



**STRATHALBYN FOOTBALL CLUB
SENIOR PLAYER CODE OF CONDUCT**

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Senior Player Code of Conduct for the Strathalbyn Football Club

1. Introduction and Purpose

This document serves as the Senior Player Code of Conduct for the Strathalbyn Football Club. It articulates the expected standards of behavior and responsibilities for all senior players who represent the club in competitions under the auspices of the Great Southern Football League (GSFL) and, by affiliation, the South Australian National Football League (SANFL).¹ The Strathalbyn Football Club is committed to fostering a positive, respectful, and inclusive environment for all its members, supporters, and stakeholders. This commitment extends to ensuring that the conduct of its senior players both on and off the field reflects the values and reputation of the club and aligns with the guidelines established by the governing football bodies. The GSFL, as the local league, sets the immediate framework for competition and expected standards, while the SANFL, as the state governing body, provides a broader context for these expectations. The existence of a spectator code of conduct within the GSFL framework¹⁰ underscores a league-wide emphasis on appropriate behavior for all participants in the football community. This suggests a recognition that maintaining a positive environment requires clear behavioral guidelines for everyone involved, and a comprehensive player code of conduct is a natural extension of this principle, given the prominent role players hold in representing their clubs. By clearly outlining these expectations, this Code aims to promote responsible conduct, prevent potential issues, and contribute to a more harmonious and successful club environment.

2. Core Values and Expected Standards

The Strathalbyn Football Club operates on a foundation of core values that guide the behavior of all its senior players. These principles are essential for maintaining the integrity of the club, fostering a positive team culture, and upholding the spirit of Australian Rules Football.¹¹

Paramount among these values is **respect**. Senior players are expected to demonstrate respect for all individuals associated with the game. This includes their teammates, opponents, umpires and match officials, coaches, club officials, volunteers, and spectators.¹¹ This respect should be evident in their interactions, language, and conduct at all times.

Furthermore, the club expects senior players to embody **fair play and sportsmanship** in every aspect of their involvement.¹¹ This means competing honestly, adhering to the rules of the game, and accepting both victory and defeat with grace and dignity. Demonstrating a positive attitude and acknowledging good plays by both their own team and the opposition are key indicators of sportsmanship.¹²

Integrity and ethical conduct are also fundamental principles. Senior players are

expected to act with honesty and integrity, upholding the reputation of the Strathalbyn Football Club and the broader sport of Australian Rules Football.¹³ Their behavior should reflect the high standards expected of representatives of the club.

Finally, the Strathalbyn Football Club is committed to **inclusivity and diversity**. Senior players are expected to contribute to an environment where all individuals feel welcome, valued, and respected, regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background, sexual orientation, or religion.¹² The consistent appearance of these principles across various football club codes of conduct¹² highlights their significance within the culture of Australian Rules Football at the community level. This widespread emphasis suggests that these values are deeply ingrained in the sport's ethos and are not merely optional ideals. By explicitly stating these guiding principles, the Strathalbyn Football Club provides its senior players with a clear understanding of the ethical framework within which they are expected to operate, influencing their decisions and actions both on and off the field.

3. On-Field Conduct: Expectations During Matches

The conduct of senior players during matches is critical to ensuring fair competition, maintaining the integrity of the game, and upholding the reputation of the Strathalbyn Football Club. Several specific expectations guide their behavior on the field.

Senior players must consistently demonstrate **respect for umpires and officials**. This includes accepting their decisions without argument or dissent.¹¹ If a player has concerns about a decision, the appropriate course of action is to relay those concerns through the designated team captain or coach, either during a break in play or after the match.¹² Publicly criticizing or disputing the decisions of match officials is strictly forbidden.¹²

Respect for opponents is equally important. Senior players are expected to treat opposing players with courtesy and avoid any form of verbal abuse, taunting, or deliberate actions intended to provoke or distract them.¹² Demonstrating fair play and good sportsmanship towards opponents, including acknowledging their positive contributions to the game, is a fundamental expectation.¹²

A thorough understanding and **adherence to the Laws of Australian Football** are mandatory for all senior players.¹³ This includes familiarity with the specific rules and regulations of the AFL, as well as any modifications or additional rules implemented by the GSFL and SANFL.

Violence and aggressive behavior of any kind are unequivocally prohibited. Senior players must not engage in violent acts against spectators, officials, or other players.¹¹ This prohibition extends to any behavior that could be perceived as threatening or intimidating towards others involved in the game.¹¹

Finally, senior players are expected to maintain **control of their emotions** at all times.¹³

They must refrain from any conduct, including offensive language or gestures, that could bring the game, the Strathalbyn Football Club, or the GSFL and SANFL into disrepute.¹¹ The emphasis placed on emotional control and the avoidance of abusive language across numerous club codes¹² indicates a clear understanding of the potential for intense moments during competition and a proactive effort to prevent negative conduct. By adhering to these guidelines for on-field behavior, senior players contribute to a safer, more respectful, and ultimately more enjoyable experience for everyone involved in the game.

4. Off-Field Conduct and Community Representation: Behavior Beyond the Game

The responsibilities of a senior player at the Strathalbyn Football Club extend beyond their on-field performance. As representatives of the club, their conduct off the field and within the community is equally important in shaping the club's image and upholding its values.

Senior players are expected to maintain a high standard of **conduct at training sessions and club events**. This includes attending sessions and events punctually and showing respect towards coaches, club officials, and fellow members.¹⁵ Treating all individuals with courtesy and consideration is paramount.¹² Furthermore, players may be required to adhere to specific dress codes for certain club functions, reinforcing their role as representatives of the Strathalbyn Football Club.²⁷

In the digital age, **responsible use of social media** is a critical aspect of off-field conduct. Senior players must exercise caution and discretion in their online activities. Posting inappropriate, offensive, or discriminatory comments about players, clubs, umpires, officials, the AFL, or the GSFL and SANFL is strictly prohibited.¹³ Engaging in any form of bullying or harassment through social media platforms is also unacceptable.¹³ Players must recognize that their online conduct can significantly impact the reputation of the Strathalbyn Football Club and the sport as a whole.¹³ The specific inclusion of social media guidelines in numerous codes of conduct¹³ highlights the increasing recognition of the influence of online behavior on both individuals and organizations, prompting a proactive approach from clubs in addressing this area.

Public conduct and reputation are also key considerations. Senior players are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that reflects positively on the Strathalbyn Football Club when in public settings.¹³ Any behavior that could bring the sport, the club, or its sponsors into disrepute is to be avoided. By setting these expectations for off-field behavior, the Strathalbyn Football Club aims to cultivate a culture of responsibility among its senior players, ensuring they act as positive ambassadors for the club within the wider community.

5. Respect, Inclusivity, and Anti-Discrimination: Fostering a Welcoming Environment

The Strathalbyn Football Club is steadfast in its commitment to providing a welcoming

and inclusive environment for all individuals involved in the club and its activities. This commitment is reflected in the following expectations regarding respect, inclusivity, and anti-discrimination.

Senior players must adhere to a strict **prohibition of discrimination, harassment, and vilification** in any form.¹² This includes any actions or language that discriminate against, harass, or vilify individuals based on their gender, ability, sexual orientation, cultural background, religion, race, color, language, national or ethnic origin, or any other characteristic protected by law or club policy. The use of obscene or offensive language or gestures, the incitement of hatred or violence, or participation in any form of indecent or racist chanting are explicitly forbidden.¹²

Respect for diversity is a fundamental expectation. Senior players are required to respect the rights, dignity, and worth of every person involved with the game.¹² This includes valuing their individuality and supporting their potential to contribute to the club and the sport.

Creating and maintaining a **safe and positive environment** is a shared responsibility. Senior players are expected to actively contribute to a club culture that is respectful and accepting of all individual differences.¹³ Any form of bullying, intimidation, or harassment will not be tolerated.¹¹ The strong emphasis placed on anti-discrimination and inclusivity in various sporting codes¹² reflects a growing societal awareness and a commitment within sporting organizations to establish environments where everyone feels valued and safe. By prioritizing these principles, the Strathalbyn Football Club aims to cultivate a strong sense of belonging among its players and contribute to a more equitable and positive sporting community.

6. Compliance with League and Club Regulations: Understanding and Adhering to the Rules

Senior players at the Strathalbyn Football Club have a responsibility to be well-informed about and to comply with all relevant rules and regulations established by the club, the Great Southern Football League, and the South Australian National Football League.

Players are expected to **understand the club's by-laws and policies**, which may cover a range of important areas including member protection, child safety, and guidelines regarding alcohol and drug use.³¹ Familiarity with the GSFL's by-laws is also essential, as these govern the league's operations and the conduct of its member clubs and players.³¹

Furthermore, senior players must adhere to the **rules and regulations of both the Great Southern Football League and the South Australian National Football League**.¹³ This includes understanding and abiding by their respective codes of conduct and member protection policies, which outline expected standards of behavior and outline procedures for addressing breaches.

Compliance with the **AFL Anti-Doping Code** and any associated policies implemented

by the GSFL and SANFL is mandatory.²⁶ Senior players are personally responsible for understanding the regulations regarding prohibited substances and methods, and for ensuring that any medications or supplements they use are compliant with these rules.²⁶ The inclusion of anti-doping policies in club codes³⁰ underscores the serious consequences associated with doping in sport and the commitment to maintaining a fair and ethical playing environment. Adherence to all these regulations is crucial for upholding the integrity of the competition and safeguarding the health and well-being of all players.

7. Club Membership and Responsibilities: Commitment to the Team and Club

As members of the Strathalbyn Football Club, senior players have specific responsibilities that contribute to the overall success and well-being of the team and the club as a whole.

Consistent **attendance and punctuality** at all scheduled training sessions, team meetings, and matches are expected.¹⁵ If a player is unable to attend a commitment, it is their responsibility to inform the club or coaching staff as soon as practically possible.¹⁵ Being on time for all club-related activities demonstrates respect for teammates, coaches, and the club's schedule.¹¹

Maintaining an appropriate level of **fitness and preparation** is also a key expectation.²⁶ Senior players are expected to take responsibility for their physical conditioning throughout the season and to arrive at training and matches prepared to perform to the best of their ability. This includes having the necessary equipment and a good understanding of the team's game plans and strategies.³⁰

Senior players are expected to treat **club property and resources** with respect and ensure they are used appropriately.¹⁰ This includes facilities, equipment, and any other resources made available to them as members of the Strathalbyn Football Club.

Contributing to the broader **club activities** may also be expected of senior players.¹⁷ This could involve assisting with operational tasks on match days, participating in club fundraising initiatives, or engaging in local football development and promotional activities to support the growth of the sport within the community.

Finally, senior players are responsible for meeting their **financial obligations** to the club, which typically includes the timely payment of membership fees.³⁶ The emphasis on commitment, preparation, and contribution highlights the understanding that a thriving football club relies on the active participation and dedication of all its members. Senior players, in particular, often serve as role models within the club, and their commitment sets a positive example for younger players and strengthens the overall club culture.

8. Breaches of the Code and Disciplinary Procedures: Addressing Non-Compliance

To ensure the integrity and effectiveness of this Code of Conduct, it is essential to have

clear procedures for addressing any breaches that may occur.

Any suspected violations of this Senior Player Code of Conduct should be **reported promptly** to a designated club official. This could include the team coach, the club captain, or a member of the club's committee.¹⁸ The GSFL also has established processes for reporting on-field offenses through umpires and club officials.³¹

Upon receiving a report of a potential breach, the Strathalbyn Football Club will conduct a **fair and impartial investigation** into the matter.¹⁸ The player involved will be provided with a reasonable opportunity to respond to the allegations and present their perspective.

Depending on the severity and nature of the breach, a range of **disciplinary actions** may be taken by the club.¹⁶ These actions could include:

- A verbal or written warning issued to the player.
- A requirement for the player to issue a formal apology to any affected parties.
- Suspension from training sessions or matches for a specified period.
- Removal from any team leadership positions held by the player.
- Financial penalties, if such measures are permitted under the club's by-laws and the regulations of the GSFL and SANFL.
- In cases of serious or repeated breaches, expulsion from the Strathalbyn Football Club.

The club's disciplinary procedures will be consistent with the rules and regulations established by the Great Southern Football League and the South Australian National Football League.¹⁴ The GSFL operates a Tribunal that adjudicates on reported offenses and imposes sanctions as deemed appropriate.³¹ Players may have the right to appeal disciplinary decisions made by the club, according to the processes outlined in the club's constitution or by-laws.³³ The existence of defined disciplinary procedures within the club and the leagues underscores the importance of accountability and ensures that mechanisms are in place to address unacceptable behavior in a fair and consistent manner.

Valuable Table:

The following table provides a summary of potential disciplinary actions based on the severity of the breach:

Level of Breach	Examples of Misconduct	Potential Disciplinary Actions
Minor Breach	Minor dissent towards an official, minor inappropriate language, late arrival to training without notification,	Verbal warning, written warning, requirement for apology.

	minor breach of dress code.	
Moderate Breach	Persistent dissent towards officials, sledging an opponent, inappropriate social media posts, repeated lateness to training, disrespectful behavior at club events.	Written warning, short-term suspension from training or matches, requirement for apology, community service within the club.
Serious Breach	Violence on or off the field, discriminatory or vilifying behavior, significant breach of anti-doping policies, bringing the club into serious disrepute through public conduct, repeated moderate breaches.	Longer-term suspension from training or matches, loss of leadership positions, financial penalty (if applicable and permitted), referral to GSFL Tribunal, potential expulsion from the club.
Major Breach	Assault on an official, repeated acts of violence, severe discriminatory or vilifying behavior, significant doping violation, actions leading to significant damage to the club's reputation or financial standing.	Indefinite suspension, referral to GSFL and/or SANFL for further disciplinary action, expulsion from the club.

Conclusion

This Senior Player Code of Conduct establishes clear expectations for all senior players representing the Strathalbyn Football Club. By adhering to these guidelines, players will contribute to a positive and respectful club culture, ensure fair and safe competition, and uphold the reputation of the club within the Great Southern Football League and the South Australian National Football League. It is the responsibility of every senior player to understand, embrace, and consistently demonstrate the principles and expectations outlined in this document.

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