

# IAAF Code of Ethics for Coaches

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INTERNATIONAL AMATEUR ATHLETIC FEDERATION

## Introduction

The basic principle of the IAAF Code of Ethics for Coaches is that ethical considerations leading to fair play are integral, and not optional, elements of all sporting activity. These ethical considerations apply to all levels of ability and commitment and they include recreational as well as competitive Athletics.

The Code provides a sound ethical framework to combat the pressures of modern day society. Many of these pressures appear to be undermining the traditional foundations of sport – foundations built on fair play and sportsmanship and, in many instances, on the voluntary movement.

Fair play is defined as much more than playing within the rules. Fair play is a way of thinking, not just a way of behaving. Fair play can be expressed as a philosophy of coaching and incorporates the concepts of friendship, respect for others and always playing in the right spirit. This philosophy also integrates issues concerned with the elimination of cheating, doping, gamesmanship, physical and verbal violence, exploitation, unequal opportunities, excessive commercialisation and corruption.

Sport is a cultural activity which, practised fairly, offers the individual the opportunity of personal development through self knowledge, self determination, self expression and self fulfilment. The personal achievement, skill acquisition and ability gained can be added to social interaction, moral maturation, enjoyment, good health and general well-being. Sport can fairly be said therefore to play a central role in the

active involvement and responsibility of the individual within society.

It has been said that Athletics has a place above all other sports. Its component skills are fundamental to most other sports and modern training theory originated and developed in Athletics. It is the most international of all sports and is the central focus of the Olympic Games.

Coaches in Athletics are in a privileged position in preparing several generations of athletes for their contribution to Athletics. With this privilege comes a certain responsibility. This responsibility should be reflected in the work of the individual coach, and how it is carried out; an image of coaching is projected to athletes, to other coaches and to those not involved in coaching. Whether these coaches in Athletics are in paid employment or working as volunteers they enjoy a high profile as representatives of the sport.

The development of fair play or sportsman-like behaviour and attitude is not an automatic consequence of participating in Athletics. This fair play behaviour can be learned from the coach who provides a positive role model and applies consistent, clear reinforcement for what are desirable and undesirable actions. The role of the coach is, therefore, crucial as an ambassador, educator and guardian of the ethical values of fair play within Athletics.

Bearing in mind the potential conflict between the demands of performance and the importance of fair play, the IAAF has made the Code of Ethics an integral part of the Coaches Education and Certification System syllabus

## Code of Ethics for Coaches

The coach's primary role is to facilitate the process of individual development through the achievement of athletic potential. This role accepts the athletes' long term interests as of greater importance than short term athletic considerations. To fulfil this role the coach must behave in an ethical manner respecting the following points:

- Coaches must respect the basic human rights, that is the equal rights, of each athlete with no discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, birth or other status.
- Coaches must respect the dignity and recognise the contribution of each individual. This includes respecting the right of freedom from physical or sexual harassment and advances.
- Coaches must ensure that practical environments are safe and appropriate. This appropriateness must take into consideration the age, maturity and skill level of the athlete. This is particularly important in the case of younger or less developed athletes.
- Coaches must acknowledge and respect the Rules of Competition. This respect should extend to the spirit as well as to the letter of the rules, in both training and competition, to ensure fairness of competitive opportunity between all athletes.
- Coaches must show an active respect for officials, by accepting the role of the officials in providing judgement to ensure that competitions are conducted fairly and according to the established rules.
- Coaches have a responsibility to influence the performance and conduct of the athletes they coach, while at the same time encouraging the independence and self determination of each athlete by their acceptance of responsibility for their own decisions, conduct and performance.
- Coaches must assert a positive and active leadership role to prevent any use of prohibited drugs or other disallowed performance enhancing substances or practices. This leadership by coaches includes the education of the athletes to the harmful effects of prohibited substances and practices.
- The coach must acknowledge that all coaches have an equal right to desire the success of the athletes they coach – competing within the rules. Observations, recommendations and criticism should be directed to the appropriate person outside the view or hearing of the public domain.
- Coaches should never solicit athletes, either overtly or covertly, if they are already receiving coaching from elsewhere.
- Coaches should hold recognised coaching qualifications and respect that this is an ongoing commitment, achieved through the upgrading of their knowledge by attendance of accredited courses and through practical coaching experience. Coaches also have a responsibility to share the knowledge and practical experience they gain.
- Coaches must respect the image of the coach and continuously maintain the highest standards of personal conduct, reflected in terms of both appearance and behaviour.
- Coaches should never smoke while coaching, nor consume alcoholic beverages so soon before coaching that it affects their competence or that the smell of alcohol is on their breath.
- Coaches should enter into full co-operation with all individuals and agencies that could play a role in the development of the athletes they coach. This includes working openly with other coaches, using the expertise of sports scientists and sports medicine practitioners, and displaying an active support of their National Federation and the IAAF. ■