

Resource 30: Respectful behaviour

Expectations about behaviour are met: Welcome

Promoting 'respect and responsibility' is about cultural change and a commitment within sport and the wider community to end all forms of violence, harassment and abuse. All staff, members and volunteers, regardless of their gender, sexuality, age, cultural background or religious beliefs, should feel safe, welcome and able to equally participate to the best of their ability. In addition to code of conduct requirements, SSAs should provide senior and representative players/athletes and coaches with information on respectful and responsible behaviour. The following provides some brief information on the positive role coaches and senior players can play in regards to promoting respectful and responsible behaviour in sport.

Coaches

Boys and young men are constantly exposed to messages that suggest that to be a 'real man' they need to be tough and always in control. Sometimes they get messages that suggest that being a man is to be someone who treats girls and women badly or disrespectfully. Coaches are in a position of great influence. What they say and don't say, do and don't do – on and off the field – says a lot about their values and what they believe in. Coaches of boys or young men have an opportunity to challenge these kinds of attitudes and shape the way boys treat and develop their relationships with girls and women.

What can coaches do?

- Read, understand and commit to your sport's **code of conduct** and discuss this with your team.
- Advise players that behaviours like sledging, wolf-whistling or harassing girls and women, telling stories about them or spreading rumours, or speaking to them in derogatory ways are **just not acceptable**.
- Explain to players that saying they were joking or they didn't mean it, or that no one else had a problem with their behaviour is **never an excuse** for sexual or racial harassment.
- Acknowledge the importance of social events but talk to players about **responsible consumption of alcohol** and the link between excessive alcohol consumption and inappropriate behaviour.
- Encourage players to **support girls and women** in the sport; for example, by going to watch their games.
- If concerned about behaviours or attitudes, **don't ignore it**. Find an appropriate time to talk to the person about the harm or impact his behaviour might have on others. Talk about positive and respectful ways of relating to girls and women and people from culturally diverse communities.

Senior players have real influence

Other players/athletes look to senior and representative players as a role model for how to behave in sport. If they treat their female friends, girlfriends and women and people from culturally diverse communities in an equal and respectful way, other players will follow this lead.

What can senior players do?

Think about their behaviour

- Treat all people respectfully – on and off the field.
- Refuse to engage in behaviour or make comments that are sexist, racist or homophobic.
- Support girls and women in your sport – for example, by watching their games.
- Respect the need for women's and girls' privacy in the change rooms.
- Understand that drunken behaviour makes people feel uncomfortable and can be intimidating.

Be an active bystander

- Support mates on and off the field. Help each other with potentially high-risk situations with alcohol, drugs and sex. Make an agreement with each other that if someone gets out of hand, others will step in and set him right.
- Don't associate with team mates who are disrespectful towards women and people from culturally diverse backgrounds. Speak up when they use sexist, racist or homophobic language.
- Support all women. If a woman is in trouble, try to offer help. If she's drunk, offer to call her a taxi. If she is being harassed, quietly intervene or get others to help.

Teach young players that:

- Sexual harassment is never OK.
- Racial and religious harassment is never OK.
- Wolf-whistling or harassing girls and women, sledging, telling stories about them or spreading rumours, or speaking to them in derogatory ways is just not acceptable.
- Touching someone sexually without their consent is sexual assault.

Modified from *Fair Game: Respect Matters* program materials, VicHealth.

Developed in collaboration

Collaboration leader:

