



# Frequently Asked Questions – JBNPL

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# OVERVIEW

## What is the JBNPL?

The Junior Boys National Premier League (JBNPL) is Football Victoria's aspirational tier of football for boys participating at the NPL U13-U16 age levels.

This means participants take part in a longer season (33 league games), inclusive of more training sessions under qualified coaches, enhanced facility standards and game day management standards that provide players with the best opportunity to develop their game.

The NPL is overseen by Football Federation Australia (FFA), in partnership with Football Victoria (FV).

## How many clubs participate in the JBNPL?

For season 2020, there will be 48 clubs who are eligible to participate in the JBNPL competition.

## Why is the JBNPL changing in 2020?

For several years, we have received overwhelming feedback from the football community that the development pathways at the JBNPL level were not achieving its objectives.

Although the JBNPL tier of competition has had many positive outcomes, there were also some areas that needed reviewing.

Some of the recurring problems included lopsided scores, infrequent high-quality matches, variances in technical development and an undefined and an opaque future pathway.

After an intensive 12-month consultation process across the football community, including an extensive review from an independent consultant (Sports Business Partners), FV was able to formulate a road map that aims to address the key issues which have challenged the JBNPL since its inception in 2014.

As a direct outcome of this review, FV is introducing the newly formatted JBNPL competition from 2020.

## What age groups make up the JBNPL program?

The mandatory age groups for JBNPL includes U13, U14, U15 and U16. All clubs are limited to one (1) team per age group in the JBNPL program.

## **Who is suited to playing JBNPL?**

The JBNPL is designed for players with qualitative aspirations for their football development. This is for players looking to participate in more advanced and intensive programs than those offered at the Community level.

This means that requirements on players will be more significant. Not only are players expected to have higher levels of technical ability, but they must also be prepared to commit to a longer season and more training sessions than at the Community level.

All clubs are required to participate in a season that is 40 weeks long, playing 33 games and includes three (3) training sessions per week. Coaches must possess FFA coaching qualifications and facilities must reach certain standards.

The season will require players to be available for training and playing across most long weekends and school holidays.

Our JBNPL competition also includes teams from regional Victoria and as such there is an added requirement regarding travel for some away fixtures.

## **Who is suited to Community level?**

The Community level is designed for players of all abilities to experience a well-organised, structured football competition in a shorter-time frame. Community teams have reduced playing and training commitments to those that participate in the JBNPL competition.

As a result, participation in Community competitions should be significantly cheaper than participation in JBNPL competitions.

Most clubs will participate in seasons that are between 22 and 30 weeks, playing 18-22 games. Training will occur once or twice per week, depending on the club. Coaches must be registered but there is no mandatory requirement to have advanced FFA coaching qualifications.

There are committed and talented players who choose to play in our Community competition for a variety of reasons. These can include the football culture at a club, the cost, the time commitment required and the travel demanded at various levels of FV competitions.

## **Do you have to play JBNPL to be considered for representative teams?**

No. FV runs various trials for representative sides and this is not limited to JBNPL players.

# COMPETITION FORMAT

## How is the JBNPL changing in 2020?

The JBNPL competition will comprise of 48 teams. Each team will be allocated to a geographical "Zone" made up of 12 teams.

Each team will play 11 pre-qualifying games. At the end of that period, teams will move into divisions based on their finishing positions.

The top three (3) teams of each Zone will form Division 1, made up of 12 teams. Each team will then play 22 games in a home and away format.

The following three (3) teams from each Zone will then form Division 2, also made up of 12 teams. Each team will then play 22 games in a home and away format.

The remaining six (6) teams from each Zone will then form Division 3. This division will be split into North/West and South/East divisions, also made up of 12 teams each. Each team will then play 22 games in a home and away format.

For further information, please click on [this link](#)

In 2020, FV has authorised a "decoupling" of senior and junior programs for the purposes of promotion and relegation. This means that the finishing position of the senior team will not determine where the JBNPL program for that club plays.

## What level will each JBNPL club play at?

At the start of each JBNPL season, clubs will be arranged into four regional zones, which will act as the qualification period for the JBNPL season. The results of these regional leagues will determine which division each club will participate in for the JBNPL Home and Away season.

This will help establish FV's aim of "best-vs-best" and "like-vs-like", creating an environment where the best players can face each other on a regular basis. This will create a more competitive environment for our best juniors, whilst allowing the remainder to play against other clubs of similar skill level.

At the end of the season, the competition will reset and clubs will recommence in their zones for the pre-qualifying period.

## Can different age groups from the same club end up in different divisions?

Yes. After the qualification phase, the pre-qualifiers will determine what division each age group team will play in for that year for U13 to U16 only.

## **How does Football Victoria envisage the new grading system will lead to better outcomes for young footballers in Victoria?**

The 11-game, geography-based qualification phase of the competition provides eligible clubs with a minimum of 11 gala days through the qualification phase before being re-graded into a new 'like-vs-like' league structure where another 22 competitive games will be played.

This provides clubs with the opportunity to develop strong 'football cultures' within their own environment and enables their young players to play in more competitive football fixtures throughout the season.

With more competitive games after the qualification period, players will be consistently challenged at an appropriate level.

The new model is reviewable on an ongoing basis.

## **Why has FV chosen this competition format?**

The determining factor in this decision was a fundamental principle of 'club development' over 'individual team development'.

There was a strong view amongst stakeholders that an investment was required to be made in the facility, football program, coaching and technical direction of a minimum of four (4) junior teams (U13, U14, U15, U16) at a club rather than reward a structure where an individual club team may rise up through the pathway.

This principle also aligns with FV's key pillar of 'Our Clubs' which seeks to enable our clubs to thrive while providing great experiences to all players.

## **Does the grading system recommended compare with any other models?**

Most junior elite competitions have competitive mechanisms to determine the appropriate level each team should participate at.

This system is a blend of the system utilised in football for years and the grading system utilised in other junior representative sports.

FV sought a model built on extensive research, remains scalable into the future, and - most importantly - can be monitored and reviewed using key metrics to ensure a process of continuous improvement, commencing from 2020 onwards.

The aim is to have young players competing in leagues that provide a challenge for the level of their current ability.

## What do the JBNPL Zones look like?

Please refer to the chart below:

JUNIOR BOYS NPL				 FOOTBALL VICTORIA	 NATIONAL PREMIER LEAGUES
NORTH	WEST	SOUTH	EAST		
 BRUNSWICK CITY SC	 ALTONA MAGIC SC	 BENTLEIGH GREENS SC	 ASHBURTON UNITED SC		
 ELTHAM REDBACKS FC	 AVONDALE FC	 BERWICK CITY SC	 BOX HILL UNITED SC		
 ESSENDON ROYALS SC	 BALLARAT CITY FC	 DANDENONG CITY SC	 EASTERN LIONS SC		
 GOULBURN VALLEY SUNS FC	 BENDIGO CITY FC	 DANDENONG THUNDER FC	 FC BULLEEN LIONS		
 HEIDELBERG UNITED FC	 BRIMBANK STALLIONS FC	 GIPPSLAND FC	 MALVERN CITY FC		
 HUME CITY FC	 CS GEORGE CROSS FC	 GLEN EIRA FC	 MANNINGHAM UNITED FC		
 MELBOURNE VICTORY FC	 GEELONG SC	 KINGSTON CITY FC	 MELBOURNE CITY FC		
 MORELAND CITY FC	 GREEN GULLY SC	 LANGWARRIN SC	 NORTHCOTE CITY FC		
 MORELAND ZEBRAS FC	 MELBOURNE KNIGHTS FC	 MORNINGTON SC	 NUNAWADING CITY FC		
 MURRAY UNITED FC	 NORTH GEELONG WARRIORS FC	 OAKLEIGH CANNONS FC	 PORT MELBOURNE SHARKS SC		
 PASCOE VALE FC	 ST ALBANS SAINTS SC	 PENINSULA STRIKERS FC	 RINGWOOD CITY FC		
 WHITTLESEA RANGES FC	 WERRIBEE CITY FC	 SPRINGVALE WHITE EAGLES FC	 SOUTH MELBOURNE FC		

## How are the Zones determined?

The Zones for the pre-qualification phase are determined by Geography.

FV competitions team have the discretion when allocating Hyundai A-League (HAL) Clubs and 'Regional Clubs' (defined as a club located further than 100km from Melbourne's CBD) to a zone.

FV Competitions Team will monitor all travel requirements throughout the phases of the competition structure, noting that the regional programs may host 66 percent of JBNPL competitions fixtures – which may include all 11 qualification games at their home venue (or other competing regional club venues) and that the second 'home and away' phase of the competition may require teams to travel to regional areas on multiple occasions.

All JBNPL Clubs have been advised that participation in JBNPL competition requires clubs and players/parents to commit to enhanced travel throughout the season.

## Could the structure change again?

Yes. We will continuously review the structure to ensure we are meeting KPIs in overall competitiveness, registrations, cost to play, travel, referee and player development.

Our focus has been about removing obstacles that prevent progress, rather than attaining perfection. This JBNPL model was the result of an exhaustive review and considerable consultation.

However, as the landscape of Victorian football is evolving rapidly, and the prospects for the professional game are altering at the national level, we will need to continually review and update our regulations where necessary.

### **Will the new league structure reduce large score variances in JBNPL matches?**

Our research identified that 23 per cent of all JBNPL games finish with a score difference greater than five (5). One of the aims of the new competition structure is to reduce this occurrence by holding a qualification phase before re-grading teams into 'like-vs-like' competition.

We expect that there will be some high score variances in this qualification/group phase. This is no different to any qualification phase in tournament football and is evident in the early stages of the best competitions in the world.

Post qualification, it is anticipated that teams will align to their fellow participants more accurately as this 'like-vs-like' home and away fixtures phase of the tournament commences.

During the second phase of the competition it is envisaged that games will be more competitive with lower score variances.

### **If the senior team is relegated, will this impact the junior boys' position in the competition the following year?**

No. For the purpose of promotion and relegation seniors and juniors are decoupled, which means that a senior team's finishing position will have no impact on the junior placings in the following year.



# CLUBS' QUESTIONS

## How can our club prepare to succeed in JBNPL?

We urge all clubs to have a robust plan in place to make the most of this opportunity. We expect that all clubs will have to "raise their game" in every facet.

While this will be challenging for some clubs, the overwhelming feedback we have received is that the time is right to push for enhanced standards, particularly in the development of junior pathways.

Clubs will be required to appoint qualified coaches, develop a youth development plan in line with the National Curriculum, adhere to governance requirements, be financially stable, meet minimum facility requirements and comply with membership protection guidelines.

## How will the updated JBNPL affect my club?

Each club may be affected differently, depending on how they have run previously. FV encourages all club officials to thoroughly read the competition's regulations before pre-season commences including their signed licenses.

Regulations will be strictly enforced and a zero-tolerance policy will be applied for lack of knowledge regarding criteria requirements.

## Are the clubs aware of their requirements?

All JBNPL clubs have been fully briefed in relation to the criteria requirements to hold a JBNPL license.

All clubs have signed a license to participate in the JBNPL competition and have agreed to comply with the terms of the license.

## Will clubs still be assigned Gala Days?

On Gala Days, all four age groups U13, U14, U15 and U16 play together (either home and away) on the same day against the same opposition club).

All 11 qualification games will be held in Gala Day format (subject to the home team's ground availability).

Naturally, it is more difficult to provide Gala Days for clubs in the second phase of the tournament as individual teams from each club may not all line up in the same home and away league.

When they are assigned their league in the JBNPL structure, the overriding priority will be to create more appropriate, highly competitive fixtures each week.

## **Will Hyundai A-League (HAL) clubs receive any preferential treatment?**

No. All HAL clubs participating in Football Victoria competitions will be required to meet the same rules, regulations and guidance. All (HAL) clubs will need to compete in the pre-qualifying phase of the competition.

## **What is FV's position on expanding the JBNPL competition to more clubs?**

As part of its commitment to improving junior development, FV will regularly review the JBNPL competition structure including the provision to increase or decrease the number of clubs beyond 2020.

FV will communicate any such changes as required. FV reserves the right to increase or decrease license holders as required.

## **Is our club guaranteed a position in the JBNPL program if they have a license?**

Licenses have been issued to existing JBNPL clubs, HAL clubs and 13 new community clubs, who underwent a competitive and rigorous application process.

The license period offered in FV's JBNPL competition commences in 2020. Each club will be required to meet the minimum criteria for each year of the license.

FV reserves the right to review clubs who cannot meet the criteria on-going.

Clubs who are in breach may be fined or removed from the competition if criteria cannot be met.

## **Will we be travelling more or less than previous years for our club?**

This will vary for each club, depending on who they are fixtured against. FV is committed to creating the most effective competition for our juniors and asks clubs to prepare for the travel demands that come with playing in a statewide competition.

Clubs are reminded that failure to complete any scheduled fixtures, home or away, could result in significant sanctions which may include the deduction of points.

## **Can JBNPL clubs field Community teams?**

Yes. Existing JBNPL clubs can have unlimited MiniRoos and Small-Sided Games (SSG) teams provided they have enough numbers and availability of playing facilities. This excludes HAL and Regional clubs.

Current JBNPL teams may introduce one (1) additional community team per age group (U13, U14, U15 and U16) in 2020. These teams will be registered to play in FV's Community competition. This excludes HAL and Regional clubs.

From 2021, current non-regional JBNPL clubs will have no restrictions on the number of community teams per age group provided they meet the criteria for playing facilities.

All new entities excluding HAL clubs will be permitted to maintain their current community teams.

For clarity purposes, JBNPL clubs new and current will only be permitted to register one (1) team per age group (U13, U14, U15 and U16) in the JBNPL competition

### **What happens if an JBNPL club can't fulfil their obligation to play a game?**

JBNPL clubs must field all their obligations to the FV fixture. Should they fail to do this, significant penalties and sanctions can apply.

FV have enabled clubs to field the following player numbers in each of their U13, U14, U15 and U16 squads.

### **JBNPL Squad Numbers**

<b>TEAM</b>	<b>MINIMUM</b>	<b>MAXIMUM</b>
<b>U13</b>	16	20
<b>U14</b>	16	18
<b>U15</b>	16	18
<b>U16</b>	16	20

All clubs are required to provide FV with players rosters for each age group by 5 February 2020.

A player can only be listed on 1 JBNPL roster at any time.

FV has provided clubs with the opportunity to manage their team squad numbers as they work through the football season. Players can play 'up' age levels in JBNPL competition should another team be short of players for any specific weekend. This is particularly relevant on double header weekends (two games in one weekend) and through school holidays.

A Player must be registered and be made active on the 'Play Football' platform prior to being added onto the club's roster.

A Player registering to a Community team cannot play in a JBNPL team at the same time.

It is the club's responsibility to manage their player requirements throughout the pre- and post-qualifying periods. FV has considered several elements when allowing these squad sizes.

- a) There is no opportunity for U13 teams to be supported by non-registered players on the JBNPL U13 squad list at any time through the season. As such, Clubs may select a maximum of 20 players at the U13 age level should they choose to and are comfortable that they can manage the playing time available for all squad members.
- b) The U18 level of JBNPL competition may require support from additional players at certain stages through the season. As such, a maximum of 20 players at the U16 age level may be selected as there will be opportunity for U16 players to play in the U18 competition if a club's Technical Director (TD) assesses a U16 player as being capable of performing at this age level of competition.
- c) U14 and U15 JBNPL squads have been kept at a maximum of 18 players to ensure that clubs have the opportunity to provide players with enough game time to support their development. Should a club have challenges with squad numbers at these age levels at any time throughout the JBNPL season, TD's are able to seek support from age levels below or select age appropriate players from age levels above, to ensure the Club meets their fixturing obligations.

As is always the case, it is the role of the Club Technical Director (TD) to ensure they manage their squads effectively to ensure all teams field the players required to play a game. TD's need to manage:

- Player game and training loads;
- Player holidays;
- Illness and injury;
- Double-game day weekends; and-
- School sport commitments.

Football Victoria is comfortable that it has provided clubs and club TD's with enough players to meet all their fixturing requirements.

### **Can a player transfer from one JBNPL club to another?**

Yes. A player can transfer to another JBNPL club, but this can only occur during the designated registration periods.

## **What are the registration periods?**

A JBNPL player must be registered only during one (1) of the two (2) registration periods set or approved by FV;

The first registration period is prior to the pre-qualification phase with registrations opening in December to the 5<sup>th</sup> of February 2020.

## **How many clubs can a player register for in a single year?**

A Player may be registered for a maximum of three (3) clubs in each form of the game during a season. During this period, the player is only eligible to play in matches (other than friendly or trial matches) for two (2) clubs in each form of the game.

A Player must only be registered for one club and play for that one club at any one point in time in accordance with FIFA regulations.

# **PARENT or GUARDIAN QUESTIONS**

## **JBNPL or Community - what's the right pathway for my child?**

If you would like to provide your child with more aspirational football education, and the opportunity to develop alongside similarly like-minded players, with qualified coaches, we recommend considering a JBNPL club. This also requires a commitment to a 40 week football season and the occasional possibility of extended travel for away games.

If you would like to provide your child with an opportunity to play football in a football culture, with less overall commitment in time, that's focus is primarily on participation and enjoyment, whilst still enjoying the benefits of a well-administered competition, we recommend a Community club.

## **How do I choose the best JBNPL club for my child?**

This is a decision you and your child should consider very carefully. Every club is required to meet mandatory criteria as set out by FV and this forms part of the clubs' licensing requirements.

All clubs granted a JBNPL license have accepted that their club will be responsible for meeting the criteria requirements. In addition, FV conducts audits to ensure clubs are meeting these requirements.

As a parent you should consider some of the following areas including the club's vision and values, geographic proximity, technical director and coaching team, youth development program, fees, facilities and any other matters that are considered important by you and your child.

## **Why does my child have to trial to play JBNPL?**

In general, most clubs conduct trials to select players to fill their rosters for the upcoming season. Trials are conducted during the trial window and clubs will publish trial information on their website.

For players currently at a JBNPL club, at the end of the season each club will either retain the player, request the player to trial or release the player without further trial.

For new players, the club may request the player attends a trial process.

Each club's trial process may vary. However, in general you will be requested to register your interest, receive communication of trial dates and times, attend one (1) or more trials and either receive an offer or be informed that your child has been unsuccessful.

Whilst FV recommends that a fee should not be charged for trials, some clubs may charge a fee to attend a trial. Parents should be made aware of any fee required to trial for that club.

Players should only trial if they and their parent/guardian understand the commitment requirements to play in the JBNPL.

We remind parents and guardians that each JBNPL club decides who makes their squads and that FV has no say in who they select. Trials are completed on a voluntary basis and each club's trial process may vary.

## **Why does JBNPL cost more than Community level?**

The JBNPL in general provides access to the very best of junior football in Victoria - facilities, coaches, training and links to the aspirational tier for the most talented players.

In total, the JBNPL covers 40 weeks, 33 fixtured games and encompasses approximately 160 football sessions, a considerably higher amount than Community clubs.

## **Why do some JBNPL clubs cost more than others?**

JBNPL clubs do their best to minimise costs but final fees are at their own discretion.

FV has mandated that the maximum cost per-player, per-year is A\$2000 + GST. (NB: this is not FV's recommended cost for a JBNPL program).

Should you have any concern about JBNPL fees, including a club's refund policy, please contact your club's junior administrator. All clubs must have a published refund policy.

## **If our family can't commit to the JBNPL requirements, what should we do?**

FV recognises that the time and cost requirements for participants in the JBNPL structure are significant.

We believe parents and guardians must understand that when they choose to select a JBNPL program, they are making an intensive time commitment to their child's football development.

We remind parents and guardians that the JBNPL is an aspirational program and participation is voluntary. For those seeking an alternative, we encourage them to consider one of the many Community clubs.

## **Will there be JBNPL matches scheduled during school and public holidays?**

Yes. The JBNPL competition is scheduled over a 40-week season and this includes school and public holiday periods.

Whilst we accept this may prove a disruption for parents and guardians wishing to take extended holidays, we remind them that having a child in the JBNPL system requires an enhanced level of commitment to training and matches. This is common at the aspirational tier of all Australian sports.

## **What should I do if I receive an offer for my child?**

If your child is made an offer, you should read the requirements in full and be absolutely comfortable with the necessary commitments before accepting.

Parents should also declare any compulsory school sport participation their child has to the Club TD before accepting an offer of participation in a JBNPL football program.

The JBNPL may also have some games that are fixtured across school sport fixtures. Parents, club TDs and schools should be made aware of this before any participation commitments are entered into.

All parents or guardians should be aware of what you are committing to. It is a decision you and your child need to consider carefully. Most clubs will provide you with an offer to join the club if you have been a successful trialist.

It is strongly encouraged that you familiarize yourself with the contents of a Club letter of offer. You should understand what the key commitments are for you and your child and we recommend that you should only accept the offer if you are comfortable with the content and commitments required.

### **Can my child change JBNPL clubs' mid-season?**

Yes, but only if this occurs within the designated transfer windows.

The designated window is 1 June 2020 to June 4 2020.

Please note a JBNPL player can move to a Community club at the same club or a new Community club at any time as long as its prior to the Amateur Player registration deadline.

To complete this change, the player must de-register from a JBNPL team, and register to their new Community team or new Community club.

### **Can players regularly move between a Community team and a JBNPL team at the same club?**

No. - Players will need to be registered for each team they are playing for. Players moving from a Community team to a JBNPL team will need to de-register from one team and register in the other team. Once the Player deregisters, they will be ineligible to participate in that team.

### **Am I entitled to a refund if we choose to leave a JBNPL club?**

Every club is required to have a refund policy and this should be communicated clearly to all stakeholders, players and parents.

The policy is determined by the club and before committing to a particular club you should be fully aware of their refund policy.

All matters relating to refunds should be taken up with your club.

### **Can a Head Coach of an eligible team in the age groups (U13's – U16's) hold a head coach role at another JBNPL club?**

No.

### **Can a Head Coach of an eligible team in the age groups (U13's – U16's) hold multiple coaching roles within the same JBNPL club?**

A Head Coach is not able to be the Head Coach of another team. The Head Coach may be appointed as a Mentor Coach or Assistant Coach of another team. Irrespectively, every Head Coach appointed must meet the minimum coaching requirements for that position.



### **What happens if we receive an offer but can't afford the fees?**

The JBNPL competition has a higher level of expectation from clubs who are participating in this form of competition. As such, the fees charged are generally higher than other FV endorsed clubs.

Each club is required to make parents clearly aware of their fee structure and parents should be aware of whether they can afford the costs involved.

Clubs may choose to consider personal circumstances at their discretion and you should enquire with your club if this is relevant to you. Most clubs have a policy that enables parents to apply for support in cases of genuine financial hardship.

### **Do I have to help with any responsibilities at my club?**

Yes. Whilst the JBNPL is an enhanced level of competition, it still relies on parents and family to volunteer in order to provide the best football experience our players can experience.

Like all junior sports, JBNPL clubs will ask parents and families to help contribute to various responsibilities in a voluntary manner. Examples of such roles may include but not limited to Marshalls, Assistant Referee, Team Manager, refreshment duties, general club events and fundraising.

## **OTHER QUESTIONS**

### **How does the competition for U18's operate in 2020?**

U18's follow the senior program in our new competition model. If a club's U18 team is short of squad numbers, U16 player(s) will be entitled to play for the club's U18 team.

### **Where will the U12's team play?**

The U12's will compete in the Community competition. The competition is a 9v9 competition format which includes appointed referees, the collation of results and displaying of ladders.

For any other questions, please feel free to email them to FV at [JBNPL2020@footballvictoria.com.au](mailto:JBNPL2020@footballvictoria.com.au)