

# USA Ultimate Coaching Ethics Code



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**USA ULTIMATE  
SPIRIT OF COACHING ..... BACK COVER**

## *Introduction*

This Ethics Code, adapted from the United States Olympic Committee Coaching Ethics Code, is intended to provide standards of professional conduct that can be applied by the USA Ultimate and its membership that choose to adopt them. Whether or not a coach has violated the Ethics Code does not by itself determine whether he or she is legally liable in a court action or whether other legal consequences occur. These results are based on legal rather than ethical rules. However, compliance with or violation of the Ethics Code may be admissible as evidence in some legal proceedings, depending on the circumstances.

This Code is intended to provide both the general principles and the decision rules to cover most situations encountered by coaches. It has as its primary goal the welfare and protection of the individuals and groups with whom coaches work. This Code also provides a common set of values upon which coaches build their professional work. It is the individual responsibility of each coach to aspire to the highest possible standards of conduct. Coaches respect and protect human and civil rights, and do not knowingly participate in or condone unfair discriminatory practices.

## *General Principles*

### **Principle A: Competence**

Coaches strive to maintain high standards of excellence in their work. They recognize the boundaries of their particular competencies and the limitations of their expertise. They provide only those services and use only those techniques for which they are qualified by education, training or experience. In those areas in which recognized professional standards do not yet exist, coaches exercise careful judgment and take appropriate precautions to protect the welfare of those with whom they work. They maintain knowledge of relevant coaching educational information related to the services they render, and they recognize the need for ongoing education. Coaches make appropriate use of scientific, professional, technical and administrative resources.

### **Principle B: Integrity**

Coaches seek to promote integrity in the practice of coaching. Coaches are honest, fair and respectful of others. In describing or reporting their qualifications, services, products, or fees, they do not make

statements that are false, misleading or deceptive. Coaches strive to be aware of their own belief systems, values, needs and limitations and the effect of these on their work. To the extent feasible they attempt to clarify, for relevant parties, the roles they are performing and to function appropriately in accordance with those roles. Coaches avoid improper and potentially harmful dual relationships.

### **Principle C: Professional Responsibility\***

Coaches uphold professional standards of conduct, clarify their professional roles and obligations, accept appropriate responsibility for their behavior, and adapt their methods to the needs of different athletes. Coaches consult with, refer to, or cooperate with other professionals and institutions to the extent needed to serve the best interest of their athletes, or other recipients of their services. Coaches' moral standards and conduct are personal matters to the same degree as is true for any other person, except when coaches' conduct may compromise their responsibilities or reduce the public's trust in Ultimate, the USA Ultimate, the coaching profession, and/or coaches. Coaches are concerned about the ethical compliance of their colleagues' conduct, when appropriate, they consult with their colleagues in order to prevent or avoid unethical conduct.

### **Principle D: Respect of Participants and Dignity\*\***

Coaches respect the fundamental rights, dignity and worth of all participants. Coaches are aware of cultural, individual and role differences, including those due to age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language and socioeconomic status. Coaches try to eliminate the effect on their work of biases based on those factors, and they do not knowingly participate in or condone unfair discriminatory practices.

### **Principle E: Concern for Others' Welfare**

Above all else, coaches adhere to and set the example of Spirit of the Game. In their actions, coaches consider the welfare and rights of their athletes and other participants. When conflicts occur among coaches' obligations or concerns, they attempt to resolve these conflicts and to perform their roles in a responsible fashion that avoids or minimizes harm. Coaches are sensitive to differences in power between themselves and others, and they do not exploit nor mislead other people during or after their relationships.

\* Professional: of, engaged in, or worthy of high standards.

\*\* Participants: Those taking part in Ultimate (athletes and their family members, coaches, officials, volunteers, administrators and spectators).

## Principle F: Responsible Coaching

Coaches are aware of their ethical responsibilities to the community, the society in which they work and live, and the USA Ultimate. They apply and make public their knowledge of sport in order to contribute to human welfare. Coaches try to avoid misuse of their work. Coaches comply with the law and encourage the development of law and policies that serve the interest of sport.

## *Ethical Standards*

### 1. GENERAL STANDARDS

These General Standards are applicable to the activities of all coaches.

#### 1.01 Applicability of the Ethics Code

While many aspects of personal behavior and private activities seem far removed from official duties of coaching, all coaches should be sensitive to their position as role models for their athletes. Private activities perceived as immoral or illegal can influence the coaching environment, and coaches are encouraged to observe the standards of this Ethics Code consistently.

#### 1.02 Boundaries of Competence

- (a) Coaches provide services only after first undertaking appropriate study, training, supervision, and/or consultation from persons within their respective association.
- (b) In those Affiliates or Districts which require coaching education, coaches take reasonable steps to ensure their attendance at appropriate coaching education clinics.
- (c) In those emerging areas in which generally recognized standards for preparatory training do not exist, coaches nevertheless take reasonable steps to ensure the competence of their work and to protect athletes and other participants from harm.

#### 1.03 Maintaining Expertise

Coaches maintain a reasonable level of awareness of related coaching information and undertake ongoing efforts to maintain competence in the skills they use.

## **1.04 Basis for Professional Judgments**

Coaches rely on scientifically and professional derived knowledge when making judgments or when engaging in coaching endeavors.

## **1.05 Describing the Nature of Coaching Services**

When coaches provide services or information to an individual, a group, or organization, they use language that is reasonably understandable and appropriate to the receipt of those services and information that is always updated and truthful.

## **1.06 Respecting Others**

Coaches respect the rights of others to hold values, attitudes and opinions that differ from their own.

## **1.07 Nondiscrimination**

Coaches do not engage in discrimination based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, socioeconomic status, or any basis prescribed by law.

## **1.08 Sexual Harassment**

- (a) Coaches do not engage in sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is sexual solicitation, physical advances or verbal or nonverbal conduct that is sexual in nature, and that either:
  - (1) is unwelcome, is offensive, or creates a hostile environment, and the coach knows or is told this;
  - (2) is sufficiently severe or intense to be abusive to a reasonable person in the context. Sexual harassment can consist of a single intense or severe act or of multiple persistent or pervasive acts.
- (b) Coaches will treat sexual harassment complaints and respondents with dignity and respect. Coaches do not participate in denying an athlete the right to participate based on their having made, or their being the subject of, sexual harassment charges.

## **1.09 Other Harassment**

Coaches do not engage in or condone behavior that is harassing or demeaning to persons with whom they interact in their work based on factors such as a person's age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, or socioeconomic status.

## 1.10 Personal Problems and Conflicts

- (a) Coaches recognize that their personal problems and conflicts may interfere with their effectiveness. Accordingly, they refrain from undertaking an activity when they know or should know that their personal problems are likely to lead to harm to athletes or other participants.
- (b) In addition, coaches have an obligation to be alert to signs of, and to obtain assistance for, their personal problems at an early stage, in order to prevent significantly impaired performance.
- (c) When coaches become aware of personal problems that may interfere with their performing work-related duties adequately, they take appropriate measures, such as obtaining professional consultation or assistance, and determine whether they should limit, suspend, or terminate their work-related duties.

## 1.11 Avoiding Harm

Coaches take reasonable steps to avoid harming their athletes or other participants, and to minimize harm where it is foreseeable and unavoidable.

## 1.12 Misuse of Coaches' Influence

Because coaches' judgments and actions may affect the lives of others, they are alert to guard against personal, financial, social, organizational, or political factors that might lead to misuse of their influence.

## 1.13 Multiple Relationships

- (a) In many communities and situations, it may not be feasible or reasonable from coaches to avoid social or other non coaching contacts with athletes and other participants. Coaches must always be sensitive to the potential harmful effects of other contacts on their work and on those persons with whom they deal. A coach refrains from entering into or promising a personal, professional, financial, or other type of relationship with such persons if it appears likely that such a relationship might impair the coach's objectivity or otherwise interfere with the coach effectively performing his or her function, or might harm or exploit the other party.
- (b) Likewise, whenever feasible, a coach refrains from taking any obligations when preexisting relationships would create a risk of harm.

- (c) If a coach finds that, due to unforeseen factors, a potentially harmful multiple relationship has arisen, the coach attempts to resolve it with due regard for the best interests of the affected person and maximal compliance with the Ethics Code.

## **1.14 Exploitative Relationships**

- (a) Coaches do not exploit athletes or other participants over whom they have supervisory, evaluative or other authority.
- (b) Coaches do not engage in sexual/romantic relationships with athletes or other participants over whom the coach has evaluative, direct or indirect authority, because such relationships are likely to impair judgment or be exploitative.

## **1.15 Delegation to and Supervision of Subordinates**

- (a) Coaches delegate to their supervisees and assistants only those responsibilities that such persons can reasonably be expected to perform competently, on the basis of their education, training or experience, either independently or with the level of supervision being provided.
- (b) Coaches provide proper training and supervision to their assistants or substitutes, as well as take reasonable steps to see that such persons perform services responsibly, competently, and ethically.

# **2. ADVERTISING AND OTHER PUBLIC STATEMENTS**

## **2.01 Definition of Public Statements**

Coaches comply with the Ethics Code in public statements relating to their professional services, products, or publications

## **2.02 Statements by Others**

- (a) Coaches who engage others to create or place public statements that promote their professional practice, products, or activities retain professional responsibility for such statements.
- (b) In addition, coaches make reasonable efforts to prevent others whom they do not control (such as employers, publishers, sponsors, organizational clients, and representatives of the print or broadcast media) from making deceptive statements

- concerning the coach or his professional activities
- (c) If coaches learn of deceptive statements about their work made by others, coaches make reasonable efforts to correct such statements.
  - (d) Coaches do not compensate members of press, radio, television, or other communication media in return for publicity in a news item
  - (e) A paid advertisement relating to the coach's activities must be identified as such, unless it is already apparent from the context.

### **2.03 Avoidance of False or Deceptive Statements**

Coaches do not make public statements that are false, deceptive, misleading, or fraudulent (either due to what they state, convey, or suggest, or because of what they omit) concerning their work activities or those of persons or organizations with which they are affiliated. As examples (and not in limitation) of this standard, coaches do not make false or deceptive statements concerning:

- (1) their training, experience, or competence;
- (2) their academic degree;
- (3) their credentials;
- (4) their institutional or association affiliations;
- (5) their services;
- (6) the basis for, or results or degree of success of their services
- (7) their fees; or
- (8) their criminal record

### **2.04 Media Presentations**

When coaches provide advice or comment by means of public lectures, demonstrations, radio or television programs, prerecorded tapes, printed articles, mailed material, or other media, they take reasonable precautions to ensure that the statements are consistent with this Ethics Code.

### **2.05 Testimonials**

Coaches do not solicit testimonials from current athletes or other participants who, because of their particular circumstances, are vulnerable to undue influence.

## **3. TRAINING ATHLETES**

### **3.01 Structuring the Relationship**

- (a) Coaches discuss with athletes, as early as it is feasible, appropriate issues such as the nature and anticipated course of training.
- (b) When the coach's work with athletes will be supervised, the above discussion includes that fact, and the name of the supervisor.
- (c) Coaches make reasonable efforts to answer athletes' questions and to avoid apparent misunderstandings about training. Whenever possible, coaches provide oral and/or written information, using language that is reasonable understandable to the athlete.

### **3.02 Family Relationships**

- (a) When a coach agrees to provide services to several persons who have a relationship (such as parents and children), the coach attempts to clarify at the outset the relationship they will have with each person. This clarification includes the role of the coach and the probable uses of the services provided.
- (b) As soon as it becomes apparent that the coach may be called on to perform conflicting roles (such as mediator between parents and children or sibling teammates), the coach attempts to clarify and adjust or withdraw from roles appropriately.

### **3.03 Sexual Intimacies with Current Athletes**

Coaches do not engage in sexual intimacies with current athletes.

### **3.04 Coaching Former Sexual Partners**

Coaches do not coach athletes with whom they have engaged in sexual intimacies.

### **3.05 Sexual Intimacies with Former Athletes**

- (a) Coaches should not engage in sexual intimacies with a former athlete for at least two years after cessation or termination of professional services.
- (b) Because sexual intimacies with a former athlete are so frequently harmful to the athlete, and because such intimacies undermine public confidence in the coaching profession and thereby deter the public's use of needed services, coaches

do not engage in sexual intimacies with former athletes even after a two-year interval except in the most unusual circumstances. The coach who engages in such activity after the two years following cessation or termination of the coach-athlete relationship bears the burden of demonstrating that there has been no exploitation, in light of all relevant factors, including:

- (1) the amount of time that has passed since the coach-athlete relationship terminated,
- (2) the circumstances of termination,
- (3) the athlete's personal history,
- (4) the athlete's current mental status,
- (5) the likelihood of adverse impact on the athlete and others, and
- (6) any statements or actions made by the coach during the course of the athlete-coach relationship suggesting or inviting the possibility of a post termination sexual or romantic relationship with the athlete or coach.

### **3.06 Drug-Free Sport**

Coaches do not tolerate the use of performance-enhancing drugs and support athletes' efforts to be drug free.

### **3.07 Alcohol, Tobacco & Gambling**

- (a) Coaches discourage the use of alcohol by players and forbid the use of alcohol by minors.
- (b) Coaches refrain from tobacco and alcohol use while they are coaching and make every effort to avoid them while in the presence of their athletes.
- (c) Coaches refrain from gambling while they are coaching and make every effort to avoid it while in the presence of their athletes.
- (d) Coaches discourage gambling in conjunction with athletic events, at playing sites and during road trips.

### **3.08 Pornography**

- (a) Coaches discourage the use of pornographic material
- (b) Coaches refrain from the use of pornography while they are coaching and make every effort to avoid pornography while in the presence of their athletes.
- (c) Coaches do not engage in illicit behavior or activities with athletes or other participants over whom the coach has direct or indirect authority.

## 4. TRAINING SUPERVISION

### 4.01 Design of Training Programs

Coaches who are responsible for training programs for other coaches seek to ensure that the programs are competently designed, provide the proper experiences and meet the requirements for coaching education or other goals for which claims are made by the program.



### 4.02 Description of Training Programs

- (a) Coaches responsible for training programs for other coaches seek to ensure that there is a current and accurate description of the program content, training goals and objectives, and requirements that must be met for satisfactory completion of the program. This information must be readily available to all interested parties.
- (b) Coaches seek to ensure that statements concerning their training programs are accurate and not misleading.

### 4.03 Accuracy and Objectivity in Coaching

- (a) When engaged in coaching, coaches present information accurately and with a reasonable degree of objectivity.
- (b) When engaged in coaching, coaches recognize the power they hold over athletes and therefore make reasonable efforts to avoid engaging in conduct that is personally demeaning to athletes and other participants.

### 4.04 Assessing Athlete Performance

- (a) In coach-athlete relationships, coaches establish an appropriate process for providing feedback to athletes.
- (b) Coaches evaluate athletes on the basis of their actual performance on relevant and established program requirements.

## **4.05 Honoring Commitments**

Coaches take responsible measures to honor all commitments they have to all participants.

## **5. TEAM SELECTION**

- (a) Coaches perform evaluations or team selection only within the context of a defined professional relationship.
- (b) Coaches' assessments, recommendations, reports, and evaluative statements used to select team members are based on information and techniques sufficient to provide appropriate substantiation for their findings.

## **6. RESOLVING ETHICAL ISSUES**

### **6.01 Familiarity with Ethics Code**

Coaches have an obligation to be familiar with this Ethics Code (or as it may be amended from time to time), other applicable ethics code and their application to the coach's work. Lack of awareness or misunderstanding of an ethical standard is not itself a defense to a charge of unethical conduct.

### **6.02 Confronting Ethical Issues**

When a coach is uncertain whether a particular situation or course of action would violate the Ethics Code, the coach ordinarily consults with other coaches knowledgeable about ethical issues, members of the USA Ultimate conduct committee, or with other appropriate authorities in order to choose a proper response.

### **6.03 Conflicts between Ethics and Organizational Demands**

If the demands of an organization with which coaches are affiliated conflict with this Ethics Code, the coaches clarify the nature of the conflict, make known their commitment to this Ethics Code, and to the extent feasible, seek to resolve the conflict in a way that permits the fullest adherence to the Ethics Code.

### **6.04 Informal Resolution of Ethical Violations**

When coaches believe that there may have been an ethical violation by another coach, they attempt to resolve the issue by bringing it to the attention of that individual if an informal resolution appears ap-

appropriate and when intervention does not violate any athlete rights that may be involved.

## **6.05 Reporting Ethical Violations**

If an apparent ethical violation is not appropriate for informal resolution under Standard 6.04 or if not resolved properly in that fashion, participants take further action appropriate to the situation, unless such action conflicts with athlete rights in ways that cannot be resolved. Such action might include referral to the USA Ultimate Conduct Committee.

## **6.06 Cooperating With Ethics Committees**

Coaches cooperate in ethics investigations, proceedings, and resulting requirements of the USA Ultimate. Failure to cooperate is itself an ethics violation.

## **6.07 Improper Complaints**

Participants do not file or encourage the filing of ethics complaints that are frivolous and are intended to harm the respondent rather than protect the public.

# **7. PROCESS RELATING TO VIOLATION OF CODE**

## **7.01**

The coach acknowledged that this Ethics Code is administered under the authority of the USA Ultimate, that a violation of the Code subjects the coach to the processes of the USA Ultimate. The USA Ultimate acknowledges that all violations of the Ethics Code will be reviewed for possible disciplinary action, and member organizations will keep a written report on all reviews and actions.

## **7.02**

In the event that a coach is found to have violated the Ethics code, such action is separate and apart from any other legal consequences which may occur as a result of the act.

# USA Ultimate Spirit of Coaching

## BACKGROUND

The role of the coach at all levels of Ultimate is unique in a sport that places on-field player authority above non-player influence. As non-players the coach's authority must not extend to the on-field officiating process. Coaches may be faced with situations where they are able to correct the self-officiating process and ensure the correct outcome to a given play. In this situation, coaches must not interfere in the officiating process, in order to ensure that players learn and take responsibility for officiating. Coach interference in the decision making process, even in the most egregious violations, will indicate to players that the coach and not the players have the ultimate responsibility for ensuring the inherent fairness of the game. Teaching players the rules and how to implement them should be done at practices or off of the field. It is the coach's responsibility to ensure that the players understand their own responsibilities as players and teach players how to handle those responsibilities.

## GUIDELINES

- » Coaches should introduce themselves to the other coaches prior to a game and discuss concerns. This could potentially include the level of play, the level of intensity (e.g. spiking and rushing the field), and possible modifications to the captain's clause (e.g. prohibiting zone for new teams or footblocking).
- » Because the potential for misperception is high, spiking is prohibited at the youth level unless otherwise agreed upon by the coaches or captains. Spiking in a disrespectful manner is never ok at any level.
- » Coaches will not make calls from the sideline nor offer their opinion on a play. Coaches should encourage players to come to a resolution on their own, and if asked during a dispute coaches may offer rules clarifications. After a dispute a coach may talk to his or her own player about the dispute and offer opinions.
- » Youth coaches will make an effort to educate parents about Spirit of the Game and work to create a sideline atmosphere that respects Spirit of the Game
- » Coaches will teach and give players opportunities to practice knowledge of the rules of Ultimate
- » Coaches will always exhibit respect for opposing players
- » Coaches will always exhibit respect for other coaches
- » Coaches will always exhibit respect for observers
- » Coaches will model Spirit of the Game at all times

## SUMMARY

The coach's goal in terms of Spirit of the Game is to create an environment where players are responsible for upholding the rules and ensuring that the outcomes of plays and games are fair.