



In recent years, social media and networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter have become a part of our everyday lives.

Overall, the use of social networking websites can be seen to be a positive influence on Welsh football. When used correctly, it can be instrumental in raising the profiles of individuals, clubs and the game itself and allows individuals to actively engage with fans and build positive relationships with their peers. In addition, social networking websites also have the power to raise awareness of campaigns and to positively encourage other individuals to watch and play the national game fairly.

As a member of a club, whether it is as a player, manager or club official, The *FAW Fair Play Code* encourages individuals to be ambassadors for the game in Wales and therefore they should always exercise professional judgment and common sense in their approach to anything that is written on social networking sites.

Individuals should not refrain from communicating on social networking sites – everyone has the right to express themselves online - but anything that is said / written by an individual can reflect on the club.

The *FAW Fair Play Code* illustrates the necessity for good behaviour and encourages the positive 'Fair Play' message to be adopted when using social media networking sites.

Therefore as ambassadors for the football club, individuals should learn to balance personal and professional information and should think how their actions may affect the image of the game in Wales.

As best practice, individuals should:

- **Be respectful and positive, treating others as they would wish to be treated.** Respect is part of the game and is fundamental to the *FAW Fair Play Code*. As an ambassador for the game in Wales, individuals should always be professional and polite in respect of their audience and the communities with which they interact online. Regardless of religion, race, sex or national origin, everyone deserves to be treated with the same equal respect.
- **Remember that the internet is permanent and that information travels fast and easily online.** Many different audiences will see a post and therefore individuals should remember that deleted tweets can always be located. Individuals should not post anything that they would not be comfortable seeing in the media.
- **Be in the right state of mind when writing a post.** Individuals should never post when they're angry, upset or their judgment is impaired as this can lead to engaging in insulting behaviour and the alienation of other individuals.

- **Be responsible for what is written.** Every individual who is actively involved in football in Wales has a responsibility for upholding the image of the game.

Due to the nature of football, a decision made by a match official during a game can often leave club officials / players feeling aggrieved, which can lead to the individual voicing their opinion on a social networking site. In these instances, individuals should look to the guidelines above to understand the importance of exercising sound judgment.

The *FAW Fair Play Code* states that as officials are part of the game, they must be respected accordingly. Match officials should be allowed to conduct their job without provocation from players and management teams etc. and individuals must understand that writing anything on a social networking site regarding match officials can lead to disciplinary action being taken against them.

In general, the following types of comments may lead to the Football Association of Wales taking disciplinary action, particularly where made in respect of match officials:-

- (i) Implication of bias – where a comment alleges or implies bias by another participant at any time.
- (ii) Questioning integrity – where a comment calls into question the integrity of another participant at any time.
- (iii) Personal / offensive – where a comment is personal in nature such that it causes, or may cause, offence at any time.
- (iv) Bring the game into disrepute – where a comment causes, and/or may cause, damage to the wider interests of football and/or to the image of the game.

While social media can be seen as a positive tool in communicating with our peers, individuals should always be mindful as to what message they are sending out and to whom this message is being sent.

To reiterate, there is no reason why players, coaches, managers and club officials should not be able to use social networking sites. If good judgment and common sense is exercised, individuals can be themselves and conduct themselves respectfully.

Social Media is a powerful platform and should be used to promote a positive message which will benefit football at every level in Wales.

**For social media advice and best practice please follow 'Off The Pitch' on Twitter:
@FAW_OffThePitch**