

SMFNC Junior Team Selection Policy



1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear and consistent framework for team selection at South Morang Football Netball Club (SMFNC), specifically when:

- The club is fielding multiple teams in the same age group, or
- There are more players than are allowed in a single team under NFNL regulations

This policy ensures that team selection is conducted openly, fairly, effectively, and collaboratively, and in a manner that considers the best interests of the individual player, the team, and the club.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all stakeholders involved in junior football at SMFNC, including coaches, assistant coaches, officials, players, parents and guardians, Football Operations team (including Junior Age Group Coordinators), and committee members. It is relevant only in situations where the club is fielding multiple teams in the same age group, or where the number of registered players exceeds the maximum permitted for a single team under NFNL regulations.

3. Culture

SMFNC is built on four key pillars that guide how all players, officials, members, and supporters represent the club:

- **RESPECT** – Always for each other, for our club, for our jumper, for our opponents and for ourselves
- **GROWTH** – Embrace the process, chase the improvement and strive for greatness
- **STRENGTH** – Train hard, push limits and build resilience
- **PRIDE** – Represent the jumper with honour, compete with heart and leave it all on the field

These cultural principles form the foundation of our club environment and guide behaviour both on and off the field.

4. Guiding Values

Team selection is complex, and not every situation can be anticipated. To guide fair and consistent decisions, the following values underpin our selection process across all ages:

- Creating balanced teams that support skill development, enjoyment, and inclusion
- Ensuring first year Under 9 and Under 10 players, and, where possible new players in older age groups, have a minimum of one friend in their team
- Encouraging players to build new friendships, not just maintain existing ones, to strengthen our 'One Club' community
- Supporting player development by aiming to place each player in a team that matches their current ability and confidence level
- Ensuring team numbers are managed fairly across same-age teams to support equity in game time and team cohesion
- Where possible, fielding teams in multiple divisions to support growth and club competitiveness
- Promoting fairness, consistency, and long-term enjoyment of the game

These values support the club's commitment to player wellbeing, development, and team success.

5. Key Considerations in Team Selection

At SMFNC, team selection decisions are based on a number of important considerations that support fairness, development, and the best interest of all players and teams. These principles help guide the selection process and ensure transparency across all age groups:

- Friendship Groups Are Considered, But Not Guaranteed:
While we aim to support social connection, particularly for new and younger players, teams will not be built solely around friendship or school groups. Players are encouraged to build new friendships within their team.
- Development Focused Team Placement Across All Age Groups:
Team selection will reflect the development needs appropriate to each age group:
 - For Under 9 and Under 10, the focus is on fun, building friendships, balancing team numbers, basic skill development, and considering birth years to ensure even and enjoyable teams.
 - For Under 11 and Under 12, team selection balances nurturing friendships, enjoyment, and further development of technical and tactical skills
 - From Under 13 to Under 17.5, players will be placed in teams that best match their stage of development and ability to ensure all teams are competitive within their respective divisions
- Coaches Children:
The child of a coach or assistant coach will always be placed in the team their parent is involved in.
- Playing in the Appropriate Age Group:
As a general rule, all players are expected to play in their correct age group as determined by their date of birth. Requests for players to play up in an age group will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and must be approved by the Football Operations Manager and the Junior President. These decisions will take into account the players physical development, skill level, team needs, and long-term wellbeing. The club prioritises balanced age groups and fairness for all players.
- Annual Selection Review:
Team selection will be reviewed each year to ensure all teams stay competitive and allow for teams to improve and move up through divisions.
- Extenuating or Confidential Circumstances:
The club understands that some families may have unique situations that require special consideration. These cases will be assessed on a case-by-case basis to ensure we act in the best interests of the player and family.

6. Policy

Team selection in these age groups focuses on inclusion, enjoyment, and player development. While maintaining fairness and balance, SMFNC aims to create a positive environment that aligns with our club values of Respect, Growth, Strength and Pride.

Selections are made with the following age-appropriate considerations:

Under 9:

The focus at this level is on introducing children to football in a fun, safe and inclusive environment.

- Emphasis is on learning basic game skills, building confidence, and enjoying the game
- Teams will be balanced by numbers, a mix of abilities, and where possible, birth years
- Friendship requests will be considered, with a focus on building new friendships and long-term team balance
- Coaches are encouraged to work collaboratively, including shared training sessions and resources

Under 10:

The focus continues to be on skill development, enjoyment, and teamwork, with a growing emphasis on structured training and game awareness.

- Focus remains on developing fundamental skills and overall game understanding
- Players will begin to learn basic positional concepts, helping them understand different roles on the field in a fun and supportive way
- Team selection aims to support enjoyment, development, and both existing and new friendships
- Coaches are encouraged to train collaboratively

Under 11 – Under 12:

This age group marks a transition towards a more structured development focus, while still maintaining the fun and inclusive environment that supports long term participation.

- Greater focus is placed on gameplay development, positional understanding, and preparation for future competition
- While developing and maintaining friendships remains important, team structure, balance, and skill development begin to play a stronger role in team placement
- Coaches will aim to provide an environment that supports both individual growth and team success

All coaches should be actively involved in the team selection process and supported by the Football Operations Team and Junior President to ensure selections are fair, transparent, and consistent.

Under 13 to Under 17.5:

In these age groups, the emphasis shifts towards learning how to train effectively, consolidating foundational skills, and being introduced to more advanced technical and tactical aspects of the game.

Players will begin to build on their understanding of:

- Decision-making in both training and in games
- Positional skills and competencies
- Performance-enhancing routines such as warm-ups, cool-downs, hydrations, recovery, nutrition, and goal setting

At SMFNC, we are committed to providing an environment that supports players at all stages of their development. Our goal is to group players with others at a similar level of progression, which allows each individual to:

- Develop new skills
- Gain confidence
- Achieve personal and club goals
- Build a strong connection to the sport and the club

Where the club is fielding multiple teams in an age group or has more players than allowed for one team, players will be placed in the environment that best supports their development. For some players, this means playing at the highest level available to challenge their growth in a competitive setting. For others, it may involve playing in a more supportive team environment that allows them to continue developing confidence, skills, and game understanding at an appropriate pace.

Team selection will be conducted with care to ensure that all players have the opportunity to succeed and enjoy their football experience. All decisions will be guided by the club's values of Respect, Growth, Strength, and Pride, and made collaboratively by the team selection panel.

7. Team Selection Process

The SMFNC team selection process is designed to be transparent, consistent, and aligned with our club values. Selections are guided by development goals, team balance, and fairness. This section outlines how selection is approached across all age groups.

7.1 Playing Team Sizes

Players will be assigned to their relevant age group teams based on the following team capacity sizes:

- All Under 9 and Under 10 teams must accept a maximum of 20 players in each team
- All Under 11 – Under 17.5 teams must accept a maximum of 26 players in each team
- All Girls teams must accept a maximum of 24 players in each team

Should the coach wish to carry more than the maximum number of players, this will be at their discretion, subject to approval by the Football Operations Manager.

Pursuant to NFNL by-laws:

24 players can take the field each game during the Home and Away season

26 players can take the field during finals, as long as all 26 players have qualified.

7.2 The Selection Panel

When selecting teams, we feel it is important to strike a balance between past performance and the requirements of the team for the coming season. We are also committed to selecting teams through a fair and transparent process. The team selection panel will include:

- Last season coaches reviews
- Current season coaches (if different from previous season)
- Football Operations Manager and/or Junior Age Group Coordinator
- Independent Panel representative if required

7.3 How Teams Will Be Selected

Under 9 – Under 10

Team selection at this level focuses on inclusion, enjoyment and social connection. Teams will be formed by considering the following:

- Evenly distributing player numbers and ages across teams
- Ensuring all new players (especially in their first year) have at least one friend in their team where possible
- A balance of abilities, to help all players feel included and have positive on-field experiences
- Coaches may collaborate in training to promote consistency and shared learning between teams

These teams are formed to give players the best possible start in football in a safe and welcoming environment.

Under 11 – Under 12

These age groups represent a gradual shift from purely social play to more structured team environments. While enjoyment remains a priority, players begin to be grouped based on development needs. Players will be observed during pre-season for:

- Skills development and game understanding
- Engagement and focus during drills and team activities
- Willingness to learn new roles and try different positions

Team selection will aim to:

- Maintain and build friendships where possible
- Create balanced and competitive environments that are appropriate for each players stage of development

- Group players with others at a similar development level, particularly around understanding game structure, positional play, and coachability.

Some players may be placed in a more structured or competitive team, while others may benefit from a more supportive learning environment. Team selection will reflect what best supports each players growth.

Under 13 – Under 17.5

Team selection at these ages is more performance and development based, with a greater focus on ensuring each player is placed in the most appropriate football environment.

Pre-season assessment will include:

- Skill execution under pressure
- Game sense and ability to adapt in match like situations
- Understanding of positional play and willingness to play multiple roles
- Fitness, work rate and training commitment
- Coachability, attitude, and alignment with club values

Team selection decisions will consider:

- Players readiness to train and compete at a higher level
- The need to balance teams across divisions to ensure each team is competitive
- Creating environments that support both high-performing and developing players
- Team balance e.g. not all midfielders and defenders

Assessments will be conducted by the team selection panel.

7.4 New Player / Player Transfers / Late Registrations

If a player registers before team selections are finalised, they will be considered as part of the full team selection process and assessed alongside all other players.

If a player registers after team selection has occurred, they will be assessed during standard pre-season training at the discretion of the coaching teams and the Football Operations Manager.

If a player registers after the NFNL home and away season has begun, they will be assessed during training and/or initial games by the selection panel in consultation with coaches. They will be placed in the most appropriate team based on their development needs and available team capacity.

Any potential team movement must be approved by the Football Operations Manager, in consultation with the coaching team. Team movements must occur within the NFNL regulations.

7.5 Game Time Expectations / Matrix

SMFNC is committed to ensuring all junior players are given fair opportunities to develop their skills and enjoy playing time on match day. The following outlines the minimum expectations across all age groups:

Under 9: Minimum 3 quarters per week rotated equally amongst players

Under 10: Minimum 3 quarters per week rotated equally amongst players

Under 11: Minimum 3 quarters per week

Under 12: Aim of 3 quarters per week with an overall balance of 70% game time over the season

Under 13: Minimum of 2 quarters with the aim of 60% game time over the season

Under 14: Minimum of 2 quarters with the aim of 60% game time over the season

Under 15: Minimum of 2 quarters with the aim of 60% game time over the season

Under 16: Minimum 2 quarters per week

Under 17.5: Minimum 2 quarters per week

7.6 Rostering Off Guidelines

Where teams have more registered players than allowed on match day (refer to 7.1 Playing Team Sizes), SMFNC follows a fair and consistent rostering-off process to ensure all players are treated equitably throughout the season.

In Under 11 to Under 13, rostering should occur evenly across all players with no player being rostered off a second time before all other players have been rostered off at least once.

In Under 14 to Under 17.5, rostering off should be at the discretion of the coach, however, no player should be rostered off for consecutive games. Coaches are encouraged to manage this fairly and transparently across the team.

Exceptions to rostering off may occur in the event of injury, illness, or misconduct on the part of the player concerned. All players will be eligible to play finals (if the team qualifies) provided the player has met the NFNL's minimum game participation requirements.

8. Communication of Team Selections

Players will be formally advised of their team placement via a meeting, direct email, or communication from the Football Operations Manager, Coordinator or coach.

If a player is not selected due to team size limits, the club will provide other options should they be interested.

Complaints & Queries Process

Coaches and Coordinators will be available to discuss any questions or concerns about team selection 48 hours after teams are announced. If concerns are raised and a resolution cannot be reached, the Coordinator will escalate the matter to the Football Operations Manager or a member of the Junior Executive Committee.

Document Review and Approval

Prepared by:	Junior Coordinator
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Reviewed by:	Executive Committee
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Approved by:	Executive Committee
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