



MCKINNON COUGARS VJBL HANDBOOK 2026/27



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WELCOME

This Information Pack has been designed to provide Parents and Players who have been selected to play with **McKinnon Cougars** an overview of Representative Basketball in Victoria and what it means to be part of the **McKinnon Cougars** program.

The McKinnon Basketball Association was formed in 1996 to provide access to basketball programs and competitions for families within the Glen Eira, Bayside and Kingston Councils.

The association has quickly gone from strength to strength, growing year on year in our domestic competition and our representative program, known as the **McKinnon Cougars**.

The McKinnon Cougars field both male and female teams from U12 – U20 that play in the Victorian Junior Basketball League (VJBL). Cougar teams are made up of players within our association who play at one of our nine domestic clubs and want to take their basketball to the next level.

The McKinnon Cougars also have 4 Senior representative teams (an U23 team and an Open Age team for each gender) entered into Basketball Victoria's Big V Semi-Professional League, for which we are proud to offer a pathway through our VJBL program.

The pathway for athletes to participate and play in Basketball Victoria's State programs, State teams, College, Big V, NBL1, NBL and WNBL usually begins with a Representative program such as McKinnon Cougars.

#COUGARPRIDE



COUGARS CULTURE - “COUGAR PRIDE”

Everything we do links back to our culture.

The **Cougar Pride** is based around **four** key elements:

Respect All - players, coaches, referees, parents, venues, equipment etc.

Commitment - to your team, the association and the community.

Development - challenge one another to grow and improve every week.

Resilience - learn and grow from adversity in both life and sport.

*We believe **long-term** development overrides **short-term** success, both on and off the court.*

WHAT IS REPRESENTATIVE BASKETBALL?

The VJBL (Victorian Junior Basketball League) is a state-wide junior basketball competition administered by Basketball Victoria.

The McKinnon Basketball Association enters teams into the VJBL competition through their McKinnon Cougars Representative Program.

Players will have the opportunity to represent the McKinnon Cougars against other Victorian Associations and receive coaching from some of Victoria's most skilled and experienced volunteer coaches.

The representative program is for players who are committed to developing their basketball skills and knowledge of the game. McKinnon Basketball goes through an extensive try-out period, whereby if players are successful, they will be selected in a team for the following VJBL season.

The commitment of this program includes 3 compulsory sessions per week, (2 training sessions and 1 game), for the duration of the VJBL season, which excludes school holidays.



The structure of the VJBL competition is split into 3 phases:

Tryout Phase

An extensive tryout phase in September/October where successful athletes are selected to squads. Practice games will be played to finalise team placements.

Grading Phase

This runs from November through to March where teams are graded by the VJBL to be placed in their respective Divisions for the Championship Season. This extensive Grading process aims to provide the most appropriate competition possible for each team.

Championship Season

This runs from March through to September where teams will play in a 'Home and Away' format. Cougars home games are played between Bentleigh Secondary College, Glen Eira Sports and Aquatic Centre, and on occasion, Brighton Secondary College.

The **Championship Season** is made up of **three** tiers of competition:

Victorian Championship – known as '**VC**', is the highest level at which junior teams can play. Only 20 teams across the state make this division (2 Pools of 10 Teams).

Victorian Junior League – known as '**VJL**', make up next tier of the VJBL competition. There are typically 2-3 pools of 10 teams per VJL division (VJL1, VJL2, VJL3, VJL4 etc.)

Regional League – new for the 2025/26 season, known as '**RL**', makes up the final tier of the VJBL competition for *U12 and U14 age groups only*. Teams that are graded into the RL will be organised into **Geographical Pools**, based on the location of the association, that will reduce travel and provide a more balanced competition, relative to the level of the competition.

The VJBL recently announced the competition restructure in August 2025, which you can read more about [here](#).



Player Selection

At the McKinnon Cougars, player selection and team placement will be determined during the tryout phase and is based upon age, ability and the positional needs of each team.

McKinnon's Basketball Development Team (BDT), comprising of the Performance & Pathways Manager (PPM), Director of Coaching (DOC) and the VJBL Head Coaches of Gender will be responsible for determining player selection.

You can read the McKinnon Cougars VJBL Selection Policy, [here](#).

Team Composition

Team Officials – Head Coach, Assistant Coach and Team Manager

U12 to U16 – 10 players per team

U18 to U20 – up to 12 players per team

Age is determined by the players age as of the 31st December of the Championship Season. Each age group will include players spanning two birth years.

Movement of players within teams can be made by the Basketball Development Team up until the cut-off dates advised by the VJBL.

Team Managers will be appointed to your child's team in conjunction with the Head Coach. Team Managers will be responsible for the team organisation and relaying information to families such as scoring rosters for compulsory parent involvement, game information, tournament information and any special event information.

Team trainings will be organised and communicated by the club.

VJBL Calendar

To view the up-to-date calendar each season, please [click here](#) to visit the VJBL website.



COMMITMENT

All returning McKinnon Cougars Representative players U12-U16 must participate in the MBA's Domestic Competition to be eligible to play representative basketball for the McKinnon Cougars.

Special consideration can only be granted in **exceptional circumstances** in accordance with MBA Domestic By-Laws.

To apply for an exemption, please email highperformance@mckinnonbasketball.org.

If a player is new to McKinnon Cougars, they are required to be playing in the MBA's Domestic Competition by the following Winter season.

Failure to meet these requirements may affect their eligibility to play for the McKinnon Cougars.

Training Sessions

All players who commit to McKinnon's Representative program are required to attend **2 x compulsory, mid-week** training sessions each week, excluding School Holidays. Schedules for training sessions are published once teams are selected, and are scheduled between **Monday - Thursday**.

Whilst McKinnon Basketball Association encourages multi-sport athletes, it is an **expectation** that all McKinnon Cougar athletes **prioritise** Cougar representative commitments first and foremost. It will **not be acceptable** for athletes to miss full sessions every week.

On the occasion that another sport clashes with our trainings, written correspondence to highperformance@mckinnonbasketball.org is required to determine the effect this may have on the team.

Training sessions will take place at **Bentleigh Secondary College** or **Brighton Secondary College**. Players are to arrive 15-minutes prior to their scheduled training start time, allowing enough time to stretch, roll and prepare themselves for an intense and challenging session.



Training Uniform

Players are required to arrive in and wear their **full** McKinnon Training Uniform - Reversible McKinnon Training Singlet and McKinnon Black training short (or plain black athletic shorts, no pockets or standout logos).

Athletes are permitted to wear McKinnon Cougars outerwear to and from training sessions (McKinnon Hoodie, McKinnon T-Shirts, McKinnon Tracksuit Pants etc.)

Court Time Management

Representative basketball is considered an **elite development program**, and as such, does not operate by the same guidelines as domestic competitions. The basic principle within the representative program is that *equal court time is not guaranteed*.

The main parameters that determine the court time an individual player may receive are:

1. Game Environment:

- The level of competition.
- The role of the player in each game.

2. For clear disciplinary reasons, a coach may reduce court time if a player:

- Has unsatisfactory attendance at trainings session.
- Is not punctual for all trainings and games.
- Does not display adequate effort during trainings and games.
- Fails to notify the Head Coach prior to missing a training session.
- Displays poor sportsmanship towards players, officials, spectators etc.

Parents who are concerned with the child's role on the team should arrange a suitable time via email to discuss the matter politely with their Head Coach.

We strictly enforce a **24-hour cooling off period** following all games for any grievances, which can be found in our **Parent Code of Conduct**.



Game Times and Locations

Games are played on Friday nights ranging between a start time of 6:30pm for the younger age groups, through to start time of 9:40pm for older age groups. Venue locations for games will vary week to week as all teams will play home, away and neutral games throughout the Grading Phase and home/away games during the Competition Phase.

McKinnon Cougars home games can be scheduled at either Bentleigh Secondary College, Brighton Secondary College or Glen Eira Sports and Aquatic Centre (GESAC).

NOTE - players are expected to arrive at least 30 minutes prior to tip-off.

VJBL Travel Requirements

The Victorian Junior Basketball League (VJBL) is a statewide competition, and while travel is part of the representative experience, Basketball Victoria has introduced rules to balance fairness, safety, and competition standards.

Maximum Travel Distances

Travel limits vary by age group and competition level. Elite teams (VC and higher VJL divisions) may travel further, while lower divisions and the new Regional League (RL) are capped at reduced distances to minimise long trips for families.

- Under 12: VC–VJL3 up to 210 km; VJL4–RL capped at 170 km
- Under 14: VC–VJL4 up to 210 km; VJL5–RL capped at 170 km
- Under 16–18: VC–VJL4 up to 210 km; VJL5 and below capped at 170 km

The Regional League (RL) has been created to group teams into geographical pools, further reducing travel time and costs for families.



Neutral Game Arrangements

If a scheduled game exceeds the maximum distance or presents significant travel/safety issues, the VJBL may allocate the match as a neutral game.

What This Means for McKinnon Families

- Expect travel across Melbourne and regional areas on Friday nights, but distances are now capped depending on competition level.
- Neutral games may occasionally be scheduled to avoid excessive travel.
- For teams in the new Regional League, most games will be within reasonable driving distance, as pools are based on location.

Game Day Commitments

Each team *must* provide a competent scorer for each game. The Team Manager should prepare a scoring roster with all parents taking turns and ensure that there is a competent scorer placed with a novice scorer if necessary. MBA has developed a **VJBL Scorers Course** for parents to view prior to each season, which you can find [here](#).

Head Coaches may assign additional roles throughout the season to the parent group, such as a video roster to film games.

Please note - if a team has two siblings playing together in the one team, parents will be rostered on separately for each child, rather than once per family. This ensure scoring duties are shared evenly.

Fixture & Results

Game fixtures and results can be found on **PlayHQ** or via the **MyHoops** app. Fixtures are also available on McKinnon Cougars website (www.mckinnonbasketball.org/cougars) - scroll down and click on the **Fixtures and Results** link. The McKinnon website will feature updated news throughout the season.



Parent Role

When your child is selected to play representative basketball with the McKinnon Cougars, parents and carers are an integral part of the Cougar program, and the following commitments will be required:

- Score at Friday night games based on team roster.
- Encourage and support your child's commitment during training and games.
- Support the McKinnon Cougars culture and values by attending social events and activities from U12 through to Big V.
- Support your team where required eg. carpooling, filming, volunteering to be the Team Manager.
- Abide by the **Parent Code of Conduct** at all times.

Spectator Role

When your child is in the midst of competition, and you are there to spectate, it is important that you do so in a manner that encourages your child, celebrates their successes, normalises their mistakes.

When in attendance for Friday night VJBL games, it is *extremely* important that you follow the VJBL Spectator Behaviour guidelines, which you can find **here**.

Your role as a spectator is to help create a positive, supportive and safe environment for all players, officials and coaches.

We understand the commitment parents and players make to a representative program. We want you to enjoy the journey with your child and embrace the opportunities it presents to meet other families and enjoy social events. Being involved will help your child become integrated into the Cougar program.



REGISTRATION & COSTS

Player Registration Fees

Costs: \$670 1st child; \$650 2nd child (or more).

The **Player Registration Fee** is set by MBA and covers the following:

- Administration Resources
- Weekly Court Hire
- VJBL Team Registration Fees
- VJBL Association Insurance
- Coach Uniforms, Education and Accessories
- Team Manager Uniforms
- Team Manager Game Day Pack and First Aid Kit
- Association Equipment Costs
- End of Season Trophies/Medals/Pins
- End of Season Coach Honorarium

A *non-refundable* deposit of **\$50** is required at registration to confirm your acceptance within the program.

Prior to committing to a team please make yourself familiar with McKinnon Basketball Association Refund Policy, which you can view [here](#).

VJBL Weekly Team Sheet Fees

This cost is in addition to the Player Registration Fee and is set by the VJBL, known as the 'Weekly Team Sheet Fee'.

MBA charge this fee alongside the Player Registration Fee, to remove the role of the Team Manager having to collect money from the team each week (not including finals).

This fee covers the overall cost of Associations hosting the game, including spectator entry, referee costs etc.

Both of these fees are built into the one payable fee and can be paid via payment plans using our payment system, **PayThen**.



UNIFORM REQUIREMENTS

All McKinnon Cougars players must be in McKinnon Cougars branded tops (hoodie, warm-up top) when coming to and from games. This must be their outer most layer of clothing. This helps to build our culture and represent McKinnon Basketball in a professional manner.

All new players are required to purchase the Compulsory Player Pack, once registration is complete, which includes the following items:

- McKinnon Cougars Reversible Training Singlet
- McKinnon Cougars Training Shorts
- McKinnon Cougars Reversible Playing Singlet
- McKinnon Cougars Playing Shorts
- McKinnon Cougars Warm Up T-Shirt
- McKinnon Cougars Hoodie
- McKinnon Cougars Backpack / Duffel Bag

Total cost of compulsory uniform: ~ \$325.

Additional McKinnon Cougars apparel and Support Gear are available for purchase via our [online stores](#), such as socks, beanies, scarves and tracksuit pants!

TEAM PHOTOS

During the VJBL season, MBA will host a **Photo Day** where all team and individual photos will be taken by **Sports in Focus**.

We understand that teams would love to have all members of their team present for their team photo, however, it is impossible for MBA to foresee alternate commitments for families that may not make this possible (eg. School camps, religious holidays, family events etc). Sports in Focus have systems in place to work around this.

The purchase of these photos is optional.



GRIEVANCES

If you have any issues or concerns during the season, please speak to your Team Manager or Head Coach who will assist or guide you to the best person to contact in a timely manner.

If you feel your concern needs escalating, please contact your relevant VJBL Head Coach of Gender via email.

For coaching concerns please organise a time to meet with your Head Coach **following the 24-hour rule.**

Please do not approach the coach with any issues on Friday nights.

If you feel your concern needs escalating, please contact your relevant VJBL Head Coach of Gender via email.

If you have any concerns with scores, fixturing or anything else associated with VJBL, please contact the McKinnon Cougars VJBL Delegate via email operations@mckinnonbasketball.org.

Please **do not** contact VJBL directly, any queries must go through your Association delegate.

Fines will be issued to Associations if VJBL or Basketball Victoria are contacted by anyone other than the Association delegate. These fines will be forwarded to the relevant person.

McKinnon Cougars Senior Program

During the BigV Season each U12 and U14 team will be rostered on to be the **Game Day Guard of Honour**. Duties will include forming a Guard of Honour, high-fiving the players as they are announced onto the court, and of course, being the loudest fans on game night!

This is also an opportunity for **Coach Development**, where each VJBL teams coaching staff are invited to attend training sessions in the lead up to their teams rostered Guard of Honour game and sit behind the home team bench.



Coaches can listen in to time-outs and gain insight into BigV coaching. In addition, the Coaching staff and Players will be invited into the locker room at half time.

This exciting experience helps build connections between our Junior and Senior Cougars.

Home games are hosted at Glen Eira Sports and Aquatic Centre (GESAC or **The Den**) throughout the BigV Home and Away season.

COMMUNICATION

All communication will be managed via the **Stack Team App** once your child has been placed within a team, upon accepting their position. The email used to register your child to the program from PlayHQ will be used to add your child to this app in order to receive ongoing communication throughout the season.

The McKinnon Cougars Team app will be used as a centralised hub for all information regarding the VJBL program, including, but not limited to:

- **ALL** Communication regarding VJBL/McKinnon Cougars.
- Fixtures and Results.
- Team Chat (replacement of WhatsApp etc).
- Online Store.
- Attendance Tracking.
- Payment Portal.
- Club/Team Events.

Once you have accepted your position in the McKinnon Cougars Program, you will receive a link to download the McKinnon Cougars Team App and join your team at a later date.

Please refrain from using Whatsapp or other communication platforms - the Team App chat function allows MBA to monitor all communications for Child Safety purposes.

If you are concerned, you are not receiving team information please contact operations@mckinnonbasketball.org.



COACHING PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

“Our vision is to be recognised as a leading program nationally for player and coach development.”

Development Focus

Our program is structured to develop players matching the ‘360 Victorian Basketballer’ to maximise their potential for future opportunities. This includes a focus on **Basketball Victoria’s Six Pillars**:

- Competitiveness
- Physical Literacy
- 1v1 Offensive
- 1v1 Defensive
- Shooting Ability
- Decision-Making

An additional focus area, ‘**Being a Cougar**’ - relates to players living the values of our Association, embracing the mantra of ‘Respect All, Fear None’.

Our coaching staff set this example, but it is driven collaboratively with players, providing a platform for them to develop as leaders within the sport of basketball.

Our Style of Play

The McKinnon Style of Play aligns with the style of play taught by State and National programs to streamline the pathway of our players and coaches to future success, whilst staying true to our own values.

Our McKinnon Cougars Style of Play can be separated into focus areas for each side of the ball:

OFFENCE - Push / Play / Penetrate (encouraging movement via pace through the ball).

DEFENCE - Contain and Disrupt (encouraging the development of elite defenders).



CODE OF CONDUCT

The McKinnon Basketball Association's (MBA) Codes of Conduct & Expectations are aligned with Basketball Victoria (BV) to give participants a guide to the expectations of MBA and BV for their behaviour and conduct.

Basketball is primarily a recreational activity for enjoyment and health. All Codes of Conduct and additional resources can be found on VJBL's [**Competition Resources**](#) page.

As a McKinnon Cougar player and parent, you must be fully committed to abiding by the Player & Parent Code of Conduct & Expectations by digital signature, obtained by completing our compulsory **Player & Parent Onboarding** prior to registration.

It is critical that each player and parent understands the MBA Player & Parent Code of Conduct & Expectations and is familiar with the behavioural and attitudinal expectations of every McKinnon Cougar player and parent.

A breach of the Player & Parent Code of Conduct & Expectations may result in disciplinary action by the MBA Committee, a Tribunal by the VJBL and may result in team omission, suspension or de-registration.

CHILD SAFETY

The McKinnon Basketball Association is committed to child safety and is devoted to creating an enjoyable, safe and welcoming environment.

The MBA has put in place policies and procedures to help create this environment and your participation is *vital*.

You can read all about our commitment and relevant policies, as well as contact details for MBA's Welfare Officer on our [**Child Safety**](#) page.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit our Website - <https://www.mckinnonbasketball.org/>

Register for Tryouts - <https://www.mckinnonbasketball.org/tryout>

CONTACT US

Email - operations@mckinnonbasketball.org

Phone - 0417 019 949

MCKINNON BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION HEAD OFFICE

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