



## **Rules & By-Laws**

# **Victorian Blind Football League**

**As at 30 August 2019**

The Handbook relating to the Victorian Blind Football League (VBFL) has been formalised to provide official and binding rules and by-laws for competing teams.

Governed by AFL Victoria, the VBFL exists to provide Victorians without vision or low vision the opportunity to participate in Australian Rules football.

It is the responsibility of each competing team to ensure that all appointed officials and players are fully aware of the contents of this Handbook to enable the competition to be conducted efficiently and in the true spirit of sportsmanship.

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## **1. Naming rights**

The competition governed by these rules and by-laws (**Rules**) is to be referred to as the Victorian Blind Football League and must be referred to as such in all written/printed communication except in these Rules, where the Victorian Blind Football League is also referred to as the 'VBFL'.

## **2. Management**

The VBFL is conducted under the control of AFL Victoria who shall have the power to determine any matter related to the VBFL, unless the determination of such matter is otherwise specifically provided for in this Handbook.

## **3. Player Eligibility**

To compete in the VBFL, all players must be:

- a. Legally Blind; and
- b. 13 years or older

## **4. Evidence of Vision Loss**

Evidence of being legally blind needs to be sent to AFL Victoria's Disability Program Manager. Appropriate evidence which will be accepted, only need to send one, in order of preference:

1. The Companion Card – Highlighting the condition 'Blind'
2. Travel Pass Card – Highlighting the condition 'Blind'
3. Ophthalmologist Report – Highlighting less than 10% vision, or/and less than 20% peripheral vision

If you don't meet the above criteria, however would like to be considered to play, please contact AFL Victoria's Disability Programs Manager to discuss making a submission for consideration.

## **5. Teams**

A total of four (4) team will participate in the VBFL.

## **6. Number of Players Needed to Start Match**

A minimum of 5 players are required to start a match, with a maximum of 6 players per team allowed on the field. Teams with less than 5 players will result in a forfeit.

Regardless how many players each team has on match day, each team is required to play with equal numbers against one another, irrespective of players skill ability. Eg. 6 v 6, 5 v 5. Coaches should meet prior to the start of the game to discuss their player numbers. There are no restrictions to how many players can be on the bench.

If coaches cannot agree on playing numbers, the minimum playing numbers to constitute a game is what will be played.

## **7. Players Code of Conduct**

All players in the VBFL agree to uphold the VBFL Players Code of Conduct. Failure to do so may result in approval for them to participate in the VBFL being revoked or other disciplinary action being taken against the relevant player, at the discretion of the VBFL Tribunal. Refer to appendix 1 for the Players Code of Conduct.

## **8. Coaches and Officials Code of Conduct**

All coaches and team officials in the VBFL agree to uphold the Coaches and Officials Code of Conduct. Failure to do so may result in approval for them to participate in the VBFL being revoked or other disciplinary action being taken against the relevant person, at the discretion of the VBFL Tribunal. Refer to appendix 2 for the Coaches and Officials Code of Conduct.

## **9. Competition Format**

AFL Victoria shall be responsible for determining the VBFL fixture.

## **10. Competition Points**

Points will be awarded for all games as follows:

|                 |          |
|-----------------|----------|
| Win             | 4 Points |
| Draw            | 2 Points |
| Loss            | 0 Points |
| Forfeit To      | 4 Points |
| Forfeit Against | 0 Points |

In the case that two (2) or more team finish on the same amount of points after the home and away season, the club with the highest percentage will progress.

## **11. Drawn Match**

In the event of a drawn game during the home and away season, the draw will stand as is and points from the match will be shared as noted in item 10 of these Rules.

There shall be no drawn matches in the Grand Final. Where scores are level at the end of a Grand Final, an extra 5 minutes of match time will be played. If scores are level at the end of extra time, another 5 minutes of extra time will be played with teams switching ends. If scores are still tied, then "golden point" will be played, where the first team to score will be determined the winners.

## **12. Rules**

Unless otherwise provided in these Rules, Matches will be played in accordance with the Laws of Australian Football (**AFL Laws**).

### 13. Equipment Requirements

- 1 x Soft touch Sherrin, high vis yellow, Size 4.
- 2 x Rattlers. One for each goal umpire
- High Vis Vests for coaches
- Mesh backing, behind goal (colour contrast with colours behind goals)
- 8 x Bike lights, behind goal (square shape and cross shape, one at each end)
- PA system

### 14. Length of Games

All matches shall consist of four (4), 10-minute quarters with **NO TIME ON**.

### 15. Intervals

$\frac{1}{4}$  time = 2.5 minutes

$\frac{1}{2}$  time = 5 minutes

$\frac{3}{4}$  time = 2.5 minutes

Teams are not permitted to leave the ground during any of the intervals.

### 16. Support Staff Requirements

- 1 x coach per team
- 1 x field umpire
- 2 x goal umpires
- 1 x PA announcer – Scorer

### 17. Playing Field

Indoor

### 18. Player Classifications

Players will be allocated a classification as per their level of sight. There will be two groups of classification.

1. Category 1
  - a. B1: Players with no sight
2. Category 2
  - a. B2: Players with little functional vision and restricted field (hearing as primary tracking sense)
  - b. B3: Players with limited vision, with vision as their primary tracking sense

Coaches will have the ability to submit an exemption should they like a player's classification reviewed. Exemption requests should be made to AFL Victoria's Disability Programs Manager.

There will be no break down to the minimum or maximum number of Category 1 & Category 2 players per team.

## 19. Identifying players

Category 1 (B1) players will be identifiable by wearing a fluoro yellow wrist bands and an eye mask.

This identification is to assist umpires when they are awarding both marks and scores.

## 20. Scoring

To ensure an inclusive environment, scoring amounts will differ depending on a player's classification.

- Category 1: Goal = 9pts. Point = 2pts
- Category 2: Goal = 6pts Point = 1pts

## 21. Additional Rules

### i. Ball Ups

A player may not take full possession of the ball at a ball up. The ball must go to another player or touch the ground before the player winning the ball up can take possession of the ball.

When the field umpire throws the ball up, they must ask the players in the ruck if they are ready, rucks should start with their feet together, similar to a 'ball-up' in basketball. When the umpire feels that the players are ready, they yell 'PLAY' and proceed to throw the ball up.

### ii. Scoring

Players will only be able to score inside their attacking zone of the field. When the football is in the attacking zone the goal umpires will rattle the rattlers, positioned in between the goal posts. The rattlers area there to assist players identify the centre of their goals. The rattlers will indicate to players that the football is inside the scoring zone, therefore allowing a shot at goal.

If a player has taken a mark or been awarded a free kick inside their attacking zone, they are permitted to take a set shot at goal and kick from outside the attacking zone.

If a shot on goal is made outside the scoring zone, and crosses the goal line, no score will be awarded. The umpire will provide a free kick against the attacking team, with the defending team to take the free kick at the top of the scoring zone (top of the arch), not at the goal line.

- A free kick will also be awarded, at the top of the scoring zone, if the ball is kicked into the attacking zone by the attacking team, crossing the goal line, with the ball incidentally not being touched by any of the attacking team players.

Following a behind, the opposition player can kick out from the goal square, a player is not able to play on after a behind.

iii. **Tackling**

There will be no tackling in VBFL, the equivalent to a tackle is a two-hand touch between the shoulder and waist. Players are permitted to shepherd when they are within 5 metres of the football.

iv. **Holding the Ball**

If the player has not had prior opportunity to dispose of the ball, once touched/tagged by the opposition, the player with ball will have three (3) seconds to dispose of the ball. The umpire must count out loudly, 1, 2, 3, once the touch/tag has been initiated. Holding the ball will be awarded if the player does not release the ball after the 3 seconds. Players do not have to hold the player with the ball for 3 seconds, just touch them once with two-hands.

If the player has had prior opportunity to dispose of the ball, and is touched/tagged with two-hands, holding the ball will be paid without the umpiring counting out the three seconds.

v. **Running too Far**

A player may stay in possession of the ball for a maximum of 15 steps before bouncing the ball. A player can only bounce the ball a maximum of one (1) time, before they need to dispose of the ball. Should the player bounce the ball more than once, a free kick will be award against the ball carrier.

vi. **Marking**

Awarding a mark will depend on the classification of a player. The player must make a deliberate play at the ball for a mark to be awarded.

When a player is receiving a kick, the player must show an attempt to make contact with the ball. Contact must be made on the full, either on the body above the waist or on a player's arms/hands, on the frontside of their body.

Category 1 players can also be awarded a mark by receiving a handball. Contact must be made on the full, either on the body above the waist or on a player's arms/hands, on the frontside of their body.

A mark is to be paid to a player who marks the ball that has travelled at least four (4) metres and has not been touched in transit.

Should the football touch the net during transit, the umpire is to call 'Play On', and not award a mark.

vii. **Out of Bounds**

Due to the rectangular shape of the indoor playing venue, the ball can only go out of bounds when it rolls behind the point posts. In the event of



this, there will be a ball up ten metres into play, in-line with the point post the ball rolled behind originally.

**viii. 15 Metre Penalty**

A 15-metre penalty may be applied on top of a free kick at the umpire's discretion.

**ix. Player Safety**

When the ball is on the ground, all players, when within 1 meter of the football, must yell the name of their team when approaching to pick up the ball. Failure to do so will result in a free kick against the offending player. Players must also ensure they are making a realistic attempt to collect the ball on the ground and not engage in unnecessary or inappropriate contact with an opposition player, failure to make a realistic attempt at the ball may result in a free kick to the opposition.

**x. Mercy Rule**

Should a team reach a margin of 50 points, the Mercy Rule is activated. Meaning, if the leading team scores a point, the trailing team will take the kick out from their defensive scoring arc. If the team leading scores a goal, the trailing team will take possession of the ball in the centre circle, not requiring a ball up to restart play. A player can play on straight away from the advanced position on the field, once they have the ball after a score.

Double points will be awarded to the trailing team, when the Mercy Rule is activated.

- Category 1 - Goal = 18 Points, Point = 4 Points.
- Category 2 – Goal = 12 points, Point = 2 Points.

If the trailing team brings the margin back under 50 points, the Mercy Rule is deactivated, and play will revert to normal.

If the Mercy Rule is in play at the end of the quarter, to start the following quarter, the ball will be balled up as per normal.

**xi. Kicking off the Ground**

Intent to move the ball forward by kicking off the ground will be penalised with a free kick against. Tapping the ball forward with your hand will be allowed.

**xii. 2-2-2 Starting Structure**

At the beginning of each quarter and after every goal, players from each team must set up in a 2-2-2 structure (similar to the AFL 6-6-6 rule). Two defenders should be located in the defensive arc. Two midfielders should be located between the arcs. Two forward players should be situated in the forward arc. A free kick will be awarded if a side is not in the correct starting positions. The free kick will be taken from the centre, awarded to the ruckman.

## **22. Finals Eligibility**

A player must have played (taken the field) in at least half of the fixtured matches for their team before being eligible to play in a Grand Final. AFL Victoria may grant an exemption to players injured during the season with the provision of relevant medical advice.

## **23. Umpires-Officials**

One (1) field umpire for all VBFL fixtured games will be appointed by AFL Victoria. In the case that AFL Victoria is unable to appoint an umpire or the umpire does not attend, team captains and coaches will be notified accordingly.

Where AFL Victoria has not supplied umpire's uniforms, umpires shall wear their League's official uniform or AFL Victoria uniform.

The field umpires will also act as the goal umpires for all games.

The designated Match Manager will play the role of timekeeper and scorer.

When the field umpire throws the ball up, they must ask the players in the ruck if they are ready. When the umpire feels that the players are ready, they yell 'PLAY' and proceed to throw the ball up.

Umpires shall stick to running up and down the sidelines of the field (rectangular field) to avoid being confused as a player.

Field umpires must indicate each score kicked throughout the game verbally, due to different players classifications. Eg 'GOAL', '9 Points'. This needs to be communicated to the P/A.

After a stop in play (free kick, point scored etc) the umpire is to yell 'PLAY' when the player has the ball back in their hands and are ready to play. This will allow all players to know that play has reconvened.

When awarding a mark, the whistle must be blown, followed by the umpiring calling out 'mark'.

When it is not a mark, the umpire needs to call "no mark, play on". This will assist players in knowing if they have marked a handpass, due to not being able to determine if the ball has been kicked or handpassed. Please note, Category 1 players are to be awarded a mark if they mark a handpass.

The umpire must count out loudly, 1, 2, 3, once the touch/tag has been initiated. Holding the ball will be awarded if the player does not release the ball after the 3 seconds. Players do not have to hold the player with the ball for 3 seconds, just touch them once with two-hands.

## 24. Walkover/Forfeits

In the case of there being a walkover or forfeit, the non-forfeiting team will receive four competition points. Teams involved will further receive the average 'for' and 'against' scored, for that round, in their division.

In the event where the average 'for' and 'against' cannot be taken (eg, all games in the division were forfeited), the score line 30 - 0 will be recorded.

## 25. Jewellery

No Jewellery is to be worn on the ground whilst playing. If an umpire notices a player wearing jewellery the player will be asked to leave the ground and may only come back on once the jewellery has been removed.

## 26. Coaches and Officials

No coaches are permitted to be on the field coaching, however can walk around the perimeter of the playing field should they wish.

## 27. Uniform

Teams will have two different uniforms, an away strip (white), and a home strip (coloured). Teams will need to take note of if they are the home team or the away team and wear the appropriate uniform dependent whether they are playing home or away.

## 28. Order Off Rules

Players may be ordered from the field by the field umpire for breaching the AFL Laws or these Rules.

### Yellow Card

A player shown a Yellow card by a field umpire must immediately leave the ground, the player may come back on the ground once ten (10) minutes of **PLAYING TIME** has passed. Players receiving a Yellow card **CAN** be replaced.

If a player commits a second Yellow card offence, then the umpire will show a Red card.

### Red Card

A player shown a Red card by a field umpire must immediately leave the ground and is not permitted to return to the ground for the remainder of the game. Players receiving a Red card **CANNOT** be replaced for that match.

Should a player receive two yellow cards or a straight red card from the umpire, the player will receive an automatic one (1) match suspension. The one (1) match suspension is to be served directly after the game in which the incident occurred. If the game in which the two Yellow cards or the Red Card are received by a player is a Grand Final or final playoff, the one (1) match suspension will be served in the first game of the following season in which the player participates. The Tribunal has the

option of adding additional match suspensions should they deem the matter serious enough.

## **29. Notice of Report**

The head field umpire may report a player for breaching the AFL Laws or these Rules. The head field umpire should make their offence report to 'Match Manger' at the completion of the game, in which the offence occurred.

## **30. Tribunal**

The VBFL will have set penalties in place should a player act outside the AFL Laws or these Rules. The set penalties are set out at (i) below.

### **i. Set Penalties**

#### **1 MATCH PENALTY**

- Attempting to strike another person
- Attempting to trip another person whether by hand, arm, foot or leg
- Using abusive, insulting, threatening or obscene language
- Disputing a decision of an umpire
- Using an obscene gesture
- Engaging in time wasting
- Engaging in an act of staging
- Engaging in a melee, except where the player's sole intention is to remove a teammate from an incident
- Wrestling another person
- Interfering with a player kicking for goal
- Intentionally shaking a goal or behind post when another player is preparing to kick or is kicking for goal or after the player has kicked for goal and the football is in transit
- Wearing prohibited boots, jewellery and equipment, improper uniform or equipment
- Sent off from the game (2 yellow cards or 1 red card)

#### **2 MATCH PENALTY**

- Intentionally or carelessly striking another person
- Intentionally or carelessly charging another person
- Intentionally or carelessly engaging in rough conduct against an opponent which in the circumstances is unreasonable
- Intentionally or carelessly bumping or making forceful contact to an opponent from front-on when that player has his head down over the football
- Intentionally or carelessly tripping another person whether by hand, arm, foot or leg
- Attempting to kick another person
- Intentionally or carelessly scratching another person
- Carelessly making contact with an umpire
- Instigating a melee
- Pinching another person

## MANDATORY TRIBUNAL HEARING

- Intentionally or carelessly kicking another person
- Intentionally or carelessly kneeling another person
- Intentionally or carelessly stomping on another person
- Intentionally or carelessly head-butting an opponent or making contact to an opponent using the head
- Intentionally or carelessly eye-gouging an opponent or making unreasonable or unnecessary contact to the eye region of an opponent
- Intentionally or carelessly making unreasonable or unnecessary contact to the face of an opponent
- Intentionally or carelessly making unreasonable or unnecessary contact with an injured player
- Intentionally or carelessly scratching another person
- Intentionally, recklessly or negligently making contact with or striking an umpire.=
- Attempting to make contact with or strike an umpire.
- Spitting at or on an umpire
- Spitting at or on another person
- Using abusive, insulting, threatening or obscene language towards or in relation to an umpire
- Behaving in an abusive, insulting, threatening or obscene manner towards or in relation to an umpire
- Failing to leave the playing surface when directed to do so by a field umpire.
- Any act of serious misconduct (e.g. king hitting, head butting, etc.)

Should a reported offence be deemed to be of a serious nature, the offending player along with their team captain will need to attend a tribunal hearing. The time and location of the tribunal hearing will be communicated to the team captain from the relevant player's team. The tribunal may make any determination it deems appropriate.

### **31. Registration**

All players must be registered with AFL Victoria before taking the field. All participants will automatically receive Bronze cover for any injuries sustained whilst participating in the VBFL. Cover does not include any Loss of Income.

### **32. Alcohol Policy**

No alcohol consumption will be tolerated at any matches (unless it is in the confinements of an established social club).

### **33. Social Media Policy**

All affiliated team officials (including coaches and team managers), players, volunteers and umpires are to uphold the VBFL's social media policy which can be found in full in appendix 3. Failure to uphold the social media policy may result in their approval to be involved with the VBFL being revoked or other disciplinary action being taken against the relevant person, at the discretion of the VBFL Tribunal.

## **Appendix 1 – Players Code of Conduct**

All players representing at the VBFL agree to uphold the below behaviour expectations.

1. Abide by the rules of the games and rules set down by your coach and support staff.
2. Never argue with an official or umpire. If you disagree, have your captain, coach or team manager approach the official during a break or after the game.
3. Always show respect for umpires and respect decisions made.
4. Control your temper. Verbal or physical abuse during a game will not be tolerated.
5. Work equally hard for yourself and your team.
6. Be a good sport. Applaud all good plays whether they be by your team or the opponents.
7. Maintain a high standard of personal behaviour on and off the field.
8. Treat all players as you would like to be treated.
9. Cooperate with your coach and team mates, and respect the ability of your opponent.
10. Play for the 'fun of it' and within the spirit of the VBFL.
11. Uphold all rules outlined in this handbook.
12. Take responsibility for your actions.

Any player found to be in breach of the above code of conduct may be requested to answer to the tribunal and face potential suspension.

## **Appendix 2 – Coaches and Officials Code of Conduct**

All coaches and officials attending the VBFL agree to uphold the VBFL Coaches and Officials Code of Conduct outlined below.

I understand that as an integral component of my team I must maintain a high standard of behaviour and conduct in the best interests of the game and the players/staff in my care.

In representing myself in an honest manner, and without bringing my position or the Game into disrepute, I will endeavour to uphold the following to the best of my ability:

1. I will respect the rights, dignity and worth of all individuals within the context of my involvement in Australian Football, by refraining from any discriminatory practices including, but not limited to, discrimination on the basis of race, religion, gender, ethnic background, special ability/disability or sexual orientation, preference or identity.

2. I will abide by and teach the AFL Laws of Australian Football and VBFL Rules & By-Laws.
3. I will be reasonable in the demands I make on the time commitments of the players in my care, having due consideration for their health and wellbeing.
4. I will be supportive at all times and I will refrain from any form of personal or physical abuse or unnecessary physical contact with the players in my care.
5. I will have due consideration for varying maturity and ability levels of my players.
6. As a Coach/Official I will avoid overplaying the talented players, aiming to maximise participation, learning and enjoyment for all players regardless of ability.
7. I will stress and monitor safety always.
8. In recognising the significance of injury and sickness, I will seek and follow the physician's advice concerning the return of injured or ill players to training.
10. I will at all times display and teach appropriate sporting behaviour, ensuring that players understand and practise fair play.
11. I will display and foster respect for umpires, opponents, coaches, administrators, other officials, parents and spectators.
12. I will ensure that players are involved in a positive environment where skill-learning and development are priorities and not overshadowed by a desire to win

### **Appendix 3 – Social Media Policy**

Social Media is a rapidly expanding form of communication. AFL Victoria realises that participation in Social Media by Team Officials and players will continue to increase. If you choose to participate in any form of Social Media AFL Victoria expects you to adhere to the standards set out in this Policy when referencing your association with AFL Victoria the VBFL.

Social Media includes but is not limited to:

- Any form of Blogging or Microblogging on websites such as Twitter;
- Social Networking websites such as Facebook; and
- Video and Photo sharing websites such as YouTube and Instagram.

#### **POLICY SCOPE**

This policy is applicable to all VBFL affiliated team officials, players, volunteers and umpires who participate in any form of Social Media.

#### **YOUR CONDUCT IN SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY**

While all individuals are welcome to participate in Social Media, it is expected that everyone who participates in online commentary in relation to activities involving the VBFL and its Stakeholders shall respect and adhere to the following simple but important guidelines:

- Never represent yourself, the VBFL or your affiliated team in a false or misleading way. All statements must be true and not misleading; all claims must be proven.

- Post meaningful, respectful comments — in other words, no spam and no remarks that are offensive.
- Use common sense and common courtesy: for example, it's best to ask permission to publish or report on conversations that are meant to be private or internal to the VBFL.
- When disagreeing with others' opinions, keep it appropriate and polite.
- Think carefully about what you publish as it is easily seen by many people and you should be respectful at all times of people, religions, races and different cultures.

These guidelines are in place to assist in achieving our overall goal, that is, to participate online in a respectful, relevant manner which protects the reputation of the competition and the individuals within it, and of course follows the letter and spirit of the law: