

Mornington Peninsula Junior Football League

# **Dangerous Tackling Initiative**

## **Appendix 5**

Version 1.0

## MPJFL DANGEROUS TACKLING INITIATIVE

### 1. PREFACE

The MPJFL is committed to creating the safest possible environment for all participants. The welfare and safety of players within the league is the first and foremost priority of the MPJFL and affiliate clubs, and as such there is a need for stricter and more transparent protocol around dangerous/sling tackling.

This Dangerous Tackling initiative is designed to be implemented collaboratively with the clubs, with a strategic focus on continued education and awareness around the topic.

We would like to acknowledge the work of the South Metro Junior Football League in this space, and for allowing us to use the SMJFL Dangerous Tackling Guidelines to develop this document.

### 2. INTRODUCTION

The overall objective of these guidelines and information is to reduce the number of players getting injured due to dangerous tackles.

The MPJFL firmly believes that the Umpiring Group plus all clubs can play a substantial role in reducing the number of unnecessary player injuries.

This can be done by adhering to the following key points:

- 1 - Clubs educating players and coaches at all levels on how to tackle and be tackled in a safe manner; and
- 2 - The Umpire Co-Ordinator at training sessions continually educate and remind umpires regarding what constitutes a dangerous tackle and ensures the tackler is penalised in an appropriate manner.

### 1. CLUBS & OFFICIALS

The MPJFL requires clubs to continue to reinforce correct tackling techniques to all players at training and on Match Day as part of their pre-game address. Pure tackling technique is by no means limited to girls, but feedback has been that it can be more of an issue given so many of the players are still relatively new to the game and have often not grown up being taught the basics of the game.

### 1. DANGEROUS TACKLING GUIDELINES

#### How to Apply:

Should a coaching team witness a dangerous tackle being applied (or other significant unsportsmanlike behaviour) by a member of their team, the coach is to remove the player from the ground immediately and counsel the player about why the tackle was dangerous and how it may have caused injury to the opposition player.

**This is to be done regardless of whether the umpire or other official pays a free kick or applies another sanction at the time.** The player will be free to return to the field of play once the coach has delivered the message. This does not have to be a lengthy period, for example a coach may be able to remove the player and reinstate them to the playing field within a matter of minutes.

This is to be applied to significant cases of unsportsmanlike behaviour or significant unduly rough tackles, as per the current definitions.

Other behaviour can still be addressed or reinforced at the normal match breaks. The purpose of this guideline is to reinforce behaviour standards and expectations and to ensure that players play the game in the true spirit of the contest and lead by example in the manner which the MPJFL expects all teams and players to play the game. This is an MPJFL guideline and there is no intention that your Club approach other teams during the game to address opposition play. However, we encourage team managers to respectfully discuss the guideline, particularly as it applies to dangerous or unduly rough play/ tackles, with the opposition Team Manager prior to the commencement of the game; to set the standard for all players.

We would also encourage both coaches to address their teams (individually) prior to the match to reinforce the standards and raise awareness of unduly rough or dangerous tackles.

An unduly rough or dangerous tackle (such as a sling tackle or driving a player into the ground with arms pinned) is defined as a tackle that is likely to be illegal (as defined in Laws of the Game) and/or will cause injury to an opposition player.

## 1. EDUCATION

### Pre-Game Conversations

It is suggested that the following procedure is followed by the coach and team manager on match days.

- Meet and greet your opposition Coach and Team Manager before the game.
- Initiate a respectful conversation that in recent games we have witnessed an increase in dangerous tackles by both our players and opposition. Players have been removed from the field due to injury/concussion.
- Suggest that the teams work collaboratively to monitor and manage this behaviour under the MPJFL Dangerous Tackle Initiative.
- Let them know that if one of your players applies a dangerous tackle without adjudication, you will remove the player from the field – ask them to do the same.

### Coach Re-enforcement

The coaches role within this process is extremely important, acting as the central educator for junior teams in a number of important areas. It is the opinion of the MPJFL that the coach of each team must continually re-enforce the position of the Dangerous Tackling Initiative where possible, with a development-focused mindset. A uniform approach to Dangerous Tackling throughout the entire MPJFL Coaching Group will significantly increase the likelihood of change within this space.

### Training

Training sessions are the perfect opportunity for coaches to educate the players in regard to tackling methods and the importance of following the Dangerous Tackling Guidelines featured in this document. Consistent conditioning in this area, particularly within the younger age groups, will

establish a strong foundation of players learning the skills they need to tackle in the correct way, as well as to be able to differentiate between safe and dangerous tackling.

#### Pre-Match

Coaches will again have the opportunity to address Dangerous Tackling during the Pre-Match address at each game. Only needing to be brief, the coach consistently re-enforcing the messaging around Dangerous Tackling will have a profound effect on the playing group, particularly with the increased focus/engagement levels of participants during this stage in preparation for the match.

#### Post-Match

Coaches should take the opportunity of Post-Match discussions to provide honest, constructive feedback to players in the individual format. This could be either congratulating or applauding a participant for his approach, or identifying areas of improvement. This Post-Match feedback could also include a coach reprimanding a player for a dangerous tackle during the game, or an intent to lay a dangerous tackle.

#### **Umpire Education**

Umpires will continue to be trained and educated in the Dangerous Tackling space throughout the remainder of 2022. Adjudicating these tackles in-line with the guidelines in this document will be a focal point at training, which will be aided by the development and distribution of resources and learning material that will help umpires gain a stronger understanding of the rules and the way to interpret those rules.

### **1. ACTION**

#### **Reports**

Several players have been sanctioned this year across all levels of football for dangerous tackles and/or unduly rough play. To reaffirm our position, as the tackler, **you** have a responsibility to ensure that you tackle in a safe manner. Even if a player applies an otherwise legal tackle, if the player with the ball head hits the ground, then the player may be reported and suspended.

A more comprehensive overview on the adjudicating of the dangerous tackle can be found below in the next section.

#### **Umpires Adjudication**

There are a few key indicators in the tackling action that the MPJFL Umpires are instructing the Umpires to be aware of when ruling a dangerous tackle or a legal tackle, they are the following:

- Overall “type” of tackle: sling, drive, dump
- Two motions to the tackle
- Transfer of weight from one side of the body to the other
- The player being tackled having their legs in the air
- The player being tackled being parallel to the ground (in the air)
- The player being tackled being lifted off the ground
- The tackler pins the arms of the ball player
- The player has their head hit the ground in an unsafe manner

This is how the Umpire Co-ordinator is instructing Umpires to adjudicate the dangerous tackles:

- Dangerous tackle - LOW impact/severity head does NOT hit the ground – **FREE KICK**
- Dangerous tackle - LOW impact/severity head DOES hit the ground – **YELLOW CARD**
- Dangerous tackle - HIGH impact/severity head does NOT hit the ground – **YELLOW CARD**
- Dangerous tackle - HIGH impact/severity head DOES hit the ground – **RED CARD**

\*Other circumstances which may warrant an instant Red Card – Slinging motion where the ball player does not have control to brace themselves for landing. When a player is lifted off the ground and not returned to ground with reasonable care. When the tackler pins the arms of the ball player, and they have no way to brace themselves for landing. Umpires look at the action, not the result as the game needs to restart as soon as possible. Therefore, there are occasions when an incident is upgraded to a red card by the league if, after the fact, a player is found to have been injured in the tackle.

## 2. CONCLUSION

Please remember, most of our umpires are learning, and this part of the game is one of the most difficult to adjudicate. Regardless of any decision or non-decision, it is vitally important that our umpires are not subjected to abusive behaviour or negative comments as all this has the potential to do is dent the confidence of the umpire which can only have a detrimental impact on their decision making.