

PLAY ON

AUSTRALIAN RULES FOOTBALL

Play-By-Mail Stats Game

BASIC

RULEBOOK

Edition 5

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1 THE BIG PICTURE

THE OBJECT OF THE GAME is to coach your team to win a flag in an Aussie Rules footy 'Play On' league.

There are 12 teams in each league.

A FULL SEASON is 1-3 pre-season rounds, 23 home-and-away rounds, and 3 weeks of finals. A fixtures list for your league's matches is sent to you before the season, together with a list of eligible AFL players.

EACH WEEK you select a team from your own squad of up to 28 players and send it by mail, fax or e-mail to PBM Sports (before the AFL round of matches begins).

YOUR OPPONENT each week is an actual person - not a computer - although we use a computer to work out the results. Your opponents will be trying just as hard as you to put together the best balanced combination of players.

SCORES each week for your players are the same goals and behinds as they personally kick in the AFL, *PLUS* bonus scores based on their other stats - kicks, marks, handballs, hit outs and tackles.

NEW PLAYERS can be signed each week, by bidding for anyone that's not already signed by someone else, or when another coach waives (dumps) them (they can trade as well, but that rarely happens).

COACHES EARN AND LOSE POINTS for their teams. These points are called LPs for "Losing Points". Coaches must manage their points carefully because LPs are used to bid for players. As with real life footy clubs, it's unwise to spend more than you earn.

After each round you receive a report with match results, league ladder and details of all bids and trades, all inclusive.

YOU WILL EXPERIENCE *all the highs and lows of an AFL coach and chief executive. Favourites can lose, bank balances can plunge into the red, close finishes happen often, and excitement builds as teams battle it out for a final eight position.*

The finals are a straight knockout.

Keep winning and the ultimate prize is yours. CAPTURE THE FLAG!

This rulebook is THE ESSENTIAL RULES. Read them carefully and you're ready to start coaching in PBM Aussie Footy - and be very competitive.

The other rulebooks are for the FOR THE TECHNICALLY MINDED. Because the game is processed by computer you may wish to know the finer points of the computer program. But it's not essential reading. You can play OK with the stuff you've got already.

There's also a STRATEGY GUIDE with hints and tips on what works best. Some of the most experienced coaches argue fiercely against some of the advice given, so don't take it as gospel.

If you're starting in a new league setting up from scratch then you'll need the STARTUP RULES but we'll send you those once the bidding rounds are ready to start.

2 STARTING UP

2.1 NEW COACHES. Just as in the AFL, some coaches in Play On retire and can be replaced by new coaches. There are more than twenty Play On leagues running, so there are almost always teams available. New coaches usually change a team's name. Team names may be any EXCEPT the names of real teams, subject to the approval of the GM (who may object to names on the grounds of decency, taste or suitability).

2.2 THE LEAGUE. There are 12 teams in each league. Past coaches continuing in a new season keep the same team name and squad.

2.3 GAMES MASTER. The GM (Games Master) supervises play in each league. The game is processed by computer.

2.4 PAYMENT TO PLAY. You will be advised before the season of the cost and any special offers. The usual method of payment is to send a sum of money to buy 'turn credits'. Each turn you play, one credit is deducted. When your turn credits are running low you buy some more. If you run out of turn credits you drop out of the game. If you play over the internet, you can make a one-off "Online Membership" payment which covers the full season.

2.5 SEASON. One pre-season round introduces new coaches to the game, and gets past coaches back into action. Then, 23 rounds of home-and-away matches are played, followed by 3 weeks of finals.

2.6 DEADLINES. The GM sets the deadline for each turn. Your selected team must arrive in good time. Posted teams must be posted by the deadline and arrive by Monday. If you fail to send it, or it arrives late, your previously selected team will play.

2.7 YOUR GAME REPORT. If the postie doesn't deliver your results by Friday, you'll have to make up a turnsheet and send it in. Include a PAYALL special action, just in case. Of course, if your game report is emailed, you don't have to wait for the postie.

2.8 PLAYER LIST. Before the start of the season you will receive a list of players from the final squads of AFL teams. During the season we delete players who retire, or are injured long term. Updated player lists can be obtained during the season, if required.

The player list is in alphabetical order and each player is allocated a number for easy reference. Each player is classified by the GM to be one of the following: back BAK; midfielder MID; forward FWD; full forward FUL; ruck RCK or utility UTL.

The list will indicate each player's playing position, his real life AFL team and, if he is signed, to which PBM team. eg: 76 BRI MID Jason Akermanis (BB).

In this example BRI is the abbreviation for the Brisbane Lions, MID is for Midfielder and BB is for the PBM team in this league, the Brighton Bulldogs.

Player classifications will not be changed during the season.

2.9 YOUR SQUAD. Each team has a maximum squad of 28 players. You may have fewer than 28, but you can't have more.

2.10. CASH. Each new coach starts with a minimum of 100 LPs. These are used to bid for players. LPs stands for Losing Points, which are the currency of the game (they're called that because you get more of them when you lose).

2.11 TURNSHEET. The turnsheet shows the previous team selection. The turnsheet also provides spaces for you to enter bids and special actions (see 3.1 to 3.10.).

3 TEAM SELECTION

This is the most important thing you do in your orders each week. The turnsheet is the most important document in the game. Filling it in is like sending out a runner to the computer. Try not to miss a single week. You might miss something important.

3.1 PICKING THE TEAM. Each week your turnsheet has places for 18 starting players and 4 interchange players. For your new selection fill in only those selections you want to change. Simply put the player number of the new player in the box beneath the one which shows the old selection. You should NOT cross out the old selection.

For example, to replace player number 172 with player (172)
number 226, your turnsheet would be filled in as follows: (226)

Places in team selection may be left blank if you have insufficient players, but you will be fined LPs for each vacancy. You're supposed to field a proper team!

PLAYER POSITIONS TABLE

PLAYER	POSITIONS ALLOWED
BAK	Anywhere on the full back line. Anywhere on the half back line Nowhere else
UTL	Left and right half back flanks. Anywhere on the centre line. Anywhere on the half forward line. Left and right forward pockets. Ruck rover. Nowhere else.
MID	Anywhere on the centre line. Left and right forward pockets. Ruck rover, Rover. Nowhere else.
FWD	Anywhere on the half forward line. Anywhere on the forward line, including full forward. Nowhere else.
FUL	Full forward only.
RCK	1st Ruck, Ruck Rover only.

3.2 INTERCHANGE Players who start on the interchange bench may be any of these types. Starting players are only interchanged if they fail to score. Interchange players may only change with positions for which they are eligible. UTL and MID are better selections for the interchange bench as their positional options are more varied than BAK, FWD, FUL or RCK.

There's more info on interchanges in the advanced/technical rules.

4 COACH'S INSTRUCTIONS

This section covers the other instructions you can send on your turnsheet, that deal mainly with player movements.

4.1 FREE AGENT BIDS. The second section on your turnsheet is for Free Agent Bids. A free agent is any AFL player not signed by a team in your PBM league. You have space to make two bids each week. Simply fill in the number of the free agent player and the amount you decide to bid (in LPs).

eg. PLR NUM (30) BID VAL (41 LP) NAME (-) FORENAME (-) TEAM (-)

If a player you want is not on the player list (perhaps drafted only this season and newly promoted to AFL level) he won't yet have a player number. You can still bid for him by name and the computer will allocate a number. His playing position will be decided by the GM. You are welcome to suggest his likely position.

eg. PLR NUM (blank) BID VALUE (7 LP) NAME (WARDLE) FORENAME (TONY) TEAM (ESS)

HOW IT WORKS

All bids are published in the weekly league report. A bid is successful if it stands for a turn without a higher bid being made.

eg. After week 1 you bid 40 LPs for player number 88 (using the week 2 turnsheet).

Week 2 your bid is published in the weekly report.

Week 3 no other team makes a higher bid, so number 88 is your player.

However, if a higher bid IS made in Week 3, the bidding process continues.

When a player is signed then his previous team (if any) is credited with an amount equal to half the amount bid. If a player re-signs for the same team that waived him, then the bonus isn't paid.

4.2 OVERBIDS. Any overbids (higher bids) must be at least 50% higher than the previous bid as published in the weekly report.

eg. To overbid 20 LPs you must bid at least 30 LPs.

To overbid 25 LPs you must bid at least 38 LPs.

4.3 FASTSIGN BIDS. This is an alternative, faster way to sign free agents, using the Special Actions instead - that's the third section of your turnsheet.

eg. ACTION (FASTSIGN) AMOUNT (11 LP) PLR NUM (199)

The computer does not discriminate between free agent bids and FASTSIGN bids. The highest bid signs the player regardless. With a FASTSIGN he is signed immediately - unlike free agent bids, where signing is not completed until a bid has stood for one turn.

The downside is that any player fast-signed is given a value of only 1 LP, regardless of the amount actually bid. eg. Matthew Lloyd (FUL ESS) becomes a free agent. You know the bidding will be high so you fast-sign a bid of 100 LPs. Your bid is successful, but Lloyd's value is immediately marked down to 1 LP. Not much of an investment! At 1 LP he will attract poachers (see rule 4.6). Usually it's wise to spend no more than 10 LPs on fast-signings. And it's mostly only suitable for second string players.

You cannot fast-sign an unclassified player (ie. whose position is UNK) or anyone whose player number isn't known.

4.4 WAIVERS. You may want to dump players who are injured or who lose form or just turned out to be rubbish. Use the Special Actions section of your turnsheet.

eg. ACTION (WAIVE) AMOUNT (-) PLR NUM (292)

When you WAIVE a player you receive 50% of his current value immediately. You might get some more later, if someone else signs picks him up as a free agent.

4.5 WAIVERS AND BIDS. In the same turn in which you waive a player, you may make a free agent bid for the same player. You can take this action if you think a player has become overpriced and you need to cut your salary bill. The risk, of course, is that someone will trump your bid with a higher offer. In the weekly report, this bid will be listed as a REBID.

You cannot waive and FASTSIGN the same player in the same turn. You must use a proper bid and allow your rivals to make counter-offers.

4.6 POACHING. It is possible to poach players already signed by other teams, again using the Special Actions section of your turnsheet.

eg. ACTION (POACH) AMOUNT (30 LP) PLR NUM (9)

Normally your bid must be at least 50% higher than the current value for that player, and you pay a cost of 20% of your offer immediately. In the example above, the poaching action for 9 BRI FWD Jonathan Brown would only be valid if his current value was 20 LP or less. It would cost you 6 LP for this poaching action (20% of the 30 LPs offered).

In next week's report, Brown would be listed in the Trades & Poaching section. His current team has the option of offering him an improved CONTRACT (see 4.7) and increasing his salary to the level of the poaching bid. If his coach does contract him then Brown's name is removed from that section.

On the other hand, if he is NOT contracted, then ANY team may make a free agent bid for him. This bid must be at least equal to the poach price of 30 LP. Brown will be signed by the highest bid which remains unchallenged for one turn.

If you want to keep the player, you must contract him immediately or you may lose him.

The original POACH does no more than get the player's name in the Holdouts & Transfers section. If you still want to sign him you have to bid on the open market.

The poach action is mostly used on players who have been fast-signed (their value has been dropped back to 1 LP which may be well under their true market value) but if a coach is flush with LPs he may decide to go after a player of a much higher value.

Players who are listed as 'holding out' will still play if selected.

If a coach does not contract a poached player, and no-one makes a free agent bid, he will automatically be removed from the transfer list after four weeks, at no cost. So, if you don't care about losing a particular player, or think he is not worth the price, do nothing. Call the bluff or take the money!

4.7 CONTRACTS. If a poaching action is made against one of your players, and you want to block the move, use a CONTRACT action in the Special Actions section of your turnsheet. Enter the number of the player and the new value. The cost is the difference between his old and new values. The action fails if you cannot cover the cost.

eg. ACTION (CONTRACT) AMOUNT (30 LP) PLR NUM (9)

The number you put in the AMOUNT box must be the poaching price.

4.8 PAYALL. If you want to offer new contracts to all your players when they're poached, without thinking about it, then use a PAYALL action. Be warned, it's likely to get expensive! Usually coaches only use this option when they know they're going to be out of touch for a while, and it's better to hang on to the players and sort out the problems later.

4.9 REDUCE. If you've got a player who's over-valued then you can try to reduce his contract with a REDUCE action. This works like poaching in reverse. You can offer any contract you like, provided it's lower than his current value, but the following turn the player will appear in the Trades & Poaching list, holding out (for one turn only) for a better offer (50% higher than yours). If anyone else is prepared to pay what you wouldn't, and makes a bid, then the player signs for the new team in the same way as if he'd been poached, but they've only got that one turn. Then he comes off the list and accepts the new contract.

This is a reason for keeping a good number of LPs on hand, for when other coaches start reducing contracts, or doing the thing with waiving and re-bidding (see 4.5). The REDUCE action is a new rule you can use instead of the waive and re-bid option.

4.10 MESSAGES. The turnsheet also includes a section for messages, which are published in the league report. Keep them clean and fair.

4.11 SCOUTING There are two forms of scouting, which you may choose by either indicating the player number of the player to be scouted (in the box indicated) or by leaving the box blank.

If you indicate a player number then this provides up to date information on that player (who he plays for, if anyone, and his current value - you might want to do this before you try to poach someone).

If you don't give a player number then the computer will try to find a free agent (a player who isn't signed with anyone else). The position of the player scouted will be controlled by your current scouting type.

The special actions ANY, BAK, MID, FWD, FUL, RCK, and UTL allow you to change the current scouting type and will also scout a player of that type. Any special actions you don't use will be treated as un-numbered SCOUT actions.

ACTION [SCOUT] AMOUNT [] PLR NUM [100] scouts player number 100

ACTION [SCOUT] AMOUNT [] PLR NUM [] searches for any free agent

ACTION [FWD] AMOUNT [] PLR NUM [] searches for a free agent forward

5 GAME SCORES

5.1 REAL LIFE SCORES. Players make exactly the same scores in Play On as they do in real life. Points are scored for the team as in the AFL: each goal is worth 6 points and each behind is worth one point.

5.2 BONUS SCORES. Players also get bonus scores according to their other stats.

KICKS:	One goal for every 15 kicks.
MARKS:	One goal for every 8 marks.
HANDPASSES:	One goal for every 10 handpasses.
HIT OUTS:	One goal for every 10 hit outs.
TACKLES:	Three behinds for every 3 tackles.

Bonus scores are shown separately in game reports.

eg. Jonathan Brown 3.2 1k 1ha 1t

This means that Brown scored 3 goals and 2 behinds in Play On, including one bonus goal from kicks, one bonus goal from handpasses and one bonus behind from tackles. You can easily work out that he must have scored one goal and one behind in real life to bring his tally to 3.2.

5.3 QUARTER SCORES. Game reports for Play On show quarter-by-quarter scores. These are purely window dressing. Only the final score counts.

7 TIPPING COMPETITION

7.1 TURNSHEET. During the minor round there is a tipping competition where you try to predict the results of real life games.

On your turnsheet is a section showing the upcoming games.

Enter W for WIN for the first named team. Or L for LOSS for the first named team.

eg. FRE vs SYD (W) predicts a win for Fremantle.

FRE vs SYD (L) predicts a loss for Fremantle.

7.2 RESULTS. One point is scored in the competition for each correct tip. Results and progressive points are listed in your weekly report.

7.3 YOU WIN EXTRA LPs. At the end of the season the top tipster gains 100 LPs, second gains 50 LPs and smaller amounts are awarded through to the last position on the tipsters' table.

7.4 GAMBLE. The special action GAMBLE alters the scoring for your tips that week. You score 2 points for each correct tip, but lose 2 points for each incorrect tip.

Pick all 8 winners and you will score 16 points, compared with 8 points if you do not use the GAMBLE action. If you gamble and only pick half, then you score no points at all, compared with 4 points if you played it safe..

But, be careful. You can use only five special actions each week and punting on GAMBLE reduces your options in the real game: trying to win a flag. It's your call!

8. OTHER PRIZES

8.1 SECONDS COMPETITION. This has nothing to do with reserve team football, but pays a bonus of LPs at the end of the minor round to the teams that improve most in the second half of the season relative to the first. You score the number of league points you collect in the second half of the season LESS the number you scored in the first half. The prize is 100 LPs for the winner with 50, 20, 10 and 5 LPs for the next five.

8.2 MINOR PREMIERS. If the Minor Premiers fail to win the flag, they also get a bonus of 100 LPs. Small consolation for the disappointment of being the best team over the season and failing to win the Grand Final, but maybe it'll help you get it right next year.

In real life a team that tops the ladder at the end of the minor round gets a second chance if they lose before the Grand Final, and they get a good chance at winning a week off during the finals as well. In Play On all you get is weaker opponents and a few extra goals through the bonus scores.

TABLE OF SPECIAL ACTIONS

ACTION	RULE	PAGE	LPs AMOUNT	PLAYER NUMBER
CONTRACT	4.7	7	YES	YES
FASTSIGN	4.3	6	YES	YES
GAMBLE	7.4	11	blank	blank
PAYALL	4.8	8	blank	blank
POACH	4.6	7	YES	YES
REDUCE	4.9	8	YES	YES
SCOUT	4.11	8	blank	YES
WAIVE	4.4	7	blank	YES

TABLE OF PLAYER POSITIONS IN TEAM SELECTION

BACKS	BAK	BAK	BAK
HALF BACKS	BAK UTL	BAK	BAK UTL
CENTRE LINE	MID UTL	MID UTL	MID UTL
HALF FWDS	FWD UTL	FWD UTL	FWD UTL
FORWARDS	FWD MID UTL	FUL FWD	FWD MID UTL
FOLLOWERS	RCK	RCK MID UTL	MID