

1897 LAWS OF THE AUSTRALASIAN GAME OF FOOTBALL (VFL)

Port Phillip Club Hotel, March 1897

1. The distance between the goal posts shall not be more than 200 yards and the width of the playing space not more than 150 yards, nor less than 100 yards, to be measured equally on each side of a line drawn through the centre of the goal. The goal posts shall be seven yards apart of not less than twenty feet in height. Two posts shall be placed at a distance of seven yards, one on each side of the goal posts, and in a straight line with them. The intervening line between such posts shall be called the goal line. The ball to be used shall be the No. 2 size Rugby (26 inches in circumference). The ball to be approved by the field umpire.

2. Matches shall be played with not more than 20 a-side. unless where handicaps are conceded. Any team detected during the progress of the game playing more than the number arranged for shall have all the goals kicked prior to the detection of the same annulled. The field umpire shall have power at the request, of either captain to stop the game and call the players into line at any time for the purpose of counting them. Previous to calling the players into line the field umpire shall notify the timekeepers, who shall make allowance for the time so taken. In the event of a club commencing play with less than the numbers arranged for, that club shall be allowed to complete its number at any stage of the game.

3. The captain of each side shall toss for choice of goal. The players shall then take their proper positions on the field, and the game shall be commenced by the field umpire bouncing the ball in the centre of the ground. When a goal has been obtained, the players shall again take their positions as above, and the ball shall be bounced in the centre.

4. All matches throughout the season shall be played twenty-five minutes each quarter. When one-fourth, one-half, and three-quarters of the time arranged for play have expired, the players shall change ends, and the ball shall be bounced in the centre of the ground as in Rule 3. At half-time the players may leave the ground for not more than ten minutes. Each club shall appoint a time-keeper, whose duty it shall be to keep time, and ring a bell approved of by the League, at the times indicated above. At the first sound of the bell the ball shall be dead, but in the event of a player having marked a ball before the bell has rung, he shall be allowed his kick, and should he obtain a goal or behind from it, it shall be reckoned. A goal or behind obtained from a ball in transit before the bell has rung shall be reckoned.

5. A goal shall be won when the ball is kicked between the goal posts without touching either of them or any player after being kicked. A behind shall be won when the ball touches either of the goal posts, or is kicked or forced between behind post and goal post. Should the ball touch a behind post it shall be out of bounds.

6. The side kicking the greatest number of points shall win the match. A goal shall count six points and behind one point.

7. When the ball goes out of bounds it shall be brought back to the spot where it crossed the boundary line, and be there thrown in by the umpire. Immediately the ball leaves the umpire's hands it shall be in play. Should the ball drop out of bounds from the kick-off, a free kick shall be given to the opposite side at the spot where the ball went out of bounds. In case the ball is kicked behind the goal line by one of the opposite side (except when a goal is kicked, in which case the ball is bounced in the centre of the ground) anyone of the side behind whose goal it is kicked shall kick it

off from any part of the space to be indicated by two lines running parallel in a straight line from the goal posts for a distance of ten yards, and a horizontal line at each end of the said distance, joining the two parallel lines. Such lines to be marked white.

8. Any a player catching the ball directly from the foot of another player not less ten yards distant shall be allowed a kick in any direction from any spot behind where he caught of the ball, no player being allowed to come over that spot or within ten yards in rove any other direction. In kicking for goal the player must kick over his mark. Should a goal be obtained from a free kick, it shall be reckoned, notwithstanding any infringement.

9. Should a player wilfully waste time, the field umpire shall instruct the timekeepers to add such time on, and besides award a free kick to the opposing player nearest to the spot where the offence takes place. The offending player or players shall be reported to the League, which shall deal with the matter. Should a player unduly interfere with a man while a kicking for goal he shall be reported to the League.

10. The ball may be taken in hand at any time, but not be carried further than is necessary for a kick unless the player strikes it against the ground at least once in every ten yards. In the event of a player, with the ball in hand, the trying to pass an adversary, and held by him, he must at once drop the ball. While being held, if the player does not drop the ball a free kick shall be given to the man who holds him. If the player be deliberately held back or thrown after he has dropped the ball, he shall be awarded a free kick.

11. If any player, when the ball is in play, wilfully kick or force it out of bounds the umpire shall give a free kick to the nearest player of the opposing team from the spot where the ball went out of bounds.

12. The ball while in play shall under no circumstances be thrown or handed to a player.

13. Tripping, hacking, rabbiting and slinging are prohibited, or throwing a player after he has made a mark, or when the ball is out of play, or catching hold of a player below the knee, are prohibited. Charging a player when he is standing still or when in the air going for a mark is prohibited. *[Pushing a player from behind or while he is in the air is prohibited under any circumstances.]** A free kick shall be given against the player infringing this law.

14. The League shall appoint for each match a field umpire whom shall have full control of the play, and shall inflict penalties in accordance with the laws. In cases of doubt and in scrimmages he shall bounce the ball where the occurrence took place. A player disputing the decision of an umpire or unduly interfering with or assaulting, or using abusive, threatening or insulting language towards him during the progress of the game or within or without the enclosure on the day of the match, shall be dealt with as the League may think fit. A player assaulting another player, or using abusive, threatening, or insulting language, or otherwise misconducting himself during the progress of the game or within the enclosure on the day of the match shall be reported by the umpire to and dealt with as the League may think fit.

15. The field umpire shall, prior to, and may at any time before the conclusion of the match, examine the boots of the players and no one wearing projecting nails or iron plates shall be allowed to play until a change be made to the satisfaction of the umpire.

16. Two goal umpires shall be appointed for each match. They shall be sole judges of goals and behinds and their decision shall be final except in cases where the ball has become dead either by ringing of the bell, or decision of the field umpire. Goals shall be indicated by two flags, and a behind

by one flag. The goal umpire must before raising his flag or flags to register a goal, or behind, ascertain from the field umpire whether the ball had not been touched or any infringement of the rules had taken place. A goal or behind given in accordance with the above cannot be annulled.

17. The goal umpires shall keep a record of all goals and behinds kicked in any match, and furnish a report to the secretary of the League within three days.

18. The League may disqualify players for any term who have been reported for breaches of the laws.

DEFINITIONS

1. A kick for goal must be made direct from a player's a foot or below the knee.

2. A drop kick is made by letting the ball drop from the hands onto the ground and kicking it the instant it rises.

3. A place kick is kicking the ball after it has been placed on the ground.

4. A punt consists in letting the ball fall from the hands and kicking it before it touches the ground.

5. A mark shall be either given from a place, drop, or punt kick

6. Rabbiting is one player stooping down so as to cause another to fall by placing his body below the other's hips.

7. Slingsing is the act of catching a player by or round the neck, and throwing him to the ground.

8. Hacking is intentionally kicking an opponent.

*inserted following VFL Round 1 1897