

NO FINALS FOR 11&U

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The policy that states no finals for the lower junior age groups is one that is continually challenged. This document aims to explain the philosophy underpinning the policy and the reasons why the policy was established.

When finals are part of the season it emphasises the need to win. This places extra pressure on the participants and the coach. The common response of coaches (to ensure the win) is to play the “best” players in the key positions ie GA, C, GD. This means that the ‘weaker’ players have less court time and only experience 1 or 2 other positions. It can also lead to ‘best’ players having limited flexibility as they only ‘know’ one position. Therefore, having finals can disadvantage not only the weaker players but also the stronger ones.

Finals structure can also put additional pressure on those coaches who are aware of their responsibility to give all players an opportunity to develop. The pressure comes from the comments of parents or club administrators who are placing their adult views on competition and who attempt to pressure the coach into playing the “best” team every week.

In order to develop the skills of the game, children should be introduced to all court positions and given as much court time as possible. Not having finals is a very simple way of ensuring that children can focus on developing skills, experience all positions on the court and have equal time on court, in an environment that is encouraging and positive.

MANAGING CHANGE

Making the change from previously having 11 & under finals, to no finals requires Associations, coaches and parents to understand the ramifications of having finals and the benefits of no finals for not only individual participants but for netball as a whole. Some factors to consider with the change process:

- Education is the key – make everyone aware of why change needs to occur.
- View the change as making a positive step to do what is best for the 11 & Under age group, and recognise that the way things were done in the past is not necessarily the best way to do things now.
- Support those who are making decisions based on research and developing new educational opportunities for the youth.
- Develop strategies to support all participants, allowing everyone to see the positives occurring
- Develop a budget to ensure you can provide quality participation rewards for all 11 & Under participants

THE BENEFITS OF NO FINALS:

- Provides development opportunities for young netballers.
- More players with better developed skills
- More players with better court knowledge
- Reduces risk of injury from tiredness (in tournament situation)/overuse)
- Encourages more participation and intrinsic rewards – i.e. having fun, enjoy playing with the team
- Every 11 & Under participant is rewarded for their involvement – not just a few
- Risk is well managed (ie appropriate activities are provided)

DISADVANTAGES OF HAVING FINALS:

- Children with limited skills due to lack of court time
- Children who drop out because they do not have the skills
- Children who drop out because they are not having fun (due to pressure and lack of court time)
- Increased and inappropriate pressure to perform
- Reduced skill performance due to undue pressure
- Children who drop out as a result of ‘bad’ experience in finals ie no court time.