

# THE WOODLANDS GIRLS LACROSSE ASSOCIATION

## Policy Statement Regarding Coaches and Teams

(Effective October 15, 2012)

### Preamble

As participation in the programs offered by The Woodlands Girls Lacrosse Association (the "**Association**") continues to grow, the Board of Directors recognizes that in order to provide a high quality lacrosse experience for its constituents (*i.e.*, the players, their parents, the coaches and the other volunteers and supporters) and to provide continuity and consistency among its Divisions, it is advisable to adopt the following policies to guide these constituent groups in their expectations and practices. Accordingly, set forth below are policies and practices of the Association that shall be followed by the Association's teams and coaches.

### Policies and Practices

**1. Nomenclature.** Unless otherwise expressly defined, all capitalized words and phrases appearing herein shall have the meanings given them in the First Amended and Restated Bylaws of The Woodlands Girls Lacrosse Association (the "**Bylaws**").

**2. Philosophy.** The policies and practices set forth in greater detail in this policy statement should be interpreted and applied in a manner consistent with the following philosophical principles.

(a) Sportsmanship and Professionalism. All players, coaches and parents are expected to maintain the highest level of sportsmanship and professionalism in their dealings with each other, and in their dealings with other teams, officials and organizations. Players, coaches and parents will be expected to abide at all times by the Association's Code of Conduct and the policies of the Association.

(b) Teamwork. There are countless benefits to be derived from participation in team sports and every player, coach and parent should continuously work to develop a spirit of teamwork and camaraderie.

(c) Varsity Team. Participation on the high school varsity team is performance-based. Accordingly, player assignments to the varsity team, allocations of playing time, assignment of player positions and similar matters are determined by the varsity coaches based on a player's individual performance and the mix of players and skills that are available to optimally position the varsity team to achieve its goals. While the varsity team will continuously endeavor to improve, it is not a developmental team.

(d) Sub-Varsity Teams. Sub-Varsity teams include all high school teams other than the varsity team, as well as all teams in the Junior Division and in the Youth Division. Sub-Varsity teams are first and foremost, developmental teams. Every sub-varsity team should endeavor to continuously improve the base of knowledge, skills and athleticism of each of its players, so that she will be ready to advance to the next level of play. Continual player improvement is the goal of all sub-varsity teams and winning should simply be a by-product of achieving that goal. This should not be construed as meaning that winning is not important, it is. Rather, this is intended to recognize that player development is more important than "winning at all costs."

### **3. Coaches.**

(a) Selection. Coaches will be selected and assigned to teams by the Steering Committee of the Division under which their team plays. The Steering Committee will give due consideration to, among other things, recommendations from existing coaches, each coaching candidate's experience as a lacrosse player, his or her prior coaching experience (particularly with regard to lacrosse), the training completed and available to the candidate, the needs of the program and the preferences of the candidate and the other coaches.

(b) Eligibility. Each coach must satisfy the following requirements and the Vice President of each Division will have primary responsibility for verifying that the following requirements are satisfied with respect to the coaches in his or her Division.

(1) U.S. Lacrosse Registration. Each coach must be currently registered as a coach with U.S. Lacrosse and provide the Association with his or her U.S. Lacrosse membership number. Each Division will promptly reimburse the costs of such registration or renewals thereof upon confirmation of registration or renewal.

(2) Background Check. Each coach will be subject to a criminal background check to be administered through the National Center for Safety Initiatives (or its successor) in cooperation with U.S. Lacrosse.<sup>1</sup> The costs of the background check will be paid by the applicable Division. A background check performed by or through U.S. Lacrosse in connection with a Level 1 Coaching Certification<sup>2</sup> will satisfy this requirement.

(3) Training. Each coach must obtain a Level 1 Coaching Certification, including completion of the required course work offered through the Positive Coaching Alliance. All coaches are encouraged to obtain a Level 2 Coaching Certification<sup>3</sup> and to participate in other Positive Coaching Alliance programs and training opportunities. The costs of such training (exclusive of travel, unless pre-approved by the applicable Steering

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<sup>1</sup> See, U.S. Lacrosse Player Safety Bulletin dated March 24, 2008 (copy attached)

<sup>2</sup> Level 1 Coaching Certification as defined by U.S. Lacrosse.

<sup>3</sup> Level 2 Coaching Certification as defined by U.S. Lacrosse.

Committee) will be reimbursed by the coach's Division upon confirmation of successful completion of the training.

#### 4. Teams.<sup>4</sup>

(a) Number of Teams. Each Division should have an adequate number of teams to provide its players with a fair and reasonable opportunity to participate in practices, games, tournaments, etc. To the extent practicable, teams within a Division should have approximately the same number of players. The objective is to avoid situations where, as an extreme example, one team has 18 players, all of whom get substantial playing time, while another team has 36 players, many of whom see little playing time. Illustrating further, two 12-player teams are preferable to one 24-player team.

(b) Composition of Teams. To the extent practicable, sub-varsity teams should be comprised of players of similar abilities and ages. Sub-Varsity team assignments should also take into consideration and attempt to balance the developmental differences (*e.g.*, size, speed, strength, maturity, etc.) between different school grades and age groups.

(c) Position Assignments. All sub-varsity players should have the opportunity to play a variety of positions over their careers, so that they can develop a solid foundation of the knowledge and skills necessary to play attack, midfield and defense (recognizing that as players become more experienced, they also tend to become more specialized - *i.e.*, attack only, defense only, etc.).

(d) Playing Time. Coaches should endeavor to provide each sub-varsity player with a fair and reasonable amount of playing time relative to her teammates.

(e) Transition Teams / Players. The following governs the use of Transition Players in games, tournaments and similar events.

(1) Definitions.

"**Assigned Team**" means the team with which a Transition Player is normally affiliated.

"**Recipient Team**" means the team receiving one (1) or more Transition Players.

"**Transition Player**" means a player who may play-up or play-down from her Assigned Team.

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<sup>4</sup> References herein to "fair and reasonable" and similar terms should not be construed literally, or in such a manner as to suggest or require mathematical precision. Instead, such terms should be understood to mean that a coach will act in good faith and use his or her best efforts during a practice, game, tournament or other event, to provide sub-varsity players with approximately equal playing or participation time.

(2) Limited Use. Transition Players should not be used except in the limited circumstances described below.

(i) Transition Players may be used if the Recipient Team lacks sufficient players to field a full team of twelve (12) players and provide for at least four (4) substitutes. If the Recipient Team has an adequate number of players, Transition Players should not be used. If Transition Players are used, they should be drawn from players of skill and ability levels closest to that of the Recipient Team and should be no more in number than is necessary to provide the Recipient Team with twelve (12) players and four (4) substitutes. The playing time of Transition Players should be in reasonable proportion to that of the players on the Recipient Team.

(ii) From time to time, a Transition Player may play-up from her Assigned Team in recognition of her increasing skills and abilities and/or to further develop her skills and abilities through more challenging play.

(iii) Transition Players should not be permitted to play-down, except as provided in subsection (i) above.

(f) Competition. Sub-Varsity teams will play opponents that have a wide disparity of skill and experience. Accordingly, coaches should adhere to the following guidelines.

(1) Sub-Varsity is the Dominant Team. If a sub-varsity team finds itself dominating an opponent, steps should be taken by the coach to avoid needlessly running the score up on the weaker team. Without attempting to define all circumstances in which such domination may present itself, it will be deemed to exist whenever there is a ten (10) or more goal differential favoring the sub-varsity team. In such circumstances, the coach should use the opportunity to work on developing his or her team's skills (*e.g.*, playing with non-dominant hand, requiring additional passes before shooting, requiring players who do not normally shoot to shoot, switching players from their typical positions, etc.). Additionally, these circumstances provide an excellent opportunity for less experienced players to gain some additional playing time to develop their skills and experience levels.

(2) Sub-Varsity is the Team Being Dominated. If a sub-varsity team finds itself being dominated by a stronger team, such circumstances do not warrant a deviation from the broader principle that each player should receive a fair and reasonable proportion of playing opportunities. Every player on the team will benefit from having the opportunity to play against a stronger opponent.

(3) Exception. The only time the competition policy described in this section is not in effect is when the sub-varsity team is involved in an event in which goals scored by the sub-varsity team could be used as a tie-breaker.

(g) **Ball Movement.** The attack on all sub-varsity teams should emphasize ball movement and control and should not encourage a player to run the ball "coast to coast" in an effort to score. While the "coast to coast" run will occasionally occur, but it should not be a significant part of the attack's offensive strategy or instruction.

**5. Player Discipline.** It is important to remember that an undisciplined player is as much a reflection on the coach as it is on the player. Proper coaching, including the establishment of consistent and uniform expectations and consequences, will result in minimal disciplinary issues. In general, the means and methods of player discipline are within the reasonable discretion of the coach. However, the coach should do no more than is minimally necessary to resolve instances of aberrant behavior and all action by the coach should be age-appropriate. Verbal warnings, brief removal from participation, performing push-ups or running laps (both reasonable in number) are among the tools at the coach's disposal. However, only in the most extreme cases should a player be denied the opportunity to participate in a game or other event. All disciplinary issues and the coach's handling of them are reviewable by the Division Steering Committee and by the Board of Directors.

**6. Coaching Your Own Daughter.** Coaching one's own daughter is inherently difficult because there is a natural tendency to either (i) favor one's own daughter or (ii) impose greater expectations on her than are imposed on her teammates. Neither extreme is appropriate and the goal is to coach one's daughter in the same manner as her teammates are coached, with no preferences, unique expectations, or other special (positive or negative) treatment.

**7. Positive Coaching Alliance.** All coaches shall use their best efforts to consistently apply the coaching principles advocated by the Positive Coaching Alliance.

**8. Buddy System.** All coaches shall implement and enforce a "buddy system" whereby no player shall be permitted to leave the team area unaccompanied by either a teammate or an adult. This includes trips to restrooms, parking lots, concession stands and the like.

**9. Non-Association Events.** Coaches shall promptly forward to players and their parents information he or she receives concerning upcoming events and opportunities available through others (*e.g.*, clinics, camps, team try-outs, etc.) that could promote a player's lacrosse enjoyment and/or skills development.

**10. Attendance.** Each Division Steering Committee shall adopt a reasonable attendance policy, based on recommendations from its coaches, which shall apply to all players in that Division. The coaches shall fairly and impartially implement and enforce the attendance policy.

**11. Non-Association Teams.** If a player is registered to play with (i) an Association team and (ii) one or more Non-Association teams (*e.g.*, other club teams, select teams, travel teams, etc.), in the event of scheduling conflicts, the player's obligation to practice and play with the Association team supersedes her obligation to practice or play with the Non-Association team. It is the player's responsibility to discuss and resolve such conflicts with the head coach of her division.