



SEASON 2026

**FOOTBALL
COMPETITION
RULES**

BFNL FOOTBALL COMPETITION RULES

Preamble

These Rules must be read in conjunction with

- Laws of Australian Football.
- Victorian Country Football League (AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY) Rules and Regulations as published in the AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY Handbook each year or as amended by notification from the AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY after the printing of the AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY Handbook.
- AFL National Community Football Policy Handbook.

DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATION

In these Competition Rules unless the contrary intention appears:

“BFNL” means Bendigo Football & Netball League Incorporated. In these rules referred to as “BFNL” or “the Bendigo Football & Netball League”.

“Region Council” means the Region Council of AFL Central Victoria.

“Laws of Australian Football” means the laws of the game of Australian Football adopted by the Australian Football League as modified for the League

“League” means the Bendigo Football & Netball League Incorporated.

The appendices and schedules attached should be read in conjunction with and form part of the By-Laws of the Bendigo Football Netball League (BFNL).

1. LAWS OF AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL

All games shall be played in strict accordance with the “Laws of Australian Football” as determined by the AFL, or modified by the AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY or the League.

2. COMPETITION RULES

The competition shall be conducted under the National Australian Football Council Laws of the Game, the National Community Football Policy Handbook and the Victorian Country Football League Rules.

3. PLAYER UNIFORMS

- 3.1 All Club uniforms shall comply with AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY rules. The BFNL, before adoption, must approve club colours/uniforms.
- 3.2 Every player must be fully uniformed in his Club colours with his number prominent and securely fixed on his back.

3.3 All playing jumpers and shorts must carry logos as specified by the AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY and BFNL. Clubs must formally request the BFNL approval to display sponsorship logos on Club jumpers.

This request must include details such as size and positioning.

3.4 BFNL approved custom shorts shall be worn by sides playing home unless approval otherwise is granted by the BFNL.

3.5 BFNL approved custom white shorts shall be worn by sides playing away unless approval otherwise is granted by the BFNL.

3.6 Bike shorts worn under playing shorts must be neutral or beige colour.

3.7 All interchange players must wear their Club tracksuit top when warming up around the boundary line.

3.8 Away clubs are responsible to obtain alternative playing strips if there is a clashing of playing uniform strips for all home and away games and finals. Penalty for incorrect attire: \$50 per garment / per player. (e.g.: \$50 incorrect socks, \$50 incorrect shorts etc.).

Advertising on Uniforms

i) Back of Jumper

A sponsor's logo/name is allowable on the back of a football jumper provided it goes under the number, and is of such design and length so as not to cause any interference with the ability to distinguish clearly the number on such jumper.

They should be no bigger than 100mm in width and no longer than 300mm.

ii) Front of Jumper

Sponsor's logos/names are allowable on the front of a football jumper in the positions outlined below:

- In the chest area of the jumper as per existing AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY logos. Official AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY and BFL sponsor logos are to take precedence, however, club logos can be placed underneath. The size of the sponsor's logo/name should be no bigger than 100 mm x 100mm
- One further logo can be placed on the abdomen area, the size of the logo should be no bigger than 100mm in width and no longer than 300mm.

iii) Football Knicks

The size of such logos shall be no bigger than 100mm x 100mm, and are to be placed on the leg area of knicks.

4. LEAGUE STRUCTURE

The League will be structured in the following manner for competition purposes:

Each Club shall field three (3) football teams:

1. BFNL Seniors
2. BFNL Reserves
3. BFNL Under 18

The qualification age for the Under 18 team shall be, that players must be under the specified age by the 1st January. The Board shall determine the participants, number, dates, venues and duration of each match.

Where a team of any Club fails to keep any match commitment, the Board shall first give such Club the opportunity of giving any explanation it has to offer, or to present any facts or matters relevant to the question of penalty, and may impose such monetary or other penalty upon the Club as it thinks fit.

5. REGISTRATIONS

5.1 Every player must be a registered member of their Club and approved by their Club Committee.

5.2 A player must be registered with the Bendigo Football Netball League and the AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY prior to the commencement of the first game he plays for the Club each year. The registration must be entered and confirmed on the AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY database.

Playing an unregistered player will result in the following penalty

- i) \$200 fine per unregistered player per game, and
- ii) Loss of premiership points for any game in which the unregistered player took part

The Board, upon application from the opposing Club, and after inviting any submission from the unregistered player's Club, may award the lost premiership points to the opposing team.

- iii) Any player that has been registered by a Club and does not play for that Club, must obtain a clearance from that Club before playing with another Club in this League during that season

All Clubs are to furnish the Board with copies of conditional agreements attached to clearances

All Clubs are to furnish the Clearance Secretary with copies of conditional agreements attached to clearances. Failure to lodge

them at the time of granting the clearance will automatically void any conditions.

6. PLAYER TRANSFERS AND APPEALS

6.1 Player transfers

Player transfers are conducted under the current AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY Rules. All player transfers will be conducted using the AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY approved electronic data base system. The BFNL will not endorse player transfers over the telephone.

6.2 Appeals against refused Transfer

All appeals against refused player transfers are handled under AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY rules by the AFL Central Victoria Region Manager.

7. GROUND FACILITIES

7.1 Each Club is to provide a ground that in the opinion of the BFNL is suitable for match play.

7.2 Goal posts must be correctly padded in accordance with AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY Rules. Penalty: \$100

7.3 Goal posts must have flag-holders. Penalty: \$100

7.4 The ground must be marked in accordance with the Laws of the Game unless impractical to do so.

Variations are to be approved by the BFNL. Penalty: \$100

7.5 In terms of the AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY Acceptable Ground Conditions and Layout it is recommended that the actual boundary line of the playing area shall be no less than three (3) metres from the fence line.

7.6 A stretcher must be provided by the home Club and located in or near the coaches' box. Penalty: \$100

7.7 All clubs must provide locks on doors to visiting team and umpires' dressing rooms. Penalty: \$100

7.8 A separate dressing room must be available for umpires. Clubs should also provide dressing room facilities for female umpires when applicable.

7.9 Clubs must provide suitable weatherproof coaches boxes of design approved by local council building regulations and the Bendigo Football Netball League. Elevated coaches boxes must be approved by the Bendigo Football Netball League. Coaches are NOT permitted to use coaches boxes in a manner that does not comply with local council building regulations or Occupational Health & Safety requirements.

- 7.10** A box 12 metres in length, one metre from the boundary line, with its sides returning to the fence shall be marked parallel to the boundary line in front of each of the coaches' boxes. Penalty: \$100
- 7.11** Home Club must provide two (2) trainers tables in the visitor's rooms
Penalty: \$100

8. GROUND INSPECTIONS

- 8.1** All clubs in C.O.G.B. who have home games are expected to complete the standard C.O.G.B. Ground Inspection Form on the Thursday night prior to the game. Forms do not need to be forwarded to COGB if no issues have been identified.
- 8.2** For both home and away and finals matches, the BFNL retains the right to take whatever action is deemed necessary to address any issue arising from the ground inspection report, including but not limited to; moving the game to another venue, cancelling the game or re-scheduling the game to another day or time.
- 8.3** On the day of any official senior, reserve, or Under 18 match arranged by the BFNL a designated representative from each participating team must make a full inspection of the ground on which the match will be played prior to the match commencing.

The home team representative shall complete the Match Day Checklist App. If the app is not available, then the official Match Day Checklist (as provided each year by the AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY and AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY Insurer) should be completed and the representative from each club shall sign the checklist.

The duplicate AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY Worksafe Risk Management Checklist must be submitted to the BFNL in the Match Day paperwork which will be retained by the BFNL for seven years. Each home Club must retain their copy for the same period.

- 8.4** If the same Clubs are competing in all games on the same day at the same venue only one form is required, if more than two Clubs are competing on the same day at the venue then separate forms are to be completed by the Clubs competing in that match.

9. INTERCHANGE/ORDER OFF

Interchange and order off rules are to operate for Seniors, Reserves and Under 18 as per Rule 7.2, Laws of Australian Football.

- 9.1** Interchange bench numbers in the Bendigo Football Netball League are Seniors four (4), Reserves four (4) and Under 18 four (4).

- 9.2** For all Bendigo Football Netball League competitions, Clubs shall be required to field a minimum of 14 players to commence the game. Failure to do so will result in their side forfeiting the match.
- 9.3** If any irregularities are noted, the BFNL shall have the power to determine a fine and to deal with the match.
- 9.4** It is the responsibility of the timekeepers to ensure that players ordered from the ground under a yellow card, remain off for fifteen minutes of actual playing time, and cannot be replaced within that time. Any player ordered off under a red card is not permitted to take any further part in the game, however, this player can be replaced by another eligible player after 15 minutes of actual playing time.

The timekeepers must therefore:

- (a) Identify the umpire's signal (a yellow or red card), which indicates a player has been ordered off;
- (b) Acknowledge the umpire's decision;
- (c) record the relevant amount of actual playing time from the moment the player crosses the interchange area in the space provided on the time cards (failure to record the implementation of this rule on the timecards will result in a \$30 penalty) ; and
- (d) Signal the conclusion of the fifteen minute penalty

The onus remains with the clubs to ensure that this procedure operates effectively.

NB: In the event of more than one player being off at any given time, the onus is on the Club to confer with the timekeepers to determine which player is eligible to come on.

- 9.5** Clubs in breach of procedure: In the event a Club believes an opposition player has been replaced early, that Club must call a team count to verify the number of players on the ground and the score at that particular time. The Umpire will record the result of the count on the Umpire's Match Report. Where a Team has more than the permitted number of players on the Playing Surface, the following shall apply:
- (a) A field umpire shall award a Free Kick to the captain or acting captain of the opposing team, which shall be taken at the Centre Circle or where play was stopped, whichever is the greater penalty against the offending team.
 - (b) A Fifty (50) Metre Penalty shall then be imposed from the position where the Free Kick was awarded; and
 - (c) The Goal Umpires shall write the current scores as at the time of

the Head Count on their Score Card

- (d) the matter will be referred to the League to investigate and ultimately determine the outcome as they see fit - note that the offending team does not lose all points scored in the Match up to the time of the count on matchday.

10. COACHES

10.1 The non-playing coach of any team is not allowed on the playing arena during the progress of the match except at the quarter intervals. During the progress of the match the non-playing coach, interchange players (other than in warming up) and other officials must be in the restricted area as marked by the 12 metre line.

10.2 Only the team captain of the day shall be permitted to speak to the Field Umpire at the intervals during the progress of the match (other than if requesting the umpire for a count of players on the playing surface). Any breach of this rule shall be reported by the Umpire and be referred to the League Independent Tribunal and if found guilty shall incur the following maximum penalty:

1st offence – \$100.

2nd offence – \$200.

3rd or any further offence – \$400.

11. RUNNERS

Number of Runners First and Reserve eighteen grades only are permitted two (2) runners maximum.

12. ELIGIBILITY TO ACT AS RUNNER

12.1 No person who is a registered player or an official of any club, other than his home club whether affiliated or not, nor who is under disqualification or suspension by his home club or League, shall act as an official runner in any competition match, or any other match in which a AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY affiliated Club or League is participating.

12.2 No coach or assistant coach of an AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY open age team shall act as a runner in a match in which a team of his club is participating.

12.3 No coach or assistant coach of an AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY team shall act as a runner, trainer or water carrier in a match in which the team that he coaches is participating.

13. DUTIES OF RUNNERS

- 13.1** Team runner (s) shall not have affixed to his or her person communication device, which includes but is not limited to headsets, microphones or earpieces or water bottles.
- 13.2** Runners shall enter and exit the playing arena via the interchange area where two (2) club runners are used. Only one runner from each club is permitted on the playing surface at any given time. Failure to adhere to these restrictions, prohibits the offending runner from entering the playing surface for the remainder of the game. Should a club use one (1) runner only, the runner may enter and exit the playing area from any point of the ground.
- 13.3** The sole duty of the runner shall be to confer with the player or players of his/her club and to immediately leave the playing arena.

14. BREACHES OF RULE 13

Any club that breaches Rule 13.1, 13.2 or 13.3 shall appear before the League's Independent Tribunal to determine the penalty, which may be a substantial fine, and/or a loss of points: and/or such other penalties as determined appropriate.

15. RUNNERS UNIFORMS

All runners are to wear uniforms as approved by Bendigo Football Netball League at the commencement of each season. Runner tops must carry the club name and the word "Runner". Where a Club uses two Runners in the Senior or Reserves section the uniforms must be numbered to distinguish the runners. Runners Uniforms are to be the same colour matching shorts and tops. Uniforms for additional runner in the two (2) runner system will be at the expense of the club. Penalty \$100.

16. TRAINERS AND MEDICAL STAFF

- 16.1** Club trainers may enter the arena at any time during the match or intervals, but only to attend to an injured player or to replace a damaged uniform and for no other purpose whatsoever. Trainers may also carry water as part of their duties.
- 16.2** Club trainers will wear uniform dress consisting of a white top and white, navy blue or black pants or shorts. The top must bear the Club name, the word 'trainer' and a number (trainers to be numbered 1 – 5).
- 16.3** Medical staff are to wear a clear and identifying armband. Medical staff means a qualified medical practitioner, physiotherapist or similar qualified person. Penalty \$100

17. WATER-CARRIERS

17.1 Eligibility to act as water carrier

- 17.1.1 A maximum of three (3) water-carriers is permitted in any game
- 17.1.2 Water carriers must be aged over fourteen years.
- 17.1.3 No coach or assistant coach of an AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY open age team shall act as a water carrier in any Bendigo Football Netball League match.

17.2 Water carrier uniforms

- 17.2.1 Water-carriers are to wear a white shirt bearing the Club name and the word 'water carrier' and be correctly numbered with black or blue shorts or tracksuit pants. Penalty \$50
- 17.2.2 Water-carriers must be numbered 6, 7 and 8 respectively and names and number must appear on the official team sheet. Penalty \$50

17.3 Water carrier duties

- 17.3.1 Water-carriers may enter the arena at any time during the match or intervals but only to provide water to players and for no other purpose whatsoever and to immediately leave the playing arena once the drink has been delivered (Refer AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY Rule 17.2.)
- 17.3.2 Water carriers are not permitted to operate constantly from the Coaches box area but must be around the boundary area against the fence while not delivering water.

18. TIMEKEEPERS

- 18.1** One responsible Timekeeper is to be provided by each competing Club. No person shall be permitted to act as a timekeeper unless they have attained the age of 18 years. Each Clubs must provide a suitable clock that is to be synchronized with the other Club's timekeeper at the commencement of each match. Where only one clock is available that shall be the official time.

Failure to supply a timekeeper – Penalty \$50

- 18.2** In finals matches competing Clubs are to also supply their own timekeepers.
- 18.3** Matches shall start at the times decided by the BFNL.
- 18.4** Matches shall be played in accordance with the time intervals set out by the BFNL.

18.5 A bell, gong, or siren, capable of being heard across the ground at its farthest point must be provided. Penalty: \$50

18.6 Timekeepers shall keep accurate records of scores on cards supplied by Bendigo Football Netball League to each Home Club. Times of starts and finishes of quarters; appearance times of teams; elapsed playing time of players ordered from the ground. The timekeeper must sign the cards and return them to the Central Umpire for counter signature. Penalty \$30

19. TEAM MANAGERS

19.1 Home Team Manager

The Home Team Manager is responsible for the following match day duties

- Provide Time keepers cards as issued by the League
- Provide Umpires with Score Cards as issued by the League, Best & Fairest Vote Cards and envelopes as issued by the League and a current year's notice of report form pad
- Provide footballs as per Rules
- Provide any sponsors Special Award vote sheets for all grades
- Enter Match Details on AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY web based database as provided by both clubs at the end of each game in accordance with these rules
- Submit ALL Match Day Paperwork including team sheets, goal umpire cards, timekeepers reports and any match day reports via the designated online form by 12pm the Monday following the match.

19.2 Away Team Manager

The Away Team Manager is responsible for the following match day duties

- Provide opposition team manager with details of Goalkickers, and best players as soon as possible after the conclusion of the game.

19.3 Both Home and Away Team Managers

Both Team managers are responsible for the following match day duties

- Provide Team Sheet to the umpires, showing all players with correct jumper numbers and all officials with correct numbers where applicable generated from AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY Data Base and signed by the Team Manager
- Complete the AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY Match Day Ground Safety checklist

- Ensure Time keeper is available
- Ensure Field, Goal and Boundary Umpires are available where no BUA appointment is made
- Ensure Umpire Escort is appointed, is aware of and fulfils their duties
- Obtain advice of any reported players from the central umpires after each game, sign and collect a copy of any player reports from that game.

20. FORFEITS

- 20.1** A fine of up to \$2,000 will be imposed on Clubs who withdraw a team from any obligatory competition section. All of that Club's teams may be disqualified from the League's competition for that season by resolution of the BFNL.
- 20.2** Any Club forfeiting a match in any section of the League during the season will be subject to a penalty fine of \$500 and shall be liable for the cost of umpires scheduled for that match.
- 20.3** In the event of a Club failing to field a team or part thereof within half an hour of the arranged starting time of a match, the opposing Club may claim the match. The League shall investigate the circumstances and may apply provisions of the Laws of Australian Football By-Law 11.2 – Forfeiture of Match

21. FIXTURE ALTERATIONS

- 21.1** Clubs desiring to conduct Senior, Reserve or Under 18 grade matches on a day or time other than that published by the league in the official fixture may do so providing the following requirements have been satisfied:
- (i) That all appropriate licences and permissions to conduct the game have been received and copies forwarded to the League Office prior to the game;
 - (ii) That 14 days' notice is forwarded to the League office indicating times of commencement of all games and any alterations of venues to the published fixture, including written consent from both clubs before fixture alterations will be considered;
 - (iii) That 14 days' notice in writing requesting approval from the League that the fixture be altered is forwarded to the League office from each club;
 - (iv) League approved scheduled changes will occur within the

approved online database 1-week prior to the scheduled match advertising the change to the published fixture.

22. PLAYING TIMES

22.1 Duration of Games

Penalty: Clubs responsible for late starts at any point of any match will incur a fine of \$50 per occurrence.

If early games (prior to Seniors) are running behind time at half time the last 2 quarters are to be shortened accordingly to allow the game to finish on time. (does not apply in finals) Playing times for Seniors, Reserves and Under 18 games will be:

HOME AND AWAY

DAY GAMES

Under 16 (if applicable)

9.00 a.m. **First Half** 2 x 20 minute quarters
 Second Half 2 x 20 minute quarters
 ¼ time - 5 minutes, ½ time - 7 minutes, ¾ time - 5 minutes

Under 18

10.45 a.m. **First Half** 2 x 20 minute quarters
 Second Half 2 x 20 minute quarters
 ¼ time - 5 minutes, ½ time - 10 minutes, ¾ time - 5 minutes

Reserves

12.30 p.m. **First Half** 2 x 20 minute quarters
 Second Half 2 x 20 minute quarters
 ¼ time - 5 minutes, ½ time - 10 minutes, ¾ time - 5 minutes

Seniors

2.20 p.m. 4 x 20 minute quarters + plus time on in each quarter
 ¼ time - 5 minutes, ½ time - 15 minutes, ¾ time - 5 minutes

NIGHT GAMES

Under 16 (if applicable)

12.10 p.m. **First Half** 2 x 20 minute quarters
 Second Half 2 x 20 minute quarters
 ¼ time - 5 minutes, ½ time - 7 minutes, ¾ time - 5 minutes

Under 18

1.55 p.m. **First Half** 2 x 20 minute quarters
 Second Half 2 x 20 minute quarters
 ¼ time - 5 minutes, ½ time - 10 minutes, ¾ time - 5 minutes

22.2 “Time On”

22.2.1 Home & Away Games

- Seniors: “Time on” is to be signalled by the field umpires by either raising one hand above his head OR by crossing both arms across his chest or when a goal umpire signals a score is recorded (NOT when he completes waving his flags).
- If the Field umpire fails to signal “time on” when the ball goes out of bounds the clock is to be stopped when the signal is given by the boundary umpire, and restarted when the ball is thrown into play.
- Reserves and Under 18: Time on only where a team count is called, a stretcher is on ground or there is a lengthy delay as deemed by the umpire/s in charge

22.2.2 Finals

- Seniors will play Time On according to rules applicable during Home and Away season
- Reserves and Under 18 games:
 - First half - time on only where a team count is called, a stretcher is on the ground or there is a lengthy delay as deemed by the umpire/s in charge.
 - Second half - time on played as per Seniors’ rules applicable during Home and Away season, for a duration of 2 x 15-minute quarters only.

23. FOOTBALLS

- All footballs used for matches will be determined by the BFNL including any sponsor brand requirements
- Football for all senior, reserves and Under 18 games will be Size 5
- Two new branded footballs are to be provided by the home Club in each senior match.
- Two suitable branded footballs in good order and condition are to be provided by the home Club for each Reserve and Under 18 match.
- For Under 18 matches only, dependant on the variable match day environmental factors such as morning dew, dim, wet, or slippery conditions, the home club shall be responsible to select the colour of ball used for each match, either red or yellow, provided any ball used meets the outlined sizing and branding requirements.

- The Home club is also responsible to notify both the opposition team and appointed match umpires of the colour selection for any Under 18 match football.
- Once any game has commenced, the colour of football selected prior to the match (either red or yellow) must be used for the entire match and cannot be switched at any stage during a match.
- In finals, branded footballs will be provided by Bendigo Football Netball League.

24. TEAM SHEETS

24.1 Team sheets must include:

- Registered AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY Player entered
- Registered AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY Official entered
- Be signed by a Club Official or Captain
- Coach, Captain (C) and Vice-captain (VC) should be identified on the team sheet
- Players listed as starting interchange should be identified on the team sheet
- If necessary, in the case of late changes, players listed as Emergency (E), should be identified on the team sheet
- Team sheets should be submitted with the umpires/opposition 30 minutes prior to the commencement of the match
- Numbers opposite names in the Record must be the same as is on the team sheet.

24.2 Players

Team sheets generated from the AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY Data Base and web site with full name and numbers signed by Captain or Club Official responsible are to be handed to central umpire prior to commencement of each game. Only players registered with the AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY are eligible to compete.

Club Secretaries are responsible for correct names as well as seeing that the names of trainers, runners and medical staff are shown in the space provided. Coach, captain, and vice-captain and any other official entering the arena should be identified on the team sheet.

Player number must match the number recorded in the football record. A notation of a variation of jumper number must be made on the team

sheet to indicate exceptional circumstances.

Penalty for not signing – \$50

Penalty for failure to include all players in team list – \$100

Penalty for failure to include other information – \$30

Penalty for player number not matching football record – \$30.

Penalty for including names of players not participating in match – \$100

24.3 Officials

The maximum allowable number of officials are:

- Runners shall be two (2) for seniors and reserve grade teams and one (1) for Under 18
- Trainers shall be no more than five (5)
- Medical staff means a qualified medical practitioner, physiotherapist or similar qualified person
- Water carriers – no more than three (3).

“Officials” positions that are allowable on the Bendigo Football Netball League team sheet and inside the fence are:

- Coaching staff (not to exceed 3 (three))
- Team Manager
- Runner Number 1
- Runner Number 2
- Trainer Number 1
- Trainer Number 2
- Trainer Number 3
- Trainer Number 4
- Trainer Number 5 (accredited trainers only)
- Water Carrier Number 6
- Water Carrier Number 7
- Water Carrier Number 8
- Doctor (qualified)
- Physiotherapist (qualified)

All authorised persons, apart from Runners, Trainers and Water Carriers, are to remain in the Coaches Box at all times during play, or within the confines of the perimeter lines surrounding the Coach's Box. Other match day staff must be stationed outside the perimeter fence or fence line.

24.4 Late Changes to Submitted Team Sheets

- Any late change to the starting 22 players originally identified on the team sheet, including players listed to start on the Interchange (I), should be altered as soon as practically possible, but no later than 10 minutes prior to the umpires entering the playing arena
- Only players originally identified as an Emergency (E) can be substituted on to the final team sheet, unless extenuating circumstances are presented such as an unforeseen injury during warm up
- Umpires and the opposition should be notified of any late change to the team sheet as soon as practically possible, but no later than 10 minutes prior to the umpires entering the playing arena.

25. MATCH RESULTS

25.1 The Secretary of the home Club must complete the match results, on line using the AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY Data Base, for the matches played that day. Scores must be entered no later than 30 (thirty) minutes from the conclusion of each game. The final scores for the Senior Game (1st eighteen) must be entered no later than 5.15pm.

25.2 The Full Match Details must be entered on the Club AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY data base on the day the game is played by:

Seniors: 6.00pm

Reserves: 4.00pm

Under 18: 1.00pm (if played at 10.45am)

Where Friday night or Sunday games are played other arrangements MAY BE put in place.

25.3 If a report is made, clubs must follow the process provided by the league at the beginning of the season.

26. MATCH DAY PAPERWORK

A Club Representative must submit ALL Match Day Paperwork including team sheets, goal umpire cards, timekeepers reports and any match day reports via the designated online form by 12pm the Monday following the match. Penalty \$100.

All Match Day Paperwork must be filed in the provided envelope for collection by the League.

27. MATCH DAY PENALTIES

- 27.1** Team manager failing to receive the all clear regarding player reports from officiating umpires in Home and Away games and the Bendigo Football Netball League appointed Ground Manager at all finals. Penalty \$50.
- 27.2** Failing to submit Umpires' Notice of Report Form or required details to Bendigo Football Netball League by 12 noon on the first business day following the match. Penalty: \$100
- 27.3** Approved paperwork must not be altered under any circumstances.
- 27.4** Match Details submitted via AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY on line web site to Bendigo Football Netball League must be entered by the required time and contain correct scores as per Goal Umpires Cards, accurate best players, Bendigo Advertiser vote getters as required, and goal kickers for both competing teams. Penalty: \$50 for first occurrence, \$100 for subsequent occurrences.

28. ELIGIBILITY FOR HOME & AWAY GAMES

- 28.1** A player playing in a game with the senior team of his Club on a day preceding the days upon which lower sections of his Club play in a round of matches, shall be ineligible to play in those lower sections in that round.
- 28.2** A Club playing an ineligible player will:
- In the event of it winning the game forfeit all match and scored points and be subject to a fine to be set by the BFNL.
 - In the event of it losing the game, forfeit all scored points and be subject to a fine to be set by the BFNL. The opposing Club shall be awarded the match points and retains its scored points.

29. ELIGIBILITY FOR FINALS

29.1 Definitions

29.1.1 Eligible game: For a player to be deemed as having participated in a game, AFL Victoria Country rules state that any player listed on the team sheet must be at the ground, dressed in football playing attire and ready to take the field if called upon.

29.1.2 For all of rule 30 the following definitions shall apply:

"Seniors" means a Bendigo Football Netball League first senior grade team.

"Reserves" means a Bendigo Football Netball League second senior grade team.

“Under 18” means a Bendigo Football Netball League under 18 grade team.

“State League” means any of the following leagues: Australian Capital Territory AFL; Northern Territory FL; Queensland AFL; South Australian National FL; Tasmanian AFL, Victorian FL or West Australia FL.

29.2 Club

To be eligible to play in the finals series a player must have played at least four (4)* games for his club in any grade during the 2026 home and away season.

* (To be reviewed for season 2027 based on fixture structure).

29.3 Reserves

Any player who plays more than half of the games in the BFNL Home and Away Season for his club in the senior competition is ineligible to play in the reserves final series unless both the senior and reserve teams are playing finals on the same weekend.

29.4 Under 18s

29.4.1 To be eligible to play in the under 18 finals series a player must have played at least four (4)* games for his club in the under 18 grade during the 2026 home and away season.

* (To be reviewed for season 2027 based on fixture structure).

29.4.2 Notwithstanding rule 29.4.1, any player who plays more than half of the games in the BFNL Home and Away Season for his club in the senior competition is ineligible to play in the under 18 final series unless both the senior and under 18 teams are playing finals on the same weekend

29.5 Two home and away games for the same round

29.5.1 If, during the home and away series, a player is listed on the senior team sheet and the reserves or under 18 team sheet for the same round, then the senior game only shall be counted towards finals eligibility.

29.5.2 If, during the home and away series, a player is listed on the reserves team sheet and the under 18 team sheet for the same round, then the under 18 game only shall be counted towards finals eligibility.

29.6 Coates Talent League players

29.6.1 For the purpose of finals eligibility, a Coates Talent League game

shall be the equivalent of a senior game for the player's BFNL club (refer to AFL Victoria Country rule 12.1)

29.6.2 To be eligible to play in the BFNL seniors finals series, a Coates Talent League player must have physically played at least two (2) games for his club in any grade during the home and away season.

29.6.3 To be eligible to play in the BFNL under 18 finals series, a Coates Talent League player must have physically played at least four (4) games for his club in the under 18 grade during the home and away season.

29.6.4 Any player that plays more than nine (9) games in the Coates Talent League home and away competition may return to play in the BFNL senior finals series only. Rule 29.4.2 does not apply in this case.

29.6.5 For the purpose of finals eligibility, a Coates Talent League Finals Series match shall not be counted towards BFNL finals eligibility for the player's BFNL club.

29.6.6 For the purpose of finals eligibility, a Coates Talent League match played during "Wildcard Weekend" shall not be counted towards BFNL finals eligibility for the player's BFNL club.

29.6.7 Any player who has been selected in both the Coates Talent League and State League competition as a developmental '23rd player' only will be subjected to current BFNL Coates Talent League finals eligibility criteria only (refer 29.6).

29.6.8 Any player who plays in both the Coates Talent League and State League competitions during the same season, will be subjected to BFNL finals eligibility criteria of the competition in which the player plays the highest number of games.

29.6.9 Any player who plays an equal number of matches in the Coates Talent League and State League competitions, will be subjected to BFNL finals eligibility criteria of the competition in which the player first played during the current season.

29.7 State League players

29.7.1 A State League player who qualifies as a Category 1 – Home Player under the AFL Victoria Player Points System Policy must have played at least four (4) BFNL H&A Senior games to qualify for finals.

29.7.2 Any other State League player must have played at least six (6) BFNL H&A Senior games to qualify for finals.

29.8 Permits

No player shall be eligible to play on permit in any grade of finals. All players must be transferred to and registered with their club prior to competing in the BFNL finals series.

29.9 Long Term Injury

If a player is seriously injured while training or playing for his AFL Victoria Country affiliated club (practice matches included), then the club may apply for special consideration to allow that player to complete in a Finals Series without obtaining the minimum eligibility criteria. This application must be made on the Long Term Injury - Finals Eligibility Exemption Request Form and include details of players rehabilitation history for this injury including a medical certificate confirming the injury (further documentation may be required by the League to substantiate the request). The player must have been registered with the club in the previous season to be eligible for exemption. This exemption will be granted strictly on long term injury and nothing else, including retirement or travel. This application must be received by the league by 5pm on the last business day four rounds prior to the first final of that season. Any player not granted an exemption will be required to fulfil all eligibility criteria. The decision of the league on all exemptions shall be final. A long term injury is defined as a single injury that prevents the player competing in five games of that home and away season or any other football/sporting competition for that season.

29.10 Number of games per weekend

A player may only play one (1) finals game per weekend in any grade. This includes for any junior team incorporated with his BFNL club.

29.11 Ineligible player in finals

A club deemed to have played an ineligible player in a finals game shall:

- (a) Forfeit the match in the event of it scoring more points for the match than their opponents.
- (b) Be subject to a fine determined by the BFNL.

30. UNDER 18 COMPETITION

30.1 In the Under 18 competitions, during the Home and Away season only, should a club have less than 18 players at the commencement of the game, then the opposing team shall only field one more than the same number of players respectively.

30.2 AFL Victoria Country Rule 2.4, Permits for Players of Opposing Team, applies for this grade.

- 30.3** The League operates an overage policy for this grade. All clubs must be aware of the conditions of the use of such player contained in this policy.
- 30.4** The League operates a player shortage/player share policy for this grade. All clubs must be aware of the conditions of the use of such player/s contained in this policy. Should policy framework be implemented such as opposition player match day permits, 16 per side matches or a combination of both, Rule 30.1 does not apply in this case.

31. UMPIRES

The Board may appoint anybody or a group of people to be Umpires of the League matches, and may pay the umpires as instructed as per AFL Victoria fees for their services.

- 31.1** Central Umpires must make available to the home Club Secretary immediately after the match, the following:

- (a) Team sheets of opposing teams.
- (b) General report of match, starting time, uniforms, officials on Bendigo Football Netball League form.
- (c) Selection of three best and fairest players in order of preference marking the names 1st, 2nd and 3rd choice using players' names shown in team lists and numbers of such players.

This vote is to be placed in the separate sealed envelope.

- (d) Charges against Clubs or players (with numbers) for breaches of rules and any matter they consider should be brought up.

- 31.2** Central Umpires must see that Club Goal and Boundary Umpires are properly uniformed.

Goal Umpires must be appropriately attired and equipped in white coats, where provided, and equipped with suitable white flags, and two timekeepers are to be in position prior to commencement of the game.

- 31.3** The Field Umpire shall have full control of the play and shall award penalties in accordance with the laws of the game.

No appeal shall be entertained against any of his decisions.

- 31.4** In the event of an Official Umpire not being available, a substitute umpire shall be appointed by agreement of both Captains. Such Central Umpires shall have the power to:

- (a) Issue yellow cards;
- (b) Issue red cards; and
- (c) Report players.

A player can be reported by a non-BUA appointed Umpire. Normal reporting procedures are to be followed. The BUA are to provide their advocate to support the non BUA appointed Umpire.

31.5 Where a substitute Central Umpire has been appointed he shall fill in the Best and Fairest votes.

31.6 Where Goal Umpires are not provided by the BUA, they must be supplied by the competing Clubs. Any Club Goal Umpire officiating in a Bendigo Football Netball League match must be at least 16 years of age.

They must be conversant with the rules, wear white coats and be provided with white flags at least 45 cm square by Clubs and must use the League scorecard which must be signed by both Goal Umpires, Timekeepers and Central Umpires at the match conclusion, failing which it may not be recognised as official.

They must keep their goal area clear of spectators. Club-appointed goal umpires must wear a white coat. Penalty \$50.

31.7 Where Boundary Umpires are not provided by the BUA, they should be supplied by the competing Clubs.

Where a club does NOT supply a boundary umpire players from that Club must take responsibility for throwing the ball back into play for the entire boundary on one side of the ground.

If both Clubs do not supply a boundary umpire players from the forward line of respective teams will take responsibility for throwing the ball back into play for the boundary in their forward half of the ground.

32. UMPIRE ESCORTS

At all Senior, Reserve and Under 18 matches both competing clubs shall supply an escort for umpires who shall (in accordance with the AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY Policy):

- (i) Be listed on the Official team sheet
- (ii) Move quickly to the umpires at the end of each quarter
- (iii) Escort the field and goal umpires from the ground at half time and at the completion of the game to the door of the umpires room;
- (iv) Where the club is the home club, offer umpires cool drinks between each quarter;
- (v) Remain in the centre of the ground with the umpires during quarter time and three quarter time breaks;
- (vi) Show courtesy at all times and NOT question or give comment on the umpire's performance;

- (vii) Be over the age of 18 years; and
- (viii) Wear approved League Escort Bib at all times whilst officiating as an umpires escort. Penalty \$100

33. GROUND ENCROACHMENT

33.1 With the exception only of the quarter time, half time and three-quarter time interval, no persons other than officials provided for in these Rules may encroach upon or enter the playing arena, or stand sufficiently close to the boundary line to impede or hamper the progress or movement of the Boundary Umpires in the execution of their duties.

33.2 The officiating umpires are empowered to send off any of these officials if they are not correctly attired or are deemed to be exceeding their duties.

33.3 Team "huddles" at both quarter and three quarter times (and extra time in finals) must be located outside the centre square. Penalty: \$100

34. DISPUTES

To be read in conjunction with AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY Rules

34.1 The BFNL has the power to deal with and settle all disputes arising out of or in connection with this competition with the exception of appeals as defined in AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY rules.

The BFNL may have such disputes heard and decided by the Independent Tribunal.

Should the party or parties concerned refuse or neglect to abide by such decision they shall be suspended from the competition for such time as the BFNL or Tribunal may determine, and shall be liable to a fine in default of payment of such fine the party or parties concerned may be excluded from playing in the competition.

34.2 Any party referring any dispute to the BFNL shall forward a statement of such dispute in writing to the Bendigo Football Netball League not later than 5pm on the Monday following the match and 5pm on the Tuesday if Monday is a public holiday.

This notice must be accompanied with a deposit for \$500.

35. BARRACKERS AND SUPPORTERS

Any supporters or barrackers who are known to be members of any Club, within the League who, in the opinion of the Central, Boundary or Goal Umpire, Emergency Umpire, Region Council Member or Bendigo Football Netball League Officer, behave in an offensive manner by spoken remarks, or openly incite players on the field to play in a manner

not conducive to the best interests of the game, or are the cause of any disturbance between onlookers, will render the Club to which they belong liable to appear before the BFNL or Tribunal who will have the power after dealing with the case to impose a special fine, suspend or expel such Club from the League.

36. PRACTICE MATCHES

- 36.1** In all practice matches played by an affiliated Club whether within the League or against a Club from another League the Club Secretary shall ensure that a team sheet is completed and handed to the Central Umpire.
- 36.2** As the host club, the Secretary shall forward copies of all such team sheets and other relevant paperwork to the Bendigo Football Netball League Operations Manager in the event of a player being reported. A copy of the report or required details, must be emailed to Bendigo Football Netball League by 6.00pm on the day of the match.
- 36.3** Any player who plays in a practice match and is not a registered player of the participating Club must have his registered Club identified on the team sheet.
- 36.4** All practice matches will be conducted under AFL VICTORIA COUNTRY rules and under normal match conditions.
Umpires will have the right to report and order off. Umpires have been instructed that the Order Off Rule will not be used in lieu of reporting a player when a reportable offence has been committed.
- 36.5** All reports will be heard by the Independent Tribunal of the league of the host Club and any investigations referred from a practice match, will be conducted by the Host Club's League Investigation Officer.
- 36.6** Clubs shall deal direct with the BUA for appointment of umpires for a practice match and shall forward umpires' fees direct to the BUA.

37. EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES

In the event of extreme circumstances occurring in any of the League's Rules, the BFNL Board of Management shall have the power to deal with any matters arising and impose any penalties as they see fit.