

CLUB CIRCULAR – 2025-01

SUBJECT: 2025 Junior Football Rules and Regulation Handbook

DATE: 21st January 2025

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AUDIENCE: Junior Community Clubs
Junior Community Umpiring Organisations

Summary:	Club Action:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2025 Junior Football Competition Policies, Rules and Regulations Handbook has now been finalised and has been published on the WAFC website KIA Club Hub. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribute KIA Club Hub link to all Team Officials including Coaches and Managers. Ensure a physical or e-copy is available for all Match Day Officials. Ensure all volunteers, players and parents are aware of the handbook as well as any new or altered rules, regulations or policies.

WAFC 2025 Junior Football Competition Policies, Rules and Regulations Handbook.

The Junior Club Manual has been finalised for 2025 and has been published on the WAFC website under the KIA Club Hub section (<https://www.wafootball.com.au/competitions/juniors/kia-club-hub>).

This handbook outlines the Community Football Policies, Rules & Regulations for all Junior and Youth competitions conducted by the West Australian Football Commission (WAFC).

All Competitions across Western Australian that have competitions within the Year 3 to Year 12 range are governed by this handbook. If any League wishes to operate outside the rules, regulations or policies of the handbook, they must apply to their relevant Competitions Team to seek approval for an exemption. Exemptions granted in previous seasons do not carry over, and Leagues must apply for exemptions annually.

A summary of key changes to the Handbook has been included below and any changes within the document are clearly highlighted.

Match On-Field Equalisation (Even-up and Even-down)

The Match On-Field Equalisation Policy is in place to ensure both teams have equal numbers on the field during game play. To achieve this requirement, all age groups have traditionally been required to 'Even-Up' when one team is short on players. In 2024, we piloted 'Even-Down' in the Year 10-12 male and Year 9-12 female competitions.

Feedback from the pilot was overwhelmingly positive with many Clubs requesting the pilot be extended to further age groups. The Even-Down rule will be extended to include Year 9 competitions. Extending this rule to the Year 9 mixed competitions strengthens competition integrity, ensures consistency across genders, and helps keep teams intact, enabling clubs to nominate with smaller squads.

Reversal of the 2024 Assistant Coach pilot

In season 2024 we piloted the removal of the Assistant Coach role in Modified aged Competitions and a dual Assistant Coach/Interchange Steward role for Youth aged competitions. This pilot aimed to reduce the number of volunteers needed to deliver a game day, therefore reducing the volunteer burden for clubs.

Strong feedback provided from Clubs was that a number of game day challenges arose due to the removal of the Assistant Coach role. Clubs have expressed that although the pilot reduced the number of game-day volunteers needed, these roles are essential for managing player behaviour, providing timely feedback to players, and improving team organisation.

This update will restore previous rules and regulations, however the exemption for an additional female coach will remain should teams wish to promote the coaching pathway for female coaches. Clubs are encouraged to facilitate coaching opportunities for interested females and the WAFC is keen to understand how it can assist in this regard.

Introduction of WAFC appointed Goal and Boundary Umpires in Year 11/12 competitions

Starting in 2025, the WAFC will be seeking to ensure that all Year 11/12 competition games are officiated by WAFC appointed Field, Goal and Boundary Umpires.

This change will allow WA Umpiring to facilitate the creation of Boundary and Goal Umpire Academies in each region to enhance umpire recruitment and retention. It also supports older teams facing volunteer shortages, especially those impacted by participant age (e.g. players who can drive themselves and team mates to games) and limited parent support.

It will take time to build a pool of qualified officials through the academies, so WA Umpiring have committed to ensuring they communicate with clubs as early as possible if they are unable to appoint these roles in unforeseen circumstances. In these circumstances, Clubs will still need to provide volunteers to fulfil these roles until the academies are fully established.

Removal of Last Possession rule – Year 11/12 Female Competitions

In 2025 the Last Possession rule will be removed from the Year 11/12 Female Competitions due to a strong request from Clubs. This change aligns the rules with male competitions and supports the development of boundary ruck skills for female players.

This change also addresses a request from WA Umpiring to bring junior competitions in line with senior competition rules. While senior competition rules apply the Last Possession rule within the 50m arcs, most junior ovals lack marked 50m arcs, and boundary umpire duties are often handled by parent volunteers. To simplify decision-making for volunteers, it was decided to apply the same rule across the entire oval.

Introduction of penalty matrix for Development squad player breaches

Under the Local Transfer rules, teams can be penalised for exceeding the limit of five WAFL Development Squad players per team when transferring or adding new players to a team who are listed on WAFL Development Squad lists.

Previously, penalties were at the full discretion of the WAFC and decided mid-season, leading to inconsistent enforcement. Clubs have provided feedback that this lack of clarity makes it difficult to assess whether accepting a player is worthwhile, as penalties were only revealed midway through the season. The introduction of a penalty matrix offers transparency, enabling clubs to make informed decisions about accepting new players.

The penalty matrix assigns a point value to each player within the team based on factors such as whether they are a 'homegrown' player, new to football, listed on a development squad list, or a player who has transferred to their nearest club. It also considers reasons for player movement, such as a team folding, merging or changes in player residence. The matrix responds to strong feedback from clubs about the impact of development squad player movement on competition fairness, team stability, and player retention in older age groups.

Mid-season review proposals

Thank you to all the Clubs that participated in the mid-season reviews in July and August 2024 and/or completed the online feedback form regarding proposed rule changes for 2025. Your input is invaluable and plays a crucial role in shaping the final rule adjustments. Based on the feedback received through these channels, the following proposed rule changes will not be moving forward.

- *Introduce that once a player has played 8 matches in the current WAFLW season, they will no longer be eligible to return to Junior competitions in that season*

With changes made to the WAFLW season, the Colts and Rogers Cup seasons are much closer aligned. It is anticipated this will remove the issues of competition integrity and allows consistency of the same rules being

applied across genders.

- *Introduce a rule that female players may only play in mixed gender competition if their Club does not have a team in the female competition relative to their age*

This potential rule change was requested by a Club. The Australian Sex Discrimination Act 1984 limits the rulings that can be introduced.

- *Amend the Year 4 competition to 12-a-side*

Feedback from Clubs was overwhelmingly against this potential rule change.

- *Introduce a cap to the number of players on the bench in Modified aged competitions*

Feedback from Clubs was overwhelmingly against this potential rule change.

- *Amending the mercy rule activation from 60 points down to 40 points. Further amendment to include that once the limit is reached, the ball returns to the center and possession is given to the team with lower score instead of a ball-up.*

Feedback from Clubs was overwhelmingly against this potential rule change.

- *Introduction of penalties for teams who do not apply the mercy rule*

Feedback from Clubs was overwhelmingly against this potential rule change.

- *Expansion of bonus E-points for teams who achieve even playing time or have registered umpires in their team.*

Feedback from Clubs was overwhelmingly against this potential rule change.

- *Amending the First Aider requirement in Modified aged competition to be solely the responsibility of the home team rather than each team providing their own First Aider.*

This potential rule change was requested by a Club to reduce the number of volunteers required for game day. Feedback from Clubs was overwhelmingly against this potential rule change and expressed concern over the safety of players. The current rules and regulations already allow for a team's First Aider to assist the other team if required.

- *Creation of a cross conference Year 11/12 competition*

Feedback from Clubs was there was not enough interest in this competition due to the travel required and the potential to create competition integrity issues if Clubs create 'super team's to participate in a cross conference competition.

Please visit the Kia Club Hub section on the WA Football website to view and download the full 2025 Junior Football Competition Policies, Rules and Regulations Handbook.