognises that junior football players have a variety of motives to play football and possess a different level of talent dependent on background, experience, skill, playing ability, age etc. As such, the club's grading policy is an attempt to place players in a division and team that is appropriate to their level of skill development. It allows kids to play at a level equivalent to their ability so to ensure they gain maximum enjoyment and development as a player and as an individual.

-Note there are some advantages in not grading players, such as maintaining friendships and family social groups, however this soon becomes an issue in several ways. To not grade the children based on ability would take away the opportunity for some to progress to play football at higher level. Football is a competitive sport so if you would like your child to play at a less competitive level then ask the grading committee if he/she could be placed in a lower grade when grading is conducted at the start of the season.

Playing a competitive team sport teaches children lessons, which they can use right through life such as persistence, team play, friendship and fair play. MAOFC aims to give all players a fair go and the opportunity for them to play to the best of their ability and to be good sports. It's heartbreaking for the Grading Committee to decide between several players of near equal ability knowing that some will be separated from their friends. We cannot however make exceptions based on friendships, as this will undermine the new direction and growth.

Children at a young age tend to make new friends quickly and this also means that they extend their circle of friends. Please take these few points into consideration:

- ✓ **Peer pressure** – Players will let their feelings be known when major differences in playing ability is recognised and in our experience this often does more damage than any ill feelings resulting from the grading itself.
- ✓ **Exodus of talented players** – Players of above average skills and their parents will become frustrated and eventually leave for another club that does grade their players in the hope their child is put into a better team.
- ✓ **Reduced enjoyment** – Players who play in a grade significantly above their skill level will often feel left out as the more skilful players take control of games. Often this can result in the less skilful players leaving soccer in search of another sport.

Grading is conducted at the beginning of the season so as not to disadvantage those players that practise during the off season. Players also grow at different rates. Any new players also need to be graded at the start of the season. The more practice a player does the more they are able get out of the game and the more they enjoy football. For those that wish to practise here is a list of the skills, which will be used during grading at the start of the season:

- ✓ First Touch
- ✓ Juggling
- ✓ Striking the ball
- ✓ 1v1
- ✓ Running with the ball
- ✓ Heading

This policy is designed to ensure that all players play at a level of football where they can have fun, enjoy the season and have the maximum opportunity to play in a competitive environment, appropriate to their skill and ability.

4. Junior Player Grading Criteria

To effectively manage the MAOFC Junior Grading Policy the criteria below is based on the following factors & hopefully it contributes to a decision which best suits the player's ability in order for them to best enjoy the whole football experience.

1. AGES 6 to 11 INCLUSIVE

- This competition is treated differently from all other grades as there are no points awarded for results and a competition table is not maintained. The purpose is to introduce the children to the game without the added pressure. As a result the grading process is somewhat amended.
- No grading will take place.
- For players wishing to play above their age group consistently through the year approval must first be obtained from the committee.
- Approval to play at a higher age group will be at the discretion of the MAOFC committee.
- If the committee is happy for the player to play in a higher age consistently then the player is to be assessed by 2 appointed coaches to assess the player on the following:
 - First Touch, Striking the ball, 1v1 and Running with the ball
 - Physical strength

2. AGES 12 to 16 INCLUSIVE

- First All players registered are to play in their RESPECTIVE age group and are to be invited to grade.
- Secondly players will be required to play for their gender first to help with the growth of MAOFC.
- A grading selection panel will be appointed to each age group who will conduct the training/selection sessions. The panel will be organised by the coaching director and or committee and will consist of the coaches from the particular age group.
- The selection/training sessions will take 2-4 sessions and will include training and practices games.
- Where appropriate, the selection panel can choose to promote higher or put forward recommendations for players to the MAOFC committee.
- Recommended squads should be finalised no later than 4 weeks prior to start of the general competition season.
- Balancing of team numbers in the first few weeks directly after grading is sometimes required due to players dropping out of soccer or changing clubs for various reasons. At times there is no easy answer for this problem and the Club would prefer this did not happen but it does and needs to be addressed fairly for all teams and players.
- For all kinds of reasons we have new players arrive late, just like any other player they get an equal opportunity to try out for the higher division team provided the team has room for an additional player.
- The selection criteria for these age groups are as follows:

AGES 12 to 13 INCLUSIVE**Technical**

- ✓ First Touch
- ✓ Juggling
- ✓ Striking the ball
- ✓ 1v1
- ✓ Running with the ball
- ✓ Heading
- ✓ Tactical awareness
- ✓ Positioning awareness
- ✓ Creativity

Physical Aspects

- ✓ Speed
- ✓ Agility
- ✓ Strength

Personality traits

- ✓ Determination
- ✓ Coachability

AGES 14 to 16 INCLUSIVE**Technical**

- ✓ First Touch
- ✓ Juggling
- ✓ Striking the ball
- ✓ 1v1
- ✓ Running with the ball
- ✓ Heading
- ✓ Effective ball possession
- ✓ Effective defence
- ✓ Transition – attack to defence/defence to attack
- ✓ Effective positioning
- ✓ Playing out
- ✓ Creativity

Physical Aspects

- ✓ Endurance
- ✓ Speed
- ✓ Agility
- ✓ Strength

Personality traits

- ✓ Drive
- ✓ Aggressiveness
- ✓ Determination
- ✓ Responsibility
- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Self-Confidence
- ✓ Mental Toughness
- ✓ Coachability

5. Team Sizes

- Ages 6-7 no more than 8 players
- Ages 8-9 no more than 10 players
- Ages 10-11 no more than 12 players
- Ages 12- 13 no more than 15 players
- Ages 14-16 no more than 16 players
- If player numbers have to be changed this must be done in consultation with the MAOFC committee. MAOFC committee can change were necessary so that all players have a team and get fair playing time.

6. Grading Notification

- Announcing teams can be a very stressful time for Players, Parents and the Grading Panel. Sometimes the Grading Panel will have problems placing a select few players into the correct team. So rather than be rushed into a decision some players will be placed into the lower team so they can be watched before a final decision is made.
- All players will be notified by phone by a committee member or coach.