

Umpire's Instructions Round 15

DANGEROUS TACKLES

Player safety continues to be our number one responsibility and focus of our MSJFL Umpiring Panel. 'Dangerous tackles' in particular are the major focus on the basis of their inherent danger and over representation in junior football injuries.

A reminder of our previous instructions:

Have a stricter interpretation of 'dangerous' and 'sling' tackles.

- *Junior players do not have the physical strength to hold themselves up, making these types of tackles, and generally forceful tackles, dangerous.*
- *Interpret this rule with the mindset that you are **umpiring kids, not mini AFL players**. If a tackle is too forceful, not necessarily 'illegal' by AFL standards, pay a free kick to the ball player.*
- *Pay more free kicks for dangerous tackles!*

Please also action the following points:

Shorten the duration of scrimmage situations:

- *In a scrimmage situation blow your whistle to call a 'ball up' more quickly. In an extended scrimmage, the longer the ball player spends in a tackle encourages the tackler to bring the ball player to the ground and increase the risk of injury*
- *It will be apparent when a tackler has the ball player in a vulnerable situation, in these instances blow your whistle to signal a ball up even more quickly and use the phrases "**release**" (tackler to release the ball player) or "**don't dump**" (don't dump the ball player). If the tackler then uses force to bring the ball player to the ground immediately pay a free kick.*
- *Instruct the coaches of both teams that you, in the interest of reducing dangerous tackles, will be:*
 - *Calling ball ups earlier to shorten scrimmage time;*
 - *Using the phrases "release" and "don't dump" to instruct the immediate release of a tackle and paying a free kick if the tackler forcefully brings a player to the ground following this instruction.*

These instructions have been given to clubs and coaches. Where umpires fail to discuss these instructions with the coaches prior to a game, the coaches have been instructed to remind umpires of these instructions. Coaches have also been instructed to report when the above instructions have/have not been followed.

CLUBS AND COACHES

(the following instructions have not been given to umpires)

The risk of 'dangerous tackles' and general risk of injury due to unsafe play is **everyone's business**. Please take the following steps to assist umpires and minimise the risk of dangerous tackles:

- If the umpires fail to discuss these instructions please bring it up with them reasonably in conversation prior to the game as per above.
- The environment coaches and spectators create on the sidelines has a huge impact on player behaviour. A large number of parents standing around the coaches box/interchange area who constantly yell at the umpires or opposition creates a tense feeling on the ground for players and undermines the confidence particularly of young umpires. Poor player behaviour nearly always occurs in these situations, but very rare when the coaches and spectators create a reasonable environment.
- Barracking is a part of football, however criticising umpires' decisions which have been made to protect players, i.e. comments including: "soft!" or "this is football!" etc, undermines the confidence of umpires. Umpires have been instructed to interpret dangerous tackles with the mindset that they are **umpiring kids, not mini AFL players**. If a tackle is too forceful and subsequently 'dangerous', not necessarily 'illegal' by AFL standards, they should pay a free kick to the ball player.

The responsibility to encourage a safe environment does not sit uniquely with the umpires, following these instructions will directly improve the standard of umpiring and minimise the risk of dangerous tackles and improve player safety.