



# AFL PLAYERS CODE OF CONDUCT

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# **AFL PLAYERS' CODE OF CONDUCT**

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# AFL PLAYERS CODE OF CONDUCT

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 *Commitment and consultation*

The AFLPA represents AFL Players participating in the AFL Football competition organised by the AFL. The AFLPA and its members are committed to promoting the positive image of AFL Players and their professional and proper conduct.

With these aims in mind, the AFL and the AFLPA, in consultation with each AFL Club, have agreed to formulate this Code of Conduct (“the Code”) for AFL Players.

### 1.2 *Purpose*

The Code seeks to promote and strengthen the good reputation of Australian Rules Football, the AFL Competition, the AFL, AFL Clubs and AFL Players by establishing standards of performance and behaviour for AFL footballers. The primary focus of the Code is to educate Players on the importance of maintaining appropriate standards and to provide further education, counselling and other assistance to Players whose conduct does not conform to the appropriate standard and on the adverse affect such conduct may have on the standing and reputation of the game, the AFL, the AFL Club and the player himself.

Subject to any obligations set out within this Code, an AFL Player is entitled to have his privacy including that of his family and friends respected whenever possible.

Where a Player’s conduct attracts some form of discipline under this Code, it is the intention that Club Management and Leadership Group representatives have regard to the desire to impose Alternative Sanctions (as defined in clause 9 of this Code) rather than monetary forfeitures wherever practicable.

It is important to note that under the Standard Player Contract conduct of a serious nature can lead to a player being delisted by his Club or summarily dismissed, but that the parties are also desirous of utilising Alternative Sanctions where appropriate, to ensure that any sanctions to be imposed on AFL Players are commensurate to the conduct that places them in breach of this Code, and/or AFL Rules and Regulations, and/or Team Rules and that there is also an educational and remedial slant to the sanctions applicable to breaches.

## **2. Player Responsibilities**

### **2.1 Behaviour**

AFL Players aspire to the highest standards of sportsmanship and professional conduct.

AFL Players must conduct themselves in a manner so as not to bring Australian Rules football, the AFL, AFL Clubs and other AFL Players into disrepute.

This clause applies to a Player's behaviour which:

- (i) occurs during the course of any match, training session, Club or AFL function, promotional appearance, camp or tour, including travelling to and from such employment related commitments; or
- (ii) involves public comment or comments made to the media; or
- (iii) involves criminal conduct which directly impacts in a material way upon the Player's ability to perform his duties as an Australian Rules footballer or impacts upon the reputation of the AFL or the AFL Club in any way; or
- (iv) involves conduct deemed by his AFL Club and the Club's Leadership Group (or senior players of the Club if no such group exists) in accordance with clause 5 of this Code to be have brought the AFL and/or his AFL Club into disrepute.

The Players understand the obligations upon them as expressly stated in this clause 2.1, however, the AFL and AFL Clubs also recognise that Players may be subject to significantly greater intrusion into their private lives than the average person. This notion should be respected when assessing a Player's conduct and the circumstances surrounding any potential breach of the Code.

### **2.2 Playing**

AFL Players must not wilfully engage or participate in any activity which may cause or aggravate any injury or illness and which prevents AFL Players from playing AFL Football to the best of the individual's ability.

### **2.3 Fitness**

AFL Players must present themselves at all AFL Matches, AFL Club training sessions and other related activities in an acceptable state of fitness. AFL Players must also endeavour to maintain such state of fitness during periods between AFL seasons.

An acceptable state of fitness may be determined by each AFL Club and may be measured by body weight, body fat, and/or endurance/aerobic capacity.

Where an AFL Club adopts such measures, written notice should be given to each player of the Club's requirements for that player.

## **2.4 Attendance and apparel**

AFL Players must (unless granted express permission otherwise or provide an explanation satisfactory to the AFL Club) attend, and attend punctually, all AFL Matches, AFL Club training and related events, including (without limitation) weight training sessions, swimming skills sessions, physiotherapy appointments and rehabilitation programs.

AFL Players must wear appropriate apparel during all AFL Matches, AFL Club training, AFL functions and AFL Club functions when carrying out his obligations under his playing contract.

## **2.5 Functions**

AFL Players must (unless granted express permission otherwise) attend, and attend punctually, AFL, AFL Club and AFLPA functions. Such functions include (without limitation):

- authorised after-Match functions
- AFL Brownlow Medal dinner
- AFL Club annual presentations of guernseys
- AFL Club “best and fairest” functions
- AFL Club annual general meeting/s
- AFL Club player orientation/family days, or other similar functions
- AFL Club balls
- authorised autograph sessions
- other authorised AFL, AFL Club and AFLPA functions.

During such AFL and AFL Club functions, AFL Players must wear appropriate apparel.

## **2.6 Promotional events**

AFL Players must (unless granted express permission otherwise or a satisfactory explanation is provided):

- generally promote AFL Football, the AFL and AFL Clubs
- assist the AFL, AFL Clubs and Sponsors in promotional and developmental activities
- attend, and attend punctually, AFL and AFL Club promotional events, and
- attend media-related activities including (without limitation) after-Match interviews, television appearances and other related activities.

During such promotional events, AFL Players must wear appropriate apparel.

## **2.7 Property**

AFL Players must show due regard for the property and facilities of the AFL, AFL Clubs and staff of those bodies and the property, facilities and staff of other providers (including hotel, bus and aeroplane operators) which an AFL Player may utilise during any authorised activities in which the AFL Player may be engaged.

Where an AFL Player breaches this provision, he may be required to pay the relevant person or body an amount equivalent to the cost of repairing or replacing the damage the Player caused to the property and/or facility.

## **2.8 Confidentiality of Club Information**

AFL Players must maintain the confidentiality of all material provided in confidence by the AFL or AFL Club to AFL Players. Such material may without limitation include details of training methods, coaching manuals, team selections and records of a confidential nature of an AFL Club. Copies of Club policies dealing with confidentiality of Club and Player information shall be provided to AFL Players in addition to other employees of the AFL Club.

## **3. Team Rules**

### **3.1 Development of Team Rules**

An AFL Club may, after consultation with its Player Leadership Group (where such a group exists) and the AFLPA Delegate at the Club, introduce team rules which are supplementary to this Code and do not replace or extend the general obligations on AFL Players as set out in this Code ("Team Rules").

Such Team Rules shall only deal with the detailed requirements of the Club specific to the general Player responsibilities set out in clause 2 above.

### **3.2 Notification of Team Rules and Club Policies**

An AFL Club seeking to introduce Team Rules or Club Policies shall be obliged to outline such rules or policies to a meeting of players and provide a copy of the rules or policies to each Player prior to such Team Rules coming into effect.

## **4. AFL Player Rules, Regulations, Codes and Policies**

It is noted that other obligations are imposed upon AFL Players under the AFL Player Rules, Regulations and other specific Codes and Policies and examples of such obligations are set out in Schedule A to this Code.

Where the AFL proposes to respond to an AFL Player's conduct under the AFL Player Rules, Regulations or other specific Codes and Policies the AFL shall advise the Player's Club of this fact and such Player will not be disciplined under this Code.

## **5. Discipline**

### **5.1 Minor Breaches**

- (a) Except where clause 5.2 applies, where an AFL Player's conduct breaches a provision of this Code (including a Team Rule) the disciplinary action to be taken by the Club shall be determined by the Player Leadership Group (to be approved by Club Management, whose approval may not be unreasonably withheld), or where no Player Leadership Group exists, by Club Management in consultation with senior players.

Examples of conduct which should be dealt with under this provision include but are not limited to:

- (i) being late for or failing to attend a training, rehabilitation or weight session;
  - (ii) being late for a match;
  - (iii) missing a function or promotional appearance;
  - (iv) missing a medical or physiotherapy appointment;
  - (v) wearing incorrect apparel; and
  - (vi) other conduct of a similar nature or having similar effect.
- (b) In determining the disciplinary action to be taken under the Code, the Player Leadership Group of the Club shall take into account the following matters:
- (i) the seriousness of the breach;
  - (ii) whether the offence has been repeated by the Player; and
  - (iii) the appropriateness of Alternative Sanctions (as defined in clause 9) to monetary forfeitures.
- (c) Where monetary forfeitures are imposed, the amount of the forfeiture shall be no greater than:
- |      |                        |                           |
|------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| (i)  | 1 <sup>st</sup> breach | Forfeiture of up to \$200 |
| (ii) | Other breaches         | Forfeiture of up to \$500 |

### **5.2 Serious or Persistent Breaches**

- (a) Where a breach/es of a provision/s of the Code involves:
- (i) a serious breach of the provisions of the Code;
  - (ii) persistent failures by a Player to adhere to the provisions of this Code; or
  - (iii) public conduct by a Player that brings the Club, the AFL or AFL Football into disrepute;

the disciplinary action to be taken by the Club shall be determined by the Club's Management and, except in exceptional circumstances, such determination shall be made in consultation with the Club's Player Leadership Group or senior players where no Player Leadership Group exists.

- (b) In determining the disciplinary action to be taken under the Code, the Club's Management shall take into account the following matters:
- (i) the seriousness of the breach;
  - (ii) the extent to which the AFL Player's breach brings the AFL or the relevant AFL Club into disrepute;
  - (iii) the Player's role in the events that led to the breach and any mitigating circumstances (if any);
  - (iv) whether the offence is part of a persistent course of conduct by the Player;
  - (v) the income of the Player;
  - (vi) whether the Player has received any other form of sanction for the conduct; and
  - (vii) the appropriateness of Alternative Sanctions or omission from State League or AFL matches as alternatives to monetary forfeitures.
- (c) Where monetary forfeitures are imposed by the Club, the amount of the forfeiture shall be for:
- (i) 1<sup>st</sup> breach                      Forfeiture of up to \$5000  
(provided that the amount of any forfeiture shall not exceed 5% of the Player's base playing salary in the relevant year); and
  - (ii) Other breaches                Forfeiture ranging from \$2500 to \$10,000  
(provided that the amount of any forfeiture shall not exceed 7.5% of the Player's base playing salary in the relevant year).

### **5.3 Forfeitures**

- (a) The maximum allowable amount that an AFL Club may withhold from amounts which are due to the relevant AFL Player for breach of this Code are specified in this Code.
- (b) The amounts that may be forfeited by an AFL Player are not cumulative. That is, a single act by an AFL Player may breach several clauses of this Code, but the forfeiture of monetary amounts must be no more than the highest single, applicable maximum.
- (c) Where an AFL Player breaches this Code in a manner which amounts to non-performance of the obligations under his Playing Contract, the relevant AFL Club shall be entitled to withhold from any amount due to the AFL Player the amount applicable to the breach as provided in this Code.



- (d) Where in any one year an amount/s is forfeited by an AFL Player under this Code, the Club and the Player shall immediately prior to the end of the relevant year enter into a Variation of Payment Agreement recording the reduction.
- (e) Where an AFL Player forfeits monetary amounts for breach of this Code, the amount of the monetary forfeiture shall be distributed as follows:
  - 50 per cent to be retained by the relevant AFL Club or to be donated to a charity nominated by the AFL Club at its sole discretion;
  - 50 per cent to be paid to the AFLPA Charity Fund.
- (f) Each AFL Club shall within thirty days after the end of the relevant year remit to the AFLPA a cheque payable to the "AFLPA Charity Fund" for the amount being 50% of the monetary forfeitures imposed by the AFL Club under this Code in the relevant year.
- (g) A Club may, in its absolute discretion, suspend the imposition of a sanction to be imposed on a Player for a breach of the Code, provided that the Club gives written notice to the Player of his breach of the Code, details of the intended sanction and the circumstances under which it might be imposed in the future.

## **6. Dispute Resolution Procedure**

- (a) Before seeking formal review as provided in sub-clause (b) below, an AFL Club must undertake to fully investigate, consider and, if so requested by the relevant AFL Player, review its decision to impose a disciplinary measure on an AFL Player for breach of this Code.
- (b) If such informal review fails to satisfactorily resolve the AFL Player's dispute, the relevant AFL Player may formally appeal (within 72 hours from the date of the AFL Club's decision to impose a disciplinary measure) to a Dispute Resolution Panel.
- (c) The Dispute Resolution Panel shall consist of the Chief Executive Officer of the relevant AFL Club (or other AFL Club appointee), a Club's AFLPA delegate, and a third party appointed by the mutual agreement of the AFL and AFLPA.
- (d) The Dispute Resolution Panel must conduct a fresh investigation of the alleged breach by the relevant AFL Player and form its own view about the appropriate disciplinary measure, if any, to be taken. Its decision must be made within 72 hours from the date when the relevant AFL Player first instituted his appeal and must be communicated in writing to the AFL Player.
- (e) The decision of the Dispute Resolution Panel shall be final and binding on the relevant AFL Player.
- (f) The time limits set out in this clause may be extended by agreement between the AFL Player and the AFL Club.

- (g) For the avoidance of doubt, the intention of this clause and the Dispute Resolution Panel is to include a third party independent of the original decision that has been made in relation to a breach of the Code by a Player.

## **7. Relationship between the Code and Other Instruments/Documents**

### **7.1 Relationship between Code and the SPC**

Where an AFL Player breaches the provisions of this Code, the AFL Club may, if it decides to take any action, only take action against the AFL Player under either the Code or the AFL Player's Standard Playing Contract but not both.

Notwithstanding the provisions of this clause 7.1, an AFL Club shall be entitled to withhold any amount forfeited for breach of this Code.

### **7.2 Relationship with CBA and Player Contracts**

It is agreed that the provisions of this Code are not intended to supplant the provisions of the Collective Bargaining Agreement ("CBA") between the AFL, AFL Clubs and the AFLPA (as applicable from time to time) or an AFL Player's Contract. Where an inconsistency arises between this Code and the CBA or the Player's Contract, the latter shall prevail to the extent of the inconsistency.

## **8. Confidentiality of Code Matters**

The AFL Clubs and the AFL Players must use their best endeavours to ensure that any matters arising out of or relating to alleged conduct of an AFL Player in breach of this Code (including but not limited to details of any sanction imposed, unless otherwise mutually agreed between the AFL Club and the Player) shall remain confidential and are not disclosed to any third party unless expressly agreed to by the relevant Club and AFL Player concerned.

For the avoidance of doubt, all parties agree that the confidentiality intended to be protected by this provision does not preclude the AFL Club or Player announcing to a third party that there has been a breach of the Code and that it has been dealt with by the AFL Club and the Player.

## **9. Definitions**

Unless the contrary intention appears, the following words have the meanings set out below:

- (a) "Alternative Sanctions" means requiring an AFL Player to do, any one or more of the following in lieu of a monetary forfeiture as prescribed by this Code:
- (i) attend a promotional event or Club activity;
  - (ii) provide a community service;

- (iii) attend a football clinic;
- (iv) specific performance of the activity, service or commitment not undertaken by the Player; and/or
- (v) attend or perform any other similar event or activity as agreed between the AFL Player and the AFL Club.

As a general rule, the sanction of an additional appearance at a promotional event or football clinic should only apply where the Player has missed such an activity.

- (b) "Player Leadership Group" means the group of AFL Players in a Club appointed by the Club or elected within the Club to provide leadership to the playing group within the Club and/or to be focal point for consultation on behalf of the playing group with the Club.

## **SCHEDULE**

Players should be aware that the AFL Player Rules, Regulations, and specific AFL Codes and Policies incorporate provisions imposing obligations on Players in respect to:

### **Racial and Religious Vilification**

AFL Player Rules provide that Players must refrain from making any comment that vilifies or tends to vilify persons on the basis of their race, religion, colour, sex, sexual orientation or other related characteristics.

### **Substance Abuse**

AFL Players must refrain from the taking of illicit and/or performance-enhancing substances and must comply with AFL Rules, AFL Illicit Drugs Policy and AFL Anti-Doping Code which prohibits the taking of such substances.

### **Public Comment**

AFL Player Rules provide that Players must not make adverse public comments concerning AFL Umpires or decisions made by AFL Umpires during AFL Matches.

AFL Players must not make any public comments whatsoever concerning any aspect of an AFL Tribunal hearing, either before or after such hearing, even if the AFL Player is personally involved in such hearing.

### **Gambling**

The AFL Player Regulations and standard playing contract prohibit Players from betting on any aspect of an AFL Match. Any aspect of an AFL Match includes the result, first goal kicker, best on ground, Brownlow medal etc. The AFL Regulations also prohibit the passing on of information that is not publicly available concerning teams playing in any match (including the actual or likely composition of the team, players' injuries, the form of Players and tactics) unless given in a bona fide media interview.

### **Respect and Responsibility**

The AFL Respect and Responsibility Policy reflects the AFL industry's commitment to providing safe and supportive environments for women within football and the broader community. The policy contains six major components:

1. introduction of model anti-sexual harassment and anti-sexual discrimination procedures across the AFL and its 16 Clubs;
2. development of organizational policies and procedures to ensure a safe, supportive and inclusive environment for women;
3. changes to AFL rules relating to "conduct unbecoming";
4. education of players and officials;
5. dissemination of model policies and procedures at community club level; and
6. development of a public education campaign.