This is the published version

Phillips, Pamm, Wehner, Kylie, Allan, Matthew, Gastin, Paul, Spittle, Michael and Dawson, Andrew 2013, Examining the AFL junior match policy for recruitment and retention, Deakin University, School of Management and Marketing, Melbourne, Vic.

Available from Deakin Research Online

http://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30065110

Reproduced with the kind permission of the copyright owner

Copyright: 2013, Deakin University, School of Management and Marketing
EXAMINING THE AFL JUNIOR MATCH POLICY FOR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Chief Investigator: Associate Professor Pamm Phillips

Project Manager: Kylie Wehner

Research (Honours) Student: Matt Allan

Internship Students: Kim Encel & Mitchell James

Associate Investigators: Dr Paul Gastin, Associate Professor Michael Spittle, Dr Andrew Dawson

MARCH 2013
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents........................................................................................................................................... 2
Table of Figures..................................................................................................................................................... 5
Table of Authorities.............................................................................................................................................. 7
Executive Summary.............................................................................................................................................. 9

1.0 Background.................................................................................................................................................. 11

1.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................................................. 11

1.1.1 Research Aims ...................................................................................................................................... 11

1.1.2 Sport development best practice – the current state of play................................................................. 12

1.2 Methods ................................................................................................................................................... 14

1.3 Data Collection Sites ................................................................................................................................. 14

1.4 Procedures at Each Site .............................................................................................................................. 16

1.4.1 In-game movement analysis by GPS tracking ....................................................................................... 16

1.4.2 Reliability and validity of GPS tracking technology ............................................................................ 17

1.4.3 In-situ observation of skill execution .................................................................................................... 17

1.4.4 In-situ observation (coaches, umpires, and parents/spectators) ............................................................ 18

1.4.5 In-situ focus groups and/or interviews of parents/spectators ............................................................... 18

1.4.6 Post-game interviews (coaches, umpires, and administrators) ............................................................ 18

1.4.7 Umpire GPS tracking ............................................................................................................................ 19

1.5 Fun Facts from Research in the Field ........................................................................................................ 20

1.5.1 Distances travelled to collect data ......................................................................................................... 20

1.5.2 Student hours ....................................................................................................................................... 20

1.5.3 Minutes of gameplay filmed .................................................................................................................. 20

1.5.4 Total minutes of interviews and focus groups undertaken .................................................................... 20

1.5.5 Weather analysis during data collection ............................................................................................... 20

1.5.6 Match day analysis ................................................................................................................................ 20

2.0 Results....................................................................................................................................................... 21

2.1 Underlying Principle of juMP on Culture and Context ............................................................................ 21

2.1.1 AFL Non-Compliant culture and context .............................................................................................. 22

2.1.2 AFL Compliant culture and context ....................................................................................................... 23

2.2 Rules Analysis .......................................................................................................................................... 25

2.2.1 GPS analysis ....................................................................................................................................... 25

2.2.2 Skill frequencies and execution ............................................................................................................. 33

2.2.3 Modified rules of ground size, player numbers and zones .................................................................... 40

2.2.4 Modified Rules of tackling ................................................................................................................... 43

2.2.5 Modified rules of “the Game” – no match results, premiership points/ladders, finals or names published... 47
Management of implementation of rules ............................................................... 48
2.2.6 Modified rules related to skill acquisition – marking, bouncing restrictions and kicking off the ground ......................................................... 50
Management of implementation of rules ................................................................ 51
2.2.7 Modified rule of the coach on the ground .......................................................... 54
Management of implementation of rules .................................................................. 54
2.2.8 Complexity of rule changes – summary .............................................................. 56
2.3 Regulations Analysis ......................................................................................... 57
2.3.1 Case studies ....................................................................................................... 57
Data collection site background ................................................................................ 58
QLD Metro ................................................................................................................. 58
VIC Regional ............................................................................................................... 59
VIC Metro 3 ............................................................................................................... 60
VIC Metro 2 ............................................................................................................... 60
VIC Metro 1 ............................................................................................................... 60
2.4 Stakeholder Impacts ........................................................................................... 62
2.4.1 Coach analysis ................................................................................................. 62
The coaches’ perspective: A unique lens .................................................................... 63
Coaches’ views of AFL Junior Match Policy rules .................................................... 63
Coach behaviour and feedback ................................................................................ 74
2.4.2 Umpire analysis ............................................................................................... 78
The on-field experience of umpiring ........................................................................ 79
Association/trained Umpires versus parent umpires ............................................... 83
3.0 National Online Survey...................................................................................... 89
3.1 AFL Junior Match Policy survey demographics ................................................ 89
3.2 Perceptions of The use of modified rules in junior AF ....................................... 94
3.3 Perceptions of The importance of role attributes ................................................. 100
4.0 Recommendations ............................................................................................. 112
4.1 Recommendations regarding rules, regulations and their management ........... 112
4.2 Recommendations regarding pathway development and management ............ 115
4.3 Recommendations for creating broader understanding and adoption of modified rules ................................................................. 116
4.4 Recommendations for further research ............................................................ 116
5.0 Report Concluding Comments .......................................................................... 117
6.0 The Research Team ........................................................................................... 118
Chief Investigator: Associate Professor Pamm Phillips ........................................ 118
Project Manager: Kylie Wehner .............................................................................. 118
Matt Allan: Honours Student .................................................................................. 119
Mitchell James and Kim Encel: Practicum/Internship Students .......................... 119
Research Associate: Dr Paul Gastin ....................................................................... 119
Research Associate: Associate Professor Michael Spittle ................................... 120
Research Associate: Dr Andrew Dawson ............................................................... 120
7.0 Appendices ......................................................................................................... 121
Appendix 1: Observation Schedule ......................................................................... i
Appendix 2: Invitation to League ............................................................................ ii
Appendix 3: AFLuMP Study Flyer .......................................................................... iii
Appendix 4: Information and Consent forms for Interview Participants ................................................................. iv
Appendix 5: Information and Consent forms for Umpire GPS Tracking ............................................................... vii
Appendix 6: Individual League Comparison ........................................................................................................ viii
Appendix 7: Notational Analysis Compliant/Non-Compliant Comparison .............................................................. x
Appendix 8: Coach Interview Guide .................................................................................................................... xiii
Appendix 9: Survey Raw Data ........................................................................................................................... xiv
Appendix 10: Practicum/Internship Student Outcomes .......................................................................................... xix
Table of Figures

Figure 1: Research sites .............................................................................................................................................. 15
Figure 2: Culture and context of the AFL Junior Match Policy - Compliant versus Non-Compliant ........................................ 22
Figure 3: GPS running variables for players in the Under 8/9 age groups ............................................................... 26
Figure 4: GPS running variables for players in the Under 9/10 age groups .............................................................. 27
Figure 5: GPS running variables for players in the Under 11/12 age groups ......................................................... 28
Figure 6: Effect size of GPS running variables (Compliant versus Non-Compliant) ............................................... 29
Figure 7: GPS running variables (Under 8/9 subset) ................................................................................................. 31
Figure 8: Notational analysis of players in the Under 8/9 age groups .................................................................... 33
Figure 9: Notational analysis of players in the Under 9/10 age groups ................................................................. 35
Figure 10: Notational analysis of players in the Under 11/12 age groups .............................................................. 37
Figure 11: The current AFL Junior Match Policy statement on the modified rules of ground size, player numbers and zones ........................................................................................................................................ 40
Figure 12: Current AFL Junior Match Policy summary statement on the modified rules of tackling ..................... 43
Figure 13: Implementation of modified tackling rules based on the age group divisions of the Junior Football League ........................................................................................................................................... 46
Figure 14: Current AFL Junior Match Policy summary statement on the modified rules of “the game” .............. 47
Figure 15: Current AFL Junior Match Policy summary statement on the modified rules of marking .................. 50
Figure 16: Current AFL Junior Match Policy summary statement on the modified rules of bouncing restrictions and kicking off the ground ........................................................................................................ 51
Figure 17: Current AFL Junior Match Policy summary statement on the modified rule of the coach on the ground ........................................................................................................................................... 54
Figure 18: Map of rule interdependence ...................................................................................................................... 56
Figure 19: Continuum of AFL Junior Match Policy compliance .................................................................................. 57
Figure 20: Average distance run by umpires in Compliant versus Non-Compliant leagues .................................. 79
Figure 21: Average speed (km/h) for umpires in Compliant versus Non-Compliant Leagues ............................... 80
Figure 22: Maximum speeds reached by umpires in Compliant versus Non-Compliant leagues ..................... 81
Figure 23: Average number of high speed running efforts for umpires in Compliant versus Non-Compliant leagues ........................................................................................................................................... 82
Figure 24: Association/trained umpire positioning in relation to play ........................................................................ 87
Figure 25: Volunteer/parent umpire positioning in relation to play ........................................................................... 87
Figure 26: Primary role of survey participants in junior Australian Football ........................................................... 89
Figure 27: Age groups of survey participants ........................................................................................................... 90
Figure 28: Age group of players in participants’ primary role .................................................................................. 92
Figure 29: The implementation of the AFL Junior Match Policy via State/Territory of residence of survey participants ........................................................................................................................................... 95
Figure 30 Perceptions of children’s opportunity to tackle based on the age of survey participants .................. 102
Figure 31: Perceptions of the importance of winning matches for children’s involvement based on the age of survey participants................................................................. 103
Figure 32: Perceptions of the importance of premiership points/ladders for children’s involvement based on the age of survey participants................................................................. 104
Table 1: Descriptive characteristics of participants............................................................................................................25
Table 2: Effect size of GPS running variables (Compliant versus Non-Compliant) .................................................................29
Table 3: Descriptive characteristics of participants (U9 Subset)................................................................................................30
Table 4: GPS running variables (U9 Subset)..........................................................................................................................30
Table 5: Analysis of the modified rules of ground size, player numbers and zones .................................................................41
Table 6: Analysis of the modified rules of tackling................................................................................................................43
Table 7: Analysis of the modified rules of “the game” ..............................................................................................................47
Table 8: Analysis of the modified rules of marking................................................................................................................50
Table 9: Analysis of the modified rules of bouncing restrictions and kicking off the ground..................................................51
Table 10: Analysis of the modified rule of the coach on the ground.........................................................................................54
Table 11: Summary of data collection site information .........................................................................................................61
Table 12: Profile of coaches involved in the study ....................................................................................................................62
Table 13: Summary of coaches’ views on scoring in junior AF ................................................................................................66
Table 14: Summary of coaches’ views on tackling and bumping in junior AF .................................................................68
Table 15: Summary of coaches’ views on smaller ground size, reduced player numbers, and zones in junior AF .................70
Table 16: Summary of coaches’ views of the modified rule of allowing the coach on the ground in junior AF ..............72
Table 17: Summary of coaches’ views on restricted bouncing, no deliberate kicking off the ground, and attempted mark in junior AF .................................................................................................................74
Table 18: Umpire GPS participants ...........................................................................................................................................79
Table 19: Differences between association/trained Umpires and volunteer parent umpires ..............................................84
Table 20: Location of survey participants by State/Territory ..................................................................................................91
Table 21: Top ten junior football leagues by participant responses .......................................................................................91
Table 22: Participants’ main reason for involvement in junior Australian Football.................................................................93
Table 23: Implementation (or partial implementation) of the AFL Junior Match Policy in participants’ Junior Football League .........................................................................................................................94
Table 24: Modified rules that are implemented in the participants’ Junior Football League ...........................................95
Table 25: Perceptions of which modified rules should be or should not be implemented ......................................................96
Table 26: Perceptions of which modified rules should be/should not be implemented in participating Junior Football Leagues ..................................................................................................................98
Table 27: Participants’ beliefs about the importance of particular aspects for children’s involvement in sport ......................101
Table 28: Comparison of views about importance of aspects for children’s’ involvement ..................................................102
Table 29: Participants’ beliefs about the importance of coach attributes in junior football .................................................105
Table 30: Comparison of views about importance of aspects for coaches ............................................................................106
Table 31: Participants’ beliefs about the importance of umpire attributes in junior football .............................................. 107
Table 32: Comparison of views of what is important for umpires ......................................................................................... 108
Table 33: Participants’ beliefs about the importance of parent attributes in junior football .............................................. 109
Table 34: Participants’ beliefs about the importance of administrator attributes in junior football ......................... 110
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research investigated:

- The impact of the presence or absence of AFL Junior Match Policy on enjoyment and skill development of participants;
- The impact of the presence or absence of AFL Junior Match Policy on the attitudes and match-day behaviours of coaches, parents, officials, and administrators associated with the delivery of football and ultimately the implementation (or lack thereof) of the Junior Match Policy.

Data was collected at 36 junior football matches from Under 8 to Under 12 across sites that implemented the AFL Junior Match Policy, and those that did not. Data collection included:

- GPS analysis of player movement;
- Observation of skill execution;
- Observation of match-day context;
- Focus groups and interviews with coaches, administrators, parents, and umpires; and
- A national online survey.

This research is one of the first internationally to begin to understand the experience of children in junior modified sport. Through commissioning this research, the AFL has placed itself at the forefront of sport development research.

The results of this research suggest that the AFL Junior Match Policy rules play an important role in:

- The culture and context of junior sport.
  - The AFL Junior Match Policy acts not only as a set of modified rules matched to maturity of children that assists in their skill development and execution, but also as a guide for adult behaviour in junior sport in that it reminds adults about realistic expectations in junior sport.
  - This research clearly showed that where the AFL Junior Match Policy was employed in its entirety, the culture was less intense and competitive and better matched the age and maturity of the participants.

- Sport development pathways and their management
  - Each of the modified rules listed below are important components of the AFL Junior Match Policy:
    - Ground size;
    - Player numbers;
    - Zones;
- Tackling;
- Bouncing;
- Marking;
- Coach on the ground
- Kicking off the ground; and
- Conduct of the Game including no scoring, no premiership points, no ladders, no finals series, and no publication of winners.

- All of the above rules in the AFL Junior Match Policy are important to implement in their entirety if the desired outcomes (of reduced pressure on the player in possession of the ball, increased skill development and confidence, increased enjoyment, and reduced injury) are to be realised.
- The AFL Junior Match Policy rules are ineffective when implemented in isolation from each other, or when leagues choose to use some rules and not others.

There is, however, a need to review and modify the AFL Junior Match Policy. It has been recommended that:

- The complexity of many of the rules is reduced in terms of their wording/meaning as well as the transition and change between age groups.
- Leagues are to be incentivised to implement all of the rules in the AFL Junior Match Policy rather than cherry picking those that they believe are most beneficial. This research has clearly shown that when rules are implemented in this way, they are ineffective.
- How rules are implemented and managed
  - Each of the research sites visited for this research provided both positive and negative examples of the implementation of the rules. These examples, as noted throughout this report need to be taken into consideration when reviewing and revising the Junior Match Policy guidelines and designing strategies for their implementation.
- Greater emphasis is placed on Coach and Umpire education in rule implementation and management is required throughout the sport.
- The AFL invest in a social marketing campaign to increase awareness of, and education about the aims and utility of modified rules in junior football as community perceptions and understandings are at best mixed, and at worst, limited.

Specific recommendations are included in Section 4.0 on page 112.
1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The AFL Junior Match Policy is designed to be fundamental to player, coach, and umpire skill development; participation pathways; as well as sound managerial practices in order to ensure optimal environments for recruitment and retention of human capital (such as players, coaches, officials and administrators) in the sport of AFL football. However, it has been noted that numerous leagues around the country choose not to adopt all the recommendations of the policy, or only enforce a select few. It is unclear why some leagues do not adopt the policy, whereas others do. This gap in knowledge leads directly to the broad research questions that have underpinned this research project. Those include:

- Which elements of the AFL Junior Match Policy lead to its adoption and why?
- Which elements of the AFL Junior Match Policy lead to its non-adoption and why?
- How does the AFL Junior Match Policy impact human capital in AFL Junior football (that is, each of the stakeholders including parents, players, coaches, umpires and administrators)?
- What impact do stakeholder perspectives have on AFL Junior Match Policy adoption or non-adoption?

1.1.1 RESEARCH AIMS

Specifically, this research aimed to examine the actual versus intended outcomes of the Australian Football League (AFL)’s Junior Match Policy. Specifically, this research investigated:

- The impact of the presence or absence of Junior Match Policy on enjoyment and skill development of participants;
- The impact of the presence or absence of Junior Match Policy on the attitudes and match-day behaviours of coaches, parents, officials, and administrators associated with the delivery of football and ultimately the implementation (or lack thereof) of the Junior Match Policy.
1.1.2 SPORT DEVELOPMENT BEST PRACTICE – THE CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

THE SPORT DEVELOPMENT ENVIRONMENT

Sport development has been a term familiar to those in the sport industry since the 1980s when sports were first modified in systematic ways. Sophisticated plans were developed by those in sport management in order to increase the number of people playing their sports, and to provide a clear and smooth transition process to provide greater opportunities for individuals to progress to higher levels of sport. Early conceptualisations of sport development are rooted in the traditional pyramid model of sport and sport development was defined as:

- Something that makes a difference
- The removal of barriers
- The promotion/implementation of positive change
- An education process
- About provision of opportunities in addition to those that already exist
- About changing attitudes of providers and participants simultaneously
- Planned, structured and achievement-oriented
- A tradition of challenging tradition, and
- Locally original

The modern era of sport development grapples with the need to balance between developing participation in community sport for the purposes of producing future champions and developing participation in sport because of the intrinsic benefits of doing so.

Sport Development is conceptualised from two distinct perspectives—the development of sport (building the capacities of sport organisations where sport is valued for its own sake), and development through sport (using sport as a social tool for human development). In the case of the AFL Junior Match Policy, both of these elements are relevant. While most of the discussion in this report centres on the development of sport through the impact of the presence or absence of the modified rules policy (AFL Junior Match Policy), the research also has implications for development through sport.

There is a growing body of research that begins to examine the systems, processes and managerial actions most important for sport development—both in the Australian setting, and internationally. The research

---

design and method used for this research have been informed by this research. Most importantly, the recommendations that are derived from this research study have also been informed by not only what happened on the field specific to the AFL and Australian context, but also by benchmark empirical research in the area of sport development—nationally and internationally.

As will be seen in the recommendations from this research, there is the need to further build capacity within the AFL junior sport network to deliver junior football—both modified and non-modified versions. In particular, the role of adults in junior sport is of paramount importance, which is consistent with concerns in sport development internationally. Most adults who take on roles in junior sport receive their cues about how to behave, and how to perform their role (such as coach or umpire for example) from watching the sport at elite or adult levels, largely on television. The role and experiences of coaches and umpires in junior sport and the specific education and training that they each receive in order to effectively deliver the outcomes intended from the AFL Junior Match Policy (as opposed to the sport for adults) is an important consideration in light of the results of this research. This research has also identified a range of outcomes that the empirical literature that examines the role of adults in youth sport is yet to discuss, placing the AFL at the forefront of development of sport research and practice.

The impact that the presence of AFL Junior Match Policy has on the behaviour and attitudes of parents and spectators at junior sport was perhaps larger than what was expected by the researchers. While it is frequently argued that sport is a useful setting that can be leveraged for broader social outcomes in communities, there is little research that has specifically considered the way in which a modified rule policy can influence adult behaviour, and ultimately the culture and atmosphere within which junior sport is played. This research has found that the behaviour of adults, and resulting culture and atmosphere of junior football played under AFL Junior Match Policy rules was more positive. These results place the AFL at the forefront of development through sport research and practice.

---


1.2 Methods
The Deakin University Sport Research Team employed a comprehensive methodology for this research. The methodology was designed to optimize the outcomes for this research and provide thorough analysis related to the two aims of the project.

In line with, and further extending the original project brief, numerous data sources have been used by the research team so that more stringent analysis (via data triangulation) can be used to inform the research questions and fulfil the project objectives. In some cases, methods needed to be refined in the field and these are detailed further below as appropriate.

1.3 Data Collection Sites
Thirty six (36) games of junior football were observed between May and August, 2012 across a range of age groups:
- Under 8
- Under 9
- Under 10
- Under 11
- Under 12

Due to logistical limitations, not all age groups were observed at every site. The Research Team needed to be selective at each of the sites to allow for appropriate time to travel between games and ensure data was captured from the entire games. The Research Team developed a cross-sectional approach to ensure that all of the age groups were observed. Appendix 1: Observation Schedule (p. i) identifies (in red font) the particular age groups that were observed at each of the sites.

Data was collected from 5 different research sites where junior Australian Football (AF) was played. These sites have been de-identified for the purposes of confidentiality.

Two sites implemented the AFL Junior Match Policies across all age groups. For the purposes of the first section of this report, these sites have been referred to as AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant. They include:
- Queensland Metropolitan Junior Football League (QLD Metro)
- Victorian Regional Junior Football League (VIC Regional)
Two sites have not implemented (or have minimal implementation of) the modified AFL Junior Match policies across all age groups. For the purposes of the first section of this report, these sites have been referred to as AFL Junior Match Policy Non-Compliant. They include:

- Victorian Metropolitan Junior Football League 1 (Vic Metro 1)
- Victorian Metropolitan Junior Football League 2 (Vic Metro 2)

One site initially requested to be involved in the research because they considered themselves to be AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant. However, on observation, it was found that they were indeed less compliant than they had perceived. Their website suggests that they are “transitional” in that they have been progressively introducing different AFL Junior Match Policy rules each year. This site is:

- Victorian Metropolitan Junior Football League 3 (Vic Metro 3)

Figure 1 below provides a representation of the research sites.

Figure 1: Research sites

![Diagram of research sites]

There were 3 rounds of data collection at each site. An observation was conducted at each site corresponding to the start, middle and end of the season. The observation schedule is included in Appendix 1: Observation Schedule, (p. i) and outlines the dates and times of each of the observed games.
1.4 Procedures at Each Site

The administrators of each league were contacted initially by email (See Appendix 2: Invitation to League, p. iii), and discussed the involvement of their league, and the specific teams within their league. A flyer (See Appendix 3: AFL JuMP Study Flyer, p. iii) was distributed to leagues and clubs to inform them of the research. Further, the flyer, as well as an information newsletter was distributed to all of the opposition teams.

At each site, a series of data collection methodologies are used as they relate to the two broad research aims:

Aim 1: To determine the impact of the presence or absence of Junior Match Policy on enjoyment and skill development of participants. Methods used include:

- In-game player movement analysis by GPS tracking;
- In-situ observation of game to determine frequency of skill execution (tackling, kicks, handballs, zones etc.) as relevant to the modified policy;
- Post-game analysis of video recording of game to validate skill execution observations.

Aim 2: To determine the impact of the presence of Junior Match Policy on the attitudes and match-day behaviours of coaches, parents, officials, and administrators associated with the delivery of junior football ultimately the implementation (or lack thereof) of the Junior Match Policy. Methods include:

- In-situ observation of coaches, umpires, and parents/spectators;
- In-situ focus groups and/or interviews of parents/spectators;
- Post-game interviews with coaches, umpires, administrators.

At each site, there was a minimum of 4 project team members present to implement the methodology. All interviews and focus groups are conducted by Associate Professor Pamm Phillips and/or Kylie Wehner.

1.4.1 IN-GAME MOVEMENT ANALYSIS BY GPS TRACKING

At each site, the research team arranged to meet with the team coach and/or player manager at least 30 minutes before the game. Compliant with ethical procedures, players who provided consent (via their parents) were fitted with GPS vests which were worn underneath their normal playing strip. A GPS unit was fitted to each participant’s vest and height and weight measurements were recorded. No names were recorded to ensure anonymity.
Global positioning system (GPS) technology is currently perceived as the “gold standard” in movement analysis. GPS receivers worn by players during sporting competition draw upon signals sent from earth orbiting satellites to locate their position. Using this information, the receivers are able to calculate and record data on position, time, distance, speed and direction. The data can then be downloaded to a personal computer for analysis.

The application of GPS tracking technology has revolutionised the body of knowledge surrounding player movements in several sports worldwide, and is therefore used extensively in both training and competition. In recent times, there has been an upsurge in the number of studies that present GPS data in senior AF. In contrast, its use at the junior level of AF is sparse. GPS technology has rarely been used in research to assess modified sport outcomes such as player movement.

1.4.2 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF GPS TRACKING TECHNOLOGY

GPS technology has been established as a valid and reliable measure of speed, distance and movement patterns in several field sport studies. It can be confidently used to measure the distance a player travels during sport performance with a general understanding that it usually includes a small overestimation of true distance travelled. The reliability and validity of GPS is thought to be best when used over a long-duration (i.e. length of a full match) and the units possess a high sampling rate (i.e. 5 Hz).

Data collected, and included in this report consist of elements such as total distance run, maximum speed, average speed, high-speed running (HSR) distance/percentage and high-speed running efforts (HSE). Any running recorded above 14.4km/h was considered HSR/HSE in accordance with speed zones previously reported in field-based team sport research.

1.4.3 IN-SITU OBSERVATION OF SKILL EXECUTION

During each of the games, the research team observed skill execution. During Round 1, (12 matches) ethical clearance had not been received to video record junior matches, therefore the observations of skill execution were completed manually. That is, the research team recorded frequencies of skill execution during the matches. From Round 2, all remaining matches (24 in total) were video recorded and analysed post-game for skill frequency and execution.

---


1.4.4 IN-SITU OBSERVATION (COACHES, UMPIRES, AND PARENTS/SPECTATORS)

During each of the games, the research team observed the behaviours of coaches, umpires, and parents/spectators. As per recommended techniques for ethnographic research, a set of observational protocols was developed for each of the groups being observed (Coaches, Umpires, and Parents/Spectators). Researchers embedded themselves in the crowd in a location that was convenient to observe the appropriate group and took notes in small hand-held note books where appropriate.

1.4.5 IN-SITU FOCUS GROUPS AND/OR INTERVIEWS OF PARENTS/SPECTATORS

At each of the games an ethnographic research technique was used where the researcher was immersed in the crowd of parents/spectators. Casual conversations and where consent was given, more formal interviews were conducted with individual parents and spectators in-situ, and in some cases, where consent was given, an informal focus group was convened. The aim of this method was to better understand the parent’s perspective on the AFL Junior Match Policy—in particular in the setting where they were involved and engaged in the phenomenon under study. Parents were asked to describe:

- Their understanding of the rules under which their children were playing
- Their perspective about the rules under which their children were playing, and if they considered that the rules needed to be any different.
- Their perspective about what their children enjoyed most and least about playing football.

1.4.6 POST-GAME INTERVIEWS (COACHES, UMPIRES, AND ADMINISTRATORS)

Due to the logistical issues of coaches, umpires, and administrators being involved in, and being time-poor during game-days, it was necessary in most instances to interview each of them post-observation. Consistent with ethical protocols, coaches, umpires, and administrators were contacted via phone and/or email to invite them to participate in a 20-30 minute interview about their role and perspective on the AFL Junior Match Policy. Information about the study, and a consent form was sent to each of the interview participants (See Appendix 4: Information and Consent forms for Interview Participants, p. iv).

Coaches, Umpires, and Administrators were each asked to describe:

- Their understanding of the rules that they were each responsible for implementing in the league in which they were involved;
- Their perspective about the rules they were each responsible for implementing in the league, and if they considered that the rules needed to be any different.
- Their perspective about what participants in their leagues enjoyed most and least about playing football.
1.4.7 UMPIRE GPS TRACKING

An extension of the original project was to include GPS analysis of umpire on-field movement during the game. It became apparent after Round 1 observations that umpires had a major impact on the implementation of the rules—not only due to their knowledge (or lack thereof) of the rules, but also the way in which they stayed with the play on-field and assisted the participants to understand the rule interpretation and the resulting umpire decisions.

Umpires were approached either immediately prior to the game, or prior to game-day through the club administrator or coach. A copy of the information sent to umpires, as well as the consent form is included in Appendix 5, p. vii.

Only umpires who were able to provide consent were able to be included in the study. A number of umpires were under the age of 18, and a parent was not present to provide consent, so they were unable to be included in this study.

A total of 11 umpires were fitted with a GPS across Compliant, Non-Compliant, and Transitional teams. Umpires of all age groups were represented.
1.5 Fun Facts from Research in the Field

1.5.1 DISTANCES TRAVELLED TO COLLECT DATA
- 8570 kms driving in Victoria
- 1300 kms driving in Queensland
- 45500 kms travelling by air from Victoria to Queensland

1.5.2 STUDENT HOURS
- Internship: Over 250 hours
- Honours: Too many

1.5.3 MINUTES OF GAMEPLAY FILMED
- 1800 minutes

1.5.4 TOTAL MINUTES OF INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS UNDERTAKEN
- 419 minutes

1.5.5 WEATHER ANALYSIS DURING DATA COLLECTION
- Match days with rain: 5
- Coldest match day temperature: -2°C (VIC Regional)
- Warmest match day temperature: 30°C (QLD Metro)

1.5.6 MATCH DAY ANALYSIS
- Number of GPS readings from players: 454
- Total number of matches attended: 36
2.0 RESULTS

The results are divided into 5 distinct sections:
2.1 Underlying Principle of JuMP on Culture and Context
2.2 Rules Analysis
2.3 Stakeholder Analysis
2.3.1 Coach Analysis
2.3.2 Umpire Analysis
2.4 National Online Survey

2.1 Underlying Principle of JuMP on Culture and Context

Somewhat unexpected by the research team, it was found that the absence or presence of the AFL Junior Match Policy had a profound impact on the culture and context of the match play.

The AFL Non-Compliant leagues were characterised by:

- The use of adult language in
  - coaching (feedback and instruction),
  - spectator behaviour (in barracking),
  - as well as parental behaviour (when talking individually with their own children).

- Adult-like fundraising activities
  - Raffles based on “betting” on
    - which child might score the first goal for each quarter
    - winning and losing teams

- Adult expectations
  - Language used by those involved frequently implied that children were expected to perform at a level like what is seen on TV (elite level adults)

The AFL Compliant leagues were characterised by:

- Low spectator/parent interest in score
- Use of language that implied
  - Encouragement
  - Acceptance of play and participation rather than focus on performance

Largely social environment for parents/spectators
2.1.1 AFL NON-COMPLIANT CULTURE AND CONTEXT

The type of language used by parents and spectators in the AFL Non-Compliant leagues was, in some cases, disturbing.

**Barracking**

Barracking for teams (remembering the children were 12 years and under) frequently included terms such as:

“Kill him/them”

“Get him”

“Push him out of the way”

“You should have kicked/moved/run…”

“Why didn’t you…”

“What are you doing?”

“What were you thinking?”

Clapping and encouragement was more frequently directed at own team rather than opposition teams, and was also focused on scoring.

VIC Metro 2 was noted as having a very intense culture (see also Coach behaviour and feedback, p. 74). In this case, the parents would join the quarter and half time coach address, then walk with their children back to their positions on the field in order to provide extra “coaching” while walking. In this case, parents positioned themselves around the ground in cliques and were so focused on the game that they complained about the research team talking with them about their children’s experience of junior football during the
time of on field play (during each quarter) as it was too distracting for them. Many had notepads where they recorded statistics for their child’s performance.

**Umpire abuse**

At these games, umpire abuse was observed. Although the umpire may not have heard it, the crowd were frequently vocal in their disapproval of umpiring decisions. Interestingly, most of these parents had little understanding of the rules themselves (which is perhaps not much different to spectators at an elite AFL game), but were still vocal and abusive in their language reflecting their adult-like expectations of children’s sport. The worst case was observed at the transitional league (VIC Metro 3 who thought they were more compliant than they were) during the final round of observations where umpire abuse was obscene (umpire was a 12 year old boy) and a fight almost broke out at the end of the game between parents.

Many of the umpires used in AFL Junior Match Policy non-compliant leagues were Association/Trained umpires who were wearing uniforms and perhaps expected to provide a “service” to the sport. It is possible that this also contributed to spectators/fans perception that they were justified in abusing as they perceived the service provided to be inferior. A more detailed discussion regarding umpires is provided later in this report (see p. 78).

2.1.2 AFL COMPLIANT CULTURE AND CONTEXT

The type of language used by parents and spectators in the AFL Compliant leagues was in complete contrast to that witnessed in the Non-Compliant leagues.

**Culture of encouragement and social connectedness**

AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant league parents were positive in the barracking not only for their own team, but for the opposition as well. Spectators were encouraging, and clapped and cheered good skills, as well as scoring—again for both teams. In many cases, spectators had little interest in the score, and in some instances didn’t really watch the game at all, but rather had a social catch-up with others at the game.

Umpire abuse was not observed at all at any of the AFL Junior Match Policy Complaint league games. Interestingly, parents recognised the difference between having a Volunteer Parent umpire and a Trained/Association Umpire at their games.
Recommendation from Analysis of Culture and Context

- When applied in its entirety, the AFL Junior Match Policy has had an impact on the behaviour of parents and adults in junior AFL football. It is recommended that further resources are invested in further penetrating the market to introduce the Policy across more clubs. A substantial social marketing campaign is required for all sectors of the sport.
2.2 Rules Analysis

For the purposes of this section of the report, the data from VIC Metro 3 (noted as a transitional club which is neither compliant nor non-compliant) has been omitted. By omitting data from VIC Metro 3 for this section of the reporting, it will allow for a clear comparison and contrast between compliant and non-compliant leagues on a range of variables.

2.2.1 GPS ANALYSIS

Comparisons of GPS movement analysis data between AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant (QLD Metro and VIC Regional) and Non-Compliant (VIC Metro 1 and VIC Metro 2) are provided in this section of the report for each age group using inferential statistics (independent t-tests) and effect size magnitudes. Inclusion within an age group was based on both age (influenced by one or two year age group progressions depending on the club/league) and the extent of rule modification (e.g. size of the ground, number of players), with some overlap between the U8/9 group and the U9/10 group. As a result of this, significant differences between Compliant and Non-Compliant were observed in age for all age groups and for height and body mass in the U9/10s (refer to Table 1 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Age (years) Mean ± SD (Range)</th>
<th>Height (cm) Mean ± SD (Range)</th>
<th>Body Mass (kg) Mean ± SD (Range)</th>
<th>BMI Mean ± SD (Range)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U8/U9</td>
<td>C (n=16)</td>
<td>7.3 ± 0.6 (6.0 – 8.0)</td>
<td>133.7 ± 5.4 (124.0 – 144.0)</td>
<td>28.3 ± 6.3 (19.0 – 42.0)</td>
<td>15.7 ± 2.6 (11.6 – 22.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC (n=31)</td>
<td>8.0 ± 0.7 (7.0 – 9.0)</td>
<td>136.4 ± 5.7 (123.0 – 150.0)</td>
<td>31.0 ± 5.7 (23.0 – 48.0)</td>
<td>16.5 ± 2.0 (13.5 – 21.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U9/U10</td>
<td>C (n=11)</td>
<td>7.8 ± 0.8 (7.0 – 9.0)</td>
<td>134.1 ± 5.5 (125.0 – 142.0)</td>
<td>29.9 ± 6.4 (23.0 – 42.0)</td>
<td>16.6 ± 3.0 (14.4 – 23.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC (n=26)</td>
<td>9.7 ± 0.5 (9.0 – 10.0)</td>
<td>142.5 ± 8.0 (130.0 – 159.0)</td>
<td>36.3 ± 7.8 (25.0 – 57.0)</td>
<td>17.7 ± 2.7 (12.9 – 23.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U11/U12</td>
<td>C (n=26)</td>
<td>10.7 ± 0.8 (9.0 – 12.0)</td>
<td>149.7 ± 7.6 (137.0 – 165.0)</td>
<td>39.5 ± 7.8 (29.0 – 54.0)</td>
<td>17.6 ± 2.4 (14.0 – 23.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC (n=35)</td>
<td>11.4 ± 0.5 (11.0 – 12.0)</td>
<td>152.9 ± 8.8 (140.0 – 176.0)</td>
<td>42.1 ± 7.2 (31.0 – 67.0)</td>
<td>17.8 ± 2.2 (15.0 – 28.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*denotes statistical significance (p<0.05); BMI: body mass index; SD: standard deviation
The GPS variables reported in this report include absolute measures of physical activity (total distance travelled) and maximal speed, as well as three variables expressed relative to time (distance per minute, D/Min; high intensity running distance per minute, HIR/Min; high intensity running efforts per minute, HIR E/Min) to account for differences in game duration between age groups and leagues.

Data are presented graphically and interpreted for each age group, with more detailed numerical data provided in tabular form in the appendices (Appendix 6: Individual League Comparison, p. viii). Figure 3 below presents the GPS running variables for players competing in Under 8/9 age groups.

*denotes statistical significance (p<0.05); D/Min: distance per minute; HIR D/Min: high-intensity running distance per minute; HIR E/Min: high-intensity running efforts per minute; SD: standard deviation

- Significant differences found between Compliant and Non-Compliant leagues for Distance (C=2124 ± 393; NC=3965 ± 933), D/Min (C=53 ± 10; NC=75 ± 18), HIR D/Min (C=3.3 ± 2.3; NC=6.7 ± 4.6) and HIR E/Min (C=0.6 ± 0.4; NC=1.3 ± 0.7)
- No difference found for maximal speed (C=18.5 ± 2.4; NC=19.4 ± 1.8)
• Rule modifications (ground size and zones in particular) in the U8/9s reduces absolute and relative physical activity in the compliant condition. Less distance is travelled at a reduced overall intensity, including the number of high intensity running distance and efforts.

Figure 4 below presents the GPS running variables for players competing in the Under 9/10 age groups.

![Figure 4: GPS running variables for players in the Under 9/10 age groups](image)

*denotes statistical significance (p<0.05); D/Min: distance per minute; HIR D/Min: high-intensity running distance per minute; HIR E/Min: high-intensity running efforts per minute; SD: standard deviation

• Significant differences found between Compliant and Non-Compliant leagues for Distance (C=2238 ± 328; NC=4376 ± 1749), D/Min (C=56 ± 8; NC=73 ± 29), HIR E/Min (C=0.8 ± 0.3; NC=1.3 ± 1.0) and Max Speed (C=19.1 ± 1.4; NC=20.6 ± 2.6)

• Rule modifications (ground size and zones in particular) in the U9/10s reduces absolute and relative physical activity in the compliant condition. Less distance is travelled at a reduced overall intensity, including the number of high intensity running efforts.

• Lower maximal speed in the compliant condition may be related to differences in age and physical size (i.e. height and body mass) and/or the influence of zones restricting the number and length of sprint efforts.
Figure 5 below presents the GPS running variables for players competing in Under 11/12 age groups.

*denotes statistical significance (p<0.05); D/Min: distance per minute; HIR D/Min: high-intensity running distance per minute; HIR E/Min: high-intensity running efforts per minute; SD: standard deviation

- No significant differences found between any of the variables in the U11/12s.
- The physical activity profiles in the older age groups are similar in the Compliant and Non-Compliant leagues, reflective of the similar playing conditions and reduced emphasis on rule modification as compliant leagues transition into standard rules.

2.1.1 Magnitude of difference between AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant and Non-Compliant

An important consideration when comparing AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant and Non-Compliant is the magnitude of difference between the two conditions. Table 2 below presents the percentage difference for all GPS movement analysis variables and assesses these differences descriptively based on their effect size (a mathematical value assessment [Cohen’s d] of the size of the difference; illustrated below in Figure 6.
The largest and most consistent differences are evident in the U8/9 age group.

Differences between conditions generally diminish as the age groups get older and the playing conditions and rule modifications become similar.

Larger differences in absolute compared to relative physical activity are evident, likely reflecting differences between conditions in both game duration and playing conditions (e.g. ground size, zone restrictions).

Maximal speed shows the smallest differences suggesting that unlike other physical activity variables, this inherent running ability is less affected by the rules in play.

Table 2: Effect size of GPS running variables (Compliant versus Non-Compliant)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Distance (m)</th>
<th>D/Min (m)</th>
<th>HIR D/Min (m)</th>
<th>HIR E/Min (m)</th>
<th>Max Speed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U8/U9</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Large</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U9/U10</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U11/U12</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Trivial</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Trivial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6: Effect size of GPS running variables (Compliant versus Non-Compliant)
1.1.2 Removing the influence of age and physical maturity

Chronological and biological age, including physical maturity, is known to influence running performance in junior Australian football. Given observed differences in age in all three age groups and in height and body mass in the U9/10 (refer to Table 1), a secondary analysis to remove this potentially confounding influence was performed on a subset of data that only included the 7 and 8 year olds that participated in the study. These groups were comparable in age and size (see Table 3 below). Similar results were found to those described previously with moderate to very large significant differences between conditions observed (see Table 4 and Figure 6).

### Table 3: Descriptive characteristics of participants (U9 Subset)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Age (years)</th>
<th>Height (cm)</th>
<th>Weight (kg)</th>
<th>BMI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>C (n=24)</strong></td>
<td>7.5 ± 0.5 (7.0 – 8.0)</td>
<td>133.5 ± 5.2 (124.0 – 144.0)</td>
<td>29.3 ± 6.3 (21.0 – 42.2)</td>
<td>16.3 ± 2.7 (12.3 – 23.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NC (n=24)</strong></td>
<td>7.7 ± 0.5 (7.0 – 8.0)</td>
<td>135.3 ± 6.6 (123.0 – 150.0)</td>
<td>30.0 ± 5.4 (23.1 – 42.3)</td>
<td>16.3 ± 2.0 (13.5 – 21.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*denotes statistical significance (p<0.05); BMI: body mass index; SD: standard deviation

### Table 4: GPS running variables (U9 Subset)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>D/Min</th>
<th>HIR D/Min</th>
<th>HIR E/Min</th>
<th>Max Speed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>C (n=24)</strong></td>
<td>2181 ± 368.1 (1707.0 – 3030.0)</td>
<td>54.5 ± 9.2 (42.7 – 75.8)</td>
<td>3.8 ± 2.4 (0.1 – 8.8)</td>
<td>0.7 ± 0.4 (0.0 – 1.3)</td>
<td>18.7 ± 2.1 (14.6 – 24.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NC (n=24)</strong></td>
<td>*3895 ± 941.9 (2364.0 – 6311.0)</td>
<td>*72.8 ± 18.4 (42.9 – 105.2)</td>
<td>*6.5 ± 4.7 (0.5 – 15.6)</td>
<td>*1.3 ± 0.8 (0.2 – 2.9)</td>
<td>19.1 ± 1.7 (16.2 – 22.6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Difference (%)**  

- 79% Very Large  
- 34% Large  
- 71% Moderate  
- 86% Moderate  
- 2% Small

*denotes statistical significance (p<0.05); D/Min: distance per minute; HIR D/Min: high-intensity running distance per minute; HIR E/Min: high-intensity running efforts per minute; SD: standard deviation

---

Figure 7: GPS running variables (Under 8/9 subset)

*denotes statistical significance (p<0.05); D/Min: distance per minute; HIR D/Min: high-intensity running distance per minute; HIR E/Min: high-intensity running efforts per minute; SD: standard deviation

GPS SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Rule modifications, particularly the size of the ground and the use of zones, limits the extent and intensity of physical activity in junior Australian football compared to standard playing conditions. The differences between AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant versus Non-Compliant are most evident in the younger age groups where the extent of rule modification is greatest. These differences are effectively removed in the older age groups (i.e., U11/12). This has important implications for league administrators and policy makers when considering the objectives and potential outcomes, some of which may be adverse, when introducing modified rules.

While not specifically analysed in this report, differences in the variability in the data (as depicted by the standard deviation) between conditions may also provide some useful insights. Less variability in the Compliant leagues may suggest a more equitable opportunity to be physically active within the game, albeit at a reduced level. In contrast, greater variability in the Non-Compliant leagues may suggest more
varied opportunities, with some players very active and others less so. Whether this is a result of individual player characteristics or differences in playing position and game opportunities warrant further investigation.

**Recommendations from GPS Analysis**

- Rule modifications have been shown to reduce amount of physical activity children experience in junior football. If increasing physical activity is a priority of the AFL, rule modification needs to be taken into consideration.

- Recommendation: League administrators and policy makers should carefully consider the objectives of rule modifications and weigh up both positive and negative outcomes. The trade-off between skill development and distances run is important to consider.
2.2.2 SKILL FREQUENCIES AND EXECUTION

This section of the report provides comparisons of skill frequencies observed using notational analysis of video from games for each age group. Comparison is made using descriptive data and inferential statistics (independent t-tests).

The skill frequencies reported are related to number of kicks, handballs, bounces, tackles, stoppages and pressure on the player with the ball per minute. Data are presented graphically and interpreted for each age group, with more detailed numerical data provided in the appendices (See Appendix 7: Notational Analysis Compliant/Non-Compliant Comparison, p. x). Additional data relating to skill frequencies of effective kicks, effective handballs, effective bounces and marks is also provided as Appendix 7. Figure 8 below presents the notational analysis results of players competing in the Under 8/9 age groups.

Figure 8: Notational analysis of players in the Under 8/9 age groups
As can be seen from Figure 8 above, for the under 8/9 age group:

- Non-Compliant leagues had significantly more kicks (C=4.03 ± 0.98; NC=4.67 ± 0.67), bounces (C=0.20 ± 0.15; NC=0.46 ± 0.26), tackles (C=0.01 ± 0.05; NC=0.65 ± 0.63), stoppages (C=0.56 ± 0.23; NC=0.90 ± 0.23), and pressure on the player with the ball (C=0.63 ± 0.71; NC=1.61 ± 0.59) per minute than Compliant leagues

- There was no significant difference in the number of handballs per minute (C=0.90 ± 0.44; NC=0.88 ± 0.49)

- There were no significant differences in the number of mark attempts (C=1.48 ± 0.54; NC=1.63 ± 0.46), effective kicks (C=1.71 ± 0.56; NC=1.82 ± 0.29), or effective handballs (C=0.54 ± 0.27; NC=0.46 ± 0.38) per minute (see Appendix 7)

- Results indicate that rule modifications at the under 8/9 age group level was associated with lower skill frequencies overall. The impact on skill frequency for each individual player was not determined, and given that there are fewer players in each team for the Compliant leagues, a lower overall frequency may not be reflected in lower frequencies for each individual player. Future research exploring the influence on individual players is needed to determine how the rule modifications influences skill development of individual players

- There were no significant differences in skill effectiveness, so the rule modifications did not appear to reduce skill effectiveness

- The significant difference in tackling is due to the no tackling rule at this age group in the Compliant leagues

- Similarly, differences in the number of bounces is likely due to the use of zones and restrictions on the number of bounces a player can make in the Compliant leagues

- There was reduced pressure on the player with the ball, which may allow for more skill development by providing more space and time to learn, develop and improve disposal skills. Future research on the longer term effects on skill development is needed
Figure 9 below presents the notational analysis results of players competing in the Under 9/10 age groups.

As can be seen from Figure 9 below presents the notational analysis results of players competing in the Under 9/10 age groups.

Figure 9 above, for the under 9/10 age group:
• Non-Compliant leagues had significantly more handballs (C=0.74 ± 0.45; NC=1.23 ± 0.21) and pressure on the player with the ball (C=1.19 ± 0.50; NC=1.71 ± 0.47) per minute than Compliant leagues.

• Compliant leagues had significantly more tackles (C=1.09 ± 0.49; NC=0.28 ± 0.39) and stoppages (C=1.29 ± 0.31; NC=0.99 ± 0.28) per minute than Non-Compliant leagues.

• There were no significant differences in the number of kicks (C=4.26 ± 1.16; NC=4.71 ± 0.56) or bounces (C=0.23 ± 0.15; NC=0.42 ± 0.29) per minute.

• There were no significant differences in the number of mark attempts (C=1.91 ± 0.79; NC=1.75 ± 0.40) or effective kicks (C=1.91 ± 0.76; NC=1.96 ± 0.35) per minute (see Appendix 7).

• As for the under 8/9 age group, there was reduced pressure on the player with the ball in the Compliant leagues, indicating rule modifications allowed more space and time for disposal skills.

• The higher number of tackles for the Compliant league is due to the way tackles were defined in each condition. The Compliant leagues implemented “hold and release” tackles, whereas one of the Non-Compliant leagues permitted regular tackling as seen in the senior form of AF (full physical contact where the player can be dragged to the ground). Thus, the higher frequency of tackles in the Compliant leagues does not necessarily reflect a rougher, more congested matchplay environment. It may be that there are more tackles, but they could be of lower impact. Future research looking at frequencies of specific types of tackles is warranted.

• The higher number of stoppages in the Compliant leagues than the Non-Compliant leagues may be related to the increased number of tackles, as tackles can result in free-kicks and ball-ups.
Figure 10 below presents the notational analysis results of players competing in the Under 11/12 age groups.

![Figure 10: Notational analysis of players in the Under 11/12 age groups](image)

As can be seen from Figure 10 below presents the notational analysis results of players competing in the Under 11/12 age groups.

Figure 10 above, for the under 11/12 age group:
• Non-Compliant leagues had significantly more handballs (C=1.51 ± 0.51; NC=1.93 ± 0.54) and pressure on the player with the ball (C=2.10 ± 0.56; NC=2.65 ± 0.66) per minute than Compliant leagues
• Compliant leagues had significantly more bounces (C=0.31 ± 0.19; NC=0.12 ± 0.12) per minute than Non-Compliant leagues
• There were no significant differences in the number of kicks (C=4.73 ± 0.62; NC=4.99 ± 0.47), tackles (C=1.26 ± 0.30; NC=1.48 ± 0.45), or stoppages (C=1.07 ± 0.25; NC=1.25 ± 0.27) per minute
• There were no significant differences in the number of mark attempts (C=1.86 ± 0.51; NC=2.17 ± 0.46) or effective kicks (C=1.91 ± 0.36; NC=1.94 ± 0.34) per minute (see Appendix 7)
• Results indicate that rule modifications at the under 11/12 age group level were associated with some lower skill frequencies overall (handballs), but no significant differences for most skills
• An unusual finding was the Compliant leagues having more bounces per minute than the Non-Compliant leagues. This is in contrast to the under 8/9 age group where the Non-Compliant leagues had more bounces than the Compliant leagues. The observed difference for the under 11/12 age group is difficult to explain, but may be due to an increased ground size and the removal of zones for Compliant leagues in this age group (relative to younger Compliant leagues)
• Again, as for the under 8/9, and under 9/10 age groups, there was reduced pressure on the player with the ball in the Compliant leagues, indicating that rule modifications allowed more space and time for disposal skills

NOTATIONAL ANALYSIS SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

• A consistent finding across the age groups was less direct pressure on the player with the ball in the Compliant leagues than the Non-Compliant leagues. This is in line with a goal of the AFL Junior Policy of providing players with conditions that allow them to learn, develop, and improve disposal skills by allowing them to concentrate on the ball, rather than opponents. It may also help to reduce injuries and increase confidence to gain possession of the ball. Further investigation of how this reduced pressure with modified rules influences injuries, player confidence, and skill development would provide understanding of rule modifications in junior AF.
• There were no differences in effective disposal frequencies between Compliant and Non-Compliant leagues, suggesting that rule modifications did not reduce or enhance effectiveness of skill performance during games.
• Across the age groups there were lower skill frequencies per minute in the Compliant than Non-Compliant leagues for some skills (e.g., more kicks, bounces, and tackles at under 8/9; more handballs at under 9/10; and more handballs and bounces at under 11/12). This could be related to the number of players and the amount of pressure on players.
• Having fewer players in the AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant leagues might lead to more open play, even when on a smaller ground. This may reduce the number of times the ball is kicked or handpassed,
but allow for more time on the ball and potentially more effective skill development. Individual player skill frequencies were not recorded so it is unknown if the rule modifications enabled individual players to have more frequent and longer contact with the ball. It is also unclear whether the modified rules distributed contact with the ball more evenly among individual players, so that all players were more involved than just a few players getting most of the contact with the ball. Further investigation of the impact on individual player skill frequencies would provide a clearer picture of how rule modification might influence opportunities for skill development.

- Reduced pressure on players allows more time on the ball, which could mean that players in the Compliant leagues were not as rushed to dispose of the ball as players in the Non-Compliant leagues, which would also result in a lower frequency of disposals.

**Recommendations from Notational Analysis**

- **Recommendation:** Rule modifications reduced pressure on the player in possession of the ball, which may help players learn, develop, and improve disposal skills; reduce injuries; and increase confidence to gain possession of the ball.

- **Recommendation:** Rule modification sometimes resulted in reduced overall skill frequencies. Further research is needed on individual skill frequencies to determine how rule modifications influenced the distribution, frequency and length of individual player contact with the ball.
2.2.3 MODIFIED RULES OF GROUND SIZE, PLAYER NUMBERS AND ZONES

The current AFL Junior Match Policy for the modified rules of ground size, player numbers and zones are presented in Figure 11 below.

Figure 11: The current AFL Junior Match Policy statement on the modified rules of ground size, player numbers and zones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>5-8 years</th>
<th>9-10 years</th>
<th>11-12 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Playing ground</strong></td>
<td>6-a-side matches: 60m x 40m.</td>
<td>9-a-side matches: 75m x 50m.</td>
<td>About 110m x 80m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9-a-side matches: 75m x 50m.</td>
<td>The field is divided into 3 equal zones.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The team</strong></td>
<td>6-a-side: 2 forwards, 2 centres, 2 backs, 2 reserves.</td>
<td>9-a-side matches: 90m x 60m.</td>
<td>16 players a side with 3 lines of 5 players. 5 reserves but no ruck or rOVERS. Interchanges may take place at any time but all players must play at least half of the match. Interchange may take place at any time, but all players must play 3 quarters of the match.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9-a-side: 3 forwards, 3 centres, 3 backs, 3 reserves.</td>
<td>12-a-side matches: 105m x 80m.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zones/positions</strong></td>
<td>Interchanges can be made at any time but all players must play at least 3 quarters of the match.</td>
<td>Interchanges may take place at any time but all players must play at least half of the match. Interchange may take place at any time, but all players must play 3 quarters of the match.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Backs are restricted to the back zone. Centres are restricted to the centre zone. Forwards are restricted to the forward zone. Rotate players to provide opportunities in several positions.</td>
<td>Players will be instructed by the umpire to stay in their correct positions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Australian Football Junior Match Policy, 2009)

- As noted from the AFL Junior Match Policy summary statement (as above), the playing grounds, player numbers/positions and zones are comprehensively explained. However, evidence from field observations suggests that the implementation of these rules at the coal face is not an exact science. Indeed, the complexity of the rules adds to confusion.
- These three rules have been grouped together as evidence gathered from field observations suggests that they must not be used in isolation. That is, the use of reduced ground size must be tied to reduced player numbers and use of zones. Each of the rules are important to keep, but as will be seen from the table below, some modification to the rules is required, and their implementation is suggested.
Table 5: Analysis of the modified rules of ground size, player numbers and zones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ground Size</th>
<th>Player Numbers</th>
<th>Zones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keep (√) or Discard (✗)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Evidence/Comments
- Travel time increased when full size grounds used
- Greater difficulty in scheduling when all teams demand full size grounds
- Too many players on a smaller field (especially without zones) still resulted in players swarming around the ball
- Simplifies the rotation of players through positions for coaches
- Reduces time spent on player positions which can increase time for coaches to provide feedback to players

### Revise AFL Junior Match Policy Statement
- Yes
- Yes
- Yes

### Begin
- At or before Under 8/9
- At or before Under 8/9
- At or before Under 8/9

### End
- At under 10 (i.e., full size ground used from Under 11 and after)
- At under 10 (i.e., full size ground used from Under 11 and after)
- At under 10 (i.e., full size ground used from Under 11 and after)

### MANAGEMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF RULES

There was a lack of consistency (perhaps apart from QLD Metro) in:
- The size of grounds used and understanding of the particular size that should be used for a particular age group.
- How grounds were marked out
- Player numbers and ground size
- Use of zones and implementation of zone rules

In many cases several age groups played on the same sized ground as they played after each other and volunteers did not have the time or energy to revise the ground size and shape. Further, some grounds were marked out with permanent lines, others with cones on the field, or cones at the side of the field. This impacted safety and ability to implement zone rules and desired outcomes of the rules. It made it difficult for the players themselves to understand their positioning in relation to cones which may or may not have been visible to them.

It was also evident from the field observations that the use of zones allowed coaches to better manage the rotation of their players through positions. For example, in the two Compliant Leagues (QLD Metro and VIC Regional) rotating players through zones was managed with the use of armbands. Furthermore, as the same players generally moved through each zone together in a group, coaches spent less time in breaks of play on managing player positions and more time on providing feedback to players. On the other hand, in the Non-Compliant Leagues (VIC Metro 1 and VIC Metro 2) where no zones were used and there were 18 players on the ground, coaches spent a considerable amount of time moving players into different positions on their coaching boards, which on many occasions left them with little time to provide any feedback to players, especially to individual players.
The management of implementation of these rules for the future will be dependent on the education of:

- Administrators/ground keepers
- Coaches
- Umpires

**Recommendations**

- Use one modified field size only for Under 8/9 and 10
- Consider omitting exact ground sizing, match policy could suggest that leagues use the largest ground in league that is accessible, then mark out 2 grounds
- Use permanent line markings (on the ground) in preference to cones to distinguish zones
- Use armbands to manage zones and player positions
- Consider Modified Ground Size Hubs where 1 or 2 grounds within a league are always used (possibly where there are 2 grounds) and permanently structured for modified size use (so that all Under 8/9/10 teams play at the specifically designated modified ground hub).
- Note a hub environment may also assist with facilitating the management and encouragement of positive parent/spectator culture for AFL junior sport.
- Incentivise clubs to implement modified ground hubs by offering modified equipment (such as goal posts, marking equipment) and/or facility maintenance grants to assist clubs to support and facilitate modified football for youth.
2.2.4 MODIFIED RULES OF TACKLING

The current AFL Junior Match Policy for the modified rules of tackling are presented in Figure 12 below.

Figure 12: Current AFL Junior Match Policy summary statement on the modified rules of tackling

(Source: Australian Football Junior Match Policy, 2009)

- As noted from the AFL Junior Match Policy summary statement (as above), the introduction of tackling to junior AF players is progressed from no tackling, to a ‘hold and release’ of the jumper, to a wrap-around tackle (not taken to ground). Although these progressions are designed for the skill acquisition of players in their initial game experiences (as well as reducing the occurrence of injury), there is a level of complexity with the implementation of these progressions.

- The progression of tackling modifications is currently a four step process as described above; therefore, players can potentially play up to four years of junior football within the AFL Junior Match Policy before full tackling is introduced.

- The ‘hold and release’ tackle has its place in the initial game experiences of players; however, the evidence gathered from field observations suggests that this modified rule needs to be used within one age group only (dependent on the age groups of individual league).

Table 6: Analysis of the modified rules of tackling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hold and Release</th>
<th>Wrap Around Tackle</th>
<th>No Bumping/Barging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keep (✔) or Discard (✘)</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Allows players in their first year of football to concentrate on skill acquisition.
- Is complex in its implementation and interpretation for umpires.
- Provides players with an introduction to physical contact without the fear of injury.
- Top age players ready for physical contact.
- Physically bigger players can dominate when allowed to bump.

Revise AFL Junior Match Policy Statement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Begin</th>
<th>End</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 8 or Under 9 (if no Under 8)</td>
<td>Under 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Under 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MANAGEMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF RULES

It was apparent from the field observations (and analysis of related rules and regulations documents) that leagues were interpreting the modified tackling rules differently to the statements provided in the AFL Junior Match Policy:

- VIC Regional had introduced “tagging” within their Under 9 competition
  - “A player who is in possession of the ball can be tagged by an opponent (umpire to advise he must dispose of the ball) and once tagged the player must dispose of the ball within 3 steps or 3 seconds or a free kick will be awarded”

- VIC Regional also had their own interpretation of the ‘hold and release’ tackling modification within their Under 10 competition (in which the AFL Junior Match Policy states holding of the jumper only)
  - “A limited form of tackling is allowed. A player who is in possession of the ball may be retarded by holding the body or by their jumper”

- VIC Metro 1 (Non-Compliant league) had no tackling in their Under 9 competition, yet a “restrained side bump” was allowed, despite the AFL Junior Match Policy clearly emphasising no deliberate bumping of players aged 5 to 8 years

These interpretations by leagues add another level of complexity to the already comprehensive nature of modified tackling in the AFL Junior Match Policy. Furthermore, the “tagging” modification to tackling seen within the Under 9 competition in the VIC Regional league was too far detached from the skill of tackling, in addition to being difficult for the umpire to interpret, especially when their view was impeded. And VIC Metro 1 have simply replaced one form of physical contact with another, which can have implications for the confidence and skill development of players, especially in their initial game experiences.

It was also evident from the field observations that the “top age” Under 9 players (i.e., those who were 9 years of age and had been playing for 2+ years) were ready for the physical contact that comes with the wrap-around tackle despite no tackling being allowed in all but one league at this level. However, as there is generally a mix of players in a team (i.e., those who are in their first year versus those who are in their second or third year) beginning the competition with a wrap-around tackle in the Under 9 age group (where there is no Under 8 competition) could have implications for the initial game experiences of bottom age players. Furthermore, in some leagues, players are able to play up to 2 years above their age group with permission of the league (e.g., VIC Metro 1). Therefore, if players are of a younger age but are more skilled, physically bigger and/or mentally more mature, these players can play within an age group more appropriate to their needs and skill development.

The management of implementation of the modified tackling rules for the future will be dependent on the:

- Age group divisions of individual leagues
  - For example, the progression from no tackling to full tackling will be administered differently for a league with Under 8/9/10/11/12 age groups in comparison to a league with Under 9/10/12 age groups due to the ages of the players within these
- Education of all stakeholders on the value of no or modified tackling in the younger age groups

**Recommendations**

- The AFL might consider strongly discouraging junior football leagues from changing or swapping modified tackling rules beyond those stated in the guidelines/policy document
- Leagues may be encouraged to consider introducing an Under 8 competition or a split Under 9 competition to simplify the tackling progressions (refer to Figure 13 on the following page)
- The split Under 9 competition would consist of one “bottom age” competition for commencing players (i.e., 7 years of age with no game experience) and one “top age” competition for older and more experienced players (e.g., 8 or 9 years of age who had been playing for 1+ years)
- Where there is no Under 8 competition, both clubs and leagues need to accommodate as best they can the range of ages that participate in the Under 9 competition by dedicating specific competitions for these players
- It was evident from the field observations that the older and more experienced “top age” players (i.e., 9 years of age who had been playing for 2+ years) were ready for the physical contact that comes with tackling
- The ‘wrap-around tackle’ rule needs to be more clearly outlined in the AFL Junior Match Policy statement as it is not clear whether the player can be brought to ground in the tackle (this is not explicitly stated in the document)
- Encourage the introduction of the ‘hold and release’ tackle in the Under 9 competition in those leagues where an Under 8 competition exists
- Discourage the introduction of the ‘hold and release’ tackle in the Under 9 competition where there is NO Under 8 competition
- Currently, tackling modifications is a four step process – the AFL could consider further simplifying the tackling modifications by removing the ‘hold and release’ tackle from the AFL Junior Match Policy and introducing the ‘wrap-around’ tackle at the Under 9 competition
- This however, would be dependent upon the existence of either an Under 8 or split Under 9 competition – it is not recommended to introduce the wrap-around tackle for players in their initial game experiences where neither of these competitions are implemented
- Full tackling as per the Laws of Australian Football should be introduced at the Under 11 age group or Under 12 age group where there is no Under 11 competition
Figure 13: Implementation of modified tackling rules based on the age group divisions of the Junior Football League

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does the JFL have an Under 8 competition?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No tackling in Under 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U9 - 'hold and release'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U10 - 'wrap-around'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Option 1 – retention of 'hold and release' tackle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does the JFL have an Under 8 competition?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No tackling in Under 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U9 - 'wrap-around'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U10 - 'wrap-around'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Option 2 – removal of 'hold and release tackle'
2.2.5 MODIFIED RULES OF “THE GAME” – NO MATCH RESULTS, PREMIERSHIP POINTS/LADDERS, FINALS OR NAMES PUBLISHED

The current AFL Junior Match Policy for the modified rules of no match results, premiership points/ladders, finals and names published are presented in Figure 14 below.

Figure 14: Current AFL Junior Match Policy summary statement on the modified rules of “the game”

(Source: Australian Football Junior Match Policy, 2009)

- As noted from the AFL Junior Match Policy summary statement (as above), the introduction of match results, premiership points/ladders, finals and names published (as well as representative teams) should occur when players are at minimum 12 years of age
- No match results (scores) at the ground was one of the few modified rules which was implemented by all leagues in the current study (whether considered compliant or non-compliant) in the Under 9 age group, with evidence from field observations suggesting that this rule in particular (as well as no premiership points/ladders) helped in the creation of a positive culture within leagues

Table 7: Analysis of the modified rules of “the game”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No Match Results (Scores)</th>
<th>No Premiership Points/Ladders</th>
<th>No Finals</th>
<th>No Names Published</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keep (√) or Discard (✗)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence/ Comments</td>
<td>- Overall, positive culture observed in Under 9 competitions where there were no visible scoreboards</td>
<td>- Allows coach to focus on participation, teamwork and skill acquisition without the pressure of winning and finals</td>
<td>- Allows coach to focus on participation, teamwork and skill acquisition without the pressure of winning and finals</td>
<td>- Players generally received tangible rewards post-game so no benefit to players themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revise AFL Junior Match Policy Statement</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin</td>
<td>Under 8 and/or Under 9</td>
<td>Under 8 and/or Under 9</td>
<td>Under 8 and/or Under 9</td>
<td>Under 8 and/or Under 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End</td>
<td>Under 10</td>
<td>Under 10</td>
<td>Under 10</td>
<td>Under 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MANAGEMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF RULES

There was a lack of consistency in the implementation of “the game” related modified rules:

- For the Under 8/9 competitions, despite all leagues implementing no match results (scores), the clubs involved in the VIC Metro 1 and VIC Metro 2 leagues (both considered non-compliant in the current study) published competition-based information (including references to winning or losing games) on their web sites
  - The club from VIC Metro 1 published award winners’ names for the Under 9 competition
  - The club from VIC Metro 2 published “best players” and award winners’ names for the Under 9 competition
- For the Under 10 competitions, VIC Metro 2 was the only league in the current study that did not implement the modified rule of no match results (scores)
  - The club from VIC Metro 1 published award winners’ names for the Under 10 competition
  - The club from VIC Metro 2 published “best players” and award winners’ names for the Under 10 competition
- For the Under 11 competitions, QLD Metro was the only league in the current study that did implement the four modified rules associated with “the game”
- None of the leagues in the current study chose to use the four modified rules associated with “the game” in their Under 12 competitions

From the field observations it was evident that even in the Under 9 competition where no match results (scores) was implemented by any leagues, most players, parents, coaches and other officials knew the score (some to the very goal or behind). However, it most part, for coaches it took away the pressure of having to win and make finals, which in turn had an effect on the parents and spectators around them. Although the players knew the score, this did not appear to detract from the experience of playing the game. The coach appeared to have the most influence on the implementation of this modified rule, especially in their feedback to players if focused on skills and teamwork rather than the score (and through focusing the players’ attention on these attributes).

The AFL Junior Match Policy states that 11 year old players should be playing under the modified rules of no match results (scores), premiership points/ladders, finals and no names published. QLD Metro was the only league in which an Under 11 competition was observed (although QLD Metro did not include the Under 12 competition in their AFL Junior Match Policy program). Evidence from the field observations suggested that, in comparison to Under 12 competitions elsewhere, these games were less intense in nature and overall, there was less emphasis on the outcome of the game (as there was no visible scoreboard). However, this may have been more of an indicator of QLD Metro’s overall environment and players coming through and therefore being accustomed to the modified rules.
Where there is no Under 11 competition, players in the Under 12 competition should be playing with full match results (scores), premiership points/ladders and finals. However, it is questionable whether there is any real value in publishing the names of players, especially when players were generally given awards at the conclusion of games for their on-field performances. The publishing of player names, whether on websites or in the newspaper or league newsletter, is probably more for the benefit of parents rather than the players themselves who receive a tangible reward at the conclusion of the game.

The management of implementation of the rules of “the game” will be dependent on the:

- Education of all stakeholders, especially parents and spectators, on the benefits of participation rather than competition in initial game experiences
- Quality of a national social marketing campaign initiated by the AFL. This also includes the development of associated (official) merchandise, equipment, and other memorabilia that is consistent with and encourages/supports “the game” modifications. Specific attention needs to be given to incentives for each of the stakeholders who are important in enculturation of “the game” modifications (parents, coaches, administrators)

**Recommendations**

- **Match results (scores), premiership points/ladders and finals should be introduced in the Under 11 and/or Under 12 competition**
- **Further evidence is required at the Under 10 level to determine if there is a need to introduce match results (scores) and other associated rules as players can potentially play the game for three to four years without scoring**
- **The AFL could consider removing the publishing of player names from the AFL Junior Match Policy as its value is questionable**
2.2.6 MODIFIED RULES RELATED TO SKILL ACQUISITION – MARKING, BOUNCING RESTRICTIONS AND KICKING OFF THE GROUND

The current AFL Junior Match Policy for the modified rules of marking are presented in Figure 15 below.

Figure 15: Current AFL Junior Match Policy summary statement on the modified rules of marking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marking</th>
<th>5-8 years</th>
<th>9-10 years</th>
<th>11-12 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A mark is awarded, irrespective of the distance the ball has travelled, to any player who catches the ball, or makes a reasonable attempt to catch the ball from a kick. Get the mark after the ball is caught/when the mark is awarded. No playing on allowed.</td>
<td>A mark is awarded irrespective of the distance the ball has travelled to any player who catches the ball directly from the kick of another player.</td>
<td>A mark is awarded when a player catches the ball directly from another player’s kick that has travelled at least 10 metres.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Australian Football Junior Match Policy, 2009)

- As noted from the AFL Junior Match Policy summary statement (as above), the skill development of marking is progressed from an “attempted mark” irrespective of how far the ball has travelled to a mark when the ball has travelled at least 10 metres; this is to allow players who may not have fully developed the skill of marking and/or kicking the ball a longer distance the opportunity to be involved in the game.
- The “attempted mark” rule as it is stated above is open to interpretation by players, coaches and umpires; furthermore, the statement ‘endeavour should be encouraged (e.g., getting hands to the ball can be paid a mark)’ within the AFL Junior Match Policy document does not provide any further clarification as to this, including what positions the hands should be and where to draw the line in terms of what is or what isn’t an “attempted mark”.

Table 8: Analysis of the modified rules of marking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keep (✓) or Discard (✗)</th>
<th>Attempted Mark (No Minimal Distance)</th>
<th>Mark (No Minimal Distance)</th>
<th>Mark (&gt;10 metres)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Too open to interpretation by the umpire with current statement
- Some players observed simply putting hands up in the air to “mark” the ball
- Allows greater opportunity for skill development of marking (and kicking if marked)
- Greater concentration on the accuracy of the skill rather than the strength/distance of the kick
- Progresses the players’ skill development to have a greater focus on hitting targets and marking from a distance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revise AFL Junior Match Policy Statement</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Begin</td>
<td>Under 8 and/or Under 9</td>
<td>Under 10</td>
<td>Under 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End</td>
<td>Under 9</td>
<td>Under 10</td>
<td>Under 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The current AFL Junior Match Policy for the modified rules of bouncing restrictions and kicking off the ground are presented in Figure 16 below.

Figure 16: Current AFL Junior Match Policy summary statement on the modified rules of bouncing restrictions and kicking off the ground

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>5-8 years</th>
<th>9-10 years</th>
<th>11-12 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bouncing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bouncing is optional but no more than one bounce is permitted. The player must then dispose of it by hand or foot and may not touch the ball again until it has been touched by another player.</td>
<td>Only one bounce is permitted.</td>
<td>Only 2 bounces are permitted.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kicking off the ground</strong></td>
<td>Not permitted unless accidental.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Australian Football Junior Match Policy, 2009)

- As noted from the AFL Junior Match Policy summary statement (as above), bouncing is restricted for all participants playing under modified rules in the AFL Junior Match Policy.
- As also noted from the AFL Junior Match Policy summary statement (as above), deliberate kicking off the ground is not allowed for any participant playing under the modified rules in the AFL Junior Match Policy; this rule has been designed to ensure both the skill development and safety of players.

Table 9: Analysis of the modified rules of bouncing restrictions and kicking off the ground

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keep (√) or Discard (✗)</th>
<th>Bouncing Restriction (One Bounce)</th>
<th>Bouncing Restriction (Two Bounce)</th>
<th>Kicking Off the Ground</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence/Comments</td>
<td>Zones (and the smaller ground size) already restrict the ability of players to take multiple bounces and/or run from one side of the field to another</td>
<td>Increased teamwork and decreased dominance of more skilled players</td>
<td>Players are focused on the ball and skill development and not on the possibility of injury. May be beneficial however in wet weather conditions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revise AFL Junior Match Policy Statement</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin</td>
<td>N/A – refer to ‘Two Bounce’</td>
<td>Under 8 and/or Under 9</td>
<td>Under 8 and/or Under 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End</td>
<td>N/A – refer to ‘Two Bounce’</td>
<td>Under 12</td>
<td>Under 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MANAGEMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF RULES**

The management of the implementation of the “attempted mark” modified rule lacked consistency predominantly in the umpire interpretation of the rule. The various interpretations of an “attempted mark” by umpires was observed in field research.
Although the “attempted mark” modified rule allows players who may not be strong enough to mark the ball more opportunity for skill development (through being paid the mark and then being able to kick the ball), it was evident from the field observations that some players were simply putting their hands up in the air as the ball approached. This can have implications for the skill development of junior players as they are not learning how to mark the ball correctly. There were no indications from the field observations however, that coaches were instructing players to use the rule to their advantage; rather it appeared that players had figured this out for themselves. The AFL could consider using terminology such as “shows control” when marking the ball, rather than the current statement of “getting hands to the ball”.

VIC Metro 2 were the only league that did not implement the one bounce rule in their Under 9 competition, although they did restrict bounces to two before disposal of the ball for this competition. Bouncing was rarely seen in the field observations in the Compliant-Leagues where smaller ground sizes and zones were used as the players did not have the space to run and bounce the ball. On the other hand, bouncing was more notable in the Non-Compliant Leagues which used larger ground sizes and no zones. From the field observations it was evident that reducing the number of bounces increased the teamwork of players and reduced the dominance of more skill players on the ground. However, as the zones and smaller ground size already minimise the dominance of players and do not allow a player to run from one side of the field to another, this rule could be simplified by the implementation of two bounces across all ages of the AFL Junior Match Policy.

The no deliberate kicking off the ground rule was implemented in all junior leagues in the current study in the Under 8 and/or 9 competitions and was generally strictly enforced by the umpires. The implementation of this rule in the Under 12 competition, however, was not implemented in the two Non-Compliant leagues in Victoria.

The no deliberate kicking off the ground rule is an important modified rule for both the skill development and safety of players, especially in their initial game experiences (i.e., Under 8 and/or Under 9 competitions). It was evident from the field observations however, that it may be beneficial for increased flexibility of this rule in wet weather conditions in the Under 12 competition, especially in Victoria where a number of games were observed in the rain (or where the ground was wet and/or muddy from a substantial amount of rain before the game). By having the ability to kick the ball of the ground in such conditions, the play may open up more and reduce the number of stoppages. This should however only be permitted in the middle of the ground, rather than kicking for goal as its sole purpose should be to advance play. Players’ safety should still be considered paramount and therefore, if the weather conditions are fine and dry, then the no deliberate kicking off the ground rule should be enforced.

The management of the implementation of the modified marking, bouncing and kicking off the ground rules for the future will be dependent on the:
The appropriate training of coaches regarding the rules, their implementation, and relevant feedback

The implementation of the coach on the ground rule in providing immediate feedback to players on how to correctly mark the ball

The appropriate training of umpires to assist in providing relevant and timely feedback to players regarding the modified rules

A social marketing campaign to assist in the education of parents about the rules.

**Recommendations**

- Clarification of the “attempted mark” rule is required as it is too open for interpretation by players, coaches and umpires in its current form

- The deliberate kicking off the ground rule may need increased flexibility for wet weather conditions for players in the Under 12 competition

- The AFL could consider removing the one bounce restriction for players aged 5-10 years and implementing the two bounce restriction across all age groups of the AFL Junior Match Policy
2.2.7 MODIFIED RULE OF THE COACH ON THE GROUND

The current AFL Junior Match Policy for the modified rule of the coach on the ground presented in Figure 17 below.

Figure 17: Current AFL Junior Match Policy summary statement on the modified rule of the coach on the ground

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coaches</th>
<th>5-8 years</th>
<th>9-10 years</th>
<th>11-12 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The coach is allowed on the ground during play for the sole purpose of providing immediate</td>
<td>The coach is allowed on the ground during play for the sole purpose of providing immediate</td>
<td>The coach is not allowed on the ground during play</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Australian Football Junior Match Policy, 2009)

- As noted from the AFL Junior Match Policy summary statement (as above), the coach is allowed on the ground for the younger age groups, with a runner replacing the coach for players aged 11 to 12 years.
- This modified rule was implemented in all but one of the leagues in the current study within the Under 8/9 competitions, with VIC Metro 1 not allowing the coach on the ground; the implementation of this rule at Under 10 level was more varied.

Table 10: Analysis of the modified rule of the coach on the ground

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coach on the ground</th>
<th>Evidence/Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keep (√) or Discard (☒)</td>
<td>Field observations showed that in the right environment (smaller ground size and coaches working in tandem) the coach on the ground can be beneficial to players. Coaches however, need more guidance for greater impact on players’ skill development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revise AFL Junior Match Policy Statement</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin</td>
<td>Under 8 and/or Under 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End</td>
<td>Under 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MANAGEMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF RULES

Although the AFL Junior Match Policy states that the coach is allowed on the ground for players aged up to 10 years, this modified rule was only implemented in the Compliant-leagues in this study – QLD Metro and VIC Regional. VIC Metro 2 and VIC Metro 3 did not allow the coach on the ground for their Under 10 competitions.

Provision of immediate feedback was viewed by the coaches interviewed in this study as the key advantage of being allowed on the ground. As was stated in Section 3.2.1.4, ground size was a factor in the
implementation of this modified rule. In the Non-Compliant League where the coach on the ground was implemented (VIC Metro 2), a full-sized ground was used; therefore, the coach had much more distance to cover in providing feedback to players. Yet, it was evident from the field observations that no matter the size of the ground, immediate feedback was not occurring on a regular basis, with coaches generally positioning themselves in the centre of the ground and rarely keeping up with the play; therefore, the level of feedback to players, particularly immediate, was minimal. Furthermore, although coaches provided encouraging feedback (which is fantastic for the confidence of players), the remainder of the feedback given to players was general in nature and mainly focused on the direction players should move to or who to kick/handball to rather than providing specific feedback related to players’ skill development (e.g., position of the hands in marking the ball).

Ultimately it is up to the discretion of the coach as to how much feedback they provide to the players on the ground. It was however evident from the field observations that the modified rule of coach on the ground worked best on a smaller ground and when coaches worked in tandem, as was observed in the VIC Regional league. The management of implementation of the modified tackling rules for the future will be dependent on the:

- Greater guidance and education of coaches
- The size of the grounds used in Under 9 and Under 10 competitions
- Education of umpires on the role they play versus the role of the coach on the ground
- The willingness of coaches to execute the rule to the benefit of players in their coaching practice

Please refer to Section 3.2.1.4 for further information on the coach on the ground rule.

**Recommendations**

- **The AFL could consider further researching the coach on the ground rule in relation to its effectiveness on the skill development of players**

- **Coaches need to be educated on where to position themselves on the field, what type(s) of feedback to provide, the frequency of feedback and how this type of feedback can be different to what they deliver at quarter, half and three-quarter time.**

- **The coach on the ground modified rule and ground size should be not be considered in isolation to the other modified rules**

- **Coaches should be encouraged to work together, alongside the umpire, to ensure that players are receiving the best feedback possible**
2.2.8 COMPLEXITY OF RULE CHANGES – SUMMARY

The changes to the rules as outlined in this section are not as simple as choosing one rule to change as each of the rules has an impact on each other rule. Figure 18 below provides an illustration of the way in which each of the rules is interrelated.

Figure 18: Map of rule interdependence
2.3 Regulations Analysis

Sections 2.1 and 2.2 included data that allowed a clear contrast between AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant and Non-Compliant leagues. In Sections 2.1 and 2.2, VIC Metro 3 data was not reported as it is a transitional league that is neither compliant nor non-compliant.

2.3.1 CASE STUDIES

While in the field, it was noted that each of the leagues that were examined offered interesting insights into the implementation of the AFL Junior Match Policy. Indeed, rather than being AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant or Non-Compliant, rather, each of the leagues examined sits on a continuum of compliance.

Figure 19: Continuum of AFL Junior Match Policy compliance below provides a diagram that represents each of the leagues in relation to their implementation of the AFL Junior Match Policy rules.

The data collection sites are explained in further detail below.
DATA COLLECTION SITE BACKGROUND

Each of the data collection sites was unique and each offered different characteristics that had an impact on the implementation of the AFL Junior Match Policy.

Although they were grouped to be NC, C and Transitional, it is necessary to explore some of the unique elements in this report as they offer both advantages and disadvantages for any changes that may result from this research. In other words, each of the sites respectively provided some positive lessons and insights for the implementation of the AFL Junior Match Policy as they occurred in no other setting and seemed to have influenced outcomes.

QLD METRO

The QLD Metro research site was most interesting because at this site:

- The AFL Junior Match Policy was implemented 100%;
  - All clubs in the league studied consistently implemented all of the AFL Junior Match Policy rules across every age group
- The club administrator was intricately involved in the planning for, implementation of, and facilitation of AFL Junior Match Policy;
  - The club administrator was paid, although he reported working many hours beyond his paid position
  - The club administrator had a hand in all elements of the production of junior football at this club including umpire development,
- Transient population
  - This particular league was interesting in that there were a number of participants who had moved to the area and experienced the AFL Match Policy rules for the first time after having never played modified rules AFL before. This created some confusion for the children and parents.
- Football culture -- Rugby (NRL) and AFL
  - This particular league was unique in that a large proportion of parents reported that their children participated in both NRL and AFL football. Parents reported that their children played rugby league frequently in the school setting, and also many were part of a community club/league. This had some interesting impacts on tackling and drop out.
    - Experienced NRL players
      - Experienced NRL players were ready to tackle in AFL, but were not allowed under the modified rules. Parents reported that in this case, their children were somewhat bored with AFL and led to drop out.
• For those experienced NRL players who continued to play until tackling was allowed, it was reported that many were played in ways that ensured their superior tackling skills were used to the detriment of their kicking skills.
  - Experienced AFL players
    • For players who had experienced only AFL, their lack of exposure to tackling was detrimental in their development. When experienced AFL players reached the age groups where tackling was allowed, they often found it too confronting and dropped out of the sport. The first time that they experienced being tackled was with reasonably mature opponents where the physical nature of the tackle was overwhelming.
  - Structured Umpire Development Program
    • The club within QLD Metro had its own umpire development program as did the larger QLD Umpire Association.
  - Identification of individuals involved in team operations

This was in contrast to the Under 11 competition within QLD Metro where no scoreboard was visible and the coaches, parents and spectators generally appeared more relaxed and less focused on the game outcome in comparison to the other older leagues in the study. For the Under 12 competition, the AFL Junior Match Policy does allow some scope in regards to scoring and premiership points; however, this must be endorsed by the relevant state football body and no representative teams are to be selected.

VIC REGIONAL

The VIC Regional league was included in this research for a range of reasons:
• The AFL Junior Match Policy was implemented almost 100%;
• This league provided a good comparison as it was a regional league and as such represented a different context/culture and administrative structure.
• This AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant league offered an excellent comparison to QLD Metro as it was managed entirely by volunteer administrators.
• Umpires were parents in all age groups except U12 (where umpires were from an association at that level)
• Distance between grounds in some instances was significant – travel could be up to an hour. Although VIC Metro 2 parents reported some travel times to games that were similar to those experienced in VIC Regional, the actual distances travelled (city driving) were far less.
VIC METRO 3

This particular research site has provided a most interesting case for this research. It has been included in the analysis throughout this report as non-compliant. However, the data from the VIC Metro 3 has not been included in the GPS analysis. There are a range of reasons for this:

- VIC Metro 3 expressed an interest in being involved in this research project as a site because according to them, they were fully compliant with the AFL Junior Match Policy.
- Ironically, it was found VIC Metro 3 were not fully compliant with the AFL Junior Match Policy—rather, they implemented some of the rules, and not others. Essentially, they had developed their own portfolio of AFL Junior Match Policy rules to implement throughout the league.
- Therefore, VIC Metro 3 provided an excellent case study of AFL Junior Match Policy implementation as they believed that they implemented the AFL Junior Match Policy to a high degree, when in fact they didn’t. At VIC Metro 3, they played under a unique blend of a limited number of the AFL Junior Match Policy rules. More detail and background of research observations as they relate to the implementation of the AFL Junior Match Policy is provided below.

VIC METRO 2

VIC Metro 2 was of interest for this research because:

- The AFL Junior match Policy was not implemented at any age group across the league
- The culture of the games attended for this research was highly competitive and intense. This was reflected in coach, parent and player behaviour.
- This league featured some of the more difficult parents to get along with. For example, in one instance the researchers were asked not to talk with parents while the game was in play as it was too distracting for them.
- This league used large grounds for all age groups
- The distance between clubs and therefore travel required was often discussed by parents. The use of full adult sized grounds for all age groups did not facilitate fixturing and alleviating the travel times experienced.
- Ground quality was lower than other leagues due to weather conditions throughout the season.

VIC METRO 1

VIC Metro 1 was of interest for this research because:

- The AFL Junior Match Policy was not implemented at any age group across the league
- This league played on large grounds in general, which were designed for senior football, rather than junior football. These were the largest grounds that the research team had seen in all of the observations.
- All umpires were sourced from the Umpire association.
- Low socio-economic status was particularly noticeable in this league.
- Affiliation with an AFL football club, and the facilities and clubrooms were of higher quality than any location involved in this research.

A summary of the data site information is provided in Table 11 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Site</th>
<th>Implementation of Policy</th>
<th>Administrative Structure</th>
<th>Umpire</th>
<th>Standout Element</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QLD Metro</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Trained/Association</td>
<td>Consistency of rule implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC Regional</td>
<td>Almost All</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Parents as Umpires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC Metro 3</td>
<td>Custom</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Trained/Association</td>
<td>Cherry-picked rules used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC Metro 2</td>
<td>Negligible</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Trained/Association</td>
<td>Highly Competitive/Political environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC Metro 1</td>
<td>Negligible</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Trained/Association</td>
<td>Large Grounds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recommendations from Case Analysis**

- The AFL Junior Match Policy is not effective if implemented in a staged process, or when rules are implemented in isolation to others. VIC Metro 3 is a case example.
- Each of the sites provided both positive and negative examples of the implementation of the rules. Further analysis will be provided for the final report.
- It is recommended that the AFL consider using one or more of the research sites as pilot sites to implement proposed future changes.
2.4 Stakeholder Impacts

Coaches and Umpires (as discussed in the following section 4, p. 78), are both important stakeholders in the implementation and delivery of the AFL football at all levels of competition. In particular, the influence that they have in teaching children to play under modified rules is paramount and of most importance in this research. This research is one of the first empirical studies that explores the role of the coach in the implementation and delivery of rule modification, and in particular how the AFL Junior Match Policy rules their practice.

Information was collected from coaches using two methods:
- Observation
- Interviews

2.4.1 COACH ANALYSIS

Five (5) coaches consented to participating in a semi-structured interview via phone. Four (4) were from leagues which were not compliant with the AFL Junior Match Policy, while one (1) was from the transitional league (VIC Metro 3). Coaches from AFL Junior Match Policy compliant leagues were invited to participate in interviews, however despite multiple attempts to recruit participants, none of these coaches agreed to participate.

Coach interviews were conducted after the final observation at a time convenient to the coach, and questions were tailored to the compliancy of the league in which the participant coached (refer to Appendix 8: Coach Interview Guide, p. xiii).

Table 12 below provides a profile of the coaches who participated in the study. It must be noted that all coaches were parents who had entered into the role through coaching their own child’s team.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coach</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Compliancy</th>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Years’ Coaching Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>VIC Metro 1</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>U9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>VIC Metro 1</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>U12</td>
<td>First Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>VIC Metro 3</td>
<td>Transitional</td>
<td>U10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>VIC Metro 2</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>U9</td>
<td>First Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>VIC Metro 2</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>U10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE COACHES’ PERSPECTIVE: A UNIQUE LENS

All coaches, whether they were from AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant or Non-Compliant leagues were asked to distinguish:

- What rules were implemented in their respective junior AF league;
- What they each thought about modified rules in junior sport (whether they implemented them or not); and
- How they considered junior sport is different or similar to the adult form of the game.

It was important to understand the coaches’ perspective on each of these three points, because coaches at junior levels of sport may have a unique lens from which they view the game which must be taken into consideration. It must be noted that:

1. The perception of how football is played, and how coaches behave for many individuals (including some parents who step into the role of coach) comes not from a rule book or coach manual, but from what they see on TV in high performance settings where adults play the game.
2. Most of the coaches in this study were novice, and as such had only coached junior football in their current league. This is important to consider because:
   a. Coaches in AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant leagues had no experience of coaching under Non-Compliant conditions, even though they knew the rules of the game from TV and former playing experiences.
   b. Coaches in AFL Junior Match Policy Non-Compliant leagues had no experience of coaching with modified rules nor did they have much knowledge of the AFL Match Policy compliant rules.

That is, coaches had little ability to provide reliable comparative analysis between compliant and non-compliant, therefore their views were somewhat blinkered. However, it is their assumptions about the differences that are important to glean from this section of the report as this (along with data from the national survey as outlined in Section 5 of the results, p. 89) will assist in informing the reader regarding education that is required.

COACHES’ VIEWS OF AFL JUNIOR MATCH POLICY RULES

Coaches were asked a number of questions about their perspective on the AFL Junior Match Policy rules that were implemented in their particular league. For AFL Match Policy Compliant league coaches, the questions were aimed at allowing the investigator to determine the coach’s actual knowledge of the rules implemented in their league. On the other hand, for the AFL Junior Match Policy Non-Compliant league
coaches, the questions were based on knowledge gained through field observations of coaches and the impact of the absence of AFL Junior Match Policy rules on their specific coaching practice.

The analysis was centred on 8 rule modifications that emerged as important. These included:

- Scoring (or lack of),
- Tackling and Bumping,
- Use of zones,
- Reduced ground sizes,
- Coach on the ground,
- Reduced bouncing of the ball,
- No kicking off the ground and
- Attempted mark.

**Scoring**

The AFL Junior Match Policy states that for players aged 5-10 years, there should be no premiership points, no finals, no ladders, no match results (scores) and no names of players published. With the exception of the Under 10 competition at VIC Metro 2, all leagues that participated in the current study had no visible scoreboards on game day in the Under 8, 9 and 10 age groups (as well as the Under 11 age group at QLD Metro).

**INTERVIEW DATA**

In terms of the AFL Junior Match Policy rule regarding scoring there was a mixed response among coaches who were interviewed for this study.

The coaches from both VIC Metro 3 (Transitional league) and VIC Metro 1 (Non-Compliant league) reported that they believed the lack of scoring on a public scoreboard was positive, although they understood that the children knew the score regardless. For example, it was noted:

“For Under 9s, Under 10s I think it’s [no scoring] a great idea because as you saw the other weekend we don’t kick many goals. But the big thing is the kids know if they win or lose. So they know we kicked four goals one and they kicked three goals nothing.” (Non-Compliant League Coach, VIC Metro 1, U9)

However, the implementation of the AFL Junior Match Policy rule of no scoring may be more beneficial for coaches in relation to the atmosphere created by parents and spectators, rather than its impact on their role with players. One coach explained:

“With Under 10s there’s no scoreboard, and there’s no wins and losses, there’s no finals. But having said that, all the kids know exactly what the score was in every game. And at every quarter they’d come up and say ‘Oh, we’re in front’ or ‘We’re behind’. So they all know. The impact of that [no scoring] though is more from the adult perspective, that as a coach you don’t have to impress [the] parents, worrying about ‘we’re not winning.” (Compliant League Coach, VIC Metro 3, U10)
VIC Metro 2 was the only league in the current study that had scoring in the Under 10 competition. Given the difficulty of blinkered vision as noted previously, it might not be surprising therefore that the coach in the Under 9 competition viewed that keeping score was positive and part of a learning experience for children. This coach explained:

"With displaying the score and keeping the score, I think kids need to learn how to lose just as much as they need to learn how to win. And they all know the score, they all keep the score in their head, so they know who wins at the end of the game. I can’t understand how that is benefiting their progression through into Under 10s where they do keep score, I don’t know how it’s benefiting them at all." (Non-Compliant League Coach, VIC Metro 2, U9)

This coach raises an important broader issue in relation to scoring in junior sport and the life skills associated with resilience and winning and losing, which was mirrored in parental concerns for the modified rule regarding scoring.

OBSERVED BEHAVIOURS

From the field observations it was evident that there was an increased focus by spectators and parents on the score in the games in the AFL Junior Match Policy Non-Compliant leagues compared to the compliant leagues. There was also a clear shift in the intensity of the game once the scoreboards were visible, especially when scores in the game was close. The intensity of the game appeared to be particularly fuelled by the intensity of the coaches themselves, as was evidenced most frequently in the Under 12 competitions in the VIC Metro 2 (Non-Compliant league) and VIC Metro 3 (Transitional league).

VIC Metro 3 was a good example of the role the coach played in the intensity of the game, with two very different coaches observed in that league. One coach was very vocal and clearly more focused on the game result, whilst the other coach was less vocal and sat back and observed the game. Although it appeared more difficult for the coach to influence the behaviour and intensity of the parents and spectators, the intensity of the coach did influence the players. From the field observations it was evident that the players who were coached by a more intense coach concentrated more on the outcome of the game, as well as umpiring decisions. And although the division of the team may have been a factor, it should also be noted here that in the AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant league at VIC Regional, where a Division 1 level coach was observed, this same intensity was not witnessed.

Interestingly, the two coaches from the AFL Junior Match Policy Non-Compliant leagues (VIC Metro 1 and VIC Metro 2) that participated in this study write and publish weekly game summaries of each team on their club web sites. Although these are predominantly skill and teamwork focused, there were instances where the coaches have specifically referred to winning or losing games in the Under 9 and Under 10 competitions. Furthermore, “best players” were published for the Under 9 and Under 10 competitions on the club web site within the VIC Metro 2 league, and award winners were also published by coaches in both Leagues in these younger age groups. Table 13 below provides a summary of coaches’ views on scoring in junior AF.
Table 13: Summary of coaches’ views on scoring in junior AF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compliant</th>
<th>Non-Compliant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Note only 1 Coach from Compliant league was interviewed</td>
<td>• Liked scoring, considered it part of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Liked no scoring</td>
<td>• More intense in terms of competition/winning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Observed less intensity from coach and parents/spectators</td>
<td>• Publish competition based information on website (including game summaries, wins/losses, award recipients)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Expectations of coaches more closely matched age/broader purpose of sport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tackling and Bumping

One of the key underpinning principles of the AFL Junior Match Policy is deferring the introduction of tackling for players.

INTERVIEW DATA

For the coaches who participated in the interviews, there was a mixed response in relation to no tackling in the junior age groups.

For the two AFL Junior Match Policy Non-Compliant league coaches from VIC Metro 2 (which permit tackling), they believed that, with the exception of sling tackles, tackling should not be modified and was an important component of football:

“I think that tackling is like the main part of football. If there’s no tackling then it is pretty much soccer. You have to be able to tackle, it’s a full contact sport, and kids have to learn how to tackle properly and learn how to be tackled, and the earlier they do that the better I think.” (Non-Compliant Coach, VIC Metro 2, U9)

Both coaches specifically mentioned transitional issues with players moving to higher age groups, as is reflected in the quote above. In fact, the coach of the Under 10 team within the VIC Metro 2 (Non-Compliant league) emphasised that they would still teach players to tackle even if the no tackling rule was implemented in their league.

Although VIC Metro 1 are considered to be an AFL Junior Match Policy Non-Compliant league, tackling is not permitted in their Under 9 and Under 10 competitions. However, bumping is allowed both before gaining possession (within 5 metres of the ball) and when the player is in possession of the ball. This is despite the fact that the AFL Junior Match Policy clearly states that for players aged 5 to 8 years (i.e., Under 9 competition) a player cannot deliberately bump another player. For both coaches interviewed within this league, bumping was viewed positively:
“Bumping’s good. I emphasize a fair bit on bumping, and I teach them the proper way to do it, to tuck the arm in. In Under 9s they don’t pick up great pace when they bump so they don’t bump hard, but yeah they bump.” (Non-Compliant Coach, VIC Metro 1, U9)

This coach’s statement about players in the Under 9 competition bumping without any great force coincides with their view that those players just starting out in the Under 9 competition (i.e., those who have just turned 7 years of age) could get hurt if they are tackled by a bigger and/or older player who may have been playing for several years.

The Under 12 coach within one AFL Junior Match Policy Non-Compliant league (VIC Metro 1) believed that the omission of tackling in the younger age groups had not affected the player’s ability to tackle as they moved up to the older age groups, as they had covered tackling in pre-season training, and “once they tackled someone in a game, then they were fine”. This is in contrast to the coaches from VIC Metro 2 (Non-Compliant league with full tackling permitted) who believed that no tackling would affect their ability to play the game in future years.

On the other hand, VIC Metro 3 (Transitional league) as well as the other AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant leagues implemented a modified form of tackling (which does not involve body contact) referred to as the ‘hold and release’ tackle. One coach explained its utility:

“The only way that boys are legally allowed to tackle is to grab the jumper from behind, so they’re not allowed to tackle from front on. And that’s what we’ve taught them. That’s how we train and we encourage them in the matches. There are games where that’s not how it’s umpired, but we don’t have any control over that. We try to do the right thing with the boys and teach them what the rules of the competition, so that if it was umpired correctly, they wouldn’t run into trouble.” (Transitional League Coach, VIC Metro 3, U10)

This coach also noted that this modified tackling rule can have issues with umpire interpretation and implementation. The rule requires umpires to call out ‘hold’ and then ‘release’ the player in possession to dispose of the ball within 3 seconds (through counting backwards 3, 2, 1). Umpire training and rule knowledge has been indicated to be problematic, and this is discussed further in Section 4, p. 78.

OBSERVATION DATA
Despite these coaches’ views that bumping was a safer alternative to full tackling (i.e., being able to pull players to the ground), throughout the three rounds of field observations it was evident that the bump could have a significant impact on the game and the safety of players. More physically developed players, who were bumping (and barging) their way through players when in possession of the ball, had a clear...
advantage over those less physically developed players. An official in one game also voiced their concern over bumping directly to the investigators, believing it to be more dangerous than tackling.

Overall, the VIC Metro 1 have simply replaced one form of body contact with another. This is despite the viewpoint of the AFL Junior Match Policy that children’s physiological and emotional readiness to resist the pressures of tackling (and deliberate body contact such as the bump) to be about the age of 11 or 12. Table 14 below provides a summary of coaches’ views on tackling and bumping in junior AF.

Table 14: Summary of coaches’ views on tackling and bumping in junior AF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compliant</th>
<th>Non-Compliant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Note only 1 Coach from Compliant league was interviewed</td>
<td>• Liked and encouraged bumping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No bumping used</td>
<td>• Nature of AFL is full contact, and players needed to learn this from an early age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Observations note that most frustration for coaches is in the inconsistent implementation of modified tackling rules by umpires.</td>
<td>• Some reflection that hold and release may be better</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Smaller ground size, reduced player numbers, and zones**

Another key underpinning principle of the AFL Junior Match Policy is the reduction of the size of the playing ground for players aged 5-12 years. The AFL Junior Match Policy states that reduced player numbers allows greater contact with the ball for individual players and better skill development because of the openness of the game. That is, the rule is to allow for greater skill development by taking away the emphasis on running long distances and the subsequent endurance that is required to play the game on a full-size ground.

**INTERVIEW DATA**

Generally, the coaches from AFL Junior Match Policy Non-Compliant leagues were opposed to the use of smaller, modified ground sizes in junior AF. Both VIC Metro 1 and VIC Metro 2 leagues used full sized grounds, with 18 players, and no zones. It was reported by an administrator at a club within VIC Metro 2 that they had previously reduced the ground size for the Under 9 competition where they conducted two games simultaneously, but reverted back to the larger ground after several seasons. This administrator believed that the players enjoyed the larger ground size as they had greater space to move and run with the ball. Both VIC Metro 1 and VIC Metro 2 leagues utilised a field where when one was slightly smaller than the other (although still a full size ground) for their Under 9 competitions.
The Under 9 coach from the club within VIC Metro 1 raised the issues of assisting transition of players from the Under 9 competition when discussing the impact of reduced ground size throughout the sport. He noted:

“I think that [smaller ground size] would be good for when they’re first starting out like Under 8s or Under 9s. But I think once the players get a bit older, like the older group of Under 9s, I don’t think the three-quarter of a ground or half ground would be big enough” (Non-Compliant Coach, VIC Metro 1, U9)

VIC Metro 3 was an interesting case as despite using a smaller ground size, they had not reduced the number of players on the ground. Further they had chosen to omit the zone rule. Ironically, the coach reflected that there were 18 players on small ground size, who are not restricted to an area, which they believed had resulted in swarming around the ball. One coach described it this way:

“The smaller oval I didn’t agree with for the Under 9s. I thought it had the opposite impact of what was intended, which was by making the ground smaller you reduced the amount of space for the kids to play in, so they tend to be more clustered around the ball” (Transitional League Coach, VIC Metro 3, U10)

In addition to VIC Metro 3, both of the AFL Junior Match Policy Non-compliant leagues who participated in this study did not use zones. Coaches from these non-compliant leagues were opposed to the use of these zones. Although the AFL Junior Match Policy has implemented zones for the purposes of preventing ball-chasing and swarming of players around the ball, coaches believed that zones were restrictive and didn’t allow them to “just play football”:

“I wouldn’t introduce zones where players can’t go into. Because as you know, an eight or nine year old, we can put them in the right spots but all they want to do is chase the ball and not worry about zones, or that you can’t step over this line. So I think the way that [league name] do it is very good because it allows the kids to just go out and play football.” (Non-Compliant Coach, Vic Metro 1, U12)

The AFL Junior Match Policy Non-Compliant league coaches also believed that it was the coach’s role to ensure that players remained in their positions, as the coach below explains:

“I think the positions that kids play is up to the coach. On my whiteboard I show them their positions. I sort of have an imaginary line drawn out where the back men should stay and the forwards should stay as well, so they know their positioning.” (Non-Compliant Coach, Vic Metro 2, U9)

OBSERVATIONS

The pattern of swarming around the ball as noted by the VIC Metro 3 coach (as quoted on the previous page) was also evident in the field observations of Under 9 games in this same league. This suggests that all three modified rules (smaller ground size, reduced player numbers, and zones) work hand in hand.

Although the smaller ground size may have restricted players, what was more evident from the field observations was the impact of zones over the course of the season. Players appeared more restricted by zones as their skills and knowledge of the game developed.

One of the key outcomes of implementing zones in the AFL Junior Match Policy is the prevention of ball-chasing and subsequent congestion/swarming of the players around the ball. Zones were implemented in the Compliant leagues (QLD Metro and VIC Regional) and appeared to be utilised by coaches in the spirit of the AFL Junior Match Policy, especially in relation to the rotation of players. In general, coaches in these
compliant leagues rotated the same group of players through each zone (forward, centre and back) at the end of each quarter with the use of coloured arm bands.

Overall, the field observations showed that when one modified rule was used in isolation (i.e., smaller ground size without reducing player numbers or using zones) it resulted in the players doing the exact opposite of what the AFL Junior Match Policy intended. Table 15 below provides a summary of coaches’ views on smaller ground size, reduced player numbers and zones in junior AF.

Table 15: Summary of coaches’ views on smaller ground size, reduced player numbers, and zones in junior AF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compliant</th>
<th>Non-Compliant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Note only 1 Coach from Compliant league was interviewed</td>
<td>• Did not agree with use of zones, smaller grounds or reduced player numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consistent with field observations coaches recognise that by the end of the season, zones can hinder play as players have moved beyond that developmental stage</td>
<td>• Used these rules in isolation and this had a detrimental impact by encouraging swarming</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coach on the ground

The AFL Junior Match Policy states that the sole purpose of the coach being allowed on the ground for players aged 5 to 10 years is to provide immediate feedback to players. The implementation of this rule was well received by all of the coaches interviewed; however there were differences between the AFL Junior Match Policy Transitional and Non-Compliant league coaches in regards to the purpose of having the coach on the ground.

In the non-compliant league where this rule was implemented, the coaches’ views were consistent with those of the AFL Junior Match Policy, with the provision of immediate feedback was considered the key advantage of being allowed on the ground:

“In the Under 9s, a lot of the kids had never played football before, so it was good to be able to talk to them and explain the positions and where to run on the ground. If you’re on the boundary line, you don’t have that interaction with the kids. I found it a really useful tool being able to actually talk to the kids individually at the time something happened, which they seemed to understand more than trying to take notes and then talking to them at the break.” (Non-Compliant Coach, VIC Metro 2, U10).

The AFL Junior Match Policy transitional league coach, in which zones were not implemented, also believed that the role of the coach on the ground was more related to reducing congestion around the ball and ensuring players remained in their positions:

“The purpose of that [the coach on the ground] was to allow coaches to instruct the kids on the ground in where to position themselves and to try and keep a structure, so that you didn’t end up with 18 kids all following the ball around
like a big sheep pack. That was my understanding of it. And last year [in Under 9s] I thought it worked pretty well for what we did.” (Transitional League Coach, VIC Metro 3, U10)

In contrast, for those coaches in the AFL Junior Match Policy non-compliant league where the coach was not allowed on the ground:

“We can tell the runners to go tell this kid to stand here, but that’s all the runner can say, he can’t coach the kids. Where if the coach is on the ground, he can say ‘right you stand here because this might happen’, and then you can teach them a lot better” (Non-Compliant Coach, VIC Metro 1, U12)

For these coaches, their only way of communicating with the players during game play was through their runner who could only provide positional feedback to players (in a similar role to runners in the adult forms of the game). Despite this rule not being implemented in their league, these coaches could clearly see the advantages of being allowed on the ground at the junior level where players are still learning the game, as the coach below explains:

“At the age [U9] there are no disadvantages because if you’re on the ground, you can tell the boys straight away, because they’re all out there to learn too. At least when you’re out there running around with the boys you can say ‘Look, you’re doing this wrong, what you should have done is run to that position. You’re playing backline and you should’ve stayed back, and the ball will come to you.’” (Non-Compliant Coach, VIC Metro 1, U9)

OBSERVATIONS

Despite the coaches’ views that the coach on the ground allowed them to provide immediate feedback and reduce congestion around the ball, this was generally not the case when coaches were observed in practice. Coaches generally positioned themselves in the centre of the ground and rarely kept up with the play. Although there were times when coaches ran directly to a player to provide feedback, or to pat the player on the back after they had done something well, the level of feedback provided to players was minimal, and not necessarily immediate as the AFL Junior Match Policy intended.

One factor that influenced the amount of feedback provided to players was the size of the ground. In the two AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant leagues (QLD Metro and VIC Regional) and the transitional league (VIC Metro 3) where smaller ground sizes were used, there was less distance to cover and therefore, coaches were better able to keep up with the play. In contrast, in the games observed in the AFL Junior Match Policy Non-Compliant Leagues, the grounds were much larger and the coach had much more ground to cover, especially if the ball was moved quickly from one side of the ground to the other. In saying this however, in the transitional league where the ground size was reduced, the coach still remained predominantly in the middle of the ground; therefore, it is up to the discretion of the coach as to the level of impact the coach has and how much feedback they provide to the players on the ground.

The type of feedback provided to players on the ground was mainly directional in nature; that is, where to run, where to dispose of the ball, and who to dispose the ball to. In one AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant league in particular, coaches of opposing teams worked in tandem in providing feedback to all players on the ground in spite of the AFL Junior Match Policy stipulating that coaches must not instruct or make comment to the opposition team. In fact, in comparison to other leagues which implemented the coach on
the ground rule, the field observations indicated that this rule worked best in this league where coaches did not work in isolation. Overall, the coach on the ground was the only modified rule considered by all coaches as important in junior AF. It is however questionable as to whether the coaches are providing the level of feedback required for this rule to have a significant impact of the development of junior AF players, with further investigation required in this area. Table 16 below provides a summary of coaches’ views allowing the coach on the ground in junior AF.

Table 16: Summary of coaches’ views of the modified rule of allowing the coach on the ground in junior AF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compliant</th>
<th>Non-Compliant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Note only 1 Coach from Compliant league was interviewed</td>
<td>• Supported the rule that allows coach on ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supported rule that allows coach on ground</td>
<td>• Where unable to have the coach on the ground, reported using Runners to provide instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Field observations highlighted the practice in VIC Regional league of coaches working together on the field to provide feedback to their own team, as well as the opposition.</td>
<td>• Coach effectiveness diminished by larger ground sizes as many were unable/unwilling to keep up with play</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Restricted bouncing, no kicking off the ground, and attempted mark**

The AFL Junior Match Policy consists of a number of modifications for junior AF but there are three in particular which are specifically related to the skill acquisition of players; restricted bouncing, no kicking off the ground, and attempted mark. Coaches had positive views about the restriction of bounces, and prohibition of kicking the ball off the ground in the junior age groups, which were implemented in all leagues for players aged 5-10 years (VIC Metro 2 restricted players to two bounces compared to one bounce in the other four leagues). There was however a mixed response in regards to the attempted mark rule, which was implemented in the two compliant leagues and VIC Metro 2 (non-compliant) for players aged 5-10 years.

One of the key outcomes of the AFL Junior Match Policy restricting the number of bounces to one (players aged 5-10 years) or two (players aged 11-12 years) is to prevent one player running an excessive distance with the ball. This has a flow on effect in that it enhances the ball disposal skills of the player (either through a kick or handball) whilst also increasing team play. Coaches believed that though restricting the number of bounces individual players were unable to dominate the game. One coach noted:

“By only allowing them to bounce the ball once, it’s encouraging them to share the ball around, and making sure you don’t have one player who grabs the ball in the backline and takes six bounces down the wing and kicks the goal and nobody can touch him because he’s too fast.” (Transitional League Coach, VIC Metro 3, U10)
At the same time however, coaches understood that they (as coaches) also played a role in ensuring that their more talented players shared the ball with their teammates, as this coach explains:

“The kids aren’t allowed to take any more than two running bounces without kicking it. So the kids that are bigger and stronger can’t just run the whole length of the ground with the ball, just pushing kids out the way. There were a couple of kids in our team that could probably run the whole length of the ground and kick a goal, but as a coach I pulled up those kids at the start of the year and said ‘I want you to look up and kick to your teammates and bring them into the game’. I’m 50/50 on the two bounce rule but the more I think about it, I think it’s probably a good thing.” (Non-Compliant Coach, VIC Metro 2, U9)

Although in AFL Junior Match Policy kicking off the ground is considered to be a skill in itself, it is thought that through making the player gain control of the ball, their ball disposal skills will be enhanced. The coaches interviewed in this study also believed this to be the case, as well as increasing the confidence of their players in gaining control without the fear of injury:

“The ‘no kicking the ball off the ground’, I thought was really good because it’s designed to encourage the kids to develop the skills of bending over and picking the ball up, and that is very difficult, not so much in terms of the skill, but in terms of the confidence. If you’ve got someone who is going to come in and kick the ball out of our hands, you’re not going to bend over and pick it up.” (Transitional League Coach, VIC Metro 3, U10)

Despite the benefit of this rule modification in teaching players to pick up the ball and dispose of it, the skill of kicking the ball off the ground gave players an alternative when weather conditions were less than ideal:

“The [no] kicking off the ground rule, it’s good in that it teaches kids to actually go in and pick the ball up. The biggest problem with it is that it is a winter sport and the boys are trying to pick it up off the ground and it does get very slippery and not having that option sometimes makes it a bit hard.” (Non-Compliant League Coach, VIC Metro 2, U10)

To encourage players to try to mark the ball, the attempted mark rule is implemented for those players aged 5-10 years. Therefore, if the player has made a reasonable attempt to catch the ball by getting their hands to the ball; this can be paid a mark by the umpire. The two coaches from VIC Metro 2 (Non-Compliant) had contrasting views on the attempted mark rule. For the coach who was currently coaching in the Under 9 age group, they believed it was inhibiting the players’ skill development:

“The [attempted] mark rule is probably not that good, because kids, especially a lot of the kids in our team this year, are all going up next year [to Under 10s] and they don’t really try to mark it, they actually stick their hands up and get a mark” (Non-Compliant Coach, VIC Metro 2, U9)

Despite this concern, the Under 10 coach from VIC Metro 2 (Non-Compliant) believed that the rule should be continued into the age group they currently coached. This was due to players’ lack of confidence in marking the ball overhead once they moved from the Under 9 to Under 10 competition:

“In the U9s as long as they attempted the mark and had both hands to it, they didn’t have to hold it for a set period. That’s probably the one I’d continue through maybe for another year at least, because they’re still not strong enough for overhead marking, but you still want to teach them how to do it. [The rule] teaches them to put them to put their hands in the correct position and to actually jump at the football and attempt that mark, you want them to get their hands out in front or over their head. I’ve found this year [U10s] that some of the kids lacked a bit of confidence with that, they’ve stopped doing it and were trying to chest mark all the time.” (Non-Compliant Coach, VIC Metro 2, U10)

OBSERVATIONS

Although not a common occurrence, from the field observations it was evident that there were children who were simply putting their hands in the air and not making what the AFL Junior Match Policy refer to as a
“reasonable attempt” to mark the ball. The various umpire interpretations of an attempted mark can also be seen in 2.2.2 Skill frequencies and execution which again demonstrates the complexity of this modified rule.

Overall, although the interviewed coaches were predominately from non-compliant leagues, they did view certain rule modifications (mainly related to skill acquisition) as important in junior AF. Coaches appeared to have a good understanding of the rule modifications in their league and believed that the rules their league implemented was the way it should be for junior AF. However, as only one coach had exposure to a league which did things differently, it is difficult to make any definitive conclusions as they only voicing their views on the possible impact, rather than actual experience of the impact of these rule modifications on players and their coaching practice. Table 17 below provides a summary of coaches’ views restricted bouncing, no deliberate kicking off the ground, and attempted mark in junior AF.

Table 17: Summary of coaches’ views on restricted bouncing, no deliberate kicking off the ground, and attempted mark in junior AF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compliant</th>
<th>Non-Compliant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Note only 1 Coach from Compliant league was interviewed</td>
<td>• Supported no deliberate kicking off the ground rule but one coach was mindful of wet weather conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Believed no deliberate kicking off the ground rule was beneficial for reducing injury and increasing player confidence</td>
<td>• Contrasting views on ‘attempted mark’ rule – question implementation for skill development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supported the ‘attempted mark’ rule</td>
<td>• Supported the bouncing restrictions rule for reducing player dominance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supported the bouncing restrictions rule for reducing player dominance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COACH BEHAVIOUR AND FEEDBACK
At each site, general observations were made of coaches in practice. It was not always possible to be within ear shot of the coach (particularly when the coach was allowed on the ground) however, where possible coaches were observed throughout the game and also in quarter breaks. For the purposes of this study, the type of feedback provided by coaches was considered to be either specific or general, and positive or negative in nature. The feedback provided by coaches to their players was generally positive and encouraging, although it tended to be general feedback, with a high use of adult-like language.

Use of adult language
As was discussed in the section on the coaches’ views on scoring in junior AF (refer to page 65), there was a clear difference between AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant and Non-Compliant leagues in the intensity of the game, particularly in the Under 12 competitions. The same could be said for the use of adult language by
coaches in junior AF games, where the language used by coaches in the Non-Compliant leagues (VIC Metro 1 and VIC Metro 2) was very adult-like in nature.

Adult language was considered by the investigator to be comments which were used in the adult form of the game. A prime example of this is the use of the term “man up”, which was the most common term used by coaches from the field observations.

Another example of the extreme language used was when a coach in an AFL Junior Match Policy Non-Compliant League asked their players at a quarter break:

“What if we don’t move?”

to which the players responded

“We die!!”

Specific versus general feedback

In the initial coach observations, it became evident that coaches were being either specific or general in the feedback they provided to their players. General feedback was vague and considered by the investigator to be comments made by the coach that provided little or no information about skill attempt and/or was not directed at any particular player on the ground (e.g., “well done”). Specific feedback on the other hand was considered by the investigator to be comments made by the coach that made reference to a skill attempt and were directed at a player either through using the player’s name and/or through the body language of the coach (e.g., “that was a great kick [child’s name]”).

All coaches observed appeared to provide more general feedback to their players, making comments such as “good work” and “great job”, which were related to the player’s performance, but were not specific in regards to what they were doing well. And although these comments were positive in nature (as discussed in more detail in the following section) coaches were only occasionally observed making comments that were specifically related to the skill performed; for example, “[child’s name] kick to the wings rather than the centre when coming out of defence”.

A factor that influenced the specificity of feedback, when coaches had the opportunity to provide individual feedback to players, was the time coaches spent on player positions. In the quarter breaks, most coaches spent a large amount of time firstly working out where the players would be positioned in the next quarter, and then relaying this information to the players themselves. This was particularly evident in the Under 9 and 10 competitions of the Non-Compliant leagues (VIC Metro 1 and VIC Metro 2), which did not use zones (meaning that the players did not move in groups from one zone to the next) and had 18 players on the field (therefore having more players to move around). Furthermore, there were also instances where parents
were observed pulling their children aside and coaching them in the breaks between play; this was generally observed where coaches were spending a greater amount of time focusing on player positions and provided general feedback to the team, rather than providing specific feedback to individual players.

Positive versus negative feedback

Despite some differences between Compliant and Non-Compliant leagues in regards to the level of positive feedback provided to players, overall coaches were generally positive and encouraging in their feedback. Positive feedback was considered by the investigator to be comments and/or body language made by the coach, which were supportive or motivating in nature (e.g., “keep it up” or patting a player on the back). Negative feedback on the other hand was considered by the investigator to be comments that were corrective in nature but provided in an unsupportive manner (e.g., “back luck”), or comments which were scolding in nature (e.g., “get on your man!”).

Although AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant league coaches (QLD Metro and VIC Regional) were less intense and less focused on the game outcome in comparison to Non-Compliant league coaches (VIC Metro 1 and VIC Metro 2), all coaches were observed providing positive and encouraging feedback to their players. In fact, the Under 10 coach from the VIC Metro 1 (Non-Compliant league) had what they referred to as a “Share and Care” motto – the premise behind this being that if a player saw their teammate do something well, then they should tell them! The level of positive feedback provided by coaches however was clearly greater in those Compliant leagues where the coach placed.

The Under 12 Transitional league coach (VIC Metro 3) was an example of where the number of negative comments and feedback far outweighed the positive feedback provided to players. Although this coach was clearly passionate about the game, this was reflected negatively in their behaviour and the comments made throughout the game. In one particular observation, this coach’s team had made a comeback on the scoreboard and the intensity of the game had increased substantially during this time. And although the players were playing well and had bridged the gap on the scoreboard, there were little positive comments to players when they did something well on the ground. In fact, the coaches’ comments were dominantly directed to the umpires and were very negative in nature, with comments such as “this is shocking umpiring” and “watch the play umpire”. This coach’s behaviour may have been influenced by the nature of the competition (as discussed previously in section 3.2.2.1) as they were coaching the first division team, where coaches are selected for the team; however, there was a clear difference between this coach’s behaviour in comparison to other Under 12 first division coaches who were observed in this study.

Overall, further research is needed in regards to coach feedback and behaviour in modified sport, particularly when the coach is allowed on the ground (as was highlighted previously in section 3.2.1.4). Although the rules may be modified to allow for greater skill development and participation of junior AF players, little is known about the coach’s role in providing the positive environment that is envisioned when sports are modified.
**Recommendations from Coach Analysis**

- The AFL needs to consider coach development specifically for the junior context, in particular with regards to the use of modified rules in AFL. This may require an examination of existing coach development information, educational materials, structures, management and pathways.

- If the AFL Junior Match Policy is adopted, it must be a central pillar for knowledge development for umpires who referee in the junior match play context.

- The development of an education/awareness program for AFL Junior Match Play coaches that includes:
  
a. Clarity with regards to why scoring is/is not used, and a plan for communicating with parents and children.

b. Assisting coaches to facilitate the training and development of tackling, as well as the transition of tackling skills between age groups. This may include introducing tackling within season rather than between seasons.

c. Safety issues, ineffectiveness and irrelevance of bumping in AFL, particularly at junior levels of the sport.

d. Assisting the coaches to facilitate transition from zones to non-zone play at earlier stages within season.

e. The AFL might consider different models of transition from zones that occurs within a season rather than between seasons as players develop an understanding of the game. Different models might include a 4 week end of season series of playing non-modified rules ready for the following season.

f. Greater guidance regarding how and where to position themselves on the field to provide optimal impact from “Coach on the Ground” rule.

g. Increased information on the frequency and type of feedback coaches should provide to their players for optimal impact whilst they are on the ground.

h. Clarification of and facilitation for coaches to provide consistent implementation of the attempted mark rule.

  i. Clarification of the rule needs to ensure that players are in fact making a “reasonable attempt” to catch the ball rather than just throwing their arms in the air as a ball approaches. This may impact their skill development for future years.
2.4.2 UMPIRE ANALYSIS

Umpires are important stakeholders in the provision of AFL at all levels of competition. Very little is known globally about the experience of umpires in junior sport, and this research is one of the first to begin to explore the way in which umpires impact participation and enjoyment of junior football, as well as how the experience of umpiring in junior football impacts upon them.

Information was collected from umpires using three methods:

- GPS Analysis
- Observation
- Interviews

The data from these sources is included in this section of the report.

An extension of the original project was to include GPS analysis of umpire on-field movement during the game. It became apparent after Round 1 observations that umpires had a major impact on the implementation of the rules—not only due to their knowledge (or lack thereof) of the rules, but also the way in which they positioned themselves on the field in relation to the play, and the way in which they stayed with the on-field play.

Eleven (11) umpires consented to wearing GPS units. Five (5) were from leagues who were compliant with the AFL Junior Match Policy while five (5) were from leagues who were non-compliant. It must be noted that GPS was not collected from any umpires in the transitional league (VIC Metro 3).

Table 18 below provides a profile of the umpires who participated in the study by wearing a GPS unit for the duration of their game. All GPS readings were taken during observations 2 and 3 in the respective locations.
Table 18: Umpire GPS participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Umpire</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Compliancy</th>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Umpire Profile</th>
<th>Number of umpires on field</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>VIC Regional</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>U9</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>VIC Regional</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>U10</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>VIC Regional</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>U12</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>QLD Metro</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>U8</td>
<td>Club Umpire</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>QLD Metro</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>U11</td>
<td>Association Umpire</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>VIC Metro 1</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>U9</td>
<td>Association Umpire</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>VIC Metro 1</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>U10</td>
<td>Association Umpire</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>VIC Metro 1</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>U12</td>
<td>Association Umpire</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>VIC Metro 2</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>U9</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>VIC Metro 2</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>U10</td>
<td>Association Umpire</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE ON-FIELD EXPERIENCE OF UMPIRING

GPS data was collated to better understand the on-field experiences of referees at junior football games in both AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant and Non-Compliant leagues. Average distance run by umpires in Compliant versus Non-Compliant leagues each of the age groups is presented in Figure 20 below.

Figure 20: Average distance run by umpires in Compliant versus Non-Compliant leagues

![Graph showing average distance run by umpires in Compliant versus Non-Compliant leagues for U8/9, U10, U11/12 age groups.](image)
Table 20 and Figure 21 above provide a range of information that is useful to begin to unpack the experience of umpiring in junior football.

**Average Distances Run and Average Speeds in game**

It is clear from Table 20 and Figure 21 above that that umpires in AFL Junior Match Policy Non-Compliant leagues run longer distances and higher speeds than their counterparts in compliant leagues. When umpiring the Under 8/9 leagues, umpires run on average, 4.85km per game at a speed at 4.15km/h. The distances run increases as umpires referee at older age groups, running on average 6.6km per game in Under 11/12 at an average speed of 5.10km/h.

In comparison to their counterparts in AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant leagues, when umpiring the Under 8/9 leagues, umpires run on average 2.55km per game at a speed of 3.10km/h. The distances run increases for umpires at the Under 11/12 age groups where they run on average 5.55km per game at a speed of 4.35km/h, which is closer to the distances and speeds at which their counterparts in the Non-Compliant Leagues run.

- For the Under 8/9 and Under 10 age groups in AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant leagues the ground sizes were modified, therefore requiring umpires to run lower distances per game, and lower speeds.
- The Under 10 Compliant umpire data indicates the lowest average distance run by an umpire (1.5 km per game). This umpire was a parent, covering only half of the field. There was only one GPS recording of an umpire in this category (Compliant Under 10) so this should be treated with some caution.

- For the Under 11/12 age groups, it is clear that the average distances run by umpires across AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant and Non-Compliant leagues are more similar. This is explained by:
  - In each setting (compliant and non-compliant) there was one umpire on the ground
  - The ground size in each setting (compliant and non-compliant) was similar therefore a similar distance/area to be covered to referee the game.

**High Speed Running Efforts**

For the purposes of this study, and consistent with previous studies of athletes, high intensity running is considered to be when individuals reach a speed of at least 14.4km/h.

The following figures (Figure 22 and Figure 23) identify maximum speeds reached by umpires, and the number of high-speed running efforts that umpires engage in during a game.

![Figure 22: Maximum speeds reached by umpires in Compliant versus Non-Compliant leagues](image)
Figure 22 and Figure 23 above show the maximum speeds reached and high speed running efforts for umpires in each of the settings (compliant and non-compliant) across all of the age groups. It is clear that:

- In Under 9 and Under 10 leagues that are AFL Match Policy compliant, umpires rarely reached maximum speeds that would be classed as high speed running (a speed of 14.4 km/h or above) during a game.

- In Under 9 and Under 10 AFL Match Policy Non-Compliant leagues, umpires reached higher maximum speeds than their compliant counterparts, and reached high speed running (a speed of at least 14.4 km/h) almost 40 times during a game.

- In contrast, in Under 11/12, umpires in AFL Junior match Policy Compliant leagues reached higher maximum speeds, and reached high speed running (a speed of at least 14.4 km/h) more than their counterparts in AFL Match Policy Non-Compliant leagues.

  - In this case (Compliant Under 11/12 data), the overall data is skewed due to one individual umpire who is in training to be an elite level AFL umpire. This particular individual ran the highest distance, had the highest maximum speed, and had the greatest number of high speed running efforts – almost triple any other umpire who participated in the study. This data skewed the Under 11/12 data, but highlights an important issue regarding umpire training and career development which is discussed further in the next section.
Empirical research on AFL umpiring\(^\text{12}\) notes that umpires understand their role as a leisure choice. In other words, they choose to umpire in their leisure time rather than undertake other activities. Many undertake the activity for social, mental, and physical health benefits that it can provide—just like other individuals who take up sport participation for the same reasons. While the empirical research examined AFL umpires at the senior levels (rather than those at the junior level such as the case in the AFL Junior Match Policy project), the results from umpires in this study suggest that it might be of interest to explore this concept as part of a broader marketing strategy. That is, to recruit umpires, it might be useful to use the data collected from this study to provide a picture of the health benefits that umpiring can provide.

ASSOCIATION/TRAINED UMPIRES VERSUS PARENT UMPIRES

One of the original reasons for extending the study of umpiring in this research project was that after Round 1 of observations, it was clear that some umpires were volunteer parents, while others were trained umpires and part of a larger Umpire Association. Association umpires often refereed at multiple games over a weekend, one of which was at the junior level where we observed them.

Perhaps counter-intuitively, it was noted that trained association umpires in many cases did not facilitate play for the juniors in the same positive way that volunteer parents did. Observations as well as individual interviews illuminated some important differences between Association/Trained Umpires and Volunteer Parent Umpires. Table 19 below highlights some of the differences.

---

Table 19: Differences between association/trained Umpires and volunteer parent umpires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key areas of difference</th>
<th>Association/Trained Umpires</th>
<th>Volunteer Parent Umpires</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age Range of umpires</strong></td>
<td>• Most frequently umpires under the age of 25</td>
<td>• Aged 30+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• For U8 and U10 games, often 14 year old umpires</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Most common motive for umpiring</strong></td>
<td>• Desired a Career in umpiring</td>
<td>• To facilitate their children’s sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Umpiring is a serious leisure choice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sources of Knowledge about umpiring</strong></td>
<td>• Umpire Association training</td>
<td>• Talking with team parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Watching other umpires from their Association at games (most often when they were refereeing at Under 16 or above age groups)</td>
<td>• Talking with the team coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Watching other (elite level) umpires on TV</td>
<td>• Through experience on the ground.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• AFL Rule book (most notably, this was not the AFL Junior Match Policy).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation</strong></td>
<td>• Professionally dressed (uniform)</td>
<td>• Tracksuit/Shorts and T-shirt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positioning</strong></td>
<td>• Distanced from play</td>
<td>• Consistently with play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connection with Kids</strong></td>
<td>• Used correct umpiring hand signals, but kids did not always know what they meant</td>
<td>• Knew and used kids names—often in opposition team as well as own team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Distance from play meant that voice not always heard or attended to by kids</td>
<td>• Experienced in dealing with kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Often referred to kids by their number, which kids did not always recognised</td>
<td>• Close proximity to play allowed them to connect better with kids.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Younger umpires clearly had little experience dealing with kids</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With the exception of umpires at QLD Metro (discussed in greater detail later in this section), it was clear from observations that umpire knowledge of the actual AFL Junior Match Policy rules was patchy at best, and absent at worst. As each of the junior football leagues used different combinations of the modified rules, and the rules used changed at each age group level, it is not surprising that umpires had difficulty. Further adding to the complexity of the problem for umpires is that often coaches and parents were confused about which rules applied to their age group and league.

It must be noted that those individuals who were trained through Umpire Associations were easily recognised as most wore their professional uniforms, behaved as umpiring professionals, and had excellent knowledge of the rules of AFL. However, translation of the rules to the junior match play context was not always evident, nor was it successful.

Umpire lack of knowledge is highlighted in the following examples.

Example 1:

At an Under 10 game in VIC Metro 1, spectators/parents were getting agitated with the Umpire and his decisions regarding kicking off the ground. The VIC Metro 1 web site had clearly articulated that this was one of the only rule modifications that they employed. In order to assist the umpire, the Chief Investigator from this project was required to meet with the umpire in the middle of the ground at quarter time with a copy of the AFL Junior Match Policy Rules that Vic Metro 1 had adopted to explain to the umpire how the game differed slightly to the adult form of the game. The umpire had no idea that the junior game might have different rules to those that he normally umpired (Under 18, and senior football)

Example 2:

At an Under 9 game in VIC Regional, the “training” of an umpire was observed. A coach took the umpire aside and within 30 seconds gave him his instructions prior to umpiring his first game. He noted that three things were important in the game:

- No tackling, but kids are allowed to wrap their arms around another kid
- No bouncing the ball
- No kicking off the ground

VIC Regional is one of the leagues that is almost 100% AFL Match Policy compliant, and as such, implements almost 15 different rule modifications. The explanation or “training” was not representative of the requirements of the role.
Example 3:

It has already been highlighted from previous sections that umpire interpretation of various AFL Junior Match Policy rules is inconsistent. As noted in the Skills section, this can have an impact on skill development, and participant behaviour. In particular the way in which different umpires interpreted what constituted an ‘Attempted Mark’ was observed to be highly problematic across all leagues. In some cases, it resulted in participants throwing their arms up in the air aimlessly when the ball came near them in order to convince the umpire that they were attempting to mark the ball. In many cases, they were rewarded.

Given the range and quality of some of the knowledge sources used by umpires to obtain knowledge about umpiring, it is perhaps not surprising that an overall lack of knowledge of the specific AFL Junior Match Policy rules in particular was observed.

Association Trained versus Amateur Umpire Positioning in Relation to Play

GPS data allowed the researchers to clearly identify the difference in umpire positioning in relation to play between Association/Trained Umpires compared with Volunteer Parent Umpires. The two figures below provide a contrast that reflects the differences noted in the Table above. Figure 24 on the next page shows the GPS tracking of one umpire in an Under 12 match. This umpire ran at a range of speeds (consistent with the reporting above), however most important for this discussion is that it is clear that this umpire (an Association/Trained umpire) positioned himself largely to run on only one side of the ground. This is consistent with how he has been trained to umpire. He explained to the researcher:

We are taught to basically think about the ground as if it has railway tracks running along it, and you always stay on the tracks and don’t deviate too far from them.

Similarly, an umpire from an Under 10 game in the same league had a similar pattern of positioning within the game, and he explained it this way:

You always stay on the fat side of the ground. That is, you always position yourself on the side of the field where there is most room between you and the actual play. It is really easy to remember it that way, and that is where you stay for the game.

The GPS output map in Figure 24 on the following page clearly illustrates the concept.
Figure 24: Association/trained umpire positioning in relation to play.

In contrast, Figure 25 below shows the running and positioning of a Volunteer Parent Umpire. It is clear from this GPS map that the umpire ran at lower speeds, but most importantly, was clearly moving over all parts of the ground to keep up with the play. This is consistent of all GPS output maps for Volunteer Parent Umpires.

Figure 25: Volunteer/parent umpire positioning in relation to play
Recommendations from Umpire Analysis

- Encourage volunteer parent umpires particularly for U8-U11 age groups.
- Encourage associations to include 2 umpires per game to spread the workload and work rate required by umpires.
- Advertise umpiring as a way for individuals to keep fit. Use statistics to market the on-field experiences and related health benefits of umpiring.
- Revise and review the development of knowledge for umpires who work in the junior match play context.
- Ensure that the AFL Junior Match Policy document is a central pillar for knowledge development for umpires who referee in the junior match play context.
- Umpiring in junior AFL requires different skills, and positioning. The career development pathway for umpires needs to reflect this difference. How umpires communicate and position relative to the play requires knowledge and development from sources that are different to the ones currently available.
3.0 National Online Survey

3.1 AFL JUNIOR MATCH POLICY SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

In total, 2227 participants completed the AFL Junior Match Policy National Survey. Raw data is available Appendix 9: Survey Raw Data, p. xiv. The participants who completed this survey were predominantly parents (69%), female (57%), and aged between 38 and 42 years (35.4%). The majority of respondents lived in Victoria (48.8%), Western Australia (19%) and South Australia (12.5%), with the most participants involved in the Yarra Junior Football League in Victoria (12.2%). Survey participants worked predominantly with players from the Under 10 competition (29%), with the greater part of respondents (76.5%) involved with players aged between 9 to 12 years.

As Figure 26 below shows, parents made up the large majority of those who participated in the survey. This is reflected in the motivating factors for involvement in junior AF, with close to 80 per cent of survey participants becoming involved through their own children playing the sport (refer to Table 22 later in this section).
Those that were considered to be ‘dual role’ were survey participants who could not distinguish between the roles they played in junior AF. Match Day Operations were defined as participants who undertook duties such as trainer, runner, first aid, water carrier, and canteen volunteer. Interestingly, there were a number of survey participants who stated that their role as “team manager” yet did not consider their primary role to be an administrator and therefore chose “other”. This highlights the complexity of developing and designing education programing for the sector as there is little clarity about the boundaries and responsibilities that various roles may engender.

Reflecting the primary role of survey participants, the large majority of participants were aged between 33 to 52 years, accounting for just over 88 per cent of all respondents (refer to Figure 27 below).

Figure 27: Age groups of survey participants

Table 20 below shows the location of survey participants by state/territory in which they conducted their primary role. Participants from Victoria accounted for almost 50 per cent of all survey respondents, with Western Australia (19%) and South Australia (12.5%) rounding out the top three states. These states contributed to just over 80 per cent of all survey respondents.
Table 20: Location of survey participants by State/Territory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>Frequency of Responses</th>
<th>% of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales/ACT</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>1081</td>
<td>48.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2216</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Total respondents = 2227, missing = 11

It was not surprising therefore, that three of the top four leagues by survey participant responses were from the state of Victoria. Interestingly, three of the leagues that participated in the larger study (VIC Metro 1, VIC Metro 2, and QLD Metro) were in the top ten leagues by survey respondents (refer to Table 21 below).

Table 21: Top ten junior football leagues by participant responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>League</th>
<th>Frequency of Responses</th>
<th>% of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yarra JFL (VIC)</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Eastern Metro JFL (SA)</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geelong Junior Football (VIC)</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern JFL (VIC)</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Tasmanian JFL (TAS)</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFL Brisbane Juniors (QLD)</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Districts JFL (WA)</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro South JFL (VIC)</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mornington Peninsula JFL (VIC)</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frankston &amp; District JFL (VIC)</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1082</strong></td>
<td><strong>51.6</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Total respondents = 2076, missing = 151
Figure 28 below shows the player age groups in the participants’ primary role. Most survey participants were involved in the Under 10 competition (29%), with the large majority of participants coaching players aged 9 to 12 years, with these age groups accounting for just over 76 per cent of all respondents.

Survey participants were asked about the predominant motivating factor for their involvement in junior AF. For the large majority of survey participants, their involvement was through their own children, accounting for almost 79 per cent of responses (refer to Table 22 on the next page).
A family association with someone who played and/or umpired football appeared to be another important reason why survey participants were involved in junior AF, with the majority of ‘other’ reasons listing family members such as a father, husband, brother or grandfather (or being a grandfather themselves).

For a significantly small number of participants (0.4%) their main reason for involvement in junior AF was a career pathway. Interestingly, the primary role of all of these participants was an umpire (which is discussed as an issue in relation to umpire training and implementation of rules – see 2.4.2 Umpire analysis, p. 78). Although the survey asked participants what was the main factor in their involvement in junior AF, it is concerning that no coaches in the survey were using their experiences in junior AF as a career pathway in coaching. However in saying this, as over 80 per cent of coaches had entered into coaching because of their own children, they may view the role as only voluntary and short-term, rather than a long-term, paid profession. This has an impact on the ability to provide education and training for umpires (as noted as key recommendations from the Coaching Analysis p. 62)

Table 22: Participants’ main reason for involvement in junior Australian Football

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Frequency of responses</th>
<th>% of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Because My Own Children Play(ed)</td>
<td>1756</td>
<td>78.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love Of The Sport</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Played Football</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To give something back</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Pathway</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2223</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Total participants = 2227; missing = 4.*
3.2 PERCEPTIONS OF THE USE OF MODIFIED RULES IN JUNIOR AF

Survey participants were asked about the implementation of the AFL Junior Match Policy, what modified rules were implemented, and which modified rules should or should not implemented in their junior football league. As Table 23 below shows, just over 54 per cent of participants stated that the AFL Junior Match Policy was implemented or partially implemented in their junior football league.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Responses</th>
<th>% of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2223</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Total participants = 2227; missing = 4.

What is concerning however, are the large number of survey participants who were unsure if the AFL Junior Match Policy was implemented in their junior football league, accounting for almost 45 per cent of all respondents. Just over 50 per cent of parents were unsure about the implementation of the AFL Junior Match Policy. This may be expected due the varying levels of involvement a parent has in their child's football activities. However, almost 39 per cent of umpires and 26 per cent of coaches did not know if the AFL Junior Match Policy was implemented in their junior football league. This is troublesome given both roles are crucial in the implementation of the AFL Junior Match Policy in junior AF. This is consistent with findings from umpire interviews and observations as noted in the umpire analysis, p. 78.

Figure 29 below indicates perceptions of or knowledge about the implementation of the AFL Junior Match Policy nationally. As Figure 29 shows, the AFL Junior Match Policy was implemented most in the state of Queensland, based on the responses of the survey participants. Queensland participants were also the least unsure of all survey participants in regards to the implementation of modified rules. Furthermore, based on the responses of the survey participants, the Northern Territory was where the AFL Junior Match Policy was implemented least. It should however be noted that there were only 18 participants from the Northern Territory and this should be considered when interpreting the results.

Interestingly, there were a similar number of Victorian survey participants who believed that the AFL Junior Match Policy was implemented in comparison to those who were unsure. These results, as well as the evidence from the field observations, suggest that the AFL has work to do in both the implementation and promotion of the AFL Junior Match Policy in Victoria.
Survey participants were then asked to identify which modified rules were implemented in their junior football league (refer to Table 24 below). The implementation of these rules are ranked in order of most frequent to least frequent.

Table 24: Modified rules that are implemented in the participants’ Junior Football League

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule</th>
<th>Frequency of Responses</th>
<th>% of Yes Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No deliberate kicking off the ground</td>
<td>1515</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced ground size</td>
<td>1278</td>
<td>57.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited bounces</td>
<td>1102</td>
<td>49.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No scoring</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>44.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified tackling</td>
<td>954</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted mark</td>
<td>887</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced player numbers</td>
<td>677</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No tackling</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zones</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Total respondents = 2209; missing = 18. Participants could choose multiple responses.
From Table 24 above it is clear that the most frequently recognised modified rule was “no deliberate kicking off the ground” which is consistent with the observed games as part of this research. That is, all leagues observed (both AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant and Non-Compliant) used this modification.

Of interest is that the reduced ground size is the second most frequently recognised modified rule. However, no AFL Junior Match Policy Non-Compliant team observed for this research used a modified size ground—all used adult size grounds that might have been smaller than the MCG for example, but did not adhere to the guidelines for modified ground sizes as stated by the AFL Junior Match Policy guidelines.

This has major implications for the AFL as it appears that devising a social marketing strategy for the AFL Junior Match Policy rule modifications may be necessary.

Survey participants were then asked to provide their views on which of these modified rules should or should not be implemented in junior AF (see Table 25 below). These views are ranked from most agreed to least agreed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Unsure (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No deliberate kicking off the ground</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced ground size</td>
<td>74.3</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted mark</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified tackling</td>
<td>71.8</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited bounces</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced player numbers</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zones</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>12.4*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No tackling</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No scoring</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Agreed is in green, disagree is in red (highest percentages); *High percentage of unsure responses

From Table 25 above, four of the modified rules were viewed by participants to be important rules to implement in junior AF, with the top two rules consistent with Table 24 on the previous page.
The implementation of zones was the modified rule in which a large percentage of survey participants were unsure (12.4%). Although over 47 per cent of participants believed that zones should be implemented, the number of unsure participants in comparison to the other modified rules may indicate a level of misunderstanding of the benefits of zones for the development of junior AF players. Furthermore, there was a very even split between those who agreed (47.8%) and those who disagreed (47.6%) with the implementation of reduced player numbers. So although survey participants believed in a reduced ground size for junior AF, they do not appear to view zones and reduced player numbers as interrelated modified rules with a smaller ground.

As was evident from the field observations (discussed further in Section 2.1 and demonstrated visually in Figure 2) the no tackling and no scoring modified rules in particular contributed to the positive parent/spectator culture within the Compliant leagues. Yet, these were the only two rules in which the greater part of survey participants were in disagreement, with 63 per cent believing scoring, and 62 per cent believing tackling should be implemented. Participants did however view tackling modifications positively, with over 71 per cent believing that this modified rule should be implemented. Therefore, although survey participants were against the removal of tackling all together in junior AF, they appeared to believe that tackling should be modified for junior AF players.

When further investigating the perceptions of survey participants in relation to modified rules, it was interesting to examine the perceptions of those participants who indicated they were associated with the leagues that participated in the broader research project (see Table 26 on the following page). These views are ranked from those rules which all leagues believed should be implemented, to those rules which received the least agreeable responses.
Interestingly, although it was evident from the field observations that no scoring and no tackling contributed to a positive parent/spectator culture within VIC Regional, the participants who completed the survey did not believe these should be implemented. In saying this however, these views were consistent with the overall views of survey participants (as discussed on the previous page). Furthermore, there was not a large disparity between those who agreed and disagreed with the implementation of these rules; 52 per cent of participants believed that there should be scoring; and 57 per cent of participants believed that there should be tackling.

Consistent with the coach interviews of those from the Non-Compliant Leagues, survey participants believed that reduced player numbers and zones are modified rules that should not be implemented in junior AF. It is also not surprising to see that participants from the Non-Compliant Leagues believed that scoring should be implemented, with a large majority (70.6%) of those participants from the VIC Metro 2 believing that scores should be recorded. It should be noted here that although the participants within the two Non-Compliant Leagues believed that a reduced field size should be used, this may not necessarily mean reducing the size of the ground as the AFL intended. As discussed previously in Section 2.2.3, a reduced field size may simply be the smaller ground when there is more than one ground option.

As has been discussed previously in Section 2.3, VIC Metro 1 implemented no tackling in the Under 9 competition, with 60 per cent of survey participants indicating that the modified rule of no tackling should

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 26: Perceptions of which modified rules should be/should not be implemented in participating Junior Football Leagues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No deliberate kicking off the ground</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attempted mark</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Modified tackling</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Limited bounces</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reduced field size</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zones</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reduced player numbers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No tackling</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No scoring</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Agreed is in green, disagree is in red (highest percentages); *18.9% unsure
be implemented. In comparison, VIC Metro 2 had tackling in all age groups and consistent with this, over 70 per cent of survey participants believed that tackling should be implemented in junior AF.

Survey participants from VIC Metro 3, who were for the purposes of this research considered a Transitional League, did not believe in the implementation of the three interrelated rules of reduced field size, reduced player numbers, and zones. Participants were particularly disagreed about the reduction of player numbers; interestingly, this league did implement a reduced ground size in its Under 9 competition, but did not implement reduced player numbers or zones. As stated previously, these rules should not be implemented in isolation; therefore, the perceptions of the survey participants are most likely reflective of their own experiences and observations of 18 players swarming around the ball (without the use of zones) on a smaller ground size. There was also a low response rate from VIC Metro 3; therefore, this should be considered when interpreting the results.

Overall, apart from a few minor disparities, the results of the survey participants who were from those leagues that participated in the larger study were reflective of the views of participants interviewed, rules and regulations documents analysed, and field observations conducted.
3.3 PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF ROLE ATTRIBUTES

The survey asked respondents to provide their perspective about the characteristics they believed are important for each of:

- Children
- Coaches
- Umpires
- Parents
- Administrators

The data is presented in the following section.

What is important for children’s involvement?

As noted in Table 27 below, survey respondents rank general sport elements as important for children’s involvement. Important elements include fun, participation, enjoyment, and promoting good behaviour. Interestingly, the ability to tackle, winning, and competition are ranked as not as important. This adds further support for the use of modified rules such as those that make up the AFL Junior Match Policy as this is consistent with the fundamental concept of the Policy.
Table 27: Participants' beliefs about the importance of particular aspects for children's involvement in sport

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Important (%)</th>
<th>Not Important (%)</th>
<th>Unsure (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fun/enjoyment</td>
<td>99.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>99.3</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays good sporting behaviour</td>
<td>99.2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise/fitness</td>
<td>98.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased confidence/self-esteem</td>
<td>98.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>98.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendships</td>
<td>97.8</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe environment</td>
<td>97.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dev. of sport related skills</td>
<td>95.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the rules</td>
<td>90.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to tackle</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No and/or modified tackling</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External rewards</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premiership points/ladders</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winning</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>53.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Total respondents = 2227; missing = 1-3 dependent on item.

Further analysis of perspectives regarding children’s involvement in sport notes 3 important aspects (refer to Table 28 on the following page). Coaches perceive the opportunity to tackle as part of children’s involvement in sport to be more important than what parents and umpires do. Coaches also perceive that it is important for children to experience competition. Administrators perceived that it was more important for children to know the rules than did coaches and umpires in particular.
Table 28: Comparison of views about importance of aspects for children’s involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Parents (%)</th>
<th>Umpire (%)</th>
<th>Administrator (%)</th>
<th>Coaches (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to tackle</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>69.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the rules</td>
<td>90.9</td>
<td>88.2</td>
<td>93.9</td>
<td>82.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In relation to the age of the survey participants, there were some interesting differences for the aspects of ‘opportunity to tackle’, ‘winning matches’, and ‘inclusion of premiership points/ladders’. As Figure 30 below demonstrates, there was a general upward trend in the importance given to tackling for children’s involvement in junior AF based on the age of the survey participants. More importantly, those survey participants aged 48 to 67 years more sure about the inclusion of tackling in junior AF for children’s involvement (30.7% unsure). In comparison, over 43 per cent of those survey participants aged 18 to 27 years were unsure about whether it was important to provide children with the opportunity to tackle. These results may be reflective of changing perceptions of people who grew up with traditional football (i.e., those aged 48-67 years) compared to those people who may have had greater exposure to or better understanding of modified sport (i.e., those aged 18-27 years).

Figure 30: Perceptions of children’s opportunity to tackle based on the age of survey participants
As previously discussed, survey participants disagreed with the omission of scoring in junior AF (refer to Table 28). When considering the age of the survey participants, there was a gradual increase in the importance given to winning matches for children’s involvement in junior AF. As Figure 31 shows, winning matches was considered most important by participants aged 48-67 years (18.8%) and least important by participants aged 18-27 years (9.5%). Furthermore, the youngest participants in the survey were the least unsure (42.1%) about the importance of winning matches in junior AF.

A similar trend was found when examining the importance given to scoring through the use of premiership points/ladders for children’s involvement in junior AF, further confirming previous results in relation to this modified rule (refer to Figure 32 on the following page). The youngest aged participants therefore viewed scoring as least important (16.8%) in comparison to the oldest participants in the survey who considered it more important (27.7%). And again, the youngest participants in the survey were the least unsure about the importance of scoring in junior AF.
However, the high number of participants who were unsure about the importance of all three of these aspects of children’s involvement in junior AF, along with the data from Table 26, suggests that no scoring/winning and no tackling are contentious issues in relation to modified rules.

**Figure 32: Perceptions of the importance of premiership points/ladders for children’s involvement based on the age of survey participants**

What are the important characteristics for a coach?

As noted in Table 29 below, survey respondents rank characteristics they see as important for a coach to have in junior sport with nine of these ranked above 90 per cent in importance. Consistent with views about what keeps children involved (as per above), respondents note that it is important for a coach to be a promote teamwork, be positive and approachable, to teach the skills and rules of the sport and promote good sportspersonship. Interestingly, these were ranked above teaching sport skills well and knowing the rules of football, which are synonymous with what is viewed in society as the role of the coach. It is viewed that it is not important for a coach to win, which adds further support for the use of modified rules such as those that make up the AFL Junior Match Policy as this is consistent with the fundamental concept of the Policy.
Table 29: Participants’ beliefs about the importance of coach attributes in junior football

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Important (%)</th>
<th>Not Important (%)</th>
<th>Unsure (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promotes teamwork</td>
<td>99.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides positive feedback</td>
<td>99.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaches good sportpersonship</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approachable/personable</td>
<td>99.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaches sport skills well</td>
<td>98.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows the rules of football</td>
<td>97.8</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows players individually</td>
<td>95.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested in players’ football development</td>
<td>95.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching philosophy focuses on ‘player first, winning second’</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on fitness/physical conditioning</td>
<td>79.5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested in players’ lives outside football</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>49.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows how to use the rules to their advantage</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tough on the players</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Total respondents = 2227; missing = 1-4 dependent on item.

Further analysis of perspectives regarding the attributes of the coach illustrates 5 important aspects (refer to Table 30 on the next page). Although being successful was considered by survey participants to be one of the least important characteristics of the coach, 47 per cent of administrators believed this to be an important attribute. This is in comparison to coaches, where just over 30 per cent considered the success of the coach as important. A surprisingly statistic is that nearly 50 per cent of survey participants are unsure about whether the coach should be successful or not; this may reflect the broader society’s confusion about junior sport and the balance between participation and competition.
The different perspectives dependent on the primary role of the survey participants can be also seen in the importance given to fitness and physical conditioning of players in junior AF. Over 83 per cent of parents viewed this as an important focus of the coach, whereas only 69 per cent of the coaches themselves considered this to be important in their coaching practice. Coaches may therefore believe that their focus should be on the development of skills of their players in comparison to parents who may view physical activity as an important factor in why their children play junior AF.

Table 30: Comparison of views about importance of aspects for coaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Parents (%)</th>
<th>Coaches (%)</th>
<th>Umpires (%)</th>
<th>Administrators (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>47.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tough on the players</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows how to use the rules to their advantage</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on fitness/physical conditioning</td>
<td>83.6</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>76.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested in players’ lives outside football</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What are the important characteristics for an umpire?

As noted in Table 31 on the following page, survey respondents rank characteristics they see as important for an umpire to have in junior sport. Respondents noted that it is important for an umpire to know the rules and clearly explain to players about the decisions that they make. Also important are to manage children, keep up with the play and to encourage players—similar attributes to what have been described as the Volunteer Parent Umpire (see 2.4.2 Umpire analysis, p. 78), and more in line with the umpire taking on a development coach role in the context of junior sport.
Table 31: Participants’ beliefs about the importance of umpire attributes in junior football

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Important (%)</th>
<th>Not Important (%)</th>
<th>Unsure (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knows the rules of junior football</td>
<td>99.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes clear explanations to players when decisions are made</td>
<td>99.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeps up with the play</td>
<td>99.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manages children well</td>
<td>95.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides positive feedback</td>
<td>90.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages players during the game</td>
<td>81.7</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asserts their authority on the game</td>
<td>81.7</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards appropriate behaviour</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides guidance on positions/and or what to do next</td>
<td>67.2</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sticks strictly to the rules no matter the situation</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Total respondents = 2227; missing = 2.*

Three aspects of umpire characteristics were analysed further to understand how each of umpires, parents, coaches, and administrators viewed umpire attributes. Table 32 below displays the data and it is of interest to note that there is some difference between coaches and umpires regarding sticking to the rules. It is not surprising that the majority of umpires noted that it is important for them to stick to the rules, whereas coaches reported it to be less important in this context. This lends further support to the need to consider the junior sport context as a requiring different umpiring skills and roles.
In relation to the gender of survey participants, a great percentage of females (75%) believed that it was important for the umpire to provide guidance on positions and/or what to do next in comparison to males (57%), which may reflect a more ‘traditional’ view of the role of the umpire for males versus females (who in the case of this survey were predominantly parents).

**What are the important characteristics for parents?**

As noted in Table 33 below, survey respondents rank characteristics they see as important for parents to display in junior sport. Respondents noted that it is important for parents to encourage and foster a positive environment, as well as to respect umpire decisions. Interestingly, to know the rules of the game, provide coaching, and focus on performance are least important, which adds further support for the use of modified rules such as those that make up the AFL Junior Match Policy as this is consistent with the fundamental concept of the Policy.
Table 33: Participants’ beliefs about the importance of parent attributes in junior football

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Important (%)</th>
<th>Not Important (%)</th>
<th>Unsure (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide encouragement</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fosters a positive environment win or lose</td>
<td>99.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect umpires decisions</td>
<td>99.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows appreciation and support for coaches, umpires and administrators</td>
<td>99.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows the coach to conduct their role</td>
<td>99.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applauds the efforts of all players</td>
<td>99.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers to help at trainings/matches</td>
<td>94.7</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows the rules of football</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides additional coaching advice and feedback to players</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>40.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushes their child to be the best</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Total respondents = 2227; missing = 1.

In further analysis, it was noted that 27% of parents believe it is important for them to push their child to be the best, but only 14% of coaches believe that it is important for parents to push their child to be the best. It might be concluded that coaches are more attuned to the culture and purpose of modified rule sport than are parents.
What are the important characteristics for administrators?

As noted in Table 34 below, survey respondents rank characteristics they see as important for administrators to display in junior sport. Respondents noted that it is important for administrators to communicate, comply and focus on enjoyment for sport consumers. Least important is to develop a winning culture. Interestingly, to support modified rules is not seen as important for administrators at clubs, perhaps because respondents don’t perceive that the club administrator has the power to modify rules, or there is a lack of understanding about what and who an administrator is.

Table 34: Participants’ beliefs about the importance of administrator attributes in junior football

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Important (%)</th>
<th>Not Important (%)</th>
<th>Unsure (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensures communication with key personnel</td>
<td>99.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeps up to date with policies and procedures</td>
<td>98.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensures compliance with the rules</td>
<td>97.9</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on enjoyment for the players</td>
<td>97.6</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes on constructive feedback from others</td>
<td>97.6</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condemns unsporting behaviour</td>
<td>96.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides adult education opportunities</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifies rules and regulations to match needs and skills of players</td>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develops a winning culture at the club</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Total respondents = 2227; missing = 4-9 dependent on item.
Recommendations from National Online Survey

- The AFL has a strong and enthusiastic volunteer base reflected by the number of people participating in the survey. The interest in the survey shows that they care about junior football and this should be nurtured.

- Each of the stakeholders (parents, coaches, umpires, and administrators) had a unique perspective on modified rules in sport, the utility of them, as well as the characteristics of those involved in its delivery. Careful analysis of the football public sentiment is required to assist building a strategic and meaningful social marketing and educational campaign to assist the development and implementation of modified rules into the future.

- On a national level, knowledge of modified rules, and whether or not modified rules are implemented in their league is lacking. This further indicates the need for a social marketing campaign to raise awareness and understanding of modified rules in junior football.
4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING RULES, REGULATIONS AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

- Rule modifications have been shown to reduce amount of physical activity children experience in junior football. If increasing physical activity is a priority of the AFL, rule modification needs to be taken into consideration.

- League administrators and policy makers should carefully consider the objectives of rule modifications and weigh up both positive and negative outcomes. The trade-off between skill development and distances run is important to consider.

- Rule modifications reduced pressure on the player in possession of the ball, which may help players learn, develop, and improve disposal skills; reduce injuries; and increase confidence to gain possession of the ball.

- Rule modification sometimes resulted in reduced overall skill frequencies. Further research is needed on individual skill frequencies to determine how rule modifications influenced the distribution, frequency and length of individual player contact with the ball.

- When applied in its entirety, the AFL Junior Match Policy has had an impact on the behaviour of parents and adults in junior AFL football. It is recommended that further resources are invested in further penetrating the market to introduce the Policy across more clubs. A substantial social marketing campaign is required for all sectors of the sport.

- The AFL Junior Match Policy is not effective if implemented in a staged process, or when rules are implemented in isolation to others. VIC Metro 3 is a case example.

- Each of the sites provided both positive and negative examples of the implementation of the rules. These examples, as noted throughout this report need to be taken into consideration when reviewing and revising the Junior Match Policy guidelines and designing strategies for their implementation.

- Use one modified field size only for Under 8/9 and 10

- Consider omitting exact ground sizing, match policy could suggest that leagues use the largest ground in league that is accessible, then mark out 2 grounds

- Use permanent line markings (on the ground) in preference to cones to distinguish zones

- Use armbands to manage zones and player positions

- Consider Modified Ground Size Hubs where 1 or 2 grounds within a league are always used (possibly where there are 2 grounds) and permanently structured for modified size use (so that all Under 8/9/10 teams play at the specifically designated modified ground hub).

- Note a hub environment may also assist with facilitating the management and encouragement of positive parent/spectator culture for AFL junior sport.
• Incentivise clubs to implement modified ground hubs by offering modified equipment (such as goal posts, marking equipment) and/or facility maintenance grants to assist clubs to support and facilitate modified football for youth.

• The AFL might consider strongly discouraging junior football leagues from changing or swapping modified tackling rules beyond those stated in the guidelines/policy document.

• Leagues may be encouraged to consider introducing an Under 8 competition or a split Under 9 competition to simplify the tackling progressions.

• The split Under 9 competition would consist of one “bottom age” competition for commencing players (i.e., 7 years of age with no game experience) and one “top age” competition for older and more experienced players (e.g., 8 or 9 years of age who had been playing for 1+ years).

• Where there is no Under 8 competition, both clubs and leagues need to accommodate as best they can the range of ages that participate in the Under 9 competition by dedicating specific competitions for these players.

• It was evident from the field observations that the older and more experienced “top age” players (i.e., 9 years of age who had been playing for 2+ years) were ready for the physical contact that comes with tackling.

• The ‘wrap-around tackle’ rule needs to be more clearly outlined in the AFL Junior Match Policy statement as it is not clear whether the player can be brought to ground in the tackle (this is not explicitly stated in the document).

• Encourage the introduction of the ‘hold and release’ tackle in the Under 9 competition in those leagues where an Under 8 competition exists.

• Discourage the introduction of the ‘hold and release’ tackle in the Under 9 competition where there is NO Under 8 competition.

• Currently, tackling modifications is a four step process – the AFL could consider further simplifying the tackling modifications by removing the ‘hold and release’ tackle from the AFL Junior Match Policy and introducing the ‘wrap-around’ tackle at the Under 9 competition.

• Tackling modifications would be dependent upon the existence of either an Under 8 or split Under 9 competition – it is not recommended to introduce the wrap-around tackle for players in their initial game experiences where neither of these competitions are implemented.

• Full tackling as per the Laws of Australian Football should be introduced at the Under 11 age group or Under 12 age group where there is no Under 11 competition.

• Match results (scores), premiership points/ladders and finals should be introduced in the Under 11 and/or Under 12 competition.

• Further evidence is required at the Under 10 level to determine if there is a need to introduce match results (scores) and other associated rules as players can potentially play the game for three to four years without scoring.

• The AFL could consider removing the publishing of player names from the AFL Junior Match Policy as its value is questionable.
• Clarification of the “attempted mark” rule is required as it is too open for interpretation by players, coaches and umpires in its current form

• The deliberate kicking off the ground rule may need increased flexibility for wet weather conditions for players in the Under 12 competition

• The AFL could consider removing the one bounce restriction for players aged 5-10 years and implementing the two bounce restriction across all age groups of the AFL Junior Match Policy

• Coaches need to be educated on where to position themselves on the field, what type(s) of feedback to provide, the frequency of feedback and how this type of feedback can be different to what they deliver at quarter, half and three-quarter time.

• The coach on the ground modified rule and ground size should be not be considered in isolation to the other modified rules
4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING PATHWAY DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

- The AFL needs to consider coach development specifically for the junior context, in particular with regards to the use of modified rules in AFL. This may require an examination of existing coach development information, educational materials, structures, management and pathways.

- If the AFL Junior Match Policy is adopted, it must be a central pillar for knowledge development for umpires who referee in the junior match play context.

- The development of an education/awareness program for AFL Junior Match Play coaches that includes:
  a. Clarity with regards to why scoring is/is not used, and a plan for communicating with parents and children.
  b. Assisting coaches to facilitate the training and development of tackling, as well as the transition of tackling skills between age groups. This may include introducing tackling within season rather than between seasons.
  c. Safety issues, ineffectiveness and irrelevance of bumping in AFL, particularly at junior levels of the sport.
  d. Assisting the coaches to facilitate transition from zones to non-zone play at earlier stages within season.
  e. The AFL might consider different models of transition from zones that occurs within a season rather than between seasons as players develop an understanding of the game. Different models might include a 4 week end of season series of playing non-modified rules ready for the following season.
  f. Greater guidance regarding how and where to position themselves on the field to provide optimal impact from “Coach on the Ground” rule.
  g. Increased information on the frequency and type of feedback coaches should provide to their players for optimal impact whilst they are on the ground.
  h. Clarification of and facilitation for coaches to provide consistent implementation of the attempted mark rule.
    i. Clarification of the rule needs to ensure that players are in fact making a “reasonable attempt” to catch the ball rather than just throwing their arms in the air as a ball approaches. This may impact their skill development for future years.

- Coaches should be encouraged to work together, alongside the umpire, to ensure that players are receiving the best feedback possible.
- Encourage volunteer parent umpires particularly for U8-U11 age groups.

- Encourage associations to include 2 umpires per game to spread the workload and work rate required by umpires.

- Advertise umpiring as a way for individuals to keep fit. Use statistics to market the on-field experiences and related health benefits of umpiring.

- Revise and review the development of knowledge for umpires who work in the junior match play context.

- Ensure that the AFL Junior Match Policy document is a central pillar for knowledge development for umpires who referee in the junior match play context.

- Umpiring in junior AFL requires different skills, and positioning. The career development pathway for umpires needs to reflect this difference. How umpires communicate and position relative to the play requires knowledge and development from sources that are different to the ones currently available.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CREATING BROADER UNDERSTANDING AND ADOPTION OF MODIFIED RULES

- The AFL has a strong and enthusiastic volunteer base reflected by the number of people participating in the survey. The interest in the survey shows that they care about junior football and this should be nurtured.

- Each of the stakeholders (parents, coaches, umpires, and administrators) had a unique perspective on modified rules in sport, the utility of them, as well as the characteristics of those involved in its delivery. Careful analysis of the football public sentiment is required to assist building a strategic and meaningful social marketing and educational campaign to assist the development and implementation of modified rules into the future.

- On a national level, knowledge of modified rules, and whether or not modified rules are implemented in their league is lacking. This further indicates the need for a social marketing campaign to raise awareness and understanding of modified rules in junior football.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- It is recommended that the AFL consider using one or more of the research sites as pilot sites to implement proposed future change and conduct stringent longitudinal evaluation studies.

- The AFL could consider further researching the coach on the ground rule in relation to its effectiveness on the skill development of players.

- Through conducting this research, the AFL has put itself at the global forefront of empirical research in modified rules sport. To solidify that position, further research that builds on the results of this study should be conducted.
5.0 REPORT CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This report is to be considered at draft stage, and we would prefer that it is not distributed beyond the core research group at the AFL. We are seeking your comments and feedback in preparation for the submission of the final report in late January.

To that end, there are some important considerations. Although this report has provided an in-depth comparison of compliant VERSUS non-compliant leagues, it must be noted that each have their advantages and disadvantages.

As noted in previous sections of the report, leagues are currently operating along a continuum of compliancy. There are some significant issues that are derived from this:

- There is a place for both AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant leagues, as well as those that do not adopt modified rules.
- There is no place for Transitional Leagues who “cherry pick” the rules that they do and don’t want to implement.
- If the AFL continues with the Junior Match Policy, it needs to provide incentives for clubs to implement; educational programs to facilitate and support implementation; as well as a social marketing campaign to gain acceptance nationally.
- The AFL needs to consider the modified rules competition as another “product” in the same way that “Auskick” is a product from which parents can choose. The key is in the marketing and positioning of the modified rules product to work in parallel to (rather than in opposition to) existing non-modified rules leagues.
6.0 THE RESEARCH TEAM

Chief Investigator: Associate Professor Pamm Phillips

Associate Professor Pamm Phillips (nee Kellett) is the Coordinator for Postgraduate studies in the Deakin University Sport Management Program. Pamm is also an Affiliate Faculty Member at the University of Texas at Austin Sport Development Laboratory. Pamm teaches in the area of sport delivery systems and sport development and strategic management in sport organisations. Pamm is also the Associate Editor of Case Studies in one of the leading sport management journals—Sport Management Review.

Research Experience: Pamm has considerable research experience in AFL football. Currently she is studying recruitment and retention issues for umpires in the sports of AFL (as well as Basketball in the US context) and has also examined the tribunal system in the AFL. Pamm has also undertaken research in water consumption and management for sports including the AFL. Pamm has also undertaken research for numerous national sport organisations including Sport Medicine Australia, Tennis Australia, and Touch Football Australia. Pamm also undertakes research in the event sector (including consumer behaviour in the Olympic Games and Commonwealth Games, and other special events).

Publication record: Pamm has published nationally and internationally. Pamm’s publications have included textbooks and book chapters designed for education and development of industry professionals. She has also produced reports to industry (such as the AFL, Arts Victoria, and Tennis Australia). Her research has also been published in leading academic journals in the field including The Journal of Sport Management, Sport Management Review, and the European Journal of Sport Management.

Project Manager: Kylie Wehner

Kylie completed her PhD thesis during 2012 while undertaking managing the AFL Junior Match Policy project. Kylie submitted her PhD in October 2012. Her thesis is in the area of coach training and development, and her expertise in this area was invaluable to the project. Kylie conducted the coach observations and interviews as part of this project. Kylie has received a Publication Scholarship from the University in order to write up the results of her thesis into multiple manuscripts for publication in peer-reviewed academic journals in the field of sport coaching and sport management.
Matt Allan: Honours Student

Matt completed his Honours as part of this project. Matt’s Honours Thesis (entitled Modified Junior Sport: Does it Create Differences in Skill Frequencies and Player Movement?) required the collection and analysis of GPS and skill frequency data as part of this research project. His thesis was assessed at the level of H1A, the highest score that can be received. The results from his thesis are incorporated into this report. Matt has received a Scholarship from the University to write up his results into a manuscript for publication in a peer-reviewed academic journal in the field of sport science.

Mitchell James and Kim Encel: Practicum/Internship Students

Mitch and Kim came into the project as Practicum Students. Mitch and Kim were diligent and contentious members of the team who each brought their unique expertise. Mitch is currently ranked Number 21 in the world in the sport of Archery and will most likely be a strong contender for Australia in the 2016 Olympic Games. Mitch studied his Bachelor of Exercise Science while working in this project, and assisted in all areas of field observations, GPS data collection and analysis, and report writing. Kim studied his undergraduate degree in Psychology with a specialisation in sport while working on this project. He assisted in all areas of field observations, GPS data collection and analysis, and report writing. Kim will continue studying in 2013 to complete an Honours and hopes to continue studying the impact of AFL Junior Match Policy.

For a report of the outcomes and learning experiences from the project, see Appendix 10: Practicum/Internship Student Outcomes, p. xix.

Research Associate: Dr Paul Gastin

Dr Paul Gastin is Course Director for the Bachelor of Exercise and Sport Science, Research Program Leader in Sports Science in the Centre for Exercise and Sports Science and an ESSA Accredited Exercise Physiologist and Sports Scientist. Paul teaches in the area of applied sports science and coaching. Prior to returning to academia in 2007 he worked in performance sport in Australia and overseas over many years holding senior positions in leading organisations such as the Victorian Institute of Sport and UK Sport. Paul’s research and consultancy work centres on transferring theory into practise in areas including the monitoring of athlete responses to training and competition, assessment methods in sport to quantify load and movement, and talent and system development in sport.

Dr Gastin has considerable personal and professional experience related to the AFL’s research projects that focus on Junior Match Policy and Football Retention. He is a parent of children who participate in junior
football and is an active researcher in Australian football (AF) at junior, development and elite levels of the sport. Two recent projects have looked at the influence of chronological (U/11 to U/19) and biological age on running performance in training and competition, with a specific interest in how late maturers may be disadvantaged in junior AF competition. Other projects have considered player loads and injury in TAC Cup football and the assessment of tackling frequency, demands and outcomes in elite AFL. Dr Gastin also has extensive experience in research consultancy with clients and research partners including the Australian Sports Commission, Australian Institute of Sport, Geelong FC, GPSports, Singapore Sports Council, UK Sport, Sport England, UK Athletics, British Paralympic Association, British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences, Sports Institute of Northern Ireland.

Research Associate: Associate Professor Michael Spittle

Associate Professor Michael Spittle is a Senior Lecturer in Motor Learning and Skill Acquisition at Deakin University. Michael specialises in motor learning and motor development and is an active researcher, with numerous journal publications as well as book chapters. He is also co-author of the book “Developing Game Sense Through Practical Learning” which focuses on the development of games for skill learning in junior sport. He has also supervised research projects relating to sport burn-out in adolescents. Michael has experience in contract research and program evaluations of sport and junior sport policy as well as research on children’s involvement in sport.

Research Associate: Dr Andrew Dawson

Dr Andrew Dawson is a Lecturer in the area of Exercise and Sport Science in the School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences. He teaches Sport and Exercise Psychology and Sport Coaching at undergraduate and postgraduate level and leads the coaching research area in the Centre for Exercise and Sports Science (C-ESS). Dr Dawson has considerable expertise and an emerging track record in research on the management of coach development.
7.0 APPENDICES
### Appendix 1: Observation Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>League</th>
<th>Round Dates</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>No Games</th>
<th>Early</th>
<th>Mid</th>
<th>Late</th>
<th>Age Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vic Metro 2 (N/C)</td>
<td>Round 1 - 1 Apr Round 16 - 5 Aug</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>8 Apr, 10 June, 8 Jul</td>
<td>13 May (6)</td>
<td>1 July (12)</td>
<td>22 Jul (14)</td>
<td>U9, 10, 11, 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vic Metro 1 (N/C)</td>
<td>Round 1 - 22 Apr Round 14 - 5 Aug</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>10 June, 8 &amp; 22 July</td>
<td>6 May (3)</td>
<td>3 Jun (7)</td>
<td>29 Jul (13)</td>
<td>U9, 10, 11, 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD Metro (C)</td>
<td>Round 1 - 21 Apr Round 14 - 18 Aug</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>23 June - 7 July</td>
<td>12 May (4)</td>
<td>16 June (9)</td>
<td>11 Aug (13)</td>
<td>U6, 8, 9, 10, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC Regional (C)</td>
<td>Round 1 - 29 Apr Round 14 - 12 Aug</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>S/H 30 Jun - 15 July</td>
<td>5 May (1 or 3)</td>
<td>23 June (7 or 9)</td>
<td>4 Aug (12 or 14)</td>
<td>U9, 10, 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC Metro 3 (C)</td>
<td>Round 1 - 22 Apr Round 14 - 5 Aug</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>10 June, 8 Jul</td>
<td>27 May (6)</td>
<td>15-Jul</td>
<td>5 Aug (14)</td>
<td>U9, 10, 11, 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rounds 1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rounds 5-9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rounds 10-14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: Invitation to League

Dear (League Contact)

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and the AFL research project entitled ‘Examining the AFL Junior Match Policy for recruitment and retention’. Your league has been recommended by the AFL as a potential site for this research. I am the Project Manager for this research study and along with the research team from Deakin University (Associate Prof Pamm Kellett; Dr Paul Gastin; Dr Michael Spittle; and Dr Andrew Dawson) we look forward to your league’s participation in the research. The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of the utility of the match policy for the development of juniors.

Participation of one site/club within your league who offers match play for multiple teams in the following age groups is required: 5-8 years, 9-10 years and 11-12 years are required. The site/club’s participation will include providing video footage of the matches; approval for 3 games during the season to be observed by our trained Deakin University research team; and a selection of players, coaches, parents, administrators and officials from one or more of the teams playing at the site to participate in focus groups. Further details on each of these components will be provided in future discussion and correspondence.

Benefits to participating in this research:

- Your league will be at the forefront of junior development in AFL football and has the opportunity to be a nationally benchmarked league
- You have the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the impact of policy implementation on the success of junior development strategies
- Access to research project results which can assist you to provide better support for junior development in your league

If you have any questions regarding this research project, please do not hesitate to contact me either by phone on 0430078811 or email at kylie.wehner@deakin.edu.au

Kind Regards

Kylie Wehner

Project Manager – AFL Jump Study

Centre for Exercise and Sports Science
School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences
Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood VIC 3125
Ph: 0430078811   Email: kylie.wehner@deakin.edu.au
Appendix 3: AFL JuMP Study Flyer

AFL JUMP Study

“Examining the AFL Junior Match Policy for recruitment and retention”

What is the AFL JUMP Study?
The AFL Junior Match Policy involves game modifications for young football players aged 5-12 years based on their stage of learning and level of ability, with the goal of delivering a non-discriminatory and inclusive environment for the skill development of all participants. The purpose of the AFL JUMP Study is to gain a better understanding of the utility of the match policy for the development of juniors.

What does the research involve?

- **Observation** of junior Australian football matches in leagues throughout metropolitan and regional areas of Victoria and Queensland
- **GPS** tracking of players to measure overall match participation

If you have any queries or questions in regards to this research project please contact the Project Manager, Ms Kylie Wehner, via email kylie.wehner@deakin.edu.au

This research project is supported by the Australian Football League and is a joint collaboration between the Australian Football League and Deakin University (Centre for Exercise and Sport Science and School of Management and Marketing).
Appendix 4: Information and Consent forms for Interview Participants

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Focus Group/Phone Interview Participant/Observation Plain Language Statement

Date: May 2012
Full Project Title: Examining the AFL Junior Match Policy for recruitment and retention
Principal Researcher: Associate Professor Pamm Kellett
Student Researcher: Mr Matthew Allan
Associate Researchers: Dr Paul Gastin, Associate Professor Michael Spittle, Dr Andrew Dawson, Ms Kylie Wehner

1. Your consent.
You are invited to participate in a research project as titled above. This statement contains detailed information about the project. Its purpose is to explain to you as openly and clearly as possible all the procedures involved in this project so that you can make a fully informed decision about whether you wish to participate. Please read this statement carefully and ask questions about any information in the document to the appropriate contact listed at the end of this document.
Once you understand what the project is about, you may choose to sign the Consent Form. By signing the Consent Form, you indicate that you are fully informed and willing to participate in the research project. You will be given a copy of this statement and consent form for your records.

2. Purpose and background.
Broadly, this research aims to examine the actual versus intended outcomes of the Australian Football League (AFL)’s Junior Match Policy. The study is funded by the AFL and supported by the participating junior football leagues and their clubs.
The AFL Junior Match Policy has been designed with the intention to provide young football players (aged 5 – 12) with a modified version of the sport that is non-discriminatory and inclusive. The intention of the Junior Match Policy is to guide coaches, administrators and parents in their behaviour so that they can provide an environment that values skill development of all participants and de-emphasises winning, competition, and the physical rigour of the adult form of the game that is popularised in media. Specifically, this research will investigate

1. The impact of the presence or absence of Junior Match Policy on enjoyment and skill development of participants
2. The impact of the presence or absence of Junior Match Policy on the attitudes and match-day behaviours of coaches, parents, officials, and administrators associated with the delivery of football and ultimately the implementation (or lack thereof) of the Junior Match Policy

3. Procedure
Participation in this project will be dependent on your role within the junior football league/club. For parents/guardians and administrators this will involve participation in a group forum discussion (focus group). These focus groups (5 to 10 per group) will involve a cross-section of participants from across the three age groups (5-8, 9-10 and 11-12 years). Approximately 30 minutes in length, these focus groups will be held at the training site of the club, most likely at the scheduled training time of the parent/guardian’s child.
For coaches and officials this will involve participation in a short phone interview, and your consent for the research team to video-record the on-field game. As a coach and/or official, you are part of the on-field context, therefore you may be recorded as part of the larger study to understand how the match policy impacts play (zones, tackling etc). The phone interview component of the study will involve a cross-section of coaches and officials who work with any of the AFL Junior Match age groups (5-8, 9-10 and 11-12 years). Approximately 20 minutes in length, phone interviews will be conducted at a time preferable to the participant. Please Note: Where possible, both focus groups and phone interviews will be digitally recorded. A copy of the transcribed data will be provided to participants to clarify and confirm that it is an accurate record of discussions.

4. Possible benefits.
This project will provide a greater understanding of the utility of modified games in junior sport. There is currently little evidence as to the impact of modified games on the skill development, behaviours, participation and retention of junior sport participants. This multiple methods approach aims to not only gain a better
understanding of the impact of the AFL Junior Match Policy on junior AF players but it has wider community implications in regards to the potential benefits of modified sport on the behaviours of those involved and the participation and retention rates of children in sport.

Through their participation, junior football leagues will gain an understanding of how the AFL Junior Match Policy is implemented and operating in their league and the impacts it has on the various stakeholder groups involved. Those stakeholders, through participation in focus groups and phone interviews, also have the opportunity to express their views in regards to the policy which will not only assist the junior football leagues in the implementation of the policy but will also have wider implications for the national policy implementation of the AFL Junior Match Policy.

5. Possible risks.
There are no anticipated risks associated with this research. The researchers will ensure participant confidentiality is maintained at all times. Where study results are published or presented in any manner, only group data and anonymous data will be use. All identifying characteristics will be omitted.

6. Privacy, confidentiality and disclosure of information.
All information will be handled by the researchers with strict confidentiality. All data will be stored securely, predominantly in electronic format on password-protected computers, with any paper documents to be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Data will be retained securely at your football club and at Deakin University. Data held at Deakin University will be held for a period of six years following the conclusion of the study, then deleted or disposed of securely. Data held at your football club may continue to be kept after the six year period. The information gathered during this study may be published in scientific literature and presented at conferences. However, only anonymous data would be presented, with no information included that would allow any individual to be identified.

If you do not choose to participate, the Deakin University researchers will not have access to your personal information or data at any stage. The privacy of your data as a non-participant will be maintained by your football club, who will ensure that only data from consenting participants is provided to the Deakin University researchers.

7. Participation is voluntary.
Participation in any research project is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you will not be required to make an additional time commitment or undertake additional testing. This study will use data that has already been, and will continue to be collected on players on players from your football club. You are free to withdraw from the project at any stage by completing the “Revocation of Consent Form”. Upon withdrawing from the project, all of your individual data that is held at Deakin University will be removed.

8. Results of Project
The results from the project may be published in a student’s thesis and/or be published in a scientific journal. Your name or identity and club name will not be included in any published results and your anonymity is guaranteed. If you wish we can provide you with a copy of the results at the end of the study by requesting this information from the relevant representative from your club.

9. Reimbursement for your costs.
You will not be paid for your involvement in this project.

10. Complaints.
If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact:
The Manager, Research Integrity, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood Victoria 3125, Telephone: 9251 7129; Facsimile: 9244 6581; research-ethics@deakin.edu.au
Please quote project number 2012-2013
11. Further information, queries or any problems.
If you require further information, wish to withdraw your participation or if you have any problems concerning this project, you can contact one of the Co-researchers.

Principal Researcher
Associate Professor Pamm Kellett
School of Management and Marketing
Deakin University
221 Burwood Highway
Burwood VIC 3125
Ph: 03 9244 6936
pamm.kellett@deakin.edu.au

Project Manager
Ms Kylie Wehner
School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences
Deakin University
221 Burwood Highway
Burwood VIC 3125
Ph: 0430078811
kylie.wehner@deakin.edu.au
Appendix 5: Information and Consent forms for Umpire GPS Tracking

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Parent/Guardian for child’s Participation in GPS tracking; Observation; and Discussion.

Date: May 2012
Full Project Title: Examining the AFL Junior Match Policy for recruitment and retention
Reference Number: 2012-123

I have read and I understand the attached Plain Language Statement.

I give my permission for ……………………………………………………(name of participant) to participate in this project according to the conditions in the Plain Language Statement.

I therefore agree to the above named participant for the observation component of this research project. This will include video recording of the game by researchers which will be reviewed to make sure game-day observations are accurate and reliable.

I also agree to the use of GPS and height and weight measurements of the above named participant for the purposes of this research.

And if selected for the focus group component of this research project, I also agree to the participation of the above participant for the purposes of this research.

I have been given a copy of Plain Language Statement and Consent Form to keep.

The researcher has agreed not to reveal my identity and personal details, including where information about this project is published, or presented in any public form.

Participant’s Name (printed) …………………………………………………
Name of Person giving Consent (printed) …………………………………………………
Relationship to Participant: …………………………………………………
Signature ………………………………………………… Date …………………………

Appendix 6: Individual League Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Distance Mean ± SD (Range)</th>
<th>D/Min Mean ± SD (Range)</th>
<th>HIR D/Min Mean ± SD (Range)</th>
<th>HIR E/Min Mean ± SD (Range)</th>
<th>Max Speed Mean ± SD (Range)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>U9/U10</strong></td>
<td>C1 (n=9)</td>
<td>2280 ± 449.9 (1877 – 3030)</td>
<td>57.0 ± 11.2 (46.9 – 75.8)</td>
<td>4.6 ± 1.9 (1.4 – 7.9)</td>
<td>0.9 ± 0.3 (0.5 – 1.2)</td>
<td>19.5 ± 21.0 (17.1 – 24.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C2 (n=7)</td>
<td>1924 ± 180.0 (1707 – 2202)</td>
<td>48.1 ± 4.5 (42.7 – 55.1)</td>
<td>1.6 ± 1.5 (0.1 – 3.6)</td>
<td>0.3 ± 0.2 (0.0 – 0.6)</td>
<td>17.3 ± 2.2 (14.6 – 21.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C3 (n=10)</td>
<td>3425 ± 772.8 (2398 – 4661)</td>
<td>71.4 ± 16.1 (50.0 – 97.1)</td>
<td>4.4 ± 2.8 (1.0 – 9.6)</td>
<td>0.8 ± 0.4 (0.3 – 1.4)</td>
<td>20.0 ± 1.7 (17.9 – 22.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC1 (n=14)</td>
<td>4160 ± 1079 (2573 – 6311)</td>
<td>69.3 ± 18.0 (42.9 – 105.2)</td>
<td>5.9 ± 4.3 (0.7 – 12.9)</td>
<td>1.2 ± 0.7 (0.2 – 2.2)</td>
<td>19.6 ± 2.2 (16.6 – 23.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC2 (n=17)</td>
<td>3804 ± 789.4 (2364 – 5011)</td>
<td>79.3 ± 16.4 (49.3 – 104.4)</td>
<td>7.4 ± 4.9 (0.5 – 15.6)</td>
<td>1.4 ± 0.8 (0.2 – 2.9)</td>
<td>19.3 ± 1.4 (16.2 – 21.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>U11/12</strong></td>
<td>C1 (n=3)</td>
<td>2109 ± 400.6 (1764 – 2548)</td>
<td>52.7 ± 10.0 (44.1 – 63.7)</td>
<td>3.9 ± 0.8 (3.1 – 4.7)</td>
<td>0.8 ± 0.1 (0.7 – 1.0)</td>
<td>19.2 ± 1.0 (18.2 – 20.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C2 (n=8)</td>
<td>2286 ± 313.5 (1725 – 2631)</td>
<td>57.2 ± 7.8 (43.1 – 65.8)</td>
<td>4.8 ± 2.6 (0.8 – 8.8)</td>
<td>0.8 ± 0.4 (0.2 – 1.3)</td>
<td>19.1 ± 1.6 (16.8 – 21.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C3 (n=9)</td>
<td>3589 ± 779.7 (2459 – 4957)</td>
<td>74.8 ± 16.2 (51.2 – 103.3)</td>
<td>6.5 ± 4.2 (2.7 – 16.1)</td>
<td>1.3 ± 0.5 (0.5 – 1.9)</td>
<td>20.1 ± 2.5 (17.5 – 25.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC1 (n=9)</td>
<td>3854 ± 1158 (2134 – 5138)</td>
<td>65.8 ± 19.2 (40.0 – 92.7)</td>
<td>6.5 ± 4.1 (0.9 – 12.5)</td>
<td>1.5 ± 1.1 (0.3 – 4.0)</td>
<td>20.8 ± 1.8 (16.4 – 22.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC2 (n=17)</td>
<td>4653 ± 1968 (1678 – 7210)</td>
<td>77.6 ± 32.8 (28.0 – 120.2)</td>
<td>6.7 ± 5.8 (0.4 – 19.7)</td>
<td>1.2 ± 0.9 (0.1 – 2.9)</td>
<td>20.5 ± 2.9 (16.1 – 26.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>U11/12</strong></td>
<td>C1 (n=16)</td>
<td>4631 ± 1498 (2312 – 7293)</td>
<td>77.2 ± 25.0 (38.5 – 121.6)</td>
<td>9.7 ± 6.0 (1.5 – 24.9)</td>
<td>1.3 ± 0.7 (0.1 – 2.9)</td>
<td>22.1 ± 1.8 (19.1 – 25.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C2 (n=10)</td>
<td>4541 ± 1302 (2639 – 6994)</td>
<td>75.7 ± 21.7 (44.0 – 116.6)</td>
<td>8.0 ± 4.0 (2.9 – 14.8)</td>
<td>1.3 ± 0.6 (0.6 – 2.7)</td>
<td>22.2 ± 1.4 (20.2 – 23.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C3 (n=16)</td>
<td>4496 ± 1090 (2765 – 6374)</td>
<td>74.9 ± 18.2 (46.1 – 106.2)</td>
<td>6.3 ± 3.0 (1.4 – 11.3)</td>
<td>1.1 ± 0.4 (0.4 – 1.9)</td>
<td>21.8 ± 1.7 (17.2 – 24.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC1 (n=18)</td>
<td>5189 ± 868.0 (3838 – 6539)</td>
<td>86.5 ± 14.5 (64.0 – 109.0)</td>
<td>9.9 ± 4.1 (2.7 – 17.9)</td>
<td>1.6 ± 0.5 (0.6 – 2.6)</td>
<td>22.1 ± 1.5 (19.5 – 24.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC2 (n=17)</td>
<td>4830 ± 884.1 (3464 – 6202)</td>
<td>80.5 ± 14.7 (57.7 – 103.4)</td>
<td>8.6 ± 3.2 (5.6 – 17.7)</td>
<td>1.3 ± 0.4 (0.6 – 1.9)</td>
<td>21.8 ± 1.2 (19.9 – 24.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D/Min: distance per minute; HIR D/Min: high-intensity running distance per minute; HIR E/Min: high-intensity running efforts per minute; SD: standard deviation
AFL Junior Match Policy Compliant/Non-Compliant Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Distance (Range)</th>
<th>D/Min (Range)</th>
<th>HIR D/Min (Range)</th>
<th>HIR E/Min (Range)</th>
<th>Max Speed (Range)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U8/U9</td>
<td>C (n=16)</td>
<td>2124 ± 392.7 (1707 – 3030)</td>
<td>53.1 ± 9.8 (42.7 – 75.8)</td>
<td>3.3 ± 2.3 (0.1 – 7.9)</td>
<td>0.6 ± 0.4 (0.0 – 1.2)</td>
<td>18.5 ± 2.4 (14.6 – 24.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC (n=31)</td>
<td>*3965 ± 932.8 (2364 – 6311)</td>
<td>*74.8 ± 17.6 (42.9 – 105.2)</td>
<td>*6.7 ± 4.6 (0.5 – 15.6)</td>
<td>*1.3 ± 0.7 (0.2 – 2.9)</td>
<td>19.4 ± 1.8 (16.2 – 23.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U9/U10</td>
<td>C (n=11)</td>
<td>2238 ± 328.3 (1725 – 2631)</td>
<td>56.0 ± 8.2 (43.1 – 65.8)</td>
<td>4.5 ± 2.2 (0.8 – 8.8)</td>
<td>0.8 ± 0.3 (0.2 – 1.3)</td>
<td>19.1 ± 1.4 (16.8 – 21.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC (n=26)</td>
<td>*4376 ± 1749 (1678 – 7210)</td>
<td>*73.5 ± 29.0 (28.0 – 120.2)</td>
<td>*6.6 ± 5.2 (0.4 – 19.7)</td>
<td>*1.3 ± 1.0 (0.1 – 4.0)</td>
<td>*20.6 ± 2.6 (16.1 – 26.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U11/U12</td>
<td>C (n=26)</td>
<td>4596 ± 1399 (2312 – 7293)</td>
<td>76.6 ± 23.3 (38.5 – 121.6)</td>
<td>9.1 ± 5.3 (1.5 – 24.9)</td>
<td>1.3 ± 0.7 (0.1 – 2.9)</td>
<td>22.1 ± 1.6 (19.1 – 25.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC (n=35)</td>
<td>5015 ± 881.9 (3464 – 6539)</td>
<td>83.6 ± 14.7 (57.7 – 109.0)</td>
<td>9.3 ± 3.7 (2.7 – 17.9)</td>
<td>1.4 ± 0.5 (0.6 – 2.6)</td>
<td>22.0 ± 1.3 (19.5 – 24.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D/Min: distance per minute; HIR D/Min: high-intensity running distance per minute; HIR E/Min: high-intensity running efforts per minute; SD: standard deviation
## Appendix 7: Notational Analysis Compliant/Non-Compliant Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Kick Mean ± SD</th>
<th>Handball Mean ± SD</th>
<th>Bounce Mean ± SD</th>
<th>Tackle Mean ± SD</th>
<th>Stoppage Mean ± SD</th>
<th>Pressure Mean ± SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U8/U9</td>
<td>C (n=16)</td>
<td>4.03 ± 0.98</td>
<td>0.90 ± 0.44</td>
<td>0.20 ± 0.15</td>
<td>0.01 ± 0.05</td>
<td>0.56 ± 0.23</td>
<td>0.63 ± 0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC (n=16)</td>
<td>*4.67 ± 0.67</td>
<td>0.88 ± 0.49</td>
<td>*0.46 ± 0.26</td>
<td>*0.65 ± 0.63</td>
<td>*0.90 ± 0.23</td>
<td>*1.61 ± 0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U9/U10</td>
<td>C (n=16)</td>
<td>4.26 ± 1.16</td>
<td>0.74 ± 0.45</td>
<td>0.23 ± 0.15</td>
<td>1.09 ± 0.49</td>
<td>1.29 ± 0.31</td>
<td>1.19 ± 0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC (n=12)</td>
<td>4.71 ± 0.56</td>
<td>1.23 ± 0.21</td>
<td>0.42 ± 0.29</td>
<td>0.28 ± 0.39</td>
<td>0.99 ± 0.28</td>
<td>*1.71 ± 0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U11/12</td>
<td>C (n=20)</td>
<td>4.73 ± 0.62</td>
<td>1.51 ± 0.51</td>
<td>*0.31 ± 0.19</td>
<td>1.26 ± 0.30</td>
<td>1.07 ± 0.25</td>
<td>2.10 ± 0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC (n=16)</td>
<td>4.99 ± 0.47</td>
<td>*1.93 ± 0.54</td>
<td>0.12 ± 0.12</td>
<td>1.48 ± 0.45</td>
<td>1.25 ± 0.27</td>
<td>*2.65 ± 0.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*denotes statistical significance (p<0.05); mean = rate per minute; SD: standard deviation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Effective Kick Mean ± SD</th>
<th>Effective Handball Mean ± SD</th>
<th>Mark Attempt Mean ± SD</th>
<th>Mark Contested Mean ± SD</th>
<th>Mark Completed Mean ± SD</th>
<th>Bounce Completed Mean ± SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U8/U9</td>
<td>C (n=16)</td>
<td>1.71 ± 0.56</td>
<td>0.54 ± 0.27</td>
<td>1.48 ± 0.54</td>
<td>0.46 ± 0.27</td>
<td>*0.91 ± 0.57</td>
<td>0.16 ± 0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC (n=16)</td>
<td>1.82 ± 0.29</td>
<td>0.46 ± 0.38</td>
<td>1.63 ± 0.46</td>
<td>*1.03 ± 0.38</td>
<td>0.58 ± 0.24</td>
<td>*0.34 ± 0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U9/U10</td>
<td>C (n=16)</td>
<td>1.91 ± 0.76</td>
<td>0.41 ± 0.24</td>
<td>1.91 ± 0.79</td>
<td>1.11 ± 0.53</td>
<td>1.03 ± 0.36</td>
<td>0.19 ± 0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC (n=12)</td>
<td>1.96 ± 0.35</td>
<td>*0.75 ± 0.30</td>
<td>1.75 ± 0.40</td>
<td>1.00 ± 0.49</td>
<td>0.90 ± 0.40</td>
<td>0.33 ± 0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U11/12</td>
<td>C (n=20)</td>
<td>1.91 ± 0.36</td>
<td>0.70 ± 0.32</td>
<td>1.86 ± 0.51</td>
<td>0.52 ± 0.27</td>
<td>0.98 ± 0.33</td>
<td>*0.27 ± 0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC (n=16)</td>
<td>1.94 ± 0.34</td>
<td>*0.94 ± 0.33</td>
<td>2.17 ± 0.46</td>
<td>*0.93 ± 0.33</td>
<td>1.10 ± 0.32</td>
<td>0.08 ± 0.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*denotes statistical significance (p<0.05); mean = rate per minute; SD: standard deviation
## Notational Analysis Individual League Comparison (1 of 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Kick Mean ± SD</th>
<th>Handball Mean ± SD</th>
<th>Bounce Mean ± SD</th>
<th>Tackle Mean ± SD</th>
<th>Stoppage Mean ± SD</th>
<th>Pressure Mean ± SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U8/U9</td>
<td>C1 (n=8)</td>
<td>4.83 ± 0.51</td>
<td>1.03 ± 0.44</td>
<td>0.18 ± 0.13</td>
<td>0.03 ± 0.07</td>
<td>0.66 ± 0.22</td>
<td>1.20 ± 0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C2 (n=8)</td>
<td>3.24 ± 0.59</td>
<td>0.78 ± 0.44</td>
<td>0.23 ± 0.18</td>
<td>0.00 ± 0.00</td>
<td>0.46 ± 0.21</td>
<td>0.63 ± 0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C3 (n=4)</td>
<td>4.44 ± 0.71</td>
<td>1.08 ± 0.25</td>
<td>0.25 ± 0.10</td>
<td>1.21 ± 0.32</td>
<td>1.33 ± 0.25</td>
<td>2.30 ± 0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC1 (n=8)</td>
<td>4.61 ± 0.58</td>
<td>1.01 ± 0.64</td>
<td>0.58 ± 0.14</td>
<td>0.11 ± 0.06</td>
<td>0.88 ± 0.19</td>
<td>1.28 ± 0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC2 (n=8)</td>
<td>4.74 ± 0.78</td>
<td>0.75 ± 0.26</td>
<td>0.34 ± 0.31</td>
<td>1.19 ± 0.41</td>
<td>0.92 ± 0.27</td>
<td>1.94 ± 0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U9/U10</td>
<td>C1 (n=8)</td>
<td>5.10 ± 0.44</td>
<td>1.01 ± 0.40</td>
<td>0.20 ± 0.14</td>
<td>1.04 ± 0.56</td>
<td>1.30 ± 0.39</td>
<td>1.54 ± 0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C2 (n=8)</td>
<td>3.43 ± 1.05</td>
<td>0.46 ± 0.33</td>
<td>0.26 ± 0.17</td>
<td>1.15 ± 0.44</td>
<td>1.28 ± 0.22</td>
<td>0.85 ± 0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C3 (n=8)</td>
<td>4.07 ± 0.34</td>
<td>1.33 ± 0.52</td>
<td>0.47 ± 0.24</td>
<td>0.75 ± 0.26</td>
<td>1.26 ± 0.73</td>
<td>1.93 ± 0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC1 (n=8)</td>
<td>4.68 ± 0.59</td>
<td>1.21 ± 0.25</td>
<td>0.53 ± 0.27</td>
<td>0.03 ± 0.04</td>
<td>0.90 ± 0.20</td>
<td>1.53 ± 0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC2 (n=4)</td>
<td>4.78 ± 0.55</td>
<td>1.27 ± 0.05</td>
<td>0.18 ± 0.14</td>
<td>0.78 ± 0.21</td>
<td>1.18 ± 0.35</td>
<td>2.07 ± 0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U11/U12</td>
<td>C1 (n=12)</td>
<td>4.86 ± 0.67</td>
<td>1.77 ± 0.46</td>
<td>0.34 ± 0.21</td>
<td>1.18 ± 0.34</td>
<td>1.02 ± 0.20</td>
<td>2.21 ± 0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C2 (n=8)</td>
<td>4.55 ± 0.52</td>
<td>1.12 ± 0.30</td>
<td>0.26 ± 0.16</td>
<td>1.38 ± 0.18</td>
<td>1.15 ± 0.32</td>
<td>1.93 ± 0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C3 (n=8)</td>
<td>4.55 ± 0.82</td>
<td>1.66 ± 0.80</td>
<td>0.14 ± 0.13</td>
<td>0.98 ± 0.25</td>
<td>1.13 ± 0.31</td>
<td>2.23 ± 0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC1 (n=8)</td>
<td>4.93 ± 0.51</td>
<td>2.03 ± 0.67</td>
<td>0.19 ± 0.12</td>
<td>1.66 ± 0.53</td>
<td>1.23 ± 0.27</td>
<td>2.74 ± 0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC2 (n=8)</td>
<td>5.05 ± 0.44</td>
<td>1.83 ± 0.39</td>
<td>0.04 ± 0.03</td>
<td>1.30 ± 0.28</td>
<td>1.26 ± 0.29</td>
<td>2.57 ± 0.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean = rate per minute; SD: standard deviation
## Notational Analysis Individual League Comparison (2 of 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Effective Kick Mean ± SD</th>
<th>Effective Handball Mean ± SD</th>
<th>Mark Attempt Mean ± SD</th>
<th>Mark Contested Mean ± SD</th>
<th>Mark Completed Mean ± SD</th>
<th>Bounce Completed Mean ± SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U8/U9</td>
<td>C1 (n=8)</td>
<td>2.06 ± 0.42</td>
<td>0.55 ± 1.78</td>
<td>1.70 ± 0.55</td>
<td>0.58 ± 0.32</td>
<td>1.00 ± 0.53</td>
<td>0.14 ± 0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C2 (n=8)</td>
<td>1.36 ± 0.45</td>
<td>0.54 ± 0.35</td>
<td>1.26 ± 0.46</td>
<td>0.34 ± 0.12</td>
<td>0.81 ± 0.62</td>
<td>0.19 ± 0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C3 (n=4)</td>
<td>1.60 ± 0.22</td>
<td>0.46 ± 0.20</td>
<td>1.75 ± 0.53</td>
<td>0.54 ± 0.28</td>
<td>0.88 ± 0.31</td>
<td>0.21 ± 0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC1 (n=8)</td>
<td>1.73 ± 0.29</td>
<td>0.64 ± 0.45</td>
<td>1.38 ± 0.41</td>
<td>1.04 ± 0.34</td>
<td>0.63 ± 0.24</td>
<td>0.41 ± 0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC2 (n=8)</td>
<td>1.92 ± 0.27</td>
<td>0.28 ± 0.17</td>
<td>1.88 ± 0.38</td>
<td>1.01 ± 0.45</td>
<td>0.53 ± 0.24</td>
<td>0.28 ± 0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U9/U10</td>
<td>C1 (n=8)</td>
<td>2.15 ± 0.56</td>
<td>0.53 ± 0.19</td>
<td>2.26 ± 0.49</td>
<td>1.21 ± 0.39</td>
<td>1.23 ± 0.29</td>
<td>0.19 ± 0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C2 (n=8)</td>
<td>1.68 ± 0.90</td>
<td>0.29 ± 0.23</td>
<td>1.56 ± 0.90</td>
<td>1.01 ± 0.66</td>
<td>0.84 ± 0.32</td>
<td>0.19 ± 0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C3 (n=8)</td>
<td>1.63 ± 0.27</td>
<td>0.66 ± 0.36</td>
<td>1.31 ± 0.28</td>
<td>0.86 ± 0.29</td>
<td>0.66 ± 0.25</td>
<td>0.33 ± 0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC1 (n=8)</td>
<td>2.11 ± 0.35</td>
<td>0.83 ± 0.32</td>
<td>1.83 ± 0.44</td>
<td>1.26 ± 0.36</td>
<td>1.00 ± 0.34</td>
<td>0.42 ± 0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC2 (n=4)</td>
<td>1.67 ± 0.05</td>
<td>0.58 ± 0.19</td>
<td>1.60 ± 0.30</td>
<td>0.47 ± 0.11</td>
<td>0.68 ± 0.49</td>
<td>0.15 ± 0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U11/12</td>
<td>C1 (n=12)</td>
<td>1.93 ± 0.34</td>
<td>0.84 ± 0.28</td>
<td>1.94 ± 0.57</td>
<td>0.58 ± 0.31</td>
<td>1.08 ± 0.32</td>
<td>0.29 ± 0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C2 (n=8)</td>
<td>1.88 ± 0.41</td>
<td>0.48 ± 0.26</td>
<td>1.75 ± 0.40</td>
<td>0.42 ± 0.17</td>
<td>0.83 ± 0.29</td>
<td>0.24 ± 0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C3 (n=8)</td>
<td>1.94 ± 0.38</td>
<td>0.85 ± 0.47</td>
<td>1.91 ± 0.47</td>
<td>0.68 ± 0.12</td>
<td>1.00 ± 0.49</td>
<td>0.13 ± 0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC1 (n=8)</td>
<td>1.90 ± 0.36</td>
<td>0.94 ± 0.39</td>
<td>1.91 ± 0.35</td>
<td>0.74 ± 0.20</td>
<td>0.97 ± 0.25</td>
<td>0.14 ± 0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC2 (n=8)</td>
<td>1.98 ± 0.35</td>
<td>0.93 ± 0.27</td>
<td>2.43 ± 0.42</td>
<td>1.13 ± 0.33</td>
<td>1.23 ± 0.35</td>
<td>0.02 ± 0.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean = rate per minute; SD: standard deviation
Appendix 8: Coach Interview Guide

**Coach Interview Questions:**

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself and how and why you got into this role as coach of U[age] at [club].
2. What rules do you use in U[age] at [club]? How are these similar or different to other junior leagues in your area? Compared to what kids watch on TV?
3. What do you believe the impact of your rules are on junior football in terms of fun, enjoyment and skill development of the kids?
4. Do parents understand the rules and what you are trying to achieve at [club]?

**Compliant:**

5. Have you received any formal training to coach under the modified rules that you use? If so, what did this involve? If not, how did you learn?
6. At [your club] the coach is allowed on the ground in UB/U9 competitions? This doesn’t happen in other leagues -- what is the purpose of this and does it work?
7. What do you think kids enjoy most/enjoy least about playing AFL under modified rules versus what they see on TV?
8. At [your club] there are runners, umpires, assistant coaches, and water carriers just like in AFL. Do these people play the same role in U[age] as what they would in AFL?
9. What do you believe works best in terms of the rule modifications that you use? Why?
10. If you could recommend changes to the AFL for their modified rules policies, what would these changes be?

**Non-Compliant:**

5. In other junior leagues coaches use modified rules such as limited or no tackling, no scoring, use of zones, reduced player numbers and smaller fields for age groups below 12 years. Your club doesn’t. What do you think are the advantages of the way you do things at [club]. Are there any disadvantages?
6. What if your league wanted to implement more modified rules such as limited tackling in younger age groups – how would this impact your coaching? What about no scoring? Zones? Ground size? Reduced player numbers? (VIC Metro 1 – no tackling in U9, query about bumping?)
7. In other leagues the coach is allowed on the ground in the U8/U9 competitions. This does not happen in your league – what do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of the coach on the ground? (VIC Metro 2 – At your club the coach is allowed on the ground in U9 competitions. This doesn’t happen in other leagues – what is the purpose of this and does it work?)
8. What is your opinion of tackling in the younger age groups? (U12 coaches - How does the removal of tackling in the younger age groups affect their skills when moving up to higher age groups?)
9. What are your thoughts on the policy of no scoring in the younger age groups?
10. What do you think about the use of smaller ground sizes, reduced player numbers and the use of zones to increase the participation and skill levels of junior football players?
11. At [your club] there are runners, umpires, assistant coaches, and water carriers just like in AFL. Do these people play the same role in U[age] as what they would in AFL?
12. If you could change the rules of the game, what would be your recommendations?
Appendix 9: Survey Raw Data

*AFL Junior Match Policy rules participants’ believe should be implemented in their Junior Football League (Complete)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree (%)</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Unsure (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No deliberate kicking off the ground</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced ground size</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited bounces</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No scoring</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified tackling</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted mark</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced player numbers</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No tackling</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zones</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspect</td>
<td>Very Important (%)</td>
<td>Important (%)</td>
<td>Not Very Important (%)</td>
<td>Not at all Important (%)</td>
<td>Unsure (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>86.2</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to tackle</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendships</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise/fitness</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased confidence/self-esteem</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays good sporting behaviour</td>
<td>85.3</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winning</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of sport related skills</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe environment</td>
<td>71.8</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No and/or modified tackling</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun/enjoyment</td>
<td>83.1</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the rules</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premiership points/ladders</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External rewards</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants’ beliefs about the importance of coach attributes in junior football (Complete)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Very Important (%)</th>
<th>Important (%)</th>
<th>Not Very Important (%)</th>
<th>Not at all Important (%)</th>
<th>Unsure (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provides positive feedback</td>
<td>85.1</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaches sport skills well</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>49.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows the rules of football</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows players individually</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaches good sportspersonship</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tough on the players</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes teamwork</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching philosophy focuses on ‘player first, winning second’</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approachable/personable</td>
<td>71.0</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows how to use the rules to their advantage</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested in players’ football development</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on fitness/physical conditioning</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested in players’ lives outside football</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>42.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants’ beliefs about the importance of umpire attributes in junior football (Complete)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Very Important (%)</th>
<th>Important (%)</th>
<th>Not Very Important (%)</th>
<th>Not at all Important (%)</th>
<th>Unsure (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provides positive feedback</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows the rules of junior football</td>
<td>89.1</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeps up with the play</td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes clear explanations to players when decisions are made</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages players during the game</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sticks strictly to the rules no matter the situation</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides guidance on positions/ and or what to do next</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards appropriate behaviour</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manages children well</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asserts their authority on the game</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants' beliefs about the importance of parent attributes in junior football (Complete)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Very Important (%)</th>
<th>Important (%)</th>
<th>Not Very Important (%)</th>
<th>Not at all Important (%)</th>
<th>Unsure (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide Encouragement</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers to help at trainings/matches</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect umpires decisions</td>
<td>83.8</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fosters a positive environment win or lose</td>
<td>85.9</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides additional coaching advice and feedback to players</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows appreciation and support for coaches, umpires and administrators</td>
<td>77.4</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applauds the efforts of all players</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows the rules of football</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushes their child to be the best</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows the coach to conduct their role</td>
<td>74.5</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants' beliefs about the importance of administrator attributes in junior football (Complete)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Very Important (%)</th>
<th>Important (%)</th>
<th>Not Very Important (%)</th>
<th>Not at all Important (%)</th>
<th>Unsure (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensures compliance with the rules</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on enjoyment for the players</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeps up to date with policies and procedures</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensures communication with key personnel</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides adult education opportunities</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifies rules and regulations to match needs and skills of players</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condemns unsporting behaviour</td>
<td>78.0</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes on constructive feedback from others</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develops a winning culture at the club</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 10: Practicum/Internship Student Outcomes

INTERNSHIP STUDENT ROLES

The roles for this study were:

Helping out on match day with data collection

Data entry and analysis

MATCH DAY DATA COLLECTION ROLES

Consisted of:

• Fitting GPS units and bros to children
• Measuring heights and weights of children
• Filming each game
• Participant, umpire and general observations
• Transportation of materials
DATA ENTRY AND ANALYSIS

Using GPS program Team AMS data entry and analysis from players included:
• Average speed and distance run
• Top speed achieved
• Amount of high intensity running bouts (over 14.4 km/h)
• Knocks received

Other data entered and analyzed included:
• Age, height and weight of players
• Video analysis (skills and rule interpretations)

OUR TASKS AND SERVICES
FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT USED

The club rooms were used at each football ground which the particular observation was taken at.
The equipment used varied in the study depending on tasks undertaken. These consisted of:
- GPS Tracking
- Fitting vests and GPS
- Biometric Analysis
- Tape measure scales and measuring tape
- Data Collection and Analysis
- Laptop (including GPS analysis program Team AMS)
- Video camera and video analysis software
- Notebooks
- Standard observational protocols

PRACTICAL SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED

Through this project we developed the following skills:
- Ability to critically review research in a broad sense and its repercussions
- Interact with a variety of people including children, parents, coaches and administrators
- Fit and use GPS units and analyse output
- Conduct field observations objectively using standard research protocols
- Film games and analyse output proficiently
- Work effectively in a team environment
- Determine important statistics related to research problem
- Creating research relevant videos
BENEFITS OF BEING INVOLVED IN STUDY

Realisation that not all research is conducted in stuffy rooms, and the importance of field based (real world) data collection.

Understanding that the ability to review, analyse, and apply empirical research is an important component for our future career.

Development of understanding of the optimal team environment that can facilitate work output, and my role in creating and maintaining the environment.

Realizing that we are most productive when happy and interested.