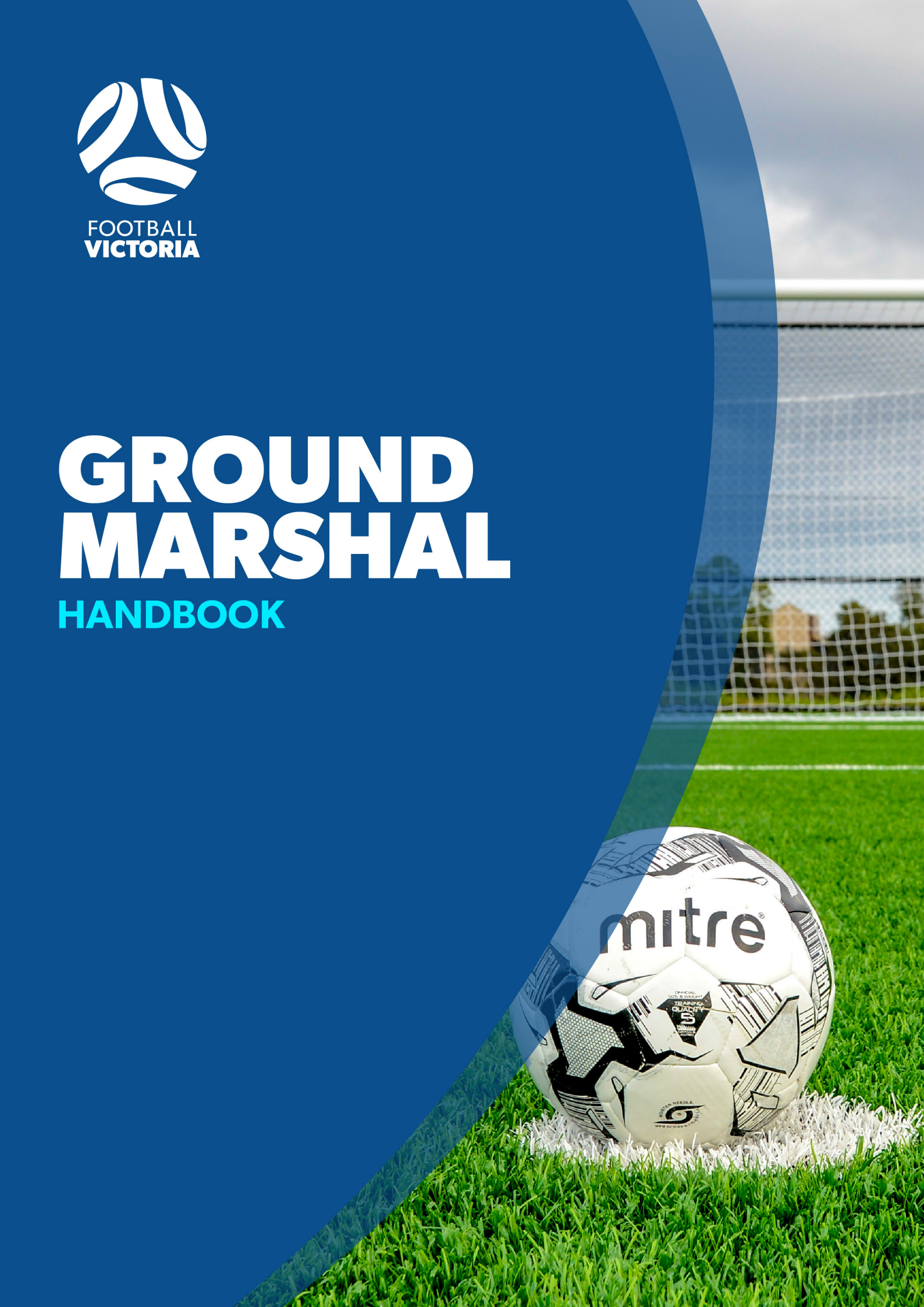
FOOTBALL VICTORIA

GROUND MARSHAL

HANDBOOK



IMPORTANCE OF A GROUND MARSHAL

The Ground Marshal plays an integral role in providing support to the clubs, players, parents, coaches, assistants and referees participating in Football of a high quality, welcoming and respectful sporting experience.

The Ground Marshal is a nominated club representative who will co-ordinate the efficient completion of match day fixtures. This person must be over the age of 18. A home club should appoint a relevant number of Ground Marshals, proportionate to attendance and to the number.

It is important to note that although the Ground Marshal(s) has a role it remains incumbent on all stakeholders to ensure a safe and respectful experience for all involved.

This document will provide a scope of duties, ensure the code of conduct is upheld and that **RESPECT** is in effect for all.

HOW TO BE A GROUND MARSHAL

- Must be present and wearing a coloured vest which clearly indicates the role of Ground Marshal on the vest.
- Must arrive no less than 15 minutes prior to every kick-off.
- This applies to all teams U7 to Seniors.

Pre-Match Checks

- Ground Marshal must be an adult (over the age of 18 years old)
- Ground Marshal must always wear a clearly identifiable uniform (vest as described above) and be visible.
- Check that balls cannot get through **goal nets**. Especially bottom of side netting.
- Check that corner **flags** are safe. Also placed straight up & down and not easily knocked or blown over.
- Safety checks: Ensure **4m clearance** from pitch to dangerous objects such as trolleys, ladders, bikes, prams, etc.

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Additional pre-match checks for U12-U18 & Seniors…

- **Halfway** flags to be set back 1.5m back from sideline. (where applicable)
- At least 6 **chairs** in each technical area.
- **Stretcher & ice packs** to be placed between technical areas just behind the halfway flag. If there is not enough equipment, be sure to know exactly where to get the stretcher or ice if required.
- Keep an eye on the match balls. They are only to be used for match play.
- **Match Balls** aren't to be used for team warm-ups or other kids to play around with.
- Meet referees and show them their change-room and field of play.

GROUND MARSHAL DUTIES

The home club will appoint a Ground Marshal from duty teams and allocate certain spaces of the club grounds to covering areas of match play and hosting effectively.

• Reminder that all Ground Marshal(s) must be over the age of 18 years and cannot be working in the "technical area" coaching or managing a team while on duty as a Ground Marshal.

• The Ground Marshal(s) has the right to retain an authority and control that reflects the positive aspects of Football Victoria and the Clubs "Code of Conduct". It is essential that the code of conduct sign is always in position in an area where there is a high degree of visibility.

• The Ground Marshal(s) is the **only person** permitted to approach the referees.

• A committee member and/or the clubs MPIO will always be in attendance as the "go to" person to lend support and advise on required action/s whenever a Ground Marshal feels ill equipped to handle a situation that has arisen.

• The Ground Marshal(s) must not consume alcohol or be under the influence of alcohol when performing their duties.

• The Ground Marshal(s) must not remove people by force, as this may be referred to or investigated in line with the GDT.

WELCOME THE OPPOSITION TEAM(S) AND MATCH OFFICIALS

- Introduce yourself to opposition team and officials and be their point of contact with the home club. Please be sure to introduce any other relevant points of contact at the club.
- Introduce yourself to the Referee of your allocated field. Explain where the field, Referee rooms, toilets, canteen and changerooms are located.
- Make it clear to match support and players that shouting negative comments, voicing **criticism to players, spectators** or pointed **questioning** of referees **is not allowed** at your club's home grounds.

- Suggested process for managing the environment could include the following:
    - **Apply 3 step communication:**

RESPECT the Game

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SPECIFIC MATCH DUTIES

- Be mindful where the **First Aid facility** and stretcher are located IF NOT IN the technical area.
- Ask animal owners to secure unleashed dogs to minimize risk to the animal, players, officials and spectators in the designated areas.
- The Ground Marshal is always to escort the referee from the Referee room / Pavilion /club rooms to the field, including before match, half time and after match.
- Position yourself in your assigned area and resume an 'active' observer role circulating the allocated fields to ensure visibility.
- **Where disrespectful / negative behaviour should occur toward a Referee/Assistant Referee the following process should be followed:**
    1. **Ask** the offending person or group, respectfully, to stop the conduct whilst reminding the person or group that criticism or strong questioning of referees is not allowed.
    2. If the disrespectful / negative **behaviour** continues, **instruct the person or group** to cease the behaviour immediately. If possible at this point, an important step would be to try and get another parent to start videoing the bad behaviour on their phone.
    3. At this point if the person conducting themselves in disrespectful / negative **fashion is not the team coach then you should involve the team coach to assist in ending this scenario.** If it is the coach, then ask their TM or the visiting Ground Marshal to assist if not already assisting.
    4. If the disrespectful / negative **behaviour** continues, **expel** the offending person or group from the ground immediately. The carpark is the closest they are allowed to be.
    5. Where the offending person or group refuses to heed the reasonable instruction, respectfully inform the Referee that the game is to be immediately abandoned. Do not engage further, collect playing equipment such as **match balls** and exit the space accompanying the Referee at the same time.
    6. Report misconduct - including disputes, foul and abusive language by any persons at the ground. Report should be captured in the Incident Book located within the Clubroom
- Keep the exclusion zone (1.5m from sideline) clear of people (including coaches), bags, dogs, etc. Important note: **Only assistant referees are allowed inside, and players during an interchange.**
- Keep the area between the technical areas clear. Only ground marshals allowed.
- When the spare ball is called for, send someone to retrieve the first ball and bring it back to the halfway flag. ***If it happens a lot, appoint another volunteer or two as a ball retriever.***
- Remind coaches not to make player interchanges unless the Referee has acknowledged it.
- Ensure that subs wear bibs or similar, especially if they are standing.

GUIDE TO RESOLVING CONFLICT

Ground marshals may at times deal with volatile situations that require strategies to redirect hostile people and defuse confrontational situations. The first minute of an interaction often determines its direction and outcome and how people react to an interaction is largely dependent on the cues they pick up from you.

Try the following steps…

1. STOP

- Assess the risk and situation as I approach
- Decide whether to send for assistance
- Stay open-minded, intending to defuse the situation
- Remain calm
- Don't argue, accuse, or tell to 'calm down'

2. LOOK

- Are they drunk?
- Have I ever reacted like that?
- When I was that age…how did I behave?
- If I was brought up in that culture/ environment would I act the same?
- Are their expectations of the ref, coach, players or club too high?
- Am I the focus of their anger?
- Has the person just displayed aggression towards an individual or group?

3. LISTEN

- Receive other people's comments without interruption
- Show empathy and use statements carefully.
- Validate and clarify.
- Recognise your own prejudices.
- Be quiet

4. RESPOND

- Remain calm and keep your language short and simple.
- Use non-threatening body language and tone of voice.
- Very rarely is using the word: 'NO' going to get you very far with the public.
- It is better to say: 'I need' or we need rather than 'you must' or you 'have to'
- Learn to feel comfortable with phrases such as: (a). 'I can help you better if…..' (b). 'I need you to help me by slowing down just a little…' (c). 'I really don't think your comments……'

IN SUMMARY

- Listen to what the problem is for them
- Say what the problem is for you
- Focus on the problem, not the person
- Look for answers so everyone gets what they need.
- If the situation can't be resolved in a rationale manner, report the incident.

(Reference: Play by the Rules; http://play-by-the-rules.s3.amazonaws.com/Resources/R021_Resolving_conflict_steps_Ground_Marshall.pdf)

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