Melbourne East Netball Association
Registration No: A0011747L
ABN 54 201 268 575
Spirit of the Game Policy
Correspondence to: PO Box 613, Heathmont 3135
Email: admin@menanetball.com.au
Phone 0411 691 888

Policy Date: Effective 15 Jan 2027
Policy Name: Spirit of the Game Rule for Junior Club Competition
Committee Responsible: MENA Board & Club Competition Standing Committee
Applies to: Club Competition Autumn/Spring 2027 : 11&U Mixed /13&U Mixed /15&U Female lowest section excluding Grading & Finals.
Status: For Trial in Autumn/Spring 2027. With a view to adopt in Autumn 2028.

Purpose
MENA is committed to providing a safe, inclusive and enjoyable netball environment in which all participants can develop, compete and remain engaged in the game. This trial policy introduces a "Spirit of the Game" rule to reduce the impact of one-sided matches and to encourage participation, learning and enjoyment, particularly in the bottom section of each age group.

This approach reflects the Fair Play principles already recognised by Netball Victoria and MENA, including integrity, respect, responsibility, fairness and safety.

Policy Intent
The intent of this policy is to:

- support player enjoyment and retention in junior netball;
- reduce the risk of demoralising, one-sided results;
- create more meaningful participation opportunities for developing players;
- encourage coaches to prioritise development, confidence and inclusion when margins become excessive; and
- align MENA competition management with approaches already used by other school and association competitions in netball. (e.g. seisa)

Trial Scope
This policy is recommended for trial use:

- in the lowest graded section of 11 & Under Mixed, 13 & Under Mixed & 15 & Under Female;
- All matches except Grading & Finals Matches, unless otherwise determined by MENA.

Spirit of the Game Rule
Trigger
The rule will apply when a team leads by **20 goals or more** at any stage of the match. This threshold reflects a commonly used margin in other netball competitions, including SEISA, SACCSS and EISM competitions.

Effect of the Rule
Once the rule is triggered:

1. every centre pass following a goal will be awarded to the team that is trailing on the scoreboard;

2. normal centre pass rotation will resume once the margin falls below the trigger threshold; and
3. umpires, team managers and coaches are expected to support the practical application of the rule in a calm and sportsmanlike manner.

Coaching Expectations During Spirit of the Game Rule

When the rule is active, coaches are strongly encouraged to act in the spirit of player development rather than scoreboard maximisation. Coaches should, wherever reasonably possible:

- rotate players through different positions;
- provide players with opportunities in unfamiliar or developmental court areas;
- avoid leaving dominant combinations unchanged for extended periods;
- increase court time for less experienced players; and
- reinforce respectful play, team balance and encouragement from the bench.

For grassroots and junior development settings, other netball clubs and programs already encourage players to experience multiple positions and expressly require rotation when a margin becomes significantly high. (E.g. Kingston Netball).

Roles and Responsibilities

Coaches

Coaches must support the purpose of this policy by promoting participation, confidence and fair play. Coaches should not treat the Spirit of the Game rule as a tactical inconvenience, but as a prompt to develop players, rotate positions and preserve enjoyment for both teams.

Umpires

Umpires will continue to officiate matches under normal netball rules, while recognising the operation of the Spirit of the Game rule once the agreed margin is reached. Umpires may remind benches of the rule where necessary but are not responsible for tactical decisions such as player rotation.

Team Managers and Officials

Team managers and officials should assist in ensuring score awareness, communication and calm implementation of the rule. All officials are expected to model the standards of conduct and fair play required across Victorian community netball.

Club Competition Standing Committee

The MENA Club Competition Standing Committee should monitor the trial through score patterns, feedback from clubs, coaches, umpires and parents, and regrading outcomes and provide advice to the MENA Board where relevant.

Review and Evaluation

The trial should commence in the lowest section of the 11&Under Mixed, 13U Mixed & 15& U Female divisions and for Autumn 2027. At the end of the trial, MENA should review:

- the number of matches in which the rule was triggered;
- whether the rule improved player engagement and reduced discouraging game experiences;
- feedback from coaches, umpires, clubs and families;
- whether the trigger margin remains appropriate for each age group; and
- whether the rule should be continued, amended or expanded.

Recommended Policy Wording for Adoption
Spirit of the Game Rule (Trial)
To promote inclusion, player development and enjoyment, Melbourne East Netball Association will trial a Spirt of the Game rule in the lowest section of 11&U Mixed, 13 & U Mixed and 15 & U Female divisions. Where a team leads by 20 goals or more at any stage of the match, every centre pass following a goal will be awarded to the trailing team until the margin is reduced below 20 goals, at which time normal centre pass rotation will resume.

During the period in which the Spirit of the game rule applies, coaches are encouraged to rotate players into different positions, increase developmental opportunities for less experienced players and manage the game in a manner consistent with the Fair Play values of integrity, respect, responsibility, fairness and safety.

Policy Review Date : October 2027