

BC Soccer Social Media Guidelines

Over 120,000 people participate in BC Soccer affiliate leagues and millions more worldwide are actively engaged in online conversations involving soccer. Social media (twitter, Facebook, instagram etc.) plays an important role in everyone's job whether it be for engagement, promotion, or awareness. It is also an invaluable communications tool to help drive and promote soccer in British Columbia.

However if these tools are not used in an appropriate and respectful way, they may give rise to complaints from individuals or organization alleging violations of relevant BC Soccer Rules, Regulations and Policies, including complaints that individuals are not acting in the best interest of the game of soccer or are demonstrating unethical (ungentlemanly) conduct and or behavior.

In the case of soccer in BC, if complaints are brought to the attention of BC Soccer and, following applicable disciplinary procedures, inappropriate behavior is proven, a number of sanctions are available ranging from formal warnings to suspensions from all soccer related activities, depending on the severity of the incident. Examples of actions that BC Soccer deem inappropriate include:

- Comments that bring the game into disrepute or are ungentlemanly
- Abuse of individuals by means of racist, sexist or ageist comments
- Abuse of individuals by means of insult or threat
- Abuse of players or officials in comments that are deemed personally insulting or damaging

Therefore BC Soccer has developed the following guidelines to help you to use social media tools in an effective way and to minimize the risk of individuals or organizations acting in a manner contrary to the BC Soccer Rules and Regulations.

If you have any questions on any aspect of social media please feel free to connect with the BC Soccer Marketing and Communications Officer Peter Lonergan (peterlonergan@bcsoccer.net) prior to engaging online.

Social Media Guidelines

1. Respect your Audience

British Columbia is a multicultural and diverse society and it is important to be aware of and respect this diversity when posting online. Respect all ethnicities and always be conscious of how others will receive your message - remember your message is not bound by borders.

2. Never post or comment on discipline issues, legal issues, media related issues or potential crisis issues without authorization to do so

Media are constantly patrolling various social media sites and they won't hesitate to comment or even put your post on-air especially if it relates to a controversial subject. We recommend that organizations have policies in place designating a spokesperson on such matters. In addition, try to

let those who are experts on the subject matter comment or discuss the appropriate response with them prior to commenting. In the absence of a policy and clear direction from the organization's leadership, during a crisis or media event every employee or volunteer can potentially become a spokesperson whether or not you want them to speak for the organization.

3. Be Transparent

Transparency is extremely important. If you post incorrect information try to be the first to correct it and never intentionally omit information or cover up an issue.

4. Use your common sense

Social Media is a tool that can be used by everyone in the office or at your organization to help promote the sport of soccer but always remember to use your common sense when posting. If you're at all unsure about your post or comment please check with your designated communications representative if you have one or if not, feel free to connect with the BC Soccer Marketing and Communications Officer Peter Lonergan (peterlonergan@bcsoccer.net) prior to posting.

Things To Remember

1. You're responsible for your actions

You are responsible for your actions so always think about how your post will affect your organization and those above your organization such as BC Soccer, Canada Soccer or FIFA. Although individuals have a general right of freedom of speech, by virtue of your involvement in BC Soccer you are subject to certain limits on that right where your comments relate to BC Soccer matters. Where comments on a public forum such as Twitter or Facebook are in violation of the Rules and Regulations of BC Soccer that apply to all members and participants in BC Soccer sanctioned events, there can be repercussions for the individual or organization, particularly where comments are directed against individuals, could be deemed to be improper, may bring the game into disrepute, or are threatening, abusive, indecent or insulting.

In addition, re-tweeting another person's posting may lead to disciplinary action if the original comment was improper.

The following are a number of high profile soccer related examples where players were pursued from a disciplinary perspective for inappropriate comments they made on social media.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-2216301/Ashley-Cole-admits-FA-disrepute-charge-bunch-t--tweet.html>

<http://www.espnfc.com/story/1128423/man-uniteds-rio-ferdinand-charged-over-twitter-remarks>

<http://www.sportsnet.ca/soccer/arsenal-emmanuel-frimpong-fined-twitter/>

2. Content posted on social media channels is permanent

Whether you're tweeting, blogging, posting or instagramming the content in which you put out on the internet via social media is permanent – even if you quickly remove your post, it could already be too late.

In addition, what you say on Twitter may be viewed all around the world instantly even if you or your organization don't have many 'followers'. One 'retweet' by someone else could mean a comment is suddenly communicated to a far wider audience.

Finally, deleting an inappropriate posting, whilst advisable, does not necessarily prevent disciplinary action being taken.

3. Others will associate you with your organization

Even if you are posting on a personal social media site, the public will associate you with the organization you work for or represent and therefore you'll be viewed as speaking on behalf of them. Therefore be extremely mindful of what you are saying and about whom. This is extremely important to remember especially during time of crisis management.