

Equal Playing Time Policy

Murdoch University Melville Football Club (MUMFC) is recognised as a club that focuses on developing young players and endeavours to provide them with every opportunity for improvement. It also actively promotes the growth of the game, with the long-term aim of retaining and developing in *all* children a life-long love of the sport.

This in turn will ensure that these young individuals in the future will put back into the game as supporters, volunteers, players (at any level from social through to elite) or any combination thereof.

Coaches

Most coaches will be well aware that children's football skills develop at different rates and that only a very small percentage of players will become professional footballers. Good coaches support these dreams and understand that these young individuals they have under their control are on a development path. This means that the coaches' association with them is *not* the final product, but that they have a significant, critical impact *on* the end result.

Players play football because they love it, they love the game and playing it, be it training or match day. Major studies have shown that limiting their time playing is often taken by the child as a punishment or judgement on their ability – this has a negative effect on the child and will affect their confidence.

The club policy will define what is expected from all coaches who have teams that represent Murdoch University Melville Football Club from 2012 onwards.

The Two Part Policy

The policy is defined in two parts based around age groups, as the progressive capacity of individuals increases as they get older. It is acknowledged that precise measurement is not the goal of this policy but having consideration to being fair and equitable.

Coaches for a particular squad may submit a case for dispensation on these policies but this will need to be endorsed by the MUMFC committee. If endorsed, the dispensation would need to be justified and published to all the teams' parents *before the season starts* so these parents have the option to opt in or out of that squad.

Equal playing time policy 1

This policy applies to all the age groups from 5 through to 12 years of age.

*“All Murdoch University Melville Football Club players between the age of 5 and 12 years of age will be given EQUAL GAME TIME for each match every week and be a starting player for a fair and equitable number of matches – exceptions may **only** occur for injury, ill-discipline, or a choice by the parent or child.”*

These are only grounds to vary the equal playing time for any age group on the day.

Equal playing time policy 2

This policy applies to age groups 13 through to 16 years of age.

*“All Murdoch University Melville Football Club players between the age of 13 and 16 years of age must play an equal amount of time **over the course of a season** and be a starting player for a fair and equitable number of matches. This does not require equal playing time in each game.”*

At Under 13s to 16’s level, the Club provides coaches with a small degree of discretion in applying the Equal Playing Time Policy. The Coach is granted discretion as to how he/she administers the Equal Playing Time Policy based on:

- The calibre of the opposition;
- The position of goalkeeper;
- Behaving appropriately with respect;
- The safety of the player concerned;
- The status of the game; or
- The preparation of the player”

Interpretation for policy 2.

It is Murdoch University Melville Football Club’s desire to provide a supportive atmosphere for all registered players in these age groups primarily providing a vehicle where players **want** to be at Murdoch University Melville as they understand they will receive fair treatment and a sense of belonging. Allowing players match time helps them develop.

The over-riding principle of the above policy is that Coach must provide each registered player with EQUAL PLAYING TIME over the course of the home and away season. There must not be significant and obvious disparity between all players’ playing time and adjustments for not playing in a specific game must be compensated for in other games.

Players need to honour the opportunity of equal playing time by being mentally and physically prepared at each game. In particular when they know that they will be playing a major part in the team that day. Failing to do so allows the coach to invoke his/her discretion on equal playing time.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Won't this be an onerous job for a coach to manage this policy, especially for younger grades?

A: This policy isn't intended to be something that coaches or managers need to fastidiously record. The idea sets the tone to change the default thinking about how coaches should behave in substituting players equally.

Q: What happens if a player or a parent comes to me as a coach complaining that they haven't fairly been given time on the pitch?

A: If the match/attendance forms are filled out, as in the MUMFC coaches written program, there will be evidence of the amount of time that a player has played and positions played.

Q: If I wanted an easy system to ensure equal time on the pitch, what would you recommend?

A: The best way, especially for junior grades, is to rotate players at set times, and keep a list and work through the list in order. Rotations could be done every 10 minutes, for example, or something divisible into the total playing time of the game (which varies depending on age group).

Q: If I wanted a system to rigorously record the time on the pitch, what is the best way of doing it?

A: While not necessary, a parent or manager could record all of the interchanges as players come on and off. In older age groups these are not as frequent, and so the task of recording is less onerous. At the end of each match, you can quickly tally time on and off the pitch and present this to the coach the following week to influence substitution choices. With younger players this will already be done prior to the game as you should be recording who has played where and how long; but this may change slightly according to injuries and attendance, but managed on the day if these events occur.

Q: Under what circumstances would you say it is OK for me as a coach to not give a player equal playing time?

A: In addition to the points on page 2, the club values good code of conduct. A player being disrespectful in some way would be the typical grounds for such a decision. This might include:

- Being rude to the coach, other team members or players of another team
- Not attending regular training, without notice to coach or manager
- Not being prepared for training or games: late, or without the right equipment
- Not respecting the referee during a match