

## **BLACKHILLS FOOTBALL CLUB ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

As part of Blackhills Football Club's (BHFC) emphasis on athlete safety, communications involving our youth athletes should be appropriate, productive, and transparent. Effective communication concerning travel, practice or game schedules, and administrative issues among administrators, coaches, athletes and their families is critical. However, the use of mobile devices, web-based applications, social media, and other forms of electronic communications increases the possibility for improprieties and misunderstandings. The improper use of mobile and electronic communications can result in misconduct and is strictly prohibited by BHFC.

It is the policy of BHFC that any participant involved in any of its club programs as a coach, employee, volunteer, or adult participant shall adhere to this policy for electronic communications and social media. All electronic communication between coach (and other employees, volunteers, or adult participants) and athlete must be for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. Coaches and athletes must follow common sense guidelines regarding the volume and time of day of any allowed electronic communication. Any content of an electronic communication should be readily available to share with the public or families of the athlete or coach.

### **Overview**

- Coaches (and other employees, volunteers, or adult participants) must copy parents(s) (or guardian(s)) on all electronic and mobile communications to minor athletes unless the parent(s) (or guardian(s)) has previously approved (in writing) direct communications between the coach and the athlete.
- To ease communications, coaches may set-up e-mail and texting groups with parent(s) (or guardian(s)) and athletes and make this group communication a norm for the team. Coaches must include parents on all email and text messaging groups.
- Should a coach inadvertently send an athlete an electronic or mobile communication without including the parent(s) (or guardian(s)), acknowledge the oversight to the parents and forward the communication to the parent(s) (or guardian(s)) as soon as possible.
- Coaches should not hesitate to speak with a parent or guardian if a coach receives an electronic and mobile communications from an athlete that make the coach uncomfortable.

### **Facebook, MySpace, Blogs and Similar Sites**

All posts, messages, text, or media of any kind between a coach (or other employee, volunteer, or adult participant) and athletes must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities or for team-oriented motivational purposes. Direct

messaging or private messaging between a coach and a minor athlete is prohibited (another responsible adult must be copied on the message).

### **Twitter, Instant Messaging and Similar Media**

All posts between a coach (or other employee, volunteer, or adult participant) and athletes must be for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. Direct messaging or private messaging between a coach and a minor athlete is prohibited (another responsible adult must be copied on the message).

### **Email and Similar Electronic Communications**

Athletes and coaches may use email to communicate. All email content between coach and athletes must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. Emails from a coach to a minor athlete must include a copy to such athlete's parent(s) or guardian(s) unless the parent(s) (or guardian(s)) has previously approved in writing direct communications between the coach and the athlete.

### **Texting and Similar Electronic Communications**

Although discouraged as a primary form of communication, texting is allowed between coaches and athletes. All texts between coach and athletes must be professional and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. Texting should not occur after 9pm unless in emergency situations. Text messages from a coach to a minor athlete must include a copy to such athlete's parent(s) (or guardian(s)) unless the parent(s) (or guardian(s)) has previously approved in writing direct communications between the coach and the athlete.

### **Violations of Policy**

Social media and electronic communications can be used to commit abuse and misconduct (e.g., emotional, sexual, bullying, harassment, and hazing). Such communications by coaches, employees, volunteers, adult participants, or athletes will not be tolerated and are strictly prohibited by BHFC.

Anyone who violates this Electronic Communications and Social Media Policy is subject to appropriate disciplinary action including but not limited to suspension, expulsion and/or referral to law enforcement authorities. Violations of this Policy should be reported to the BHFC Board.