

## **HOW DOES THE AFL GOULBURN MURRAY FOOTBALL ACADEMY SELECTION PROCESS WORK?**

Since its inception in 2016, the Tatura Milk AFL Goulburn Murray Academy has appointed a group of outstanding coaches who provide a high level of professionalism, enthusiasm, knowledge and experience to all of the players in the program.

These coaches have continually gone above and beyond to ensure the identification of the best possible talent to be invited in to the program. The program is divided in to two mirrored groups based on the TAC Cup alignment of the players. The Bendigo Pioneers aligned group is based out of Echuca, whilst the Murray Bushrangers Group is based out of Shepparton.

As with any program and any sport, players develop at different rates and there is inevitably a degree of turnover from one season to the next as some new players develop significantly from outside the program and overtake some of the players that perhaps haven't developed as much or start to plateau in their achievements.

Our highly professional coaching staff spend the entire football season reviewing, observing games, assessing club and interleague performances, and watching finals and/or lightning premierships. An extensive network of people are consulted to provide commentary and feedback on individual players. All available data, such as League Best and Fairest results and online club Sports TG information is used to help contribute to decision making.

Obviously, it is very difficult to compare so many players across different level competitions and, ultimately, informed decisions are made based on the professional opinion of the Academy coaches at the time. Any selection process for any sport is ultimately based on the opinion of the selectors. This is the reason why Academy invitations are not sent out until December each year. This time post football season is spent by our coaches researching, communicating, refining and reviewing to ensure the best possible list of invitees.

What we do know is that it can never be a perfect selection system. The Academy always maintains an open door to include players that may have been "missed" or develop at such a rate that their performances demand inclusion. Of course, there are always examples of players that don't necessarily get identified at Academy level that do eventually go on to be selected at TAC Cup level.

The culmination of the Academy program at Under 15 level sees players roll in to the V-Line Cup selection program. Again, this is NOT guaranteed to all Academy participants and inevitably includes players that have not participated in Academy. We see this as a natural and important process to ensure that ALL players can still aspire to playing representative football irrespective of Academy selection.

As parents, it is only natural to want to see the absolute best in our children. It is not sound practice to try and compare your child to another. If you are looking to advise your child on the best way to maximise their opportunities to be selected in the Tatura Milk AFL Goulburn Murray Academy Program, then that advice needs to be restricted to focussing only on the positive development of your child.

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As a guide, the following key selection criteria are provided to all Academy coaches to help drive selection decisions:

1. **Competitiveness** - On and off field is essential to be the best.
2. **Ability to win contested ball** - In air and/or on ground is paramount (a player can't kick the ball unless they have possession of the ball).
3. **Kicking** – Distance, accuracy, preferred & non preferred.
4. **Marking** – Uncontested, contested, on a lead (strong hands in marking contests)
5. **Clean hands** - gathering loose balls and hard balls (without fumbling when picking up off the deck). Handballing is part of the clean hands criteria (effective handballing skills).
6. **Defensive techniques** – Tackling, corralling, and spoiling (best players usually don't defend well, look for player who hunts the tackle and loves doing it).
7. **Decision making** – Reading the play, identifying space & understanding structure.
8. **Spread** - Offensively and defensively from contests (must run hard to play the modern game).
9. **Intensity** – 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> efforts, change of speed & defensive effort.
10. **Character/Culture** - General attitude, ability to listens to coaches, respectful and has a strong work ethic - etc.