

Akron Women's Rugby Team Player Code of Conduct



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Introduction:

The purpose of this policy is to provide the most up to date information on the rules and regulations that govern the player/member policies as well as the Akron Women's Rugby Club's (As defined in the Midwest Rugby Union) disciplinary policy and the process used during the need. It is the goal of Akron Women's Rugby Club that players, coaches, administrators, and members will use this handbook as a resource to foster the continued development of rugby as players and as members of this rugby team and club. This information contained in this document has been created by the Policy Committee which was decided on at the November 8th, 2022 Team Meeting in accordance with the authorities defined in the Bylaws of the Akron Rugby Club and the Greater Akron Rugby Foundation.

This information document does not replace or supersede the Akron Rugby Club Bylaws. It was determined that there was a need to publish specific guidelines related to policy creation associated with the team players and members. Additionally, a need to create and publish a firm disciplinary process to better serve the membership within the boundaries outlined in this overall document.

Contributors:

This document was originally authored on November 9th, 2022 by the Policy Committee (a 13-member group) with the Akron Rugby club, established at the November 8th, 2022 Team Meeting. The document was opened to representatives from the Women's Team for review and commentary in November of 2022. A thorough review and initial copy was made by the Policy Committee at the request of the Executive Board to present at the Annual General Meeting held on Sunday, December 4th, 2022. There were editing revisions completed which resulted in the initial document presented on December 4th, 2022. Any further revisions (after acceptance and team votes) are documented. Additional revisions will be made annually and published on the website if needed.

Revision History

Version	Date	Contributor	Description
0.1	9 November, 2022	Leila Halay	Initial Draft
0.2	22 November, 2022	Policy Committee	Initial Presentation to Policy Committee
0.3	29 November, 2022	Policy Committee	Revisions discussed at 11/22/22 Meeting
.04	1 December, 2022	Policy Committee	Revisions discussed at the 11/29/22 Meeting
1.1	4 December, 2022	Policy Committee	Initial Presentation to Akron Women's Team
1.2		Disciplinary Committee	Initial Draft of the Disciplinary Policy

USA Rugby Policies and Statements

As an affiliate of USA Rugby, Akron Rugby Club, their Teams, and members shall abide by the USA Rugby Code of Conduct and Diversity Statement.

USA Rugby Code of Conduct

The USA Rugby Code of Conduct may be viewed in its entirety at http://www.usarugby.org/documentation/about/usarugby_code_of_conduct.pdf

Diversity – ‘A Game for All’

USA Rugby is proud to serve a diverse membership of players, coaches, officials and fans and is committed to creating and promoting a culture of inclusion and mutual respect, regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religious beliefs, sex, age, gender identity, disability or sexual orientation.

We celebrate the differences that make our members unique and special and do not tolerate discrimination, bullying or exclusion in any form.

USA Rugby expects its leadership, coaches, officials, teams, players, administrators and fans to promote a culture of acceptance and support through their actions and through the recruitment of members without regard to sex, race, physical disability, or sexual orientation.

Through our commitment to diversity and mutual respect, we believe that the sport of rugby will continue to grow and become a powerful voice of change in the world of sport.

Spirit of the Game (from World Rugby “Principles of the Game”)

Rugby owes much of its appeal to the fact that it is played both to the letter and within the Spirit of the Laws. The responsibility for ensuring that this happens lies not with one individual - it involves coaches, captains, players and referees.

It is through discipline, control and mutual respect that the Spirit of the Game flourishes and, in the context of a Game as physically challenging as Rugby, these are the qualities which forge the fellowship and sense of fair play so essential to the Game’s ongoing success and survival.

Old fashioned traditions and virtues they may be, but they have stood the test of time and, at all levels at which the Game is played, they remain as important to Rugby’s future as they have been throughout its long and distinguished past. The principles of Rugby are the fundamental elements upon which the Game is based and they enable participants to immediately identify the Game’s character and what makes it distinctive as a sport.

ATHLETIC POLICIES FOR CURRENT CLUB PLAYER/MEMBER

Participation in the rugby club and team as a player and/or member (i.e including but not limited to coaches, players, executive board members, and all affiliated members) is not a right but a PRIVILEGE. The club and team have a set standard regarding respect and appropriate behavior, this document will define a variety of standards expected of them, as the clear goal of the club is to prevent violations of the Player Code of Conduct. No player/member is required to take part in the contests or activities. Therefore, it is imperative that all players/members who do decide to take part in the program understand the following code and policies. It is imperative for the betterment of the team to respect & abide to the rules therein, as well as the coaches, club, & The Greater Akron Rugby Club.

Should a violation of Personal Conduct Policy occur, appropriate disciplinary action will occur through the Team Council, who will ultimately have the right to remove these privileges should it be deemed necessary. It is extremely important that everyone understands that situations do arise from time to time and not every situation is listed in the handbook to follow. When this happens the coaching staff, Team Council, and executive board, with the assistance of The Greater Akron Rugby Foundation (if needed), will work together to make the best decision for the program involved.

As a due paying member of the Akron Women's Rugby Team and/or CIPP'd player these policies will be directed towards each person. Please read the enclosed policies as becoming a member of this team is an underlined statement of understanding.

I. RATIONALE/PURPOSE OF POLICY

All Akron Women's Rugby Team players/members, are subject to the conduct policy as well as disciplinary policy outlined in the following document. As this team takes allegations of player/member misconduct seriously and it serves as a way to minimize the attention and scrutiny often associated with these issues/concerns. An increase in public attention carries legitimate expectations that the Team will take allegations seriously and not condone misconduct. If there is a failure to meet public, player, club, GARF, ect. expectations this can ultimately undermine the public trust in the Team. This could impair its ability to carry out its mission of rugby.

Fairness to the player/member is important in itself as well as to preserve trust in the Club.

The Purposes of the Policy

- A. To clarify and reinforce the standards of behavior expected of players/members-athletes.
- B. To treat players/members fairly.
- C. To assure confidence in the integrity of the process by minimizing the potential for conflict on the part of the Executive Board, coaches, and players/members
- D. To impose disciplinary actions when certain situations involving a player/member occur

The Scope of the Policy Applies When (included, but not limited to...):

- A. A player/member has caused serious harm/injury (physical, mental, or otherwise noted) to another person, player, or member of the club.
- B. A player/member creates a serious danger to the personal safety of another.

- C. A player/member makes a credible threat of serious physical injury to another person.
- D. A player/member is involved in repeated illicit criminal behaviors that raise the concerns addressed by the policy.
- E. A player/member is involved in allegations of sexual harassment or sexual violence (which includes but is not limited to: Sexual violence includes sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, stalking, ect.)

Deciding Whether the Policy Applies

When there is a good faith question about whether the Policy applies, the Team Council will start an investigation into the alleged behavior and/or incident and provide suggestions to remedy these issues with a variety of levels of discipline. The disciplinary policy is further laid out in Section VI.

II. TEAM COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

To ensure that this policy remains current and consistent with best practices and evolving legal and social standards, the Club has named a Team Council; to be voted on at the Annual General Meeting by due paying members and/or players. This committee will be made up of active members and/or players, a coaching staff representative, and the current GARF representative/ Old Girl who will review this policy at least annually and recommend any appropriate changes in the policy. This includes and is not limited to investigatory practices, disciplinary levels, disciplinary procedures, service components, and so on.

The committee will be comprised of a ratio of members based on current club numbers. (Example- 30 active members will have a committee of 6 members). This would be a 5:1 ratio. There will be a minimum of 3 members of this Council not including GARF representative/ Old Girl. If there was an event of a tie in regards to disciplinary action, the current GARF representative/ Old Girl will serve as the tie breaking vote. Members interested in being on the Team Council will nominate themselves or be nominated at the Annual General Meeting. Those nominated must accept their nomination and understand what will be asked of them.

III. PLAYER/MEMBER POLICIES & EXPECTATIONS

ATHLETE STATEMENT (TAKEN FROM PREVIOUS CODE OF CONDUCT)

We believe that the true essence of rugby is to strive for personal and community achievement and excellence through full and honest effort. We pledge to ensure, through instructions and personal behavior, that all club players and administrators treat all teammates, coaches, opponents, and match officials with respect at all times. We pledge to learn, understand, and adhere to both the written rules of my sport and the accepted rules of fair play. We believe that violence and physical intimidation are harmful to rugby, and we refuse to use such tactics to gain an unfair advantage. It is our responsibility to maintain self-control.

Expectations of PLAYER/MEMBER

- Be on time and attend as many practices and games as possible
- Treat your teammates and coaches with respect
- Put forth your best effort and attitude at practice and during games
- Be Coachable (i.e. Take criticism, be ready to learn, follow directions)
- Communicate appropriately (i.e. Availability)
- Respect all players, coaches, fans, establishments, and officials while on and off the pitch
- Practice safe rugby

Non-Discrimination and Player Harassment:

- A. Physical Violence:** if the conduct does not result in a criminal conviction, players found to have engaged in any of the following conduct will be subject to discipline. Prohibited conduct includes but is not limited to the following:
- a. Actual or threatened physical violence against another person, including dating violence, domestic violence, child abuse, and other forms of family violence;
 - b. Assault and/or battery, including sexual assault or other sex offenses;
 - c. Violent or threatening behavior toward another employee or a third party in any rugby setting;
 - d. Stalking, harassment, or similar forms of intimidation;
 - e. Illegal possession of a gun or other weapon (such as explosives, toxic substances, and the like), or possession of a gun or other weapon in any rugby setting;
 - f. Any physical/mental, or perceived physical/mental threats while under the influence of hard drugs or alcohol.
 - g. Possession, use, or distribution of steroids or other performance enhancing substances;
 - h. Crimes involving cruelty to animals as defined by state or federal law;
 - i. Crimes of dishonesty such as blackmail, extortion, fraud, money laundering, or racketeering;
 - j. Theft-related crimes such as burglary, robbery, or larceny;
 - k. Disorderly conduct;
 - l. Crimes against law enforcement/first responders, such as obstruction, resisting arrest, or harming a police officer or other law enforcement officer;
 - m. Conduct that poses a genuine danger to the safety and well-being of another person; and
 - n. Conduct that undermines or puts at risk the integrity of the Akron Women's Rugby Club, GARF, or any related personnel.
- B. Non-Discrimination:** It is the policy of Akron Women's Rugby Team not to discriminate on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment, in its rugby programs as well as in other activities or policies as suggested by Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments and other applicable anti-discrimination laws.
- C. Non-Violence and Bullying:** Akron Women's Rugby Team's violence prevention policies, and response procedures for such incidents, are intended to protect the health and safety of the players/members, Team, Club, and the community and ultimately to advance true essence of Rugby.

- A. Players/members are prohibited from engaging in violent acts including assault on a person or property, hate crimes, hazing, stalking, sexual violence, bullying or any other conduct prohibited by Club/GARF policy and/or law.
- B. Players/members will refrain from comments or behaviors which are abusive, offensive, racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, or otherwise harmful to teammates, club members, family, friends, fans, and all others.
- C. A player/member will not harass or tolerate harassment by others.
- D. Players/members will show respect to others as human beings and treat them with dignity.
- E. Players/members will respect the privacy of others.
- F. Players/members will never endanger the safety of others through their actions.
- G. It is understood that Akron Rugby is a safe place for everyone involved.

D. Sexual Harassment: Sex discrimination in the form of harassment on the basis of sex includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a nature when:

- a. submission to such conduct is either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's membership and/or playing abilities,
- b. submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for decisions affecting the individual, or
- c. such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.
 - i. **Examples include but are not limited to:**
 - 1. Abusing player/member through insulting or degrading sexual remarks, jokes, innuendos, or other sexually oriented conduct (including, among other things, graphic or descriptive comments relating to an individual's body or physical appearance, sexually-oriented teasing or pranks, improper suggestions, objects or pictures, or unwanted physical contact); or
 - 2. Threats, demands or suggestions that a player/members status depends in any way upon tolerating or accepting sexual advances or sexually oriented conduct.

E. Other Unlawful Harassment: Unlawful harassment is defined as verbal or physical conduct, which denigrates or shows hostility or aversion to an individual because of his or her race, color, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, marital status, veteran status, disability, genetic predisposition, carrier status, or status as a victim of domestic violence, or that of his or her relatives, friends, or associates, and which:

- d. Has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working, social, or playing environment; or
- e. Has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance; or
- f. Otherwise adversely affects an individual's additional opportunities.
 - i. **Examples include but are not limited to:**
 - 1. Abusing a player/member through epithets, slurs, negative stereotyping, or threatening, intimidating or hostile acts (even if claimed to be "jokes" or "pranks") which relate to race, color, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, marital status, veteran

status, disability, genetic predisposition, carrier status, or status as a victim of domestic violence; and

2. Written or graphic material which denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group because of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, marital status, veteran status, disability, genetic predisposition, carrier status, or status as a victim of domestic violence

Other Prohibited Conduct:

A. Disrespect:

- a. At all times, players/members are required to conduct themselves in a manner respectful of themselves, their team, the Akron Rugby Club, GARF, game officials, opponents, and property.
- b. Players/members are to refrain from disrespectful conduct such as unsportsmanlike conduct; abusive, demeaning, harassing, threatening or obscene expression; purposeful misnaming or misgendering of others or deliberate damage to equipment or other property.
 - i. Referring to others by the correct name and/or pronouns is a basic sign of respect that can prevent mental health issues caused by misnaming or misgendering.
 1. Sources: Medical News Today and Harvard Health
- c. Disrespectful conduct will be reviewed by The Team Council as it is referred. If it is found that there is an egregious act, there is a chance that conduct will result in disciplinary action.

B. Conduct Unbecoming of an Akron Rugby Club player/member:

- a. At all times Akron Women's Rugby Team players/members are expected to conduct themselves responsibly within the Rugby Community, Akron Rugby Club, and the larger community. Behavior that reflects negatively on themselves, their team, Akron Rugby Club may be grounds for disciplinary action.
- b. It is important to remember that as a representative of Akron Rugby Club you are always in the public eye.
 - i. **Please keep the following in mind as you participate on social networking web sites:**
 1. Understand that anything posted online is available to anyone in the world. Any text or photo placed online is out of your control the moment it is placed online—even if you limit access to your site.
 2. Be aware of any information, photos, or other items online that could embarrass you, your team, or be detrimental to Akron Rugby Club, the Akron Women's Rugby Team, or The Greater Akron Rugby Foundation.

Sportsmanship:

As a player/member of Akron Women's Rugby Team, we will strive for personal excellence and community in rugby. We will honor respect for the spirit and traditions of rugby. We will respect the Akron Women's Rugby Team's rules, policies, and procedures governing events and competition in which we participate. We will observe with the reasonable requests of officials of the Akron Women's Rugby Team. We accept that we are an ambassador for rugby and the Akron Women's Rugby Team. I refrain from any action which might bring the sport of rugby or the Akron Women's Rugby Club into unfavorable character.

Examples of this include but are not limited to:

- A. Players/members acting in a manner that brings honor to themselves, their team, their sport, the Akron Rugby Club, their families, and their communities, by exhibiting only the highest level of sportsmanship.
 - a. Understanding that "Sportsmanship" is respect for oneself, teammates, coaches, officials, opponents, and property. It requires self-control.
 - i. A player/member refuses to be drawn into or encourage physical conflict not otherwise required by proper execution of the sport.
- B. A sportsperson can take a loss or defeat without complaint, a victory without gloating, and treat an opponent with fairness, generosity, and courtesy. Players/members with the Akron Women's Rugby Team are held accountable to a high standard of ethical conduct in all activities affecting the Club, whether as a participant or as a spectator.
- C. "Unsportsmanlike" conduct, as defined by The Team Council will be reviewed by the Coaches and may result in a request of disciplinary action by the Team Council.

Theft:

As a member/player of Akron Women's Rugby Team, it is expected that there is a reasonable respect for the property and livelihood of your teammates as well as others who utilize the pitch provided by The Greater Akron Rugby Foundation. If a person is found to be with criminal intent, is fully aware of their actions, and these actions are done with malintent, then this will result in disciplinary action as defined in Section VI of this Code of Conduct, related specifically to theft.

IV. COACH POLICIES & EXPECTATIONS**What You Can Expect from Your Coaching Staff**

- Be on time and attend as many practices and games as possible
- Treat each player with respect and fairness.
- Have a productive practice plan for each session.
- Be open to communication within the team for suggestions, feedback, and concerns.
- Be available and willing to educate and teach underdeveloped players
- Respect the team decisions made by the Executive Board and Committees
- While on the sidelines, respect all players, all coaches, all fans, the sir, and touch judges.

Coaches Communication Expectations

The Purpose of this policy is to set a standard, ensuring that communication from the coaching staff to the team, players, and members is well coordinated, presented in clear, concise, and accurate communication. Communication should be coherent, managed effectively, and compliant with all Akron Women's Rugby Team expectations.

- Communication to the team and club should be accurate and relevant.
- All communication should occur in timely manners.
- Communication should be employed through the method chosen by the coaching staff that best fits the needs of the current team.

Coaches are held to high standards as a member of the Akron Rugby Club and the Akron Women's Rugby Team. Coaches are to never belittle, verbally abuse, or ridicule players for making mistakes or losing a game.

Coaches who wish to have players removed from the team based on continued insubordination, conflict, safety issues, or other identified concerns will present outlined concerns to the Team Council for further review.

Playing Time:

At the DII level every player will have an equal opportunity to apply themselves so they have an opportunity to play in as many games as possible. However, should a player fail to maintain expectations regarding behavior, practice attendance, or another extenuating circumstance they may have this ability limited to revoked based on the decision of the Selection Committee which is outlined in the Greater Akron Rugby Foundation By-Laws (Section 7.01(B)).

- It is not required that each player play the same amount of time.
- Playing time is at the coach's discretion.

Travel

A. All players, members, and coaching staff represent the club, GARF, as well as local communities. Therefore, it is ~~expected~~ anticipated that all will act in an acceptable manner on trips and conduct themselves in a way that is respectful of this Code.

- a. Violations may result in referral to the Team Council based on how egregious in nature the incident is.
 - i. Additionally:
 1. All players/members will treat others with respect at all times when traveling and/or in public.
 2. Be on time.
 3. Dress as directed by the coach and/or team for warm-ups and games.
 4. Be mannerly in restaurants.
 5. Should it be established prior to league or playoff games, players should remain sober previous to playing.

V. EXECUTIVE BOARD EXPECTATIONS

The Executive Board for the Akron Women's Rugby Team is defined within the By-Laws of the Greater Akron Rugby Foundation (ARTICLE VI: Section 6.01). The Executive Board is made up of a President, Vice President, Treasurer, Match Secretary, and GARF Representative/Old Girl. Expectations related to each position can be found within the By-Laws (ARTICLE VI: Section 6.01A-6.01D)

The Executive Board is responsible for the affairs of the Akron Women's Rugby Team and the long-term vision, direction, and strategy of the Akron Women's Rugby Team (ARTICLE VI: Section 6.02). The board sets the budget and member's dues. The board has the power to add non-voting members, and appointment committees. The Executive Board will ensure that all By-Laws are followed (ARTICLE VII).

It is expected that the Executive Board operate in a fair and transparent manner. There shall be timely and appropriate communication between the Executive Board and the team. Meeting minutes from all Executive Board meetings should be made to all members in a timely manner if they so request it.

All Executive Board positions shall be voted on by a majority of current due paying members at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Any removals, resignations, or vacancies shall follow all rules outlined in the By-Laws of the Greater Akron Rugby Foundation (ARTICLE VI, Section 6.01(A) and Section 7.01(A) (i)).

*****Any amendments or changes to this document will be presented to the Club at the Annual General Meeting for consideration and updates will be made based on a majority vote set forth by the members in attendance. These updates will be provided to the Akron Women's Rugby Club members within one week's time after voting has transpired.**