Complaints & Discipline Procedure

Purpose

This procedure explains how Baulkham Hills Australian Football Club (BHAFC) manages complaints and disciplinary matters in a fair, transparent, timely and child-safe manner. It applies to all players, parents, coaches, umpires, volunteers, officials and spectators involved with the Club.

This process is separate from, but complementary to, the National Integrity Framework (NIF) and its reporting processes, which apply to serious integrity issues such as child safeguarding, member protection, discrimination, abuse, and gambling/drug violations.

What Issues This Procedure Covers

This Club-level process covers concerns such as:

- Behaviour that breaches Club Codes of Conduct (player, parent, coach/official).
- Game-day conduct issues not requiring immediate escalation to AFL officials.
- Team, training or communication issues.
- Minor disputes between members.
- Administrative or operational complaints about club processes.

Important:
If a matter involves child safety, abuse, harassment, discrimination, grooming, or other integrity-related concerns, it must be escalated through NIF pathways (e.g., Sport Integrity Australia or NSW helplines). BHAFC's Child Safety page outlines how and when to escalate these matters.

Guiding Principles

All complaints are managed according to the following principles:

1. Safety first – the wellbeing of children and young people is the primary consideration.
2. Fairness & impartiality – decisions are based on facts, not assumptions or personal relationships.
3. Confidentiality – only those who need to know will be involved.
4. Respectful communication – all parties will be treated with dignity.
5. Timeliness – matters will be addressed as quickly as reasonably possible.

6. Right of response – individuals subject to a complaint may respond before decisions are made.
7. Documentation – key actions and outcomes will be recorded and stored securely.

How to Make a Complaint

Step 1 — Raise the Issue Informally (Optional)

Where appropriate and safe, concerns may be raised directly with:

- The Team Manager, or
- The Coach, or
- A Committee Member

This step is helpful for simple misunderstandings or team-related issues but is not required.

Step 2 — Lodge a Formal Complaint

A formal complaint can be made by emailing:

General Club Complaints

president@baulko.org.au (or the relevant Committee contact from the Club website)

Child Safety / Integrity Concerns

Must be directed to the Child Protection Officer (CPO) or via the NIF pathways:
protection@baulko.org.au
Or escalated to appropriate services (Sport Integrity Australia, NSW Child Protection Helpline, NSW Police) as outlined on the Child Safety page.

Your complaint should include:

- Your name and contact details
- Who the complaint is about
- What happened (dates, times, details)
- Any evidence (messages, emails, photos, witnesses)
- The outcome you are seeking (if known)

Anonymous complaints will be reviewed but may limit actions.

Club Response Process

Step 1 — Acknowledgement

The Club will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 7 days, confirm the next steps, and clarify whether the matter is:

- A Club-level issue, or
- A NIF/child safety/integrity matter requiring external escalation.

Step 2 — Initial Assessment

The President (or designated committee member) will:

- Assess the seriousness of the complaint
- Confirm jurisdiction (Club vs. NIF vs. AFL Sydney Juniors)
- Determine whether interim actions are needed (e.g., separating individuals)

Step 3 — Information Gathering

This may include:

- Speaking with the complainant
- Speaking with the respondent
- Speaking with witnesses
- Reviewing evidence (messages, documents, photos)
- Obtaining input from the relevant Team Manager or Committee member

Step 4 — Determination

The Club will determine the outcome based on:

- Club Codes of Conduct
- Relevant policies
- AFL Sydney Juniors rules (if applicable)

Possible outcomes include:

- No action
- Mediation or facilitated conversation
- Verbal warning
- Written warning

- Suspension from training or game-day roles
- Removal from volunteer or coaching roles
- Referral to AFL Sydney Juniors
- Referral to Sport Integrity Australia or NSW authorities (if identified as NIF-relevant)

Step 5 — Communication of Outcome

The complainant and respondent will receive a summary of the decision unless restricted by privacy or safety requirements.

Step 6 — Record Keeping

The Club will securely record:

- The complaint
- Investigation notes
- Outcome
- Any follow-up actions taken

Stored in accordance with the Club's Privacy Policy.

Appeals

If a member believes a complaint was handled unfairly or incorrectly:

- They may request one internal review by the President or a subcommittee not involved in the original decision.
- Appeals must be lodged within 14 days of the decision.
- If Club-level review is exhausted, external escalation may be available (AFL Sydney Juniors or NIF pathways, depending on the issue).

Serious Matters (Automatic External Escalation)

The following must not be handled solely by the Club and should follow the escalation instructions outlined on the Child Safety page:

- Child abuse, grooming, sexual misconduct
- Serious harassment, bullying, assault
- Discrimination
- Threats, violence, or safety risks

- Integrity violations (e.g., drugs/medicine misuse, competition manipulation, gambling)

Protection from Victimisation

No individual will be penalised or disadvantaged for making a complaint in good faith. Retaliation will be treated as a separate disciplinary breach pursuant to the Club Codes of Conduct.

Review

This procedure will be reviewed annually as part of the Club's commitment to continuous improvement under the NSW Child Safe Standards and the National Integrity Framework.