



# Policy – Umpiring

DRAFT

## 1 Document purpose

This document explains the Association's position with regard to umpiring.

## 2 What this policy applies to

This policy applies to all competitions, officials, clubs, team officials, players and spectators.

## 3 Policy

### 3.1 Quality umpiring

Quality umpiring is an essential element for the quality of the game day environment; player development; and player welfare.

The Association has the primary responsibility for the development of umpires and for the continual improvement of the standard, proficiency and professionalism of umpires across the competition.

As a guide for umpires, the Association Executive, the Umpires Organiser and the Umpires Coach should maintain a document (as an attachment to this policy) that explains the expected standards for umpires (refer to Attachment 1).

### 3.2 Respect for the role of the umpire and feedback about performance

#### 3.2.1 The role of the umpire

The role of the umpire is to:

- interpret and apply the laws according to the spirit of the laws and the spirit of the game;
- attend to the administrative requirements necessary for the successful staging of the game;
- ensure a safe environment for all players and officials.

The Laws of Australian Football states:

*The field umpires shall officiate and have full control of a match.*

That is a law of the game that should be understood by all persons involved with the game.

All persons involved with junior football should respect the roles of the umpires.

All coaches are expected to observe the WAFC 'Umpires handshake policy'.

#### 3.2.2 Zero tolerance stance against abuse towards umpires

Umpires must be allowed to officiate a match without abuse, insult or threat. This includes prior to, during and following the match. The Association supports a **zero tolerance** stance against any form of abuse towards umpires.

#### 3.2.3 Seeking clarification about umpiring decisions

Umpires make decisions based on their knowledge and experience, and based on their position relative to the play. Everybody sees things differently and everybody involved with junior football should be aware of that fact.

After a decision, players may ask a question of the umpire for clarification, but that should be the extent of the interaction. Any further comment from a player or team official may be regarded as disputing the umpire's decision which is a reportable offence. Players should be coached to accept an umpire's decision and then focus immediately on the next passage of play.

As per the Competition Rules, only the captain or team manager may approach the umpires during quarter-time breaks for clarification of the Competition Rules.

### 3.2.4 Feedback regarding umpire performance

All feedback regarding umpire performance must be as prescribed in the Competition Rules which is... ***in writing to the Umpires Coach***. Comments about umpire performance made in any other way by any Club, team official, player or spectator may be subject to a fine or other penalty.

## 3.3 Umpire registration, accreditation and code of conduct

### 3.3.1 Registration

All umpires should be aged at least 13 years.

All umpires (field, boundary and goal) should be registered with the Association as an umpire. Registrations should be made to the Association Registrar and may involve a working with children declaration and a declaration that the umpire will abide by the WAFC 'Code of conduct for umpires'.

On registration, umpires should be provided a copy of what are the expected standards of an umpire (refer to Attachment 1).

Registration is required each season so that the Association may check the credentials of umpires and to keep a record of contact details for information to umpires and umpire development purposes.

### 3.3.2 Accreditation

Given the significance of the umpiring role to the game day environment and the development of footballers:

- All field umpires of youth grades (Year 8+) should be an AFL Level 1 Accredited Field Umpire, as a minimum.
- All field umpires of junior grades (Year 7 and below) should be Level 1 Accredited or actively working towards achieving that accreditation.
- All boundary and goal umpires during the finals series should be AFL Level 1 Accredited.
- All club appointed boundary and goal umpires should be encouraged to participate in umpire training and information sessions.

### 3.3.3 Code of conduct for umpires

All umpires should commit to upholding the WAFC 'Code of conduct for umpires'. This commitment should be reaffirmed each season on registration.

## 3.4 Umpires Organiser

In the event that the Association does not elect an Umpires Organiser, the Association Executive should appoint an Umpires Organiser.

The role of the Umpires Organiser should be to:

- maintain a roster of umpires allocated to matches, referring to umpire allocation guidelines (below);
- notify umpires of their schedule of matches, ideally a week or two in advance of the matches;
- ensure umpires acknowledge their schedule prior to match day;

- deal with late changes to the umpiring roster due to circumstances such as illness;
- advise clubs and team managers of problems finding a person to umpire a match, ideally giving the team managers sufficient notice to find an umpire before match day;
- keep track of the umpires rostered to officiate a match and the umpires that actually officiated each match;
- provide a regular report to the Umpires Coach of the variances between rostered and actual umpires;
- provide a regular report to the Treasurer of the actual umpires for umpire payments;
- work closely with the Umpires Coach regarding the allocation of umpires to matches, so that umpires are able to maximise their experiences and development;
- work with the Association to continually improve the umpire rostering process; and
- assist the Association Registrar with the updating of the AFL Sportingpulse database of umpires.

The Umpires Organiser should:

- have good organisational skills;
- have good contact and interpersonal skills;
- have a good appreciation for AFL umpiring; and
- be willing to develop a good rapport with the registered umpires.

### 3.5 Umpires Coach

The Association Executive, in consultation with the WAFC, should appoint an Umpires Coach.

The roles of the Umpires Coach and Umpires Organiser may be assigned to one person but separate persons is suggested.

The role of the Umpires Coach should be to:

- coordinate programmes and training sessions for the coaching and development of umpires;
- coordinate AFL accreditation of umpires;
- coordinate an umpire mentoring programme, particularly for new and younger umpires;
- provide coaching of and positive feedback to registered umpires on game days;
- receive and handle feedback relating to umpires;
- monitor and assess the competency and performance of umpires;
- liaise with the WA Football Commission, including the Junior Community Umpires Manager and State Umpires Coach, regarding umpire coaching and development;
- attend umpire coaching meetings;
- as part of the development for umpires, liaise with other competitions (such as the SWJFL and the SWFL) for the appointment of umpires to those competitions;
- ensure each umpire is allocated the appropriate attire for umpiring and encourage umpires to wear it correctly;
- coordinate information sessions for umpires on a variety of topics, inviting guest speakers from the WAFC, SWFL and other organisations;
- promote the Competition Rules;
- promote the AFL, WAFC and Association policies as they relate to junior football;
- conduct information sessions for club members to promote the role of the umpire and for recruiting of umpires;
- coordinate information and basic training sessions for club appointed boundary and goal umpires;
- liaise with other Umpires Coaches within the broader region towards developing relations that may promote the development of umpiring;
- establish and maintain a library of umpiring development resources that is accessible by all umpires;
- attend Association meetings from time to time as advised by the Association Secretary;

- act as the Umpire’s Advocate at any protests and disputes tribunals;
- work closely with the Umpires Organiser for the appointment of umpires to matches, so that umpires are able to maximise their experiences and development; and
- assist the Association Registrar with the updating of the AFL Sportingpulse database of umpires.

The Umpires Coach should:

- be a minimum AFL Level 2 Accredited Umpire or working towards that accreditation;
- have completed or working towards completing the AFL Mentor Accreditation; and
- have applied for or able to provide evidence of a current Working With Children Check.

### 3.6 Appointment and payment of umpires

#### 3.6.1 Appointment of umpires to matches

The Association, through the Umpires Organiser, is responsible for appointing field umpires to *all* matches.

Each team should appoint *competent* boundary and goal umpires to all matches, except for the finals series where the Association should appoint the boundary and goal umpires. Goals umpires should be aged at least 13 years.

Boundary umpires should be able to demonstrate that they are capable of appropriate boundary throw-ins. Contesting for the boundary throw-in is an important part of footballer development and boundary throw-ins should be at a consistent height and an appropriate distance from the boundary.

#### 3.6.2 When the appointed umpires do not show to a match

When the Association appointed umpires do not show to a match within a reasonable period from the scheduled start time, the home team manager should contact the Umpires Coordinator immediately and advise. The team managers of the two teams may then agree to appoint one or two field umpires to the match.

Should the Association appointed umpires show up later, they should take over at a suitable break in play. The home team manager should record on the match report the time that this occurred and the time left for the quarter.

As a standby in the event that appointed umpires do not show, each team should ensure they can call on a competent field umpire to officiate the match and have a spare suitable whistle and high-visibility shirt or vest available within the team kit, in addition to a shirt or vest and whistle for a boundary umpire.

#### 3.6.3 Guidelines for the allocation of umpires to matches

Year group	Field umpires
3	1
4	1
5	1
6	2
7	2
8	2
9	2
10	2
11	2

Year group	Field umpires
12	2

**NOTE:** The above table is for the allocation of umpires assumes single year age groups. Where an age group is not run as a competition, use the next highest age group.

### 3.6.4 Umpire payments

Payments to umpires should be made by the Association periodically during the season.

The Association Executive should determine the amount of the umpire payment amount for a season, based on WAFC guidelines for junior football, the umpire's level of accreditation, number of umpires on the field and with other considerations as the Association Executive thinks is necessary.

The Association Executive may consider a form of performance bonus for umpires that continue to meet the expected standards for umpires (referring to Attachment 1).

### 3.6.5 Improvement of umpire appointment, administration and payment processes

To facilitate administration, the Association should continually improve processes for the appointment of umpires to matches; to assist with the administrative duties of an umpire and to ensure umpires are paid correctly.

## 3.7 Umpire development

### 3.7.1 Umpire training

Umpires should endeavour to attend all programmes and training sessions as arranged by the Umpires Coach.

Umpires should work to attain a level of personal health and fitness so that they are able to officiate their schedule of matches with full concentration.

Umpires should be aware of their administration duties, including correct procedures for checking team sheets, completing match documentation and for making reports (including for reportable offences).

### 3.7.2 AFL, WAFC and Association policies and guidelines

All umpires should endeavour to keep informed of the AFL, WAFC and Association policies for junior football, particularly as they relate to the umpiring role. Examples are:

- This policy
- Equal opportunity policy (WAFC)
- Alcohol policy (WAFC)
- Smoke free environment policy (WAFC)
- Player rotation policy (WAFC)
- Member protection policy (WAFC)
- Pregnancy policy (WAFC)
- Racial vilification policy (WAFC)
- Prohibited persons declaration form (PPD) policy (WAFC)
- Working with children legislation policy (WAFC)
- Risk management policy (WAFC)
- Infectious diseases policy (WAFC, Department of Sport and Recreation)
- Protective equipment policy (WAFC)
- Spectacles policy (WAFC)
- Concussion policy (WAFC)
- Umpires handshake policy (WAFC)
- Codes of conduct (WAFC)

- Competition Bylaw 1, “The spirit of junior football”
- AFL Kids First

While it may not be the role of the umpire to enforce these policies and guidelines, umpires should be aware of and should consider reporting incidents if the umpire believes the circumstances warrant reporting.

### **3.7.3 Competition Rules**

All umpires should endeavour to keep informed of the Competition Rules (including the modified rules for the junior grades of competition, i.e. Year 7 and younger). If an umpire is unsure about the Competition Rules, they should seek clarification from the Umpires Coach.

### **3.7.4 Mentoring scheme**

The Umpires Coach should arrange a mentoring scheme where more experienced umpires are encouraged to work and umpire with lesser experienced umpires.

When mentoring, the more experienced umpire should provide positive advice about umpiring decisions and positioning. Performance review should be left to the Umpires Coach.

### **3.7.5 Keeping informed**

Umpires should endeavour to keep informed about good umpiring practices and knowledge of the game, and utilize quality resources that are freely available. Examples are:

- AFL Community - [www.aflcommunityclub.com.au](http://www.aflcommunityclub.com.au)
- WA Football Commission – [www.wafootball.com.au](http://www.wafootball.com.au)
- Australian Sports Commission – [www.ausport.gov.au](http://www.ausport.gov.au)

Umpires should be encouraged to seek other sources of information about umpiring and player welfare, and to participate in umpiring related information sessions as they become available.

### **3.7.6 Higher levels of accreditation**

Umpires of youth grades (Year 8+) should be encouraged to achieve AFL Level 2 Umpiring accreditation.

Boundary and goal umpires should be encouraged to complete at least a basic level of umpiring training or be working towards an AFL Level 1 umpiring accreditation.

### **3.7.7 Talented umpires**

The Association should establish and maintain a career pathway for talented umpires.

## **3.8 Umpire recruitment**

The Association should devise strategies for recruiting umpires. Examples might include:

- Conducting rules and umpiring information sessions at club training.
- Promote the Association and umpiring to schools and colleges of physical education, sports management and similar courses.
- Create a positive ‘club’ environment for umpires, encouraging others to join.

## **4 Why this policy is required**

Player development is fundamental to junior football; and umpiring has an important influence on player development.

This policy aims to continually improve the standard of umpiring through accreditation and coaching of umpires. This should result in the retention of players and umpires within the sport.

There is often a call for consistency of umpiring decisions, but the emphasis should be on correct and decisive decision making by umpires. This comes from training and experience within a supportive development environment. This policy aims to create that environment.

Any culture of yelling abuse towards or being overly critical of umpires and umpiring decisions is a poor culture, is not conducive to the aspirations of the sport and needs to cease.

## 5 Document record

<b>Date</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>By</b>
21-Jan-2014	1.1 DRAFT	Added Umpires Organiser and redefined roles. Updated umpire payments and other minor changes. Added What is expected of an umpire.	AS
15-Jan-2014	1.0 DRAFT	Draft for comments	AS

## Attachment 1 – What is expected of an umpire

### Role of the umpire

The role of the Umpire is to apply the laws of the game and ensure the game is played in a safe and fair manner. The laws of the game give the umpire the responsibility to manage the game both on and off the ground.

Umpiring presents Umpires with an exciting challenge and can be incredibly rewarding. Taking on a demanding task and succeeding is a great feeling – one that Umpires get from umpiring a game of football well.

The game expects its Umpires to:

- Place the safety and welfare of the participants above all else
- Accept responsibility for all actions taken
- Be courteous and respectful and open to discussion and interaction
- Value the individual in sport
- Seek continual self-improvement
- Be a positive role model in terms of behaviour and personal appearance

People expect Umpires to be:

- Trustworthy – honest and impartial
- Responsible – appreciate the importance of the role of the umpire
- Fit – physically prepared for the task
- Knowledgeable – know the rules
- Punctual – arrive at the ground with plenty of time to spare before the game

In aiming to fulfil those expectations, Umpires should be aware that first impressions are often lasting impressions. Behaviour and appearance are important factors.

### Qualities of an Umpire

#### The Umpire

Umpiring a football match is a challenging role. Umpires require strong character if they are to cope with the umpiring environment in a positive manner.

Umpires provide leadership and guidance to players ensuring that the match is conducted in a safe and fair manner. Qualities like integrity, honesty, trustworthiness and respect, provide a strong reference point for the Umpire in terms of what they do, say and are.

Every action of an Umpire can be linked to the qualities of an Umpire: how they behave and relate to others before during and following the match, how they project and protect the role of the Umpire and how they go about their role. They are responsible for their actions and attitude.

Umpires are responsible for their own improvement in terms of personal development and umpiring development.

Personal qualities and the manner in which the Umpire goes about his/her role is the cornerstone, or foundation of umpiring. Everything an Umpire does and is can be related to their personal qualities.

#### Qualities, values and beliefs

What are they? They refer to one's principles or standards, one's judgement of what is valuable or important in life. In umpiring they include:

- integrity;
- honesty;
- impartiality;
- trust;
- respect;
- teamwork.



The responsibility for the ethical conduct of sport in Australia rests equally with:

- officials;
- coaches;
- players;
- spectators;
- administrators;
- parents.

Umpires then have a major role to play, and in fulfilling that role, they have the right to have certain expectations of “sport”. Equally, “sport” has the right to have certain expectations of officials.

#### **Umpires have the right to expect that...**

- their health and safety are paramount;
- they are treated with respect and openness;
- they are appointed to a level of competition, appropriate to their level of competence;
- they have access to self-improvement opportunities.

#### **Equally, sports have the right to expect that the Umpire will...**

- place the safety and welfare of the players above all else;
- accept responsibility for all actions taken;
- be impartial;
- avoid any situation which may lead to a conflict of interest;
- be courteous, respectful and open to discussion and interaction.

One of the most important roles of the Umpire is to relate to others before, during and often following the match. The adage of ‘treating people as you would like to be treated’ provides an appropriate model for relating to others in the football environment. All players and others associated with the game should be treated with respect.

The Umpire should have an approach and style that includes others, regardless of the player’s gender, race, disability religion or age.

Teamwork is an important element of umpiring. Umpires must be willing to assist and support colleagues as well as contribute to the 'umpiring team' on match day.

Each Umpire becomes the face of umpiring at matches and other events.

### **Attitude to umpiring**

Attitude is often the reason why some people are successful and some are unsuccessful. Most successful sportspeople say that a positive, enthusiastic and responsible attitude was a key factor in them achieving success. Certainly, most successful Umpires say that.

A positive, enthusiastic and responsible attitude towards umpiring can be demonstrated in the following ways:

#### **At training sessions...**

- Regular attendance.
- Providing prior advice of non-attendance if possible.
- Displaying an enthusiastic approach to training.
- Ensuring all work is completed to schedule and to the required standard.

#### **At coaching sessions...**

- Regular attendance.
- Providing prior advice of non-attendance if possible.
- Displaying an enthusiastic approach to coaching sessions.
- Paying close attention to the person conducting the session.
- Participating in sessions and activities willingly.

### General...

- Maintaining currency around the Laws of Australian Football and local by-laws.
- Accepting any feedback/criticism in good spirit, recognising it as an opportunity to identify areas to improve and methods to overcome them.
- Accepting all appointments in a positive manner.
- Encouraging and supporting colleagues on match days.
- Never criticising colleagues, coaches or observers.
- At all times talking positively and enthusiastically about Umpires and umpiring.
- Always doing your best – remembering that the match you are umpiring is the most important match that day for those players, officials and supporters.
- Urging friends, and acquaintances who you consider may have potential to Umpire, or assist umpiring in some way, to become involved.

### Personal presentation

All Umpires have a responsibility to contribute to the creation of an image which portrays umpiring in a professional and positive light and as an attractive sporting career to other people.

They expect the Umpire to be a person they can trust to control their match.

People associated with football have certain expectations of Umpires. They expect you to be:

TRUSTWORTHY	a person who is honest and impartial.
RESPONSIBLE	a person who has integrity and takes the role seriously.
PREPARED FOR THEIR ROLE	a person who is physically and mentally prepared for the task.
COMPETENT	a person who has the skills for the task.

In aiming to fulfil those expectations, Umpires should be aware that first impressions are often lasting impressions.

Behaviour and appearance are crucial factors.

Behaviour should be courteous and respectful, and that includes the language used.

Dress should be clean, neat, tidy and appropriate.

There are specific occasions when consideration of dress standards are important. These are:

- On-field on match day.
- Off-field on match day.
- When attending a tribunal hearing.

It is important to remember that the match in which the Umpire is officiating is the most important match that day to those participating in it.

### References

- 'Umpires Manual Level One for Field, Boundary, and Goal Umpire Accreditation', Australian Football League, 2013
- 'Role of an Umpire', [AFL Community Club website](#)

*Last updated: 18 January 2013, AS.*