

# Play by the Rules website

## Do you play by the rules? Child protection on the sport and recreation field

**S**port and recreation should be fun, safe, fair and respectful—and for most people this is their experience. However, for some people sport is not enjoyable due to abuse and unfair treatment—by coaches, officials, other players and spectators.

In the past few years we have become increasingly aware of child abuse in the community, including in sport. While the focus on media reporting has been on child sex abuse, it is important to raise awareness about other forms of abuse and harassment that affect children.

Do any of the following seem familiar?

- *If there's no pain there's no gain.* The coach who believes improved performance comes with a tough coaching style, including unreasonable physical tasks and constant verbal put-downs when mistakes are made.
- *I'm only doing it because I love my son.* The parent who lives life vicariously through their child, screaming and yelling all the time.
- *Young people shouldn't umpire as they just don't have the experience.* The spectator who abuses the young learner umpire who is doing her best, but is losing confidence and self-esteem with each outburst from the sidelines.
- *I didn't mean any harm. I was only having a bit of fun.* The ex-student coach who thinks it's fun to embarrass a young girl by touching her inappropriately while demonstrating a physical skill.
- *But we won't win if we put those kids on.* School teams that play as if they are playing for sheep stations. Kids who are not the best players are made to feel bad and unwanted and are not given fair playing time.



[www.playbytherules.net.au](http://www.playbytherules.net.au)

All of the above scenarios are inappropriate and disrespectful and should have no place in sport. Thankfully, the majority of people involved in school sport are competent, safe and ethical.

Young children must be able to participate in a sporting environment that is fun, safe and fair. Everyone has a responsibility for this, including teachers, coaches, officials, players, parents and spectators.

Play by the Rules ([www.playbytherules.net.au](http://www.playbytherules.net.au)) is a unique website that assists sporting clubs, schools and local councils to meet their risk management responsibilities around discrimination, harassment and child protection. The website provides practical information, resources and free online learning courses on how to prevent and deal with all forms of inappropriate behaviour in sport and recreation.

Recently, nine short video scenarios have been added to the website that provide practical examples of everyday issues facing sport, such as:

- responding to a concern about child abuse;
- demonstrating a skill inappropriately;
- verbal abuse and inappropriate workloads;
- the ugly parent harassing a young and inexperienced umpire; and
- including kids with a disability.

There are limited supplies of the videos on DVD available through Play by the Rules. The website is supported by the Australian Sports Commission, the federal Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and all state and territory sport and recreation and anti-discrimination agencies. Visit [www.playbytherules.net.au](http://www.playbytherules.net.au) and see how it could help you and your sporting club, school or recreation centre.

**For more information, contact Mary Duncan, Play by the Rules Program Officer, SA Office for Sport and Recreation, on 0401 122 362, or download information and resources from the website. Child Protection Project Officer was Penny Fisher, phone: 0412 009 529.**