



MERCY RULE POLICY

Purpose:

The purpose of this rule is to assist in the management of roster games across all youth age groups. It applies to:

- **On field and off field** management for: U12 Girls & Boys, and U14 Girls
- **Off field only** for all remaining youth age groups.

This policy is established in accordance with the **Spirit of Junior Football**, aiming to reduce the impact of one-sided matches and promote player retention, development, and enjoyment.

Rationale:

A game dominated by one team can diminish the experience for all involved. The Mercy Rule promotes:

- **On field benefits:** Balanced gameplay, increased engagement, and skill development for all players.
- **Off field benefits:** Improved morale, reduced frustration, and better sportsmanship among players, coaches, and supporters.

Massive losses serve no beneficial purpose and may discourage continued participation. This policy supports competitive balance and encourages coaches to take proactive steps to equalise matches and foster a positive football environment.

How it will work:

On Field:

- The Mercy Rule is invoked by officiating umpires when the score differential reaches 60 points or more.
- Once invoked, it remains in effect for the rest of the match.
- After a goal by the leading team:
 - a) Restart with the trailing team's ruck taking possession in the centre circle.
 - b) Opposition ruck is positioned as in a ruck infringement.
 - c) All players must maintain their 5-5-5 or 4-4-4 positions.
 - d) Non-compliance results in a 50m penalty.
- After a point by the leading team:
 - a) The trailing team takes the kick-in from the centre of the 50m arc.
 - b) The opposition player must be positioned 10m away on the mark.
 - c) All other players must hold their positions.
 - d) The kicker may choose to kick or play on.



Off Field:

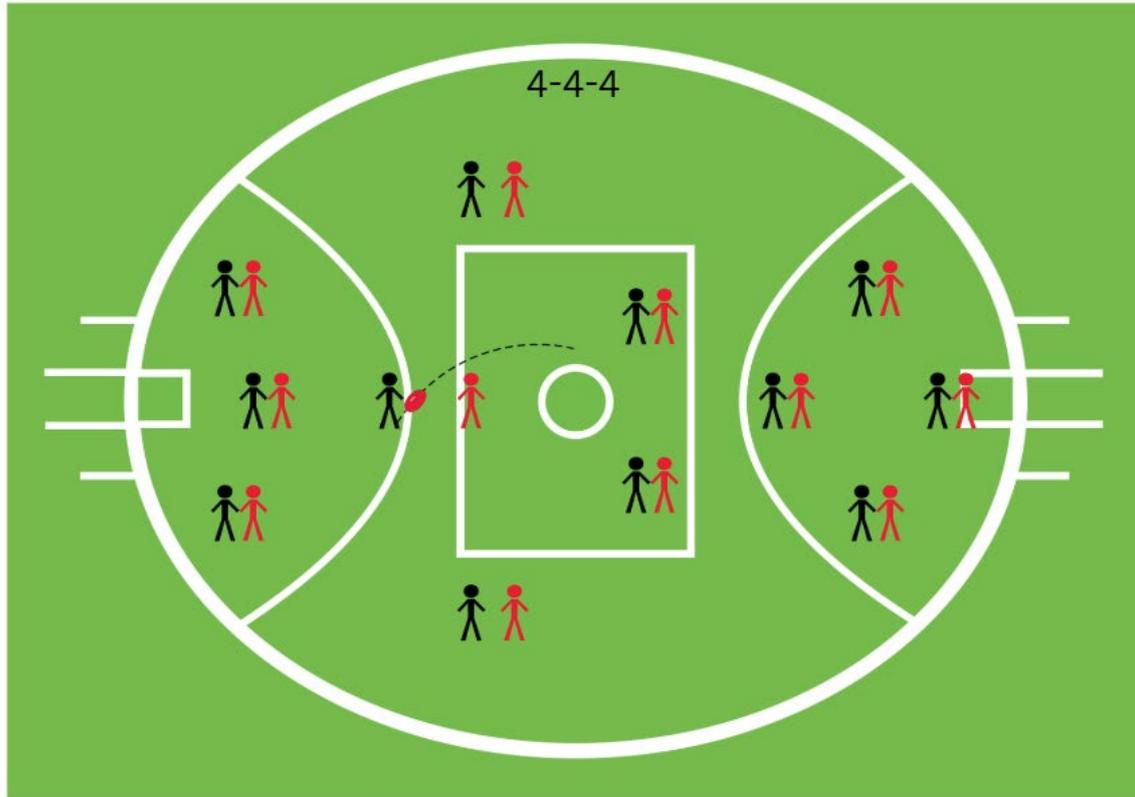
- PlayHQ score will be adjusted to reflect a maximum 60-point margin, regardless of the actual final score.
- Coaches and team officials are expected to adjust rotations, player positions, and game strategies to promote inclusivity and development.
- Examples of equalisation measures include (*These measures may be introduced before the 60-point margin is reached*):
 - Rotating dominant players into less influential positions.
 - Setting team challenges (e.g. maintain possession for a set number of passes before scoring).
 - Encouraging use of non-preferred hand or foot to develop ambidextrous skills.
 - Redefining success for trailing teams through individual goals (e.g. marks, passes, defensive stops).
 - Focusing on reducing points conceded or increasing team cohesion.
- Scoreboard and PlayHQ adjustments are intended to reduce the visible impact of one-sided matches and support player morale and retention.

Compliance:

- The Mercy Rule is mandatory and must be implemented when applicable.
- Coaches are not required to request the rule; it is the responsibility of officials to apply it.
- There is no discretion for coaches or clubs to opt out.
- NTJFA reserves the right to monitor matches and may request explanations for failure to implement equalisation measures.
 - Non-compliance may result in penalties including:
 - Reprimands
 - Non-awarding of E-Points
 - Code of Conduct breaches
 - Suspensions
- The Mercy Rule does not apply in finals matches.



Under 12's After Point

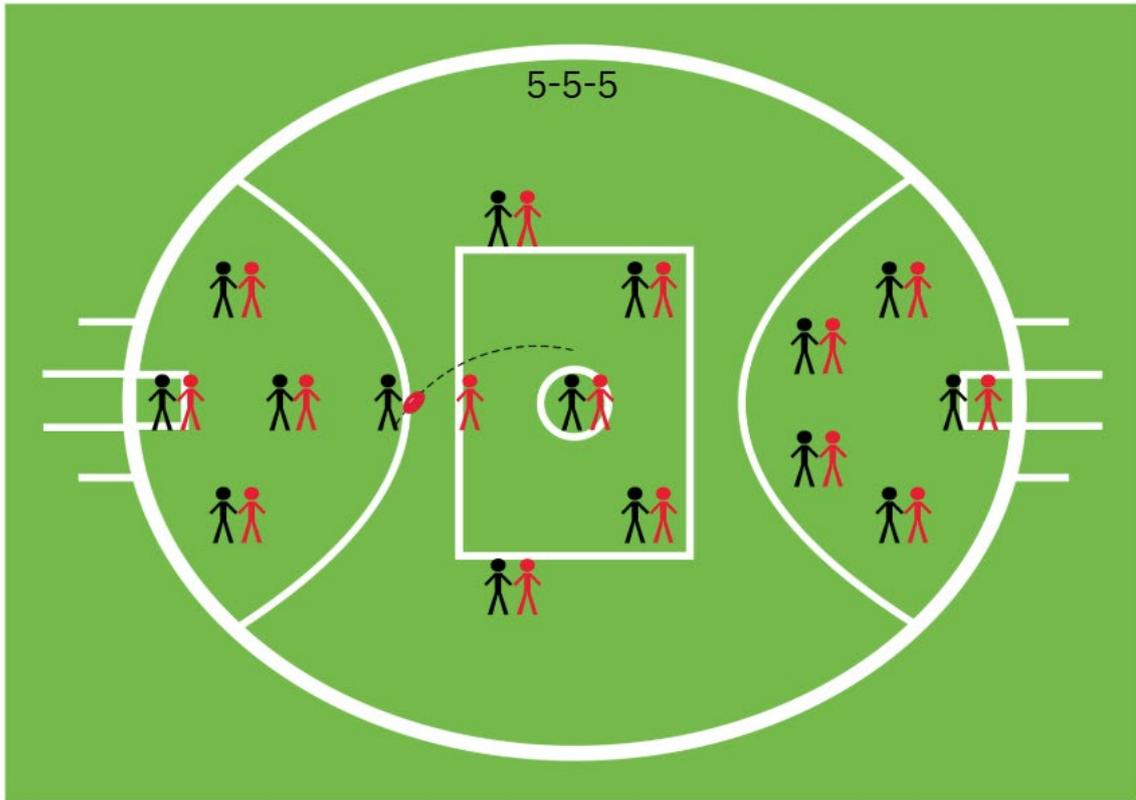


Under 12's After Goal





Under 14 Girls After
Point



Under 14 Girls After
Goal

