



## **POLICY – COACHES CONDUCT**

The athlete/coach relationship is a privileged one. Coaches play a critical role in the personal as well as the athletic development of their athletes. They must understand and respect the inherent power imbalance that exists in this relationship and must be extremely careful to not abuse it. Coaches must also recognise that they are conduits through which the values and goals of a sport organisation are channeled. Thus, how an athlete regards his/her sport is often dependent on the behaviour of the coach. The following code of conduct has been developed to aid coaches in achieving a level of behaviour which will allow them to assist their athletes in becoming well rounded, self-confident and productive individuals.

### **The coach's responsibilities**

Coaches have a responsibility to:

1. Treat everyone fairly within the context of their activity, regardless of gender, place of origin, skin colour, sexual orientation, religion, political beliefs or economic status.
2. Direct comments or criticism at the performance rather than the athlete.
3. Consistently display high personal standards and project a favourable image of their sport and of coaching by:
  - refraining from public criticism of fellow coaches, especially when speaking to the media or other athletes;
  - abstaining from the use of tobacco products while in the presence of her/his athletes and discouraging their use by athletes;
  - abstaining from drinking alcoholic beverages when working with athletes;
  - discouraging the use of alcohol in conjunction with athletic events or victory celebrations at the playing site; and
  - refraining from the use of profane, insulting, harassing or otherwise offensive language in the conduct of his/her duties.
4. Ensure that the activity being undertaken is suitable for the age, experience, ability and fitness level of the athletes and educate athletes as to their responsibilities in contributing to a safe environment.
5. Communicate and co-operate with registered medical practitioners in the diagnosis, treatment and management of their athletes' medical and psychological problems. Consider the athlete's future health and well-being as foremost when making decisions regarding an injured athletes' ability to continue playing or training.
6. Recognise and accept when to refer athletes to other coaches or sport specialists. Allow athletes' goals to take precedence over their own.
7. Regularly seek ways of increasing professional development and self-awareness.
8. Treat opponents and officials with due respect, both in victory and defeat and encourage athletes to act accordingly.
9. Actively encourage athletes to uphold the rules of their sport and the spirit of such rules.

10. In the case of minors, communicate and co-operate with the athlete's parents or legal guardians, involving them in management decisions pertaining to their child's development.
11. In an educational institution, be aware of the academic pressures placed on student-athletes and conduct practices and games in a manner to allow academic success.

## Coaching requirements

Coaches must:

1. Ensure the safety of the athletes with whom they work.
2. At no time become intimately and/or sexually involved with their athletes. This includes making requests for sexual favours or threatening reprisals for the rejection of such requests.
3. Respect an athlete's dignity - verbal or physical behaviours that constitute harassment or abuse are unacceptable (see definition of harassment below).
4. Never advocate or condone the use of drugs or other banned performance enhancing substances.
5. Never provide under-age athletes with alcohol.

## Definition of harassment

Harassment takes many forms but can generally be defined as behaviour including comments and/or conduct which is insulting, intimidating, humiliating, hurtful, malicious, degrading or otherwise offensive to an individual or groups or which creates an uncomfortable environment.

Harassment may include:

- written or verbal abuse or threats;
- sexually oriented comments;
- racial or ethnic slurs;
- unwelcome remarks, jokes, innuendoes, or taunts about a person's body, attire, age, marital status, ethnic or racial origin, religion etc;
- displaying of sexually explicit, racist or other offensive or derogatory material;
- sexual, racial, ethnic or religious graffiti;
- practical jokes which cause awkwardness or embarrassment, endanger a person's safety, or negatively affect performance;
- unwelcome sexual remarks, invitations or requests (whether indirect or explicit), or intimidation;
- leering (suggestive staring), or other obscene or offensive gestures;
- condescension, paternalistic or patronising behaviour which undermines self-respect or adversely affects performance or training conditions;
- physical conduct such as touching, kissing, patting, pinching, etc.;
- vandalism; and
- physical assault.