



Drouin Dragons Soccer Club (DDSC) Game Time Policy

Version	Date	Author	Review
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Purpose

The Drouin Dragons Soccer Club is committed to providing a positive and inclusive sporting environment for all players, regardless of their perceived skill level or ability. To support this commitment, soccer at our Club is founded on the principles of player development, participation, fun and enjoyment, fair play, and good sportsmanship.

While winning and striving for excellence are valued, they are not the sole measure of success and must not take precedence over the Club's core principles. Recognising that children develop at different rates and in different ways, the Club also considers it essential to provide an appropriate level of competition that supports the development and enjoyment of players with varying capabilities, skills, and ambitions.

Application

Grading

Grading is used to group players of similar ability into teams that compete against other teams of a comparable standard. This approach creates an environment that supports skill development, encourages healthy competition, and enhances each player's overall enjoyment of the game. As a Club, we are committed to developing and retaining our Junior players, with the long-term aim of providing them with the opportunity to progress and play high-quality Senior football at Drouin Dragons Soccer Club.

Junior Team selection and allocation

Where there are a number of junior teams within an age group, players will initially be allocated to teams based on their age. For example, in the Under 12 age group, players turning 11 during the calendar year will be allocated to the bottom-age team, while players turning 12 will be allocated to the top-age team. Teams may then be further allocated based on players' month of birth within that age group.

The Coach and Technical Director will oversee this process and may make adjustments where required to ensure team numbers are balanced, particularly where one team has significantly

more players than another. Player experience and skill level will not be considered when allocating players to teams competing in the same competition and league.

Where possible, family circumstances will also be considered, including players with siblings in other age groups or parents volunteering as coaches or team officials, to minimise travel to multiple venues on game day.

Any exemption from this policy must be formally reviewed and assessed, with the final decision made by the Club General Manager.

Age Groups

The Club requires all players to compete in their correct age group. Under no circumstances will a junior player be permitted to play in a younger age group without formal special dispensation from Football Victoria (FV).

Requests for players to play in a younger age group will be considered by the Technical Director and assessed in line with the same special dispensation criteria applied by FV. The Club reserves the right to request proof of age to verify a player's eligibility.

Players may request to play in a higher age group at the time of registration. Approval will be granted provided the request does not contravene any FV rules or regulations. Where the Club identifies a need for players to participate in a higher age group, volunteers will be sought and must have the appropriate permissions (i.e. coach, parent/guardian, Technical Director). If the number of volunteers exceeds requirements, the Club will select those players deemed most suitable to compete at the higher age level.

Team Sizes

The minimum and maximum number of players per team will be determined by the Technical Director and will reflect the numbers required to appropriately field a team within each age group or division. The player numbers outlined below represent the ideal minimum and preferred team sizes for each age group and will guide team allocations, however, this is at the discretion of the Technical Director and the Board.

The Club will endeavour to field as many teams as necessary within each age group to accommodate the greatest possible number of players. Where player numbers are either excessive or insufficient within a particular team or age group, the Club will make every reasonable effort to accommodate players. This may include recruiting additional players to form another team, or reallocating players across teams or age groups where appropriate.

It has never been the Club's policy to turn players away. However, in circumstances where it is not possible to form teams within the recommended or maximum team sizes, the Club may be

unable to accept additional registrations. In such cases, affected registrations will be declined and a full refund will be provided.

Players Per Team Min/Max	On the Field	Optimum	Players Per Team Min/Max	On the Field	Optimum
U/12 - 10 to 13 players	9	12	U/16 - 12 to 16 players	11	15
U/13 - 10 to 13 players	9	12	U/17 - 12 to 16 players	11	16
U/14 - 12 to 16 players	11	15	Senior (18 and over) 12 to 16 players	11	16
U/15 - 12 to 16 players	11	15			

Game Time

Ensuring that all junior players have an equal opportunity to enjoy their football is a shared responsibility of the Club, coaches, team managers and parents. All children must be provided with fair and equitable game time as it is fundamental to player growth and enjoyment.

Wherever possible, this should result in players receiving equal playing time, either on a weekly basis or balanced across the season. Coaches are also expected to encourage players to experience a variety of playing positions, supporting skill development and a broader understanding of the game.

Coaches must not allocate increased playing time to more skilled or talented players at the expense of other team members, nor should winning be prioritised over player development, participation and enjoyment.

As players progress through their teenage years, the game naturally becomes more competitive and the emphasis on performance and results increases. To reflect this progression, coaches of Under 17s and above are afforded greater flexibility and discretion in managing game time. As players get older and develop, they will play in less positions. This will mean that some players will receive more game time than others due to ability to play in certain positions as well as their performance. Players in these age groups can begin to “earn” more game time than the minimum with improving performances and demonstrating the right attitude to learn and develop.

In general, from Under 12s through to Under 18s, all players must receive reasonable playing time as an absolute minimum. Reasonable playing time is defined as at least 50% of total match time across the season. Fair rotation and/or rostering of players (if the team has a high number of players) to receive game time in each half, is encouraged as opposed to only playing in one

half of a game. Players should not remain on the bench for excessive periods, and should not generally be substituted more than once in a single half unless due to injury.

However, there are exceptions to be considered including injuries, poor attitude, and breaking code of conduct etc. Where a player loses out on game time due to any of the above exceptions, extra game time is not afforded/equalised for future matches.

Breaches

Breaches of this Policy may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the Drouin Dragons Soccer Club Constitution, Club policies, and Football Victoria rules, including warnings, suspension, or further sanctions.