



UPDATE ON REPORT CONCERNING INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF COACHING CULTURE AT WRESTLING CANADA LUTTE

(September 2019)

PREFACE

In response to concerns raised by the WCL membership about the coaching culture that exists at Wrestling Canada Lutte (WCL), the Board, with the support of Own The Podium, commissioned a Review of the high performance coaching environment in July 2018 to better understand the nature and extent of the issue. In addition, and more importantly, we wanted to deal proactively with our commitment to safe sport and to better align with our values.

The *Report Concerning Independent Review of Coaching Culture for Wrestling Canada Lutte* (Report) was prepared by lawyer David Bennett, who was hired to review the current high performance coaching practices within the sport at the national level. The Report was shared with the community on December 3, 2018.

WCL committed to doing a “pulse check” part-way through the year to monitor progress and make necessary adjustments.

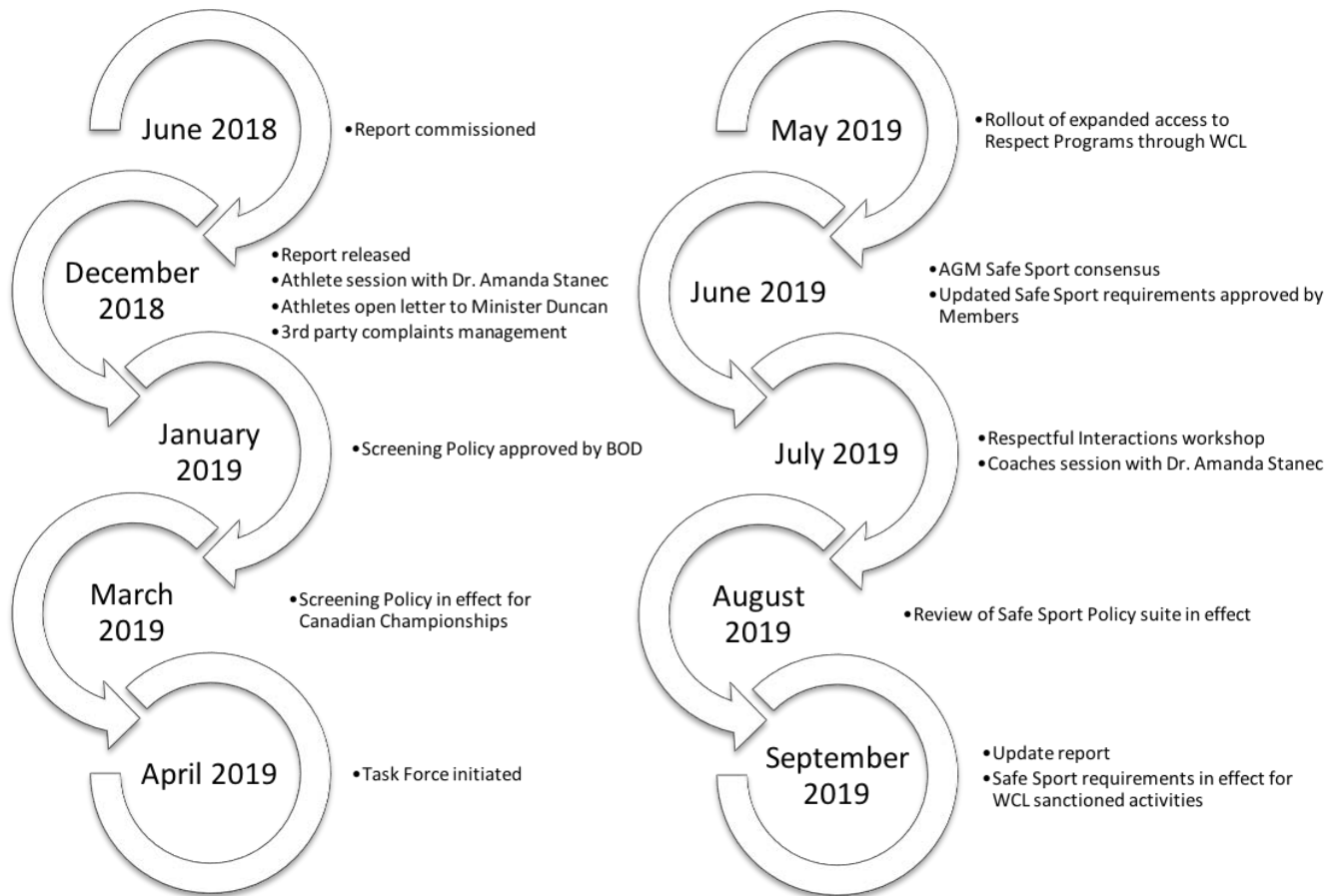
INTRODUCTION

Stemming from the release of the Report, WCL’s Board of Directors committed to striking a “Safety First Task Force” (Task Force) to assess and evaluate the recommendations and to develop an action plan, prioritizing and implementing the most critical initiatives in order to advance safe sport at WCL.

This update includes an overview of work to date in relation to the Report by the Task Force. It also provides an overview of the actions that WCL has taken in response to the Report and broader Safe Sport initiatives. A brief timeline of activities can be seen below.



TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES



FRAMEWORK

Essentially the recommendations of the report have been broken down into key areas of:

- Policies & Procedures
- Education & Training
- Complaints Management

Much of the work underway will focus on putting essential pillars in place to address the gaps identified in the Report, but there is a commitment to ensuring that real cultural change happens in our sport. This will take time but athletes, coaches, officials and everyone at WCL are committed to ensuring the long-term future of the sport.



SAFETY FIRST NATIONAL TASK FORCE (TASK FORCE)

The Task Force was created to deal with the recommendations of the Report and their potential implementation. An open call was sent out to the wrestling community for those who wished to be involved. It took some time for people to come forward to take on this important work, but in March 2019 the group was finalized and has had several productive meetings to date.

The Task Force (<https://wrestling.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Updated-TOR.pdf>) is composed of:

- Chair – Lúcas Ó'Ceallacháin (Chair)
- Member – Danielle Lappage (Athlete)
- Member – Jessica Brouillette (Athlete)
- Member – Laura Steffler (Coach)
- Member – Dave Collie (Coach)
- Member – Marcia Chiasson (Official)
- Member – Laura (Jones) Summers
- Member – Bill Bain

To date the Task Force has met 4 times and each session sees them rotate the chair of the meeting. Sessions are held via GoToMeeting and recordings and notes for each meeting are kept. For reporting purposes, Lúcas Ó'Ceallacháin is the Chair.

3rd PARTY COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT

Effective December 19, 2018 WCL commissioned the Sport Law & Strategy Group (SLSG), to act as an independent third party to receive complaints on its behalf, with the authority to appoint a neutral independent panel, until such time as WCL is able to offer a more permanent solution.

The substantive aspects of WCL's Discipline Policy and Appeal Policy remain. However, in order to ensure procedural fairness for all parties, the procedural aspects of these Policies may be modified. Should this be the case, the modified procedures will be published on WCL's website and a notice will be sent to WCL's membership. Please direct inquiries to SLSG at: ajk@sportlaw.ca.

SCREENING

WCL understands that screening is a vital part of providing a safe sporting environment and helps identify individuals with WCL activities who may pose a risk to WCL and its participants. The BOD approved a Screening Policy in effect for the 2019 Canadian Championships, requiring proof of screening for all accredited individuals, including coaches, officials, team leaders, medical personnel and WCL staff).



SAFE SPORT CONSENSUS

During WCL's Annual General Meetings in June 2019, the members were presented with an overall view of the Safe Sport landscape in Canada and their impact on them. Together with the input of the Task Force recommendations the members arrived to a consensus position of several areas listed below.

Aligned Safe Sport Framework:

- NSO and PTSOs all commit to / adopt the same framework (3 pillars)
- NSO and PTSOs all commit to / adopt one set of policies
- PTSO adoption is a requirement for being a Member in good standing with WCL
- Reciprocity of sanctions / disciplines across all tiers of participation (club, PTSO, NSO)

Response & Support Management Process:

- Further discussion required on receipt of complaints receipt, triaging and management (at WCL level vs. at jurisdictional level)
- Third party investigations at the PTSO level would be discretionary, not mandatory
- Resolution facilitation / conflict resolution is a discretionary, not mandatory component of the process

Key issues related to Code of Conduct:

- Relationships are not permitted between ATHLETES and coaches, staff, officials or any other person in a direct position of trust / authority with the ATHLETE
- "Reasonable consumption" in relation to alcohol and cannabis use

Appeals:

- Appeal policy would permit appeals (on accepted grounds) to be filed with a higher authority (e.g. PTSO to NSO) for a fee.

Minimum mandatory training effective September 1, 2019, for any WCL sanctioned activity:

Coaches	Officials / Medical / Team Leaders / Volunteers	Staff / BOD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening • Make Ethical Decisions (MED) • Rule of Two (Open & Observable Environment) • Respect in Sport • Making Headway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening • MED • Rule of Two (Open & Observable Environment) • Respect in Sport • Making Headway (for Medical) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening • MED • Rule of Two (Open & Observable Environment) • Respect in the Workplace



Retain services of SLSG to guide the Safe Sport Policy revision process. Priorities include:

- Code of Conduct
- Discipline & Complaints
- Dispute resolution
- Appeal
- Reciprocity / jurisdiction
- Screening

RESPECTFUL INTERACTIONS WORKSHOP

With the support of Respect Group, WCL engaged Siobhan Richardson and Dina Bell-Laroche to design, deliver and facilitate a session on respectful interactions. Siobhan Richardson is a well-respected Intimacy Director with extensive experience working in the arts world in the area of consent and physical contact.

The workshop was specifically designed to clarify language, ensure shared understanding of consent related to physical contact, and create an inviting space for coaches and athletes to discuss distractions to a high performing culture. The resulting feedback from the participants will provide some foundational principles for our national team coaches and athletes going forward.

<https://sportlaw.ca/lessons-from-the-mat-a-commitment-by-wrestling-canada-to-shape-a-world-leading-culture/>

ATHLETE & COACH FACILITATED SESSIONS WITH DR. AMANDA STANEC

As an immediate response to the release of the Report, WCL held a facilitated session with the national team athletes at the Gold Medal Profile camp in Vancouver in December 2019. The session was facilitated by Dr. Amanda Stanec of Move, Live, Learn, who has done extensive work with the sport of wrestling. She was assisted in workshop design and approach by members of WCL'S Athlete Council. The session allowed athletes to express their thoughts, concerns and suggestions around the Report. Some clear directions were given on the priority items from the athlete perspective.

In July 2019 a similar session was run with the coaching staff of the High Performance Program. In this session coaches expressed their shared commitment to providing a safe environment for all athletes in the sport and were supportive of the recommendations of the Report.

Valid concerns were expressed by the coaches in relation to how the Report was conducted, the methodology employed and the management of the process.



POLICY AUDIT

A Safe Sport policy audit commenced in August in collaboration with the Task Force and the Sport Law Strategy Group. Clear recommendations on the gaps will be provided via the Task Force and formalized in policy.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Based on the recommendations of the Task Force it was acknowledged that a key document for WCL's High Performance Program is the Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct will be updated and build on the HP values of Excellence, Passion, Respect and Integrity. Additional training on the new Code of Conduct will be provided and all members of teams (athletes, coaches, support staff) will be required to sign the Code of Conduct.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES RELATIVE TO THE REPORT

- Green – complete
- Yellow – ongoing
- White – no progress

Recommendation Number	Description	Pillar	Notes
1	A prohibition on sexual relationships between national team coaches and athletes (p 12)	Policy	Direction from Athletes has been solicited. Build into Code of Conduct.
2	A prohibition on sexual relationships between national team coaches and other coaches (p 12)	Policy	Direction from Athletes has been solicited. Build into Code of Conduct.
3	A prohibition on sexual relationships between national team coaches and WCL staff (p 12)	Policy	Direction from Athletes has been solicited. Build into Code of Conduct.
4	A prohibition on sexual relationships between staff and staff (p 12)	Policy	Direction from Athletes has been solicited. Build into Code of Conduct.
5	A prohibition on sexual relationships between staff and athletes (p 12)	Policy	Direction from Athletes has been solicited. Build into Code of Conduct.



6	Mandatory Vulnerable Sector Check for all WCL staff and coaches (p 13)	Policy	Policy to be expanded as part of Policy Audit.
7	Mandatory Vulnerable Sector Check for all provincial staff and coaches (p 13)	Policy	To confirm with PTSOs.
8	Creation of a coach and athlete database to ensure they have met the requirements to be licensed, including the completion of a background screen, signature of the coaching Code of Conduct and the identification of coaches who have breached the coaching Code of Conduct (p 13)	Other	Currently have info from Trackie and the Locker. WCL is also in the process of developing a new database. Propose to consolidate this info and display a list of coaches on our site who are in good standing.
9	Rule of Two policy implemented for athletes under eighteen (p 13)	Policy Education/ Training	To confirm with PTSOs.
10	There should be an annual review of all safety policies (p 13)	Policy	This should be undertaken by the Safe Sport group.
11	There should be an independent review of the allegations made by the two anonymous parties to OTP, the Minister of Sport and WCL (p 13)	Policy 3rd Party Reporting	Ongoing process.
12	Mandatory training for all coaches who participate internationally, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to deal with the modern athlete • Coaching the female athlete (Coaching males and females differently) • Psychological motivation • How to communicate with the modern athlete • How to motivate an athlete: What is the difference between motivating and bullying • Nutrition • Weight cutting • Training about the ways the body and mind can react to stress • Training about how to spot eating disorders and disordered eating • Sexual harassment • Ethics and conduct (representing Canada) (p 19) 	Policy Education/ Training	Proposal to deliver Coach Education as a priority to the High Performance Coaches. From there we will build a series of webinars with Coaches Council and finally bring this together at the national coaching conference. Webinars are currently being developed with our relevant IST Leads.
13	There should be no physical contact between coaches and athletes (p 20)	Other	Specific work is being done in this area with Siobhan Richardson during the Canada Cup with our HP Coaches and Athletes.



14	Verbal abuse, including swearing, yelling, using pejorative language (slut, lazy, fat, useless) should be prohibited by the Code of Conduct (p 20)	Policy Education/ Training Other	For consideration in a revised code of conduct.
15	Coaches should not be pushing their athletes physically until they vomit or are on the mat in tears from exhaustion (p 20)	Education/ Training Other	This is already captured in the current code of ethics of the NCCP. However, we would like to reinforce these values through the webinars, conference and interactions with coaches, athletes and staff.
16	Coaches and staff need to be reminded that they are there for the athletes and not the other way around (p 20)	Other	
17	There needs to be more opportunities for new and young coaches (p 20)	Other	WCL submitted the WOW (Women of Wrestling) Proposal for funding. The proposal focuses on creating opportunities for more women in wrestling – including young coaches. The coaching conference will also target emerging young coaches. The current lack of coach developers will make speeding this up challenging.
18	There needs to be the development and promotion of more women coaches (p 20)	Other	
19	Protocol around contacting athletes (p 20)	Education/ Training Other	Code of Conduct will be used as a starting point for this discussion but will involve both Athlete and Coaches Councils
20	Discontinue the practice of “Birthday Beats” (p 20)	Other	This has never been a practice of WCL, however, this will be emphasized in training and education.
21	Prohibit drinking between coaches and athletes (p 22)	Policy	Direction from Athletes has been solicited. Build into Code of Conduct.
22	Develop a policy concerning alcohol consumption (p 22)	Policy	Direction from Athletes has been solicited. Build into Code of Conduct.
23	Develop a policy on cannabis for coaches and staff members (p 23)	Policy	Direction from Athletes has been solicited. Build into Code of Conduct.
24	There should be mandatory education for all coaches and athletes around concussions (p 25)	Education/ Training	Proposal to deliver Coach Education as a priority to the High Performance Coaches. From there we will build a series of webinars with Coaches Council and finally bring this together as the national coaching conference. Webinars are currently being developed with our relevant IST Leads. All coaches must undertake the Making Headway in Sport module with the NCCP.
25	If an athlete is funded by WCL then they should use WCL’s medical treatment for	Education/ Training	Athlete Handbook and Athlete Agreements state this but it will be communicated more overtly to the groups concerned.



	concussions and other major injuries (p 25)		
26	There needs to be a formalized written medical clearance before an athlete can go back to practice or competition (p 25)	Other	WCL is currently developing the PPE policy for athletes – Physical Preparedness Exam. This will ensure that athletes are competition ready or receiving the necessary treatment.
27	It should be mandatory that coaches receive training on healthy eating, dieting, weight loss, disordered eating and eating disorders (p 27)	Education/ Training	Proposal to deliver Coach Education as a priority to the High Performance Coaches. From there we will build a series of webinars with Coaches Council and finally bring this together as the national coaching conference. Webinars are currently being developed with our relevant IST Leads.
28	Athletes need to be given more resources for healthy eating (p 27)	Education/ Training	Two sessions planned during Canada Cup and additional resources available on the WCL Athlete Private Page. Will work on a webinar with Athlete Council on this as well as IST Lead
29	The nutritionist needs to be doing more to work with the athletes outside of Calgary (p 27)	Education/ Training	The nutritionist is the national lead and works with local nutritionists to provide this support regularly. During the Gold Medal Profile Camps, athletes get regular sessions and access to Kelly Drager (December in Vancouver, July in Calgary, October in Japan).
30	Develop and promote a national initiative that promotes healthy attitudes towards food (p 27)	Education/ Training	
31	It should be added into the Code of Conduct that coaches should not be asking athletes to cut weight (p 27)	Other	The Code of Conduct review is underway.
32	Coaches should be given mandatory training on coaching the female athlete (p 29)	Education/ Training	Proposal to deliver Coach Education as a priority to the High Performance Coaches. From there we will build a series of webinars with Coaches Council and finally bring this together as the national coaching conference. Webinars are currently being developed with our relevant IST Leads.
33	There needs to be the development and promotion of more women coaches (p 29)	Other	WOW Proposal has been submitted for funding.
34	WCL should conduct a study of how women's monthly cycles impact their weight and weight class (p 29)	Education/ Training	This is already in existence and was delivered to our HP Coaches previously. It will form part of the Education strategy.



35	Coaches should be given access to childcare (p 29)	Other	Available already for WCL staff.
36	Clarify Job Positions Among WCL Staff (p 32)	Other	HP Unit Restructure underway – info will be provided in Athlete Handbook and on the website.
37	Have a More Professional Board of Directors Composed and Increased Gender Parity Among Board Members (p 32)	Other	Board task but could be supported by WOW if approved. BOD has committed new language around gender parity in the bylaws to be presented to the Members.
38	Bring in more women to serve on the Board of Directors (p 33)	Other	Board task but could be supported by WOW if approved. BOD has committed new language around gender parity in the bylaws to be presented to the Members.
39	Develop a Database of Athletes and Coaches (p 33)	Other	Linked to the participant model
40	Create a harassment policy (p 33)	Policy	Priority – Harassment is covered by the current Code of Conduct, however, a separate policy will be developed. The Task Force agreed that policies are rarely read and digested – having the Code of Conduct link to the policy ensures that everyone at any WCL event will have signed the Code of Conduct at a minimum.
41	Provide athletes training on the new sexual harassment policy (p 33)	Education/ Training	Training will be made available once the revised policy is approved.
42	Create a reporting mechanism for sexual harassment claims and outline the process in the Code of Conduct (p 33)	Policy 3rd Party Reporting	
	Investigate all future leaks of sensitive information and sanction those responsible (p 33)	Other	The BOD has agreed to signing a BOD Agreement including Code of Conduct in principle. Agreement to be drafted.
44	Respond to athletes' and coaches' requests for information in a timely manner (p 34)	Other	Ongoing
45	Conduct exit interviews with all athletes and employees who leave (p 34)	Policy	HR practices to be reviewed.
46	Review whether any board members of WCL are in a Conflict of Interest (p 34)	Other	BOD members are required to declare conflicts at every meeting. The BOD has agreed to signing a BOD Agreement including Code of Conduct in principle. Agreement to be drafted.



47	Establish an independent Complaints Person (p 35)	3rd Party Reporting	Adam Klevinas (SLSG) Task Force feel we need to share this information more widely.
48	Advise athletes of their rights to appeal a decision under the Appeal Policy and to the SDRCC (p 35)	Policy	
49	WCL should lobby with the other NSOs to create an ombudsman for sport (p 35)	3rd Party Reporting	
50	Coaches' salaries at the National Centers should be reviewed and a better compensation package should be paid (p 36)	Other	HP Unit Restructure
51	Athletes should be involved in the implementation of the recommendations made in this report (p 37)	Other	Task Force GMP camp Canada Cup camp Ongoing
52	There should be an audit carried out after six months and a second audit after a year to evaluate whether the recommendations in this report have been implemented (p 37)	Other	Ongoing

CONCLUSION

It remains clear that wrestling is not alone in Canadian sport in facing these challenges and has received strong support from Sport Canada, the Canadian Olympic Committee and Own the Podium in their commitment to address the issues. Much work remains to be done but the approach of WCL has been to embrace this challenge as an opportunity for growth that will make our wrestling community stronger than ever before.