

## **Parent/Athlete Liaison Handbook**

The Parent /Athlete Liaison (PAL) is an important position that supports parents and athletes by assisting in the communication and conflict resolution that may arise in the Vortex Water Polo Club. The Parent/Athlete Liaison is independent of the Board and coaching staff and is chosen by the families, typically at the AGM, for a one year duration. It is preferable for each team to have a Liaison, but at minimum VWP will have one Liaison for the Women's side of the club and one for the Men's.

The primary role of the PAL is to act as a mediator between players and coaching staff, parents and coaching staff and between VWP Club members and the Board. PAL's should be approachable and available to parents and athletes. Liaisons will hear their concerns and bring these forward to coaches or the VWP Club accurately and in a calm and clear manner. By doing this, Parent/ Athlete Liaisons can help resolve misunderstandings, miscommunications and conflict. They are listeners.

Depending on their abilities, time and the support they receive from other parents/ athletes and coaches, a Parent/ Athlete Liaison may also help out with finding solutions to issues, mediating conflicts and improving general team communications. At the mutual agreement of the Head coach and PAL, the Liaison may be asked to attend team meetings or be added to team communications such as group chats if this will improve communication.

A Parent/ Athlete Liaison's most important duty is to be a good listener. Often, when an individual has a concern, giving the speaker our full attention with the quiet act of listening validates their concern and helps to open lines of communication. Active listening involves interpreting, assessing, ensuring understanding and responding. Rephrasing after someone has explained their concern helps to ensure their message has been heard, not misinterpreted or changed.

Conflict resolution can be aided by the 24 hour cool down principle. Many of the problems or situations individuals become emotional or angry about do not seem as important or intense once there has been some time to literally cool down and think matters over. The Liaison may wish to suggest the involved parties take a day to allow emotions to settle before bringing concerns forward officially to the coach or Board. This is not to belittle the concern, but rather to allow for an assessment of what the true concern is, rather than the emotion it created.

Confidentiality is paramount. Parents and Athletes have the right to have their concerns raised anonymously. This will be left to the discretion of the individual expressing the concern and the Liaison.

The Liaison, in consultation with the parent/ athlete, may chose to speak with the coach or VWP Club as a representative of the parent/ athlete. Alternatively, the parent/ athlete and Liaison may prefer to have the Liaison present as a third party while the individual communicates with the coach or VWP Club. While the Liaison always acts as support to the parent/ athlete, this does not mean the Liaison necessarily shares the parent/ athlete opinion. The role of the Liaison is to assist in communication. The PAL is to act in the best interests of the players and team as a whole.