



JUNIOR & YOUTH COACHING HANDBOOK



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www.otagocountrycricket.co.nz



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1. INTRODUCTION

This document has been produced to provide our parents and coaches the information to understand and drive our philosophy throughout the grass roots game. We have a proud tradition of giving our young players the best chance of being successful and have produced some great players from our region, this includes the likes of Eden Carson, Caitlin Blakely, Sam Blakely and Warren McSkimming. As well as being proud of producing these talents, equally as important are the players who do not go on to play for the Volts or the Black Caps but enjoy participating in our great game and become the people who resource our local clubs for years to come.



Over the last season, Otago Country Cricket has been focusing on becoming more inclusive in how we offer opportunities to our participants. Although not perfect, we believe we are heading in the right direction to allow our young players to be exposed to great opportunities in our game. Our goal is to offer additional opportunities to players in our junior and youth space to allow them to 'enjoy and develop' their cricket. We now call our pathway cricket 'district' cricket rather than 'representative' cricket to reinforce these changes.

We are always looking for new ways to improve our pathways for our participants and hope that this booklet provides you with the information you need to understand our philosophy behind these changes.

Sam Bastin – Cricket Development Officer, Otago Cricket Association



2. PLAYERS

When representing an Otago Country team, we expect all players to:

- Respect their teammates and coach
- Respect the opposition and umpires
- Behave appropriately on and off the field
- Put in a 100% effort for their team
- Dress in a respectable manner
- Enjoy and respect the opportunity to represent our district

The above points are a big contributing factor to the 'Otago Country Way' and allows us to develop well rounded individuals as well as well-rounded players.

As a player, what can you expect to experience at the varying levels of pathway cricket we offer:

<p style="text-align: center;">Junior (Year 7 & 8) Boys and Girls</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>'Developing a love for cricket and making new friends'</i></p>	<p>At this age and stage players should expect to experience a development and participation focus. All players should expect to experience batting, bowling, and fielding in a variety of positions which will help with their long-term development. Even if a player has a preference in terms of a batting or bowling position, being exposed to a variation of positions will expose the player to a variety of scenarios within matches which will build a well-rounded understanding of the game.</p> <p>Any player who wants to participate at this level will be included and will experience equal opportunities. Players should expect to be filtered into teams to play alongside and against players with a similar ability to create 'like vs like' match ups which are healthy for development.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Youth (Year 9 & 10) Boys and Girls</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>'Developing a range of tools'</i></p>	<p>At this age and stage players should expect to experience a development focus. All players should expect to still experience batting, bowling, and fielding in a variety of positions which will help with their long-term development. Usually during this stage, a player will start to develop a role or two within a team they enjoy performing the most.</p> <p>Players should communicate this to coaches, however, be prepared to still experience playing in differing positions from match to match.</p> <p>Any player who wants to participate at this level will be included and will experience equal opportunities. Players should expect to be filtered into teams to play alongside and against players with a similar ability to create 'like vs like' match ups which are healthy for development.</p>



<p>Youth (U/17 and U/19) Boys and Girls</p> <p><i>'Developing to perform'</i></p>	<p>At this age and stage players should expect to experience a development focus. Players may start specializing into a core role or two within a team. Even though they may have a role or two that they prefer to have, players should expect to be tested by coaches at times and asked to perform roles that might feel a bit foreign to them. When a player has a role within a team, they will start to develop a more in-depth tactical knowledge about that particular role and how this contributes to the overall team performance.</p> <p>Players should expect to be filtered into teams to play alongside and against players with a similar ability to create 'like vs like' match ups which are healthy for development.</p>
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NOMINATION PROCESS

The nomination process for Otago Country Cricket will be led by Otago Cricket development staff, Otago Country administration and coaches. The players will then be filtered by the above staff into their corresponding teams. This will be done in the knowledge that players will be playing alongside their friends and players of similar ability. Last season we sent teams based on their geographic areas within our association which reaped great success. If this is not possible, we will look to filter players into their teams taking the below factors into consideration:

- Soft Skills – Coachability ► Intrinsically motivated ► Task focused ► Resilience
- Team composition (Year 11 and 12 and above only)
- The 'ceiling' – how far do we feel this player can go in the future
- Current technical ability and skills
- Current maturity (Mental, emotional and physical)
- Availability – Matches, trainings and tournaments or festivals
- Prior knowledge

TO CONCLUDE

Players who self-nominate themselves for the Otago Country pathway should do so knowing all the information recorded above. We hope that all players who self-nominate are committed to give 100% effort and commitment to the team they are filtered into. In return, players should expect support from coaches, parents, and Otago Country Development staff. Along with this support they should expect playing opportunities that meet their needs as cricketers. We hope to continue to give our participants as many opportunities as possible to develop their cricket and to develop good people.



3. PARENTS

Otago Country Association are very lucky to be supported by such a wonderful community and parent base. Without parent volunteers' cricket would not be able to run. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all volunteers at grass root level.

As a parent, you have a big impact on the overall experience your child has in sport. We would appreciate it if you took the time to read both the Player and Coach section to gain an insight into what philosophies we are wanting our coaches and players to buy into. Once you understand these philosophies you will then be able to best support the players and coaches to make the cricketing experiences as positive and enjoyable as possible.

An easy thing to do as a parent is focus all discussions and feedback to players on results, statistics, and outcomes. Players will always play to win and put pressure on themselves to do their best for their team. Added pressure from parents can be harmful and detrimental to players.

Here are some expectations we have of parents:

- Make the car ride home enjoyable ► Praise effort and behaviour (not outcomes, stats or results) or ask the player what part of the game they enjoyed the most
- Be present, but not persistent ► Research shows that young people highly value having their parents at games as spectators.
 - Once players arrive at the grounds, we encourage you to let players have their own space to be with their teammates and coaches. Coaches will make decisions in regard to different things to do with the team. Refrain from questioning decision making as they are trying to do their best for your child.
 - If you want to help a team perhaps offer your services to the coach as a scorer, drinks person or sunscreen monitor. Refrain from yelling instructions to players during the match.
- Respect umpires and opposition to umpires will make some good decisions and some poor decisions. This is a part of cricket which will never change. Helping players understand this in a healthy way will help them build resilience and sportsmanship.
 - Opposition players and parents are looking to achieve the same outcomes from their cricketing experience – an enjoyable and positive one. Respecting this and being friendly and welcoming towards opposition teams is an important step with this.

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TO CONCLUDE

As an Association we set out equally value all players, no matter their current age, ability level or circumstances. As a parent, you have major influence on your child's overall experience.

It is a challenge to stop praising results, outcomes, and statistics as these are the things that are easy to see. By praising *behaviours* and *effort* the players will feel encouraged and positive about their experience, no matter whether they have won or lost.

4. COACHES

Our Association has been very fortunate over the years to attract high quality people to coach our various pathway teams.

As coaches, it is critical to understand the main objectives of our pathway teams are:

- Provide high quality development opportunities via trainings, matches and festivals for players.
- Provide high quality coaching to players to ensure development opportunities are maximised.
- Ensure all players are equally valued and given equal opportunities.
- Whilst players will play to win when matches are being played, we encourage coaches to stay focused on providing learning and development opportunities rather than becoming outcome or result focused.
- Implement the following systems and structures with their team dependant on the age group of the players they are coaching:



<p>Junior (Year 7 & 8) Boys and Girls</p> <p><i>'Developing a love for cricket and making new friends'</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoyment and development are the priorities at this age and stage • Create ways for players to feel empowered by contributing to decision making where possible • Ensure that all players are getting the opportunity to develop different skill sets. Every player to be given the chance to play in different positions to develop well rounded cricketers
<p>Youth (Year 9 & 10) Boys and Girls</p> <p><i>'Developing a range of tools'</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Player rotation to be encouraged at this age group, challenging our participants to try new things to develop well rounded people • Enjoyment and development are the priorities at this age and stage • Empower players to create their own batting and bowling plans • Empower the captain or captains to create a game plan in conjunction with yourself
<p>Youth (Year 11 & 12) Boys and Girls</p> <p><i>'Developing to perform'</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players to start to have a core role or two within a team. • Enjoyment and development are the priorities at this age and stage. • Empower players to create their own batting and bowling plans • Empower the captain or captains to create a game plan

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The traditional thought process regarding 'selecting' teams with the sole outcome of giving the team the best chance to win a tournament is no longer relevant. This traditional way of thinking resulted in lot of players who were more physically mature selected over players who were less physically mature. The self-nomination matrix ensures a broader range of aspects are taken into consideration when filtering players into teams.



TO CONCLUDE

We appreciate the time and effort that all coaches put in to help run our various pathway teams. This time and effort if directed to align to our philosophies as described in the table above will see:

- More players continuing to play cricket as they reach early adulthood
- More players returning to be part of our pathway programmes the following season/s
- More players exposed to pathway cricket opportunities above and beyond their club or school cricket
- More players realising and reaching their potential as a player
- More players getting more enjoyment out of the pathway cricket opportunities we provide them
- More players developing as cricketers through engaging with our pathway programmes

5. SPORT NZ - BALANCE IS BETTER

Balance is Better (BiB) is an evidence-based philosophy that focusses on maximising participation and skill development in youth sport. The focus has been on growing the capability of sporting codes including cricket to better prepare athletes in their development phase to help them realise their potential.

There are three myths in youth sport that have been identified though research and are supported by evidence. The Balance is Better philosophy pushes back against these myths to stress that:

1. **Childhood success is not a reliable predictor of future success.**

Player development does not occur in a simple straightforward manner or at the same speed. Competitive sporting opportunities to reflect this, rather than over-investing (both time and money) in just the kids who the show the most promise at a young age.

2. **Identifying athletes early and specialising early is taking its toll on young people.**

Many young athletes specialise in one sport in the belief this is the best way for them to develop into elite adults. However, burnout, overuse injuries and declining motivation are more likely to be the outcomes of early specialisation. Selection decisions should be delayed, and we need to find ways to keep more young people involved in a range of quality experiences in competitive sport – for longer.

3. **A focus on winning rather than development is a problem for young people, because it can have unintended consequences on their wellbeing and affect their motivation to take part.**

We need to stop focusing on high performance and overemphasising 'winning' in youth sport. This approach is creating a lack of balance and leads to high workload and high pressure for our young people too soon. A focus on development and getting better is what young people want and what successful athletes and people focus on.

More information about the Balance is Better philosophy can be found here:



<https://sportnz.org.nz/resources/balance-is-better-philosophy/>
<https://balanceisbetter.org.nz/>

HOW OCCA ALIGNS WITH BALANCE IS BETTER

- Encouraging players to develop all of their skills through exposure to different batting, bowling and fielding roles/positions
- Equally value all players within our pathway
- Implementing systems to ensure players experience various roles within our game
- All OCCA players and participants have a program to engage with and enjoy ensuring their experience is a positive one.
- Coaches to be given guidance and support whenever it is required, this is to ensure our participants experience of the game is positive.

Balance Is Better: The 5 major **myths** vs **reality**

