

# Hawthorn Citizens Junior Football Club Grading Policy

Hawthorn Citizens is committed to providing a safe enjoyable sporting environment for all members, players and parents involved with our Club.

Our objective in every policy is to follow the culture of our club which includes –

- Creating an environment where everyone can enjoy the game of AFL
- Developing football skills of all players,
- Build confidence, self-esteem and the opportunity to create and develop new friendships;
- Encouraging and supporting participation in the club  
(If teams can win a few games as well terrific but is not the primary goal)

The Yarra Junior Football League (YJFL) recommends that clubs implement a grading policy from the U13 age group. The development and implementation of grading policy is up to each individual club.

Hawthorn Citizens agrees that U13 is the correct age group for the club to implement its grading policy and have an active responsibility for selecting teams. (Most players at U13 level move into secondary schooling at this time so it can be considered a year of change)

Grading at this level is also necessary for Citz teams to remain competitive in the YJFL. Most clubs in the YJFL follow league's guidelines and implement team grading and selections at this age group.

Grading also provides the opportunity for our players to continue to develop their skills and confidence and further expand their friendship groups. Some players will be asked to challenge themselves by playing at a higher level and others benefit by playing in a lower grade but in a key position role.

# General principles of the Citz grading policy

- Hawthorn Citizens recognises the importance of team balance and will endeavour to ensure that each team is competitive in the YJFL division that they are placed. A detailed process has been developed to support the coaches with the grading and team selection process.
- All registered players in U13 and above will have the opportunity to train together during the pre-season training sessions and practice matches.
- At U14 and above, the playing group will be re-graded at the beginning of the season. The decision to re-grade is based on the knowledge that players can develop and change in body shape significantly over the 6 month summer period.
- Coaching staff will be responsible for initial team selections Each team will have sufficient key position players to ensure that the lower graded teams are competitive.
- In the event there are three teams in an age group, team selection will be based on a “firsts” team with two balanced “seconds” teams graded to achieve a similar standard. In effect the grading is A and B1 and B2 rather than A. B. C.
  - Grading and final team selection will be reviewed and approved by the Citz Committee (Football operations Director and Age group Co-ordinator)
  - Depending on player numbers, players may have the opportunity to move between teams during the early parts of the season.
- Crucial to any grading system is communication and transparency with parents and players from the outset and the coaches are expected to action this at all times.

## **Steps in the Grading Process**

- All Players are invited to start training as an age group squad
- All players are asked to submit their preferences through a personal Questionnaire (Sample attached)
- Grading takes about 6 weeks with group training as a squad for that time
- Practice games both Intra and Inter club will form part of selection process. It is the Coaching Staff responsibility to organise these.
- The coaching staff will identify the playing squads using the approved process (Refer appendix) and recommend the teams to the Football Operations committee who will assess the squads and make final determination on the makeup of the teams.
- Players are advised by a joint email of all team allocations as soon as practical by the coaching staff
- Players train in their team in the last week or two before season starts and thereafter.
- If necessary, players can be rotated during grading games (first four weeks). After this, rotations are restricted by the YJFL unless there are special circumstances.
- Player's personal preferences are taken into account but are not a sole determinate.
- No child will be forced to play in a higher team even if their abilities suggest they should if this is requested by the player and parents. If a parent has any questions about their child's placement within a team they should first approach the coach about the issue and then can approach the Football Operations Director committee to review the placement.

## **YJFL Division Grading**

Separate to the Citz team grading policy, the YJFL grades all teams from the under 10 age group upwards and places them across several playing divisions in an attempt to create the most balanced and even competition possible.

At the start of each season, The YJFL grades the competition by assigning each team in each age group to a playing division. The allocation to a playing division at the start of the season is based on individual requests or nominations from each Club and the following guidelines:

- Team performance and results from the previous season;
- Where Clubs field two teams, the first team will be placed in the highest division (GOLD) unless results from the previous year do not warrant this grade. The team that is graded second will be played in lowest division (usually BLACK) again unless results from the previous year do not warrant this grade.
- If Clubs field a third team, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> team teams will be placed in the two lowest divisions.

The YJFL division grading is reviewed based on Team performance during the first 4 rounds of the home and away season. Teams can be re-graded (either up or down) as a result of this process.