

*CONFIDENTIAL*

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# THE PRINCIPLES OF ETHICAL JUDGMENTS WHEN DEALING WITH MINORS

## 1. INTRODUCTION

“Professional sports are meant to measure athletic ability through competition, but when one player has an unfair advantage over another it can undermine the true message of sportsmanship. News stories about doping athletes and cheating coaches can damage the reputation and purpose of professional sports. Professional sports use written and unwritten codes rules to ensure that all players have an equal advantage. While individual sports have their own codes of ethics, general ethics are observed across every sport to keep the competition clean and honest.”

Read more: <http://www.livestrong.com/article/354779-ethics-in-professional-ports/#ixzz1OsURDfud>

## 2. TAKING CARE OF MINORS

In selecting a sports team consisting of minors (children under 18 years) there are guiding principles that should be considered by the decision-makers. When one deals with minors, one’s primary responsibility is to CARE for them and to take their best interest at heart.

The duty of care implies that one becomes the “heart, the mind and the soul” of the children. Nothing should be done that can unnecessarily harm or prejudice any child.

A child is particularly vulnerable to poor self-image and a lack of self-confidence as a result of being told that he or she is: “not good enough to make the team”. This is exacerbated when there has been an unfair selection process.

As a CAREtaker of minors, one has to set an ETHICAL example. Being ethical requires that one is fair, transparent and responsible, putting the interest of the child above one’s own interest.

The duty of care also requires that one performs one's duties with INTEGRITY at all times. This means that one must be honest and trustworthy, not only towards those that one cares for, but also to oneself. One must be objective and impartial at all times. This means that one cannot be conflicted in any way. The interest of the children will then not be served. In cases of conflicts between personal in interest and the best interest of the child, it is paramount that the latter is served. If one cannot be independent, one must recuse oneself from the decision-making process.

### 3. BEING FAIR

FAIRNESS in all decisions and actions must be SEEN to be done, thereby illustrating INTEGRITY in the selection process. HONESTY in the application of selection criteria is critical. Personal opinions and observations must not be allowed and where a judgment-call is made e.g. the medical fitness of a player, professional opinion must be sought at all times. It is paramount that the same criteria are used across the board to ensure EVENHANDEDNESS. The same rules must be applied in the same way to all players, irrespective of which club they represent.

Judgments should be made of MERITS of players e.g. how many matches, games and points won. ONLY when two players are very equal in their performance should external factors like the "will to win" be considered. In making such a judgment call, e.g. can the child win? Professional opinion should also be sought e.g. a sport physiatrist.

### 4. APPLYING POLICIES

All policies must be observed in the selection of a team. Where there is a contradiction between club rules/policies and national rules/policies, the national rules will apply. If a policy is changed from one year to the next, the committee must be able to justify the decision. The change in rules or policies should clearly communicated in writing to affected parties. There must be reasonable grounds why the changed policy better serves the interest and the long term VISION of the organisation. Ultimately, the sport itself should be benefitted.

Decisions regarding players must be TRANSPARENTLY communicated and it is paramount that the reasons for inclusion or exclusion from a team are clearly stated. A fair procedure for appeal must exist.

### 5. BALANCING A SELECTION COMMITTEE

It is also important that a selection committee is balanced. There should be fair representation from all clubs involved. Persons with the necessary knowledge of the sport should be included. The chairman should be impartial and independent. Ideally the chairman should not be associated with a particular club.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The principles of ethical behavior (fairness, transparency and integrity) should always be applied and the best interest of the children and the sport should be served.

When fair selection criteria are applied, the reputation of a sports body or club will be protected. This could serve to attract good players and cultivate a culture of integrity amongst players. When a player knows that he or she will be treated fairly, he or she will be more inclined to also act with integrity.

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