

## L.A. CITY WILDCATS YOUTH ACADEMY 2016-2017 COACHES AGREEMENT

The L.A. City Wildcats Youth Academy seeks to provide a safe learning environment for its participants, and it also strives to hold them accountable for their actions. To this end, we have developed an approach to discipline and conduct that coaches in this organization must follow in order to ensure the best possible experience and development outcomes for the youth entrusted to our care. As a coach, your positive presence and influence are critical to the success of the program. You are often the on-stage representative of the organization, whether you intend to be or not. It is the nature of the position that all eyes are on you, even when you aren't aware of it. Because of this public attention, it is important that you understand and agree to our coaching philosophy.

**Discipline with firmness, *not* abuse.** Many coaches have developed the habit of militant-style coaching. This approach often involves constant berating and verbal abuse, with the use of profanity. While this style of coaching *can* get youth to perform, psychological research has shown that it can actually cause more harm than good as it disrupts confidence building and the sense of safety required in order to learn and integrate what is being taught. Given that our aim is development of the whole child in their chosen mediums (basketball, cheer, drum line, etc.), we have chosen to embrace an ethos of connection, rather than fear. The militant approach to coaching, therefore, is not acceptable here. Coaches must learn how to extract the benefits of discipline and firmness from a militant approach and leave behind the verbal abuse, constant screaming, berating, insulting, and profanity.

Coaches are expected to be consistent, fair, and reasonable with their discipline. The players need to know that there will always be a consequence for undesirable behavior. We are not suggesting "soft" or passive coaching; we are expecting coaching that models respect for the human dignity of the youth in our program. It is not only possible, but very effective, to enact discipline immediately and often without habitually and excessively raising one's voice. This is, however, just an example.

In an effort to model composure through adversity, coaches agree to strive to maintain a calm and professional demeanor at all times. We do acknowledge and accept that it is absolutely necessary to raise one's voice in order to emphasize a point, get a child's attention, or express normal human frustration. We are speaking to the fact that constant yelling is unacceptable. Berating players is not acceptable. Holding players accountable for their actions or "calling a player out publicly" IS acceptable, if done objectively. Making statements such as, "You're \*\*\*\*\* awful," or "you'll never make it" is not only unprofessional, it's destructive, unkind, and it has no place here. Profanity should be used sparingly, if ever. If a coach feels the need to use profanity, it should be something not directed *at* an individual. An occasional statement to the effect of, "That was the worst \*\*\*\* defense we've played in a half all year" may be tolerable. A statement to the effect of, "John, you're a \*\*\* \*\*\*\*" is not acceptable. It should go without saying that we do not tolerate hitting, smacking, or aggressively grabbing or shoving any participant in our program.

**Demonstrate that you care.** If you are solely here to boost your resume or for the thrill of coaching, this is not the organization for you. Developing a connection with your players is more important than wins and losses. Some teams have a lot of talent; some don't, but if our players know that we care about them, they will give us everything they have; and that's what matters most. Learn about your players. Talk to them. Ask them what's wrong when they're down. You don't have to be someone you're not, but you do have to be willing to go the extra mile for your players. Many times, we here at the L.A. City Wildcats Youth Academy are the only advocates they have.

**Consistency and accountability.** Follow through on what you promise. This goes for attendance, communication, activity, and behavior. If you cannot make a full commitment, please be up front from the very beginning about what you CAN commit to doing. The players in this organization tend to have an "I'll believe it when I see it" mentality when it comes to trusting new faces. If you choose to continue, please be consistent and communicative about any changes in your availability that may arise, and be proactive in arranging for a substitute, if possible, for the times you cannot be present.

**Teach the game.** You don't have to be a bookworm with a 50-page playbook, but you should be teaching players the game. If 4 months go by and the players feel they're not learning anything, this is an issue of concern. This learning isn't measured solely by wins and losses; it's measured from use of practice time and how players implement what they've learned on the court. If you are a developing coach, utilize the experience and support around you. You don't have to know it all. You do need to be open to continued learning and refining of your skill sets.

**Utilize your resources and stay in your lane.** We here at LACWYA all have roles. If this is your first season here, "stay in your lanes" might seem like a handcuff; but if you've been around, you know it's a weapon. All of us coaches and staff have each other's backs. Utilize your fellow leaders. Bounce ideas off them. Communicate. Get on the same page. Don't get caught off guard. Be prepared. If you don't know, ask. If you need help, ask. If you're growing frustrated with an issue, don't stew in silence; communicate. Also, as you expect others to have your back, make sure other people know you have theirs. That doesn't mean you have to agree with everything someone says. It does, however, mean we shouldn't engage in destructive behaviors, such as lying, gossiping, and double-crossing. We all need to work as a team.

**Support from the stands or the bench.** When another LACWYA team is playing nearby, if time and scheduling permit, support that team! If you're with your team at a travel event, this may entail taking your team up into the stands and cheering for your Wildcats community. If your team is gone and you choose to stay and watch, cheer from the stands or support the coach on his bench. Even though each team has its own coach, the players need to know that we support each other. They, in turn, should support us also.

**Assistant coaches should have a "varsity assistant" mentality.** Your role is very important. The HS varsity assistant has several critical roles to play. In game situations, only the head coach can stand. The assistant should assist in controlling the bench decorum of the players, which includes players

who are displaying a negative attitude. The Assistant Coach should prevent bench players from entering the court in the event of a fight as all players leaving the bench can be ejected for a flagrant technical foul. The Assistant Coach should be supportive and positive during the game and leave the admonishments or scolding to the Head Coach. The Assistant Coach should remain engaged in the ebb and flow of the game and may recommend substitutions or play calls to the Head Coach, but similar to a HS varsity coach, it is the Head Coach's choice to follow the recommendation or not.

During practice situations, the Head Coach will design the practice plan and framework. The Assistant Coach should be supportive in facilitating practice according to that plan. If the Assistant Coach has ideas of his/her own about drills or play institution, they should be discussed outside of practice. The Assistant Coach should focus on micro-teaching during practice. That is to say: let the Head Coach focus on the bigger picture, but do look for opportunities to give instant feedback to players where appropriate, such as missed box outs, poor technique, laziness, etc. As it pertains to giving feedback, be aware of flow and lock the right time to give it. The Assistant Coach should follow all the philosophical points given to coaches as it pertains to discipline, attitude, demeanor, punctuality, and consistency. And most of all, develop that connection with your players. If you weren't important to the Wildcats players and Academy, you wouldn't be here!

**8. Professional/Ethical/Legal Conduct.** This section is intentionally left vague. Coaches should always conduct themselves in a matter that is professional, ethical, and legal. Period.

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Coach's signature

Date