



Coaching Box White Card System



1. CONTEXT

AFL Goulburn Murray is committed to undertaking proactive measures to ensure the match day environment for all players, coaches, volunteers, umpires, and spectators is a positive experience. In line with this undertaking, a new Coaching Box Card System was introduced in 2023 across all competitive age levels for all affiliated AFL Goulburn Murray competitions. The system is focused on the Head Coach role modelling coach behaviour and being accountable for any unacceptable behaviour by any person/s located within the confines of the designated coaching box area.

Club, coach, and umpire feedback will be sought throughout each season as part of the review process.

2. DEFINITIONS

Affiliate League means a league licensed by AFL Victoria to administer Australian Football competitions.

AFLGM means AFL Goulburn Murray, the controlling body for football in the Goulburn Murray.

Appointed Umpire is any accredited field, boundary, goal, or emergency umpire appointed by either AFLGM or Association to officiate in an AFLGM-sanctioned game.

Association is any organization that has been authorized by AFLGM to manage the Umpire appointment process.

Captain is a person listed by each team as Captain on the official team sheet.

Club is any entity that is affiliated with AFLGM and enters a team or teams in AFLGM managed competitions.

Club Umpire is any person appointed by a Club to officiate as a field, boundary, or goal umpire in a game.

Coaching Box incorporates all designated areas where any person listed on the team sheet as a coach, team official or player can be located to undertake their duties.

Field Umpire is any Appointed Umpire or Club Umpire that is undertaking field umpire duties.

Head Coach is the person listed on the official team sheet as the head coach.

Lead Assistant is the person listed first (top of the list) on the list of assistant coaches on the official PlayHQ team sheet.

Non-Offending Team is the team that isn't being issued with a White card or Red card at the time of a card being issued.

Offending Team is the team that incurs a White card or Red card at the time of the card being issued.

Umpire/s is any person officiating in a game as a field, goal, boundary, or emergency umpire.

Unacceptable Behaviours are those as outlined in section 3. of this document.

3. UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

a) The behaviour of the Coaching Box will be deemed unacceptable when any Umpire observes or clearly hears someone within the confines of the Coaching Box area:

- o continually questioning/disputing umpiring decisions
- o abusing umpires or making inappropriate comments to or about them
- o using inappropriate language or gestures towards or about anyone
- o speaking inappropriately or aggressively towards opposition players or coaches
- o behaving in any manner that is socially unacceptable / contrary to the Coaches' Code of Conduct, AFL Victoria Senior Player Code of Conduct and Youth Player Code of Conduct.

b) In recognizing the emotions of being involved in a game, Umpires must understand that the Coaching Box Card System is in place to manage repeated instances of Unacceptable Behaviours, not isolated instances unless they are excessive/aggressive in nature.



c) This system does not override any Umpire's ability to report any person on a team sheet at any time throughout a game. For example, if an Umpire hears someone in the Coaching Box vilify someone else and they can identify the perpetrator, they should report that person immediately and take the relevant steps as per the standard reporting process.

4. COACHING BOX CARD SYSTEM OVERVIEW

a) Where Unacceptable Behaviours are emanating from the Coaching Box, a three-phase system will be undertaken by the Field Umpire/s via the use of White and Red cards to stop such behaviours in real time. The three phases are:

- 1st Phase - a warning (White card shown)
- 2nd Phase – another warning, free kick and 50m penalty (White card shown)
- 3rd Phase - Head Coach reported and removed from game, free kick and 50m penalty (Red card shown)

5. WHITE & RED CARD 3 PHASE PROCESS

5.1 Phase 1 (warning)

a) Field Umpire/s or Emergency Appointed Umpire who hear or observe Unacceptable Behaviours

- i. Notwithstanding clause 5.1 c), when a Field Umpire or Emergency Appointed Umpire hears or observes any Unacceptable Behaviours from the coaching box, at the next stoppage in play they shall pause the game and move to within 20m of the Coaching Box and clearly display a White card.
- ii. The Field Umpire or Emergency Appointed Umpire shall not engage in any conversation when undertaking this process and shall not answer any questions that come from the bench.
- iii. A Field Umpire that is not issuing the card shall take control of the football at the spot on the field where play was paused, then once the card has been issued, they will recommence play from where it stopped.
- iv. There is no on field penalty for the team that incurred the White card.

b) Goal & Boundary Umpires – Appointed & Club who hear or observe Unacceptable Behaviours

- i. When any Appointed or Club boundary or goal umpire hears or observes any Unacceptable Behaviours from the coaching box, they shall inform a Field Umpire at the next available opportunity. Notwithstanding 5.1 c), if the Field Umpire determines a card is appropriate, at the next stoppage they shall pause the game and move to within 20m of the Coaching Box and clearly display a White card.
- ii. The Field Umpire shall not engage in any conversation when undertaking this process and shall not answer any questions that come from the bench.
- iii. A Field Umpire that is not issuing the card shall take control of the football at the spot on the field where the play was paused and once the card has been issued, they will recommence play from where it stopped.
- iv. There is no on-field penalty for the team that incurred the White card.

c) Appointed Umpire & Club Umpire officiating together who hear or observe Unacceptable Behaviours

- i. If any Club Umpire is officiating in a game with an Appointed field Umpire and hears or observes any Unacceptable Behaviours from the coaching box, they shall advise the field Appointed Umpire at the next



pause in play and the field Appointed Umpire shall determine whether a White card is applicable or not. If a card is deemed appropriate, the field Appointed Umpire shall move to within 20m of the Coaching Box and clearly display a White card.

ii. The field Appointed Umpire shall not engage in any conversation when undertaking this process and shall not answer any questions that come from the bench.

iii. The Field Umpire that is not issuing the card shall take control of the football at the spot on the field where play was paused and once the card has been issued, they will recommence play from where it stopped.

iv. There is no on field penalty for the team that incurred the White card.

d) Two Club Umpires officiating together who hear or observe Unacceptable behaviours.

i. When two club umpires are officiating together, they have the same role and responsibilities as an appointed field umpire.

ii. Club umpires implement the White Card rule as per 5.1 (a)

e) Cards issued in-between quarters – Club Umpires & Appointed Umpires who hear or observe Unacceptable Behaviours

i. If following a discussion between Umpires at any quarter time breaks, notwithstanding clause 5.1 c) if the Field Umpire/s deem a White card is appropriate, then prior to the game restarting a Field Umpire should approach the Captain of the Offending Team and advise a White card will be issued to restart the quarter.

ii. Once the players are in position to resume play a Field Umpire shall move to within 20m of the coaching box and clearly display a White card.

iii. The Field Umpire shall not engage in any conversation when undertaking this process and shall not answer any questions that come from the bench.

iv. After the card has been issued play will resume with a centre bounce.

v. There is no on field penalty for the team that incurred the White card.

f) League Appointed Match Managers

Where an independent AFLGM or Affiliate League match manager has been appointed and they hear or observe any Unacceptable Behaviours from the Coaching Box, they shall notify the Field Umpires at the next break between quarters and clause 5.1 d) shall be applied.

g) Abuse When a White Card is Issued

i. When the Field Umpire or Emergency Umpire issues a White Card, if abuse is forthcoming from the Coaching Box during the card issuing process, a free kick and 50m penalty shall be applied. In this instance the Field Umpire shall notify the Offending Team Captain.

ii. The free kick and subsequent 50m penalty shall be given to the player who the Field Umpire in control of the restart deems was the closest to the ball where play was paused.



Note - If questions are being asked from the Coaching Box, such questions should not be assessed as abuse (unless delivered in an abusive manner) and the Field Umpire should vacate the area without engaging with the Coaching Box.

h) Club Clarity

If a Club wants clarity as to why a White card was issued, the Club's Captain can respectfully approach the Field Umpires. This is not an avenue for the Captain to debate the decision, it's only an opportunity to gain an understanding as to why the White card was issued.

5.2 Phase 2 (second warning, free kick and 50m penalty)

a) Field Umpire/s & Emergency Appointed Umpire who hear or observe Unacceptable Behaviours

- i. Notwithstanding clause 5.2 c), when a Field Umpire or Emergency Appointed Umpire hears or observes any Unacceptable Behaviours from the coaching box, at the next stoppage they will pause the game and move to within 20m of the Coaching Box and clearly display a White card.
- ii. The Field Umpire or Emergency Appointed Umpire shall not engage in any conversation when undertaking this process and shall not answer any questions that come from the bench.
- iii. A Field Umpire that is not issuing the card shall take control of the football at the spot on the field where play was paused and then once the card has been issued, they will resume play by awarding a free kick to the Non-Offending Team and then apply a 50m penalty. The free kick shall be given to the player who the Field Umpire in control of the restart deems was the closest to the ball where play paused.

b) Goal & Boundary Umpires – Appointed & Club who hear or observe Unacceptable Behaviours

- i. When any Appointed or Club boundary or goal umpire hears or observes any Unacceptable Behaviours from the coaching box, they shall inform a Field Umpire at the next available opportunity. Notwithstanding clause 5.2 c), if the Field Umpire determines a card is appropriate, at the next stoppage they shall pause the game and move to within 20m of the Coaching Box and clearly display a White card.
- ii. The Field Umpire shall not engage in any conversation when undertaking this process and shall not answer any questions that come from the bench.
- iii. The Field Umpire that is not issuing the card shall take control of the football at the spot on the field where play was paused and then once the card has been issued, they will resume play by awarding a free kick to the Non-Offending Team and then apply a 50m penalty. The free kick shall be given to the player who the Field Umpire in control of the restart deems was the closest to the ball where play paused.

c) Appointed Umpire & Club Umpire officiating together who hear or observe Unacceptable Behaviours

- i. If any Club Umpire is officiating in a game with a field Appointed Umpire and hears or observes any Unacceptable Behaviours from the coaching box, they shall advise the field Appointed Umpire at the next pause in play and the field Appointed Umpire shall determine whether a White card is applicable or not.
- ii. If a card is deemed appropriate, the field Appointed Umpire shall move to within 20m of the coaching box and clearly display a White card.



iii. The field Appointed Umpire shall not engage in any conversation when undertaking this process and shall not answer any questions that come from the bench.

iv. The Field Umpire that is not issuing the card shall take control of the football at the spot on the field where play was paused and then once the card has been issued, they will resume play by awarding a free kick to the Non-Offending Team and then apply a 50m penalty. The free kick shall be given to the player who the Field Umpire in control of the restart deems was the closest to the ball where play paused.

d) Two Club Umpires officiating together who hear or observe Unacceptable behaviours.

i. When two club umpires are officiating together, they have the same role and responsibilities as an appointed field umpire.

ii. Club umpires implement the White Card rule as per 5.2 (a)

e) Cards issued in-between quarters – Club Umpires & Appointed Umpires who hear or observe Unacceptable Behaviours

i. If following a discussion between umpires at any break between quarters, notwithstanding clause 5.2 c), if the Field Umpire/s deem a White card is appropriate then a Field Umpire should approach the Offending Team's Captain and advise a White card will be issued to restart the quarter, then once the players are in position to resume play a Field Umpire shall move to within 20m of the coaching box and clearly display a White card.

ii. The umpire shall not engage in any conversation when undertaking this process and shall not answer any questions that come from the bench.

iii. They shall then award a free kick to the ruck of the Non-Offending Team in the centre of the ground and then apply a 50m penalty.

f) League Appointed Match Managers

Where an independent AFLGM or Affiliate League match manager has been appointed to a game and they hear or observe any Unacceptable Behaviours from the Coaching Box, they shall notify the Field Umpires at the next break in between quarters and clause 5.2 d) shall be applied.

g) Abuse or Dispute When a White Card is Issued

i. When the Field Umpire or Emergency Umpire issues a White Card, if abuse is forthcoming from the Coaching Box during the card issuing process, the existing 50m penalty shall be upgraded to a 100m penalty.

ii. The free kick shall be given to the player who the Field Umpire in control of the restart deems was the closest to the ball where play paused.

Note - If questions are being asked from the Coaching Box such questions should not be assessed as abuse (unless delivered in an abusive manner) and the Field Umpire should vacate the area without engaging with the Coaching Box.



h) Club Clarity

If a Club wants clarity as to why a White card were issued, the Club's Captain can respectfully approach the Field Umpires. This is not an avenue for the Captain to debate the decision, it's only an opportunity to gain an understanding as to why the White card was issued.

5.3 Phase 3 (Head Coach/lead Assistant reported & removed from game, free kick and 50m penalty)

a) Field Umpires & Emergency Appointed Umpire who hear or observe Unacceptable Behaviours

- i. Notwithstanding clause 5.3 c), when a Field Umpire or Emergency Appointed Umpire observes or hears any Unacceptable Behaviours, at the next stoppage they will pause the game and move to the within 10m of the Coaching Box and clearly display a Red card and verbally advise the Coaching Box that the Head Coach (or Lead Assistant if Head Coach is on the field) is on report and must immediately leave the Coaching Box.
- ii. The Field Umpire or Emergency Appointed Umpire shall not engage in any other dialogue when undertaking this process and shall not answer any questions that come from the bench.
- iii. A Field Umpire that is not issuing the card shall take control of the football at the spot on the field where play was paused.
- iv. Once the Field Umpire or Emergency Umpire observes the Head Coach or Lead Assistant has left the Coaching Box area, they shall move into position as the non-controlling official, at this time the other Field Umpire will award a free kick to the Non-Offending Team from where the play was stopped and then apply a 50m penalty. The free kick shall be given to the player who the Field Umpire in control of the restart deems was the closest to the ball where play paused.

b) Goal & Boundary Umpires – Appointed & Club who hear or observe Unacceptable Behaviours

- i. When any Appointed or Club boundary or goal umpire hears or observes any Unacceptable Behaviours from the coaching box, they shall inform a Field Umpire at the next available opportunity. Notwithstanding clause 5.3 c), if the Field Umpire determines a card is appropriate, at the next stoppage they shall pause the game and move to the within 10m of the Coaching Box and clearly display a Red card and verbally advise the Coaching Box that the Head Coach (or Lead Assistant if Head Coach is on the field) is on report and must immediately leave the Coaching Box.
- ii. The Field Umpire or Emergency Appointed Umpire shall not engage in any other dialogue when undertaking this process and shall not answer any questions that come from the bench.
- iii. The Field Umpire that is not issuing the card shall take control of the football at the spot on the field where play was paused.
- iv. Once the Field Umpire observes the Head Coach or Lead Assistant has left the Coaching Box area, they shall move into position as the non-controlling official, at this time the other Field Umpire will award a free kick to the Non-Offending Team from where the play was stopped and then apply a 50m penalty. The free kick shall be given to the player who the Field Umpire in control of the restart deems was the closest to the ball where play paused.



c) Appointed Umpire & Club Umpire officiating together who hear or observe Unacceptable Behaviours

- i. If any Club Umpire is officiating in a game with a field Appointed Umpire and hears or observes any Unacceptable Behaviours from the coaching box, they shall advise the field Appointed Umpire at the next pause in play and the field Appointed Umpire shall determine whether a Red card is applicable or not. If a card is deemed appropriate, the field Appointed Umpire shall move to the within 10m of the Coaching Box and clearly display a Red card and verbally advise the Coaching Box that the Head Coach (or Lead Assistant of Head Coach in the field) is on report and must immediately leave the Coaching Box.
- ii. The Appointed Umpire shall not engage in any other dialogue when undertaking this process and shall not answer any questions that come from the bench.
- iii. Once the Appointed Umpire observes the Head Coach or Lead Assistant has left the Coaching Box area, they shall move into position as the non-controlling official, at this time the Club Umpire will award a free kick to the Non-Offending Team from where the play was stopped and then apply a 50m penalty. The free kick shall be given to the player who the Field Umpire in control of the restart deems was the closest to the ball where play paused.

d) Two Club Umpires officiating together who hear or observe Unacceptable behaviours.

- i. When two club umpires are officiating together, they have the same role and responsibilities as an appointed field umpire.
- ii. Club umpires implement the White Card rule as per 5.3 (a)

e) Cards issued in-between quarters – Club Umpires & Appointed Umpires who hear or observe Unacceptable Behaviours

- i. Notwithstanding clause 5.3 c), if following a discussion between umpires at any break between quarters, if the Field Umpire/s deem a Red card is appropriate a Field Umpire should approach the Offending Team Captain and advise a Red card will be issued to restart the quarter, then once the players are in position to resume play a Field Umpire shall move to the within 10m of the Coaching Box and clearly display a Red card and verbally advise the Coaching Box that the Head Coach (or Lead Assistant if Head Coach is on the field) is on report and must immediately leave the Coaching Box.
- ii. The Field Umpire or Emergency Appointed Umpire shall not engage in any other dialogue when undertaking this process and shall not answer any questions that come from the bench.
- iii. Once the Field Umpire observes the Head Coach or Lead Assistant has left the Coaching Box area, they shall move into position as the non-controlling official, at this time the other Field Umpire will award a free kick to the ruck of Non-Offending Team in the centre circle and then apply a 50m penalty.

f) League Appointed Match Managers

Where an AFLGM or Affiliate League match manager has been appointed to a game and they hear or observe any Unacceptable Behaviours from the Coaching Box, they shall notify the Field Umpires at the next break in between quarters and clause 5.3 d) shall be applied.



g) Playing Head Coaches

- i. Where the Head Coach is a playing coach, the Lead coach (wearing the lead coach armband/vest) is removed from the game & reported.
- ii. In all cases where a club has a playing Head Coach, they must note on the official team sheet who the Lead Assistant is to and wear the Lead coach armband at all times.

h) Head Coach or Lead Assistant Coach refusal to vacate

- i. Where either the Head Coach or the Lead Assistant (if Head Coach is on the field) refuses to vacate the Coaching Box area, the Field Umpire shall verbally warn the Coaching Box that if the relevant coach doesn't vacate, the game shall stop until such time the coach vacates.
- ii. If the game is stopped because of a refusal by the coach to vacate, the Captain of the Offending Team shall be advised by a Field Umpire that if the Coach doesn't leave the game within 1 minute the game shall recommence and a 100m penalty shall be applied and the matter referred to AFLGM for sanction.
- iii. Such sanction may include a deduction of premiership points, coach suspension, coach deregistration etc.

i) Club Clarity

If a Club wants clarity as to why a Red card were issued, the Club's Captain can respectfully approach the Field Umpires. This is not an avenue for the Captain to debate the decision, it's only an opportunity to gain an understanding as to why the Red card was issued.

j) Further Breaches of Unacceptable Behaviour

Following Phase 3, if any further instances of Unacceptable Behaviour occur, the Field Umpire shall on each occasion pay a free kick and award a 50m penalty.

6. ONE FIELD UMPIRE SITUATIONS

In a situation where there is only one Field Umpire and a card is being issued during a quarter, the Field Umpire should place the ball on the ground where play stopped and then issue the card. The Field Umpire should resume play from where the ball was placed on the ground. Where a free kick is applicable due to a card being issued, the Field Umpire should award it to a player who they deemed was close to where play paused at the time or any player at their discretion.

7. COACH EJECTION / REPORTS / COACHING CITATION

- a) Notwithstanding 5.3 f), upon receiving a Red card, the Head Coach cannot nominate someone else to leave the box, it must be the Head Coach regardless of whether someone else's behaviour led to the Red card.
- b) Any Head Coach or Lead Assistant that is ejected from the game must either go to the change room and remain there until the game is completed and both teams have left the playing surface, or they can elect to leave the venue.
- c) Any Head Coach or Lead Assistant who receives a Red card shall be referred directly to the AFLGM or Affiliate League Match Review Panel. The Field Umpire who issued the Red card is not required to stipulate a charge number on the report sheet. After considering the evidence before it from and Appointed Umpire/s or Club



Umpire/s, the panel shall determine the appropriate sanction, which dependent on the circumstances may include the laying of classifiable offence in accordance with the Law of Australian Football and dealt with as per the AFL Victoria Country Handbook, or an individual/club sanction or monetary Club sanction in accordance with the relevant Competition rules and regulation.

d) Any Head Coach or Lead Assistant who receives a Red card may also be issued with a coaching citation. The findings of the Match Review Panel will be considered when determining the application of a citation.

8. WHITE & RED CARD RECORDING

a) The Interchange Steward/s will be responsible for noting the time and quarter of any White card or Red card issued and to which team. A record of all cards issued must be listed on the official timecard.

b) In the event there is a dispute as to the number of cards issue under the 3-phase system, a Field Umpire should consult the Interchange Steward/s for clarification.

9. SPECTATORS

i. In the event a Club receives a White card warning (phase 1) and they determine such behaviours are coming from a person/s outside of the Coaching Box area, they should immediately seek to address such person/s through the relevant Club personnel.

ii. If advised by the away Club, it is the home Club's responsibility to manage such person/s, not the Umpires.

iii. In the event of finals, the host Club or AFLGM/League Representative must manage such person/s when requested to do so by a Club.

iv. If the spectator refuses to cease such behaviours after a request from the home Club or AFLGM/League Representative, the spectator should be requested to leave the venue by the home Club.

v. If the spectator refuses to leave, a Club runner should advise their respective Captain and the Captain should in turn advise the Field Umpire at the next available opportunity. In such situations, the Field Umpire should stop the game until the spectator leaves the venue.

10. PERMITTED PERSONS AT COACHING BOX.

a. Only the following players and officials are permitted in the coaching box. All players and officials will be clearly identifiable using either vests or armbands, anyone who does not have identifiable vest/armband is not permitted at the coaching box:

- 1 X Head/Lead Coach (Yellow vest/armband)
- 4 X Coaching Staff (can include assistant coach, line coach, team manager) Must be listed on the teamsheet (Green vest/armband)
- Trainers (Club trainers uniform/vest)
- Runner/s (Club Runner uniform/Vest)
- Physio/doctor
- Interchange players

b.

- i. Water carriers to be located adjacent to the 50m line.

- ii. Waterboys can return to the coaching box to refill water bottles throughout the game.
- iii. To avoid any confusion:
“Coaching Box” refers to:
 - a) the structure of the interchange bench and 1m either side. Extending to 1.5m from the boundary line. This configuration is to be marked at each coaching box.
 - b) any structure or area where coaches choose to position themselves to gain a raised vantage point. Including but not limited to; raised coaching boxes, grandstands.

