



## COACHES ARTICLE (1)

### 'Play by the Rules'

[www.playbytherules.net.au](http://www.playbytherules.net.au)

Coaches play a vital role in developing players through sport. They provide players with the skills and knowledge needed to develop, improve and succeed in their sport. Coaches also have a major influence over participants' enjoyment of sport.

It is not surprising then that sport is often characterised by close relationships between coaches and players whereby coaches are in positions of trust and able to assert authority and power over players. The proper use of power is important in all coach and player relationships.

While most coaches are ethical, competent and safe unfortunately some abuse their power, authority and the trust held by those they coach. This can occur with the tacit support of parents who rarely question what coaches do.

Coaches need to protect themselves and those that they coach from behaviour that could be viewed as discrimination, harassment and in particular child abuse. It is important that they:

- understand what are appropriate boundaries that enable safe and healthy relationships
- treat all players fairly, particularly children, in relation to issues such as team selection and time on the field
- do not abuse or harass players as a form of discipline or motivation
- use positive and age-appropriate language when talking to and in the presence of young players
- ensure any physical contact with players is relevant and appropriate to the development of the skills required for the activity
- avoid unaccompanied and unobserved activities (i.e. being alone with an athlete)
- ensure there is at least one other adult when travelling interstate and overseas with teams
- understand club expectations about behaviour (codes of conduct, guidelines and policies) and do not be afraid to ask questions and seek advice.

If you would like more information about how you can provide a fun, fair and safe environment for those that you coach go to [www.playbytherules.net.au](http://www.playbytherules.net.au).

'The Play By The Rules' website has:

- free short online learning courses for coaches on discrimination, harassment and child protection
- practical information and guidelines to assist coaches working with players and in particular children
- additional information to assist understanding on issues such as maintaining appropriate boundaries, understanding the difference between discipline and abuse and so on.