



## CODE OF CONDUCT

### **Introduction**

Sports coaches are expected to conform to ethical standards in a number of areas: humanity, relationships, commitment, co-operation, integrity, advertising, confidentiality, abuse of privilege, safety and competence

### **Humanity**

Coaches must respect the rights, dignity and worth of every human being and their ultimate right to self-determination. Specifically, coaches must treat everyone equitably and sensitively, within the context of their activity and ability, regardless of gender, ethnic origin, cultural background, sexual orientation, religion or political affiliation.

### **Relationship**

The good coach will be concerned primarily with the well-being, safety, protection and future of the individual performer. There must be a balance between the development of performance and the social, emotional, intellectual and physical needs of the individual.

A key element in a coaching relationship is the development of independence. Performers must be encouraged and guided to accept responsibility for their own behaviour and performance in training, in competition, and in their domestic, academic or business life.

Coaches are responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with their performers. This is particularly important when the performer is a young person. The coach must realise that certain situations or friendly words and actions could be misinterpreted, not only by the performer, but also by outsiders (or other members of a squad or group of performers) motivated by jealousy, dislike or mistrust, and could lead to allegations of misconduct or impropriety.

Where physical contact between coach and performer is a necessary part of the coaching process, coaches must ensure that no action on their part could be misconstrued and that any National Governing Body (NGB) guidelines on this matter are followed.

The relationship between coach and performer relies heavily on mutual trust and respect. This means that the performer should be made aware of the coach's Qualifications and experience, and must be given the opportunity to consent to or decline proposals for training, performance or competition.

### **Commitment**

Coaches should clarify in advance with performers (and/or employers) the number of sessions, fees (if any) and method of payment. They should explore with performers (and/or employers) the expectation of the outcome of coaching. Written contracts may be appropriate in some circumstances.

Coaches have a responsibility to declare to their performers and/or employers any other current coaching commitments. They should also find out if any prospective client is receiving instruction from another teacher/coach. If so, the teacher/coach should be contacted to discuss the situation.

Coaches who become aware of a conflict between their obligation to their performers and their obligation to their NGB (or other organisations employing them), must make explicit to all parties concerned the nature of the conflict, and the loyalties and responsibilities involved.

Coaches should expect a similar level of reciprocal commitment from their performers. In particular, the performer (parent/guardian in the case of a minor) should inform the coach of any change in circumstances that might affect the coach/performer relationship.

Coaches should receive appropriate acknowledgment for their contribution to the performer's progress and achievement. Where money is earned from performances, it is reasonable to expect the coach should receive an appropriate share of the rewards. Such apportionment with any attendant conditions should be agreed in advance (in writing) to avoid any misunderstanding.

### **Co-operation**

Coaches should communicate and co-operate with other sports and allied professions in the best interests of their performers. An example of such contact could be the seeking of: educational and career counselling for young performers whose involvement in sport impinges upon their studies sport science advice through the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES)

Coaches must communicate and co-operate with registered medical and ancillary practitioners in the diagnosis, treatment and management of their performers' medical and psychological problems.

### **Integrity**

Coaches must not encourage performers to violate the rules of their sport. They should actively seek to discourage and condemn such action and encourage performers to obey the spirit of the rules.

Coaches must not compromise their performers by advocating measures that could constitute unfair advantage. They must not adopt practices to accelerate performance improvement that might jeopardise the safety, total well-being and future participation of the performer. Coaches must never advocate or condone the use of prohibited drugs or other banned performance enhancing substances.

Coaches must ensure that the activities, training and competition programs they advocate and direct are appropriate for the age, maturity, experience and ability of the individual performer.

Coaches must treat opponents with due respect, both in victory and defeat, and should encourage their performers to act in a similar manner. A key role for a coach is to prepare performers to respond to success and failure in a dignified manner.

Coaches must accept responsibility for the conduct of their performers and discourage inappropriate behaviour in training, competition, and away from the sporting arena.

### **Advertising**

Advertising by sports coaches in respect of qualifications, training and/or services must be accurate and professionally restrained. Coaches must be able to present evidence of current qualifications upon request. Evidence should also be available to support any claim associated with the promotion of their services.

Coaches must not display any affiliation with an organisation in a manner that falsely implies sponsorship or accreditation by that organisation.

## **Confidentiality**

Sports coaches inevitably gather a great deal of personal information about performers in the course of a working relationship. Coach and performer must reach agreement about what is to be regarded as confidential information (i.e. not divulged to a third party without the express approval of the performer).

Confidentiality does not preclude the disclosure of information about a performer to persons who can be judged to have a right to know. For example:

- Evaluation for competitive selection purposes
- Recommendations for employment
- In pursuit of disciplinary action involving performers within the sport
- In pursuit of disciplinary action by a sports organisation against one of its members
- Legal and medical requirements for disclosure
- Recommendations to parents/family where the health and safety of performers might be at stake
- In pursuit of action to protect children from abuse

## **Abuse of Privilege**

The sports coach is privileged to have regular contact with performers and occasionally to travel and reside with performers in the course of coaching and competitive practice. A coach must not attempt to exert undue influence over the performer in order to obtain personal benefit or reward. Coaches must consistently display high personal standards and project a favourable image of their sport and of coaching to performers, their parents/families, other coaches, officials, spectators, the media and the public.

Personal appearance is a matter of individual taste but the sports coach has an obligation to project an image of health, cleanliness and functional efficiency.

- Sports coaches should never smoke while coaching.
- Coaches should not drink alcohol so soon before coaching that it would affect their competence to coach, compromise the safety of the performers or obviously indicate they had been drinking (e.g. smell of alcohol on breath).

## **Safety**

Within the limits of their control, coaches have a responsibility to ensure as far as possible the safety of the performers with whom they work.

All reasonable steps should be taken to establish a safe working environment.

The work done and the manner in which it is done should be in keeping with the regular and approved practice with their sport as determined by the NGB.

The activity undertaken should be suitable for the age, physical and emotional maturity, experience and ability of the performers.

Coaches have a duty to protect children from harm and abuse.

The performers should have been systematically prepared for the activity and made aware of their personal responsibilities in terms of safety.

Coaches should arrange adequate insurance to cover all aspects of their coaching practice.

## **Competence**

Coaches shall confine themselves to practice in those elements of sport for which their training and competence is recognised by the appropriate NGB. Training includes the accumulation of knowledge and skills through formal coach education courses, independent research and the accumulation of relevant verifiable experience.

Coaches must be able to recognise and accept when to refer performers to other coaches or agencies. It is their responsibility, as far as possible, to verify the competence and integrity of any other person to whom they refer a performer.

Coaches should regularly seek ways of increasing their personal and professional development.

Coaches should welcome evaluation of their work by colleagues and be able to account to performers, employers, National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and colleagues for what they do and why. Coaches have a responsibility to themselves and their performers to maintain their own effectiveness, resilience and abilities. They should recognise when their personal resources are so depleted that help is needed. This may necessitate the withdrawal from coaching temporarily or permanently.

## **Background**

The following has been developed by the National Coaching Foundation from the Code of Ethics published by the British Institute of Sports Coaches (BISC) and adopted by the RPT. It also adopts the principles contained in the Council of Europe's Code of Sports Ethics.