



INDEMNITY FORM FOR COACHES

Risk Management and, in particular, child protection and harassment issues have become more prominent in recent times. Coaches have become aware that many previously innocuous actions which they used in their regular coaching sessions are now seen as questionable and open to misinterpretation by onlookers.

Touching athletes is one of those areas where problems can arise especially with children and where a coach is of a different gender to the athlete.

Coaches teach and coach using many different methods but in many situations touch and positioning of a limb or the body can be the most effective way to assist the athlete.

Coaches should be aware that any contact should be done in context, that it should be sustained only for the minimum time necessary and that it should be done with the consent of the athlete.

The issue of consent can be tricky. A coach is in a position of authority and is seen as being in control of a training session. Even adults may not feel comfortable refusing permission and where children are concerned coaches should discuss this issue with the child's parents and obtain their consent. Where ever possible when a child is involved a coach should protect themselves and their athlete by having a third party present.

The use of an indemnity form is a risk management strategy for the coach and for TBA. The use of the form is not meant to absolve the coach from any responsibility for inappropriate or illegal behaviour.

The form should only be signed by a parent after the coach has explained its purpose and made sure the parent understands why the coach would like their permission. If a parent signs the form without being fully informed it can be argued that it will have no effect and will not protect the coach.

Take some time to explain your motivation to the parent/s and do not pressure them to sign the form. On the other hand if you have a parent who refuses to even consider the possibility or necessity for touch then perhaps you need to reconsider teaching that junior athlete.

When the form has been signed ask the parent if they would like a copy. This will reassure them that you are acting in good faith. In all cases keep your copy in a safe place even after you have stopped coaching the child or the child has reached 18 because a seemingly innocent act on your part may be misinterpreted and can come back to bite you years after the event.

Remember perception often becomes the reality. If you are ever in doubt about how some action could be interpreted don't do it.