



2015 Clubs Survey

Overview of Results and Recommendations

Over the past two years since the establishment of AFL Asia, there has been much discussion between clubs and participants about the future direction of footy in Asia, where AFL Asia should be focusing its limited resources and the perennial debate about how to best run Asian Champs.

AFL Asia has therefore invited all club Presidents to provide a consolidated response on a range of issues on behalf of their Club and 'have their say'.

For the first time, this survey has provided AFL Asia and its stakeholders, in particular the AFL, with conclusive data on participation rates and views on issues such as Asian Championships format, local development and the AFL Asia ladder.

18 clubs in total provided responses, representing all member clubs currently competing in Asian Champs and all major Auskick centres. These included:

- Bali Geckos
- Beijing Bombers
- Borneo Bears
- Cambodia Eagles
- Guangzhou Scorpions
- Hong Kong Dragons
- Jakarta Bintang
- Laos Elephants
- Macau Lightning
- Malaysia Warriors
- Myanmar Fighting Cocks
- Pattaya Pirates
- Philippine Eagles
- Shanghai Tigers
- Singapore Sharks
- Singapore Wombats
- Thailand Tigers
- Vietnam Swans

The results did not include clubs from AFL Japan or AFL India, who do not currently compete in the AFL Asia Championships or are members of AFL Asia.

RESULTS SUMMARY

Overall, the majority of AFL Asia's clubs are increasingly focusing on local player development and Auskick and see these as key AFL Asia priority areas going forward. Most clubs believe the format of Asian Champs needs to change, with the majority of clubs that are competing in this years Asian Champs in Bangkok preferring a two-division format. There was also support for issues such as introducing local player quotas, capping team numbers and making changes to the AFL Asia ladder, although these results were less conclusive and will require further discussion at this years Presidents meeting at Asian Champs.

Participation

While there exists no previous data to compare against, there is little doubt that participation rates across AFL Asia clubs have increased substantially over recent years, particularly in terms of Auskick and local player participation.

There are 697 senior players and an impressive 1,129 Auskick juniors – a total of 1,826 Aussie Rules participants across the 18 AFL Asia member clubs that participated in this survey. 222 senior participants (32%) have been identified as local players and another 224 as non-Australian ex-pats, meaning the majority of senior participants across AFL Asia clubs (64%) are from non-Australian backgrounds, reflecting the diverse international flavour of the game in Asia.

Local Development

Results indicate that the development of local players is key priority area for the majority of clubs in AFL Asia, with a number of initiatives focused on the development of squads for the AFL International Cup, such as administering and hosting local player competitions and games, employing local players as administration and local development officers, PE teacher education and conducting Australian tours for local players currently being conducted by various clubs.

Local development has also been clearly identified as a key priority for AFL Asia going forward – all clubs have either indicated, “This should be an AFL Asia Priority” (67%) or “it’s an important area, it should be addressed” (33%). Finding the time and resources to do this effectively will be an important issue for AFL Asia, with 80% of clubs indicating they hadn’t yet received much value from AFL Asia’s current focus on local development. Only 2 of the 18 clubs indicated local development was a waste of time and that AFL Asia shouldn’t bother.

Asian Champs

Now in its 16th year, the Asian Australian Football Championships, or Asian Champs as it better know, continues to be the highlight on the AFL Asia calendar and the trophy that every club in Asia wants to win. With the stronger clubs of Singapore and Hong Kong dominating much of the history of the Champs and smaller clubs finding it increasingly harder to attract players and field teams, it is timely for AFL Asia and its clubs to look at the current format.

The majority of the responses received indicate that there is strong support to change the format of the Champs, particularly from the smaller clubs. Of the 11 clubs that have currently confirmed their participation for the 2015 Champs in Bangkok, 6 of them would like to move to a 2-division format, while only 2 would prefer to ‘leave it as it is’ – both of them first division teams – with the remaining suggesting alternative formats.

In terms of team sizes, total responses show first division was evenly split between the ‘16 ‘ and ‘14 or less’ categories, although of the 7 teams that said they would envisage entering first division, 6 preferred to maintain the current 16-a-side format with one club suggesting 14 or less.

For second division, there was strong support for a reduced 12-a-side competition with only 2 clubs suggesting it should be 14 or more.

While there was support for capping team numbers, introducing local quotas and maintaining the 1-day format, results were far from conclusive and should provide the basis for further discussion between Presidents at the forthcoming Champs.

AFL Asia Ladder

Debate on the relevance of a ladder in a competition with an uneven amount of games between clubs, of varying lengths, durations and team sizes will seemingly continue, with AFL Asia clubs almost evenly split on the question of if AFL Asia should even have a ladder. One suggestion received of a ongoing cricket-style rankings system we thought had merit and will be looked into for further discussion at Champs.

RECCOMENDATIONS

1. That AFL Asia continues to expand its focus on local development and Auskick and engages the AFL and other relevant stakeholders on behalf of all AFL Asia member clubs to receive support and assistance for these efforts in a coordinated way.
2. That the 2015 Asian Champs moves to a 2-division format, consisting of a 1st Division 16-a-side competition and a 2nd Division 12-a-side competition.
3. That a feature game comprising only of local players be built into the 2015 Asian Champs schedule
4. That the 2015 Asian Champs remains a one-day event with presentations to be held at the ground at the conclusion of the day's play.
5. That all other issues such as capping playing lists, local player quotas and the AFL Asia ladder be put on the agenda for further discussion at the AFL Asia President's meeting, to be held on Friday 16th October at Tenderloins, Bangkok.