

Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy

PURPOSE

NOVA recognizes the prevalence of electronic communication and social media in today's world. While NOVA acknowledges the value of these methods of communication, we also recognize the need to establish boundaries, as these are unregulated exchanges.

GENERAL CONTENT

Coaches often use electronic methods, such as text messages or email, for communicating information about team activities. All communications between a coach or other adult and an athlete must be professional in nature. Coaches will always be professional, respectful, and use good judgment when communicating with athletes. The content and intent of all electronic communications must adhere to the USA Swimming Code of Conduct regarding Athlete Protection.

With respect to electronic communications, NOVA asks that all electronic communication between swimmers and adults be **Transparent, Accessible and Professional**.

Transparent: All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be transparent. Communication should be clear and direct, as well as free of hidden meanings, innuendos, and expectations.

Accessible: All electronic communication between coaches and athletes will be considered a matter of record. Whenever possible, include more than one coach or parent in the communication so that there is no question regarding accessibility.

Professional: All electronic communication between a coach and an athlete should be conducted professionally. This includes word choices and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of a staff member.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The electronic age in which we live causes every member of the NOVA swim team to be aware of the far reaching effects of data posted to web sites, sent via email, and other electronic mediums. This includes photos posted to web sites, text messages between teammates, or information that is on blog sites, and messages posted to sites like Twitter, Facebook, etc. No team member's future should be jeopardized due to a careless or thoughtless action. We must recognize that the words and photos that we post on-line are there for everyone to read and view, as well as know the consequences of public communication.

Why this is important: By now many have seen and heard of the mistakes people have made using social media. In constructing this policy, we hope to help our athletes avoid taking these missteps that could negatively impact their future. Here are some recent examples.

- A high school student-athlete is expelled from school after tweeting racially charged and sexually explicit messages.
- Multiple members of a high school team are suspended after posting sexually provocative pictures on social networking sites.
- A college program suspends a player after he tweets that classes are pointless.
- Another program bans its players from Twitter after one of its student-athletes tweets song lyrics about killing cops, drawing the ire of local police.
- A high school player takes the bait and gets into a war of words on Facebook with a student at a rival school, leading to the player's suspension.
- A little league softball team is kicked out of the playoffs after a picture is posted of 4 teammates making an obscene gesture to a rival team.

Representing the Club: Swimming for NOVA is a privilege, and the club expects those affiliated to portray themselves, NOVA, and the community in a positive and respectful manner. No matter where you are, who you are with, or what you are doing, you are a member of this team. Your actions can reflect on this club, even when engaging in activities outside of the pool or team functions.

Posts are always visible: Once a player posts or tweets a message, it is captured and indexed by any number of search engines that crawl the Internet. This means that a message never actually goes away. Text messages and photos can be saved or screen shot without the sender's knowledge. Colleges, coaches, and employers will research potential recruits, and turn them away based on social media findings.

Rules and Guidelines

- Using social media to attack, degrade, or demean any person, team or organization is not allowed.
- Profanity, obscenities, vulgarities, sexism, racism, homophobic and sexual references will not be tolerated.
- Do not engage with fans or members from other teams if they are making derogatory comments online. Anything deemed inappropriate or upsetting should be brought to the attention of an adult.
- Athletes may not create pages or accounts that represent NOVA unless given permission by the NOVA staff. The page will need to grant a NOVA employee admin privileges for the duration of the page's existence.

- Athletes will not engage in posts, pages, tweets, etc. that are anonymous, meant to be “confessions,” or an outlet for hurtful material. If you don’t want people to know you are the owner of a statement, then that statement shouldn’t be made.
- Use some common sense. If you are not sure whether a post or tweet is appropriate, then it probably is not.
- Never tweet or post when you are emotional. The decisions we make while emotional are myopic and rarely look ahead to potential consequences. Chances are the action will have a negative outcome.
- Be cautious when retweeting or reposting someone else’s content. Such action can appear to be an endorsement of the message, even if you are not the original author.
- Never assume that a message or post is protected from public view, even if you have the “private” settings turned on for your profile.
- Do not give out personal contact information to a “friend” or “follower” that you do not know, and never post that information publicly.

USE OF CELL PHONES & CAMERAS:

Under no circumstances will cameras or cell phones be allowed in locker rooms or behind the starting blocks. No cell phones will be allowed out of swim bags *during* practice without coach’s permission to make or accept a call (this includes dryland activities). Cell phones are NOT permitted on the competition pool deck at swim meets. It is recommended that athletes use iPods or MP3 players to store music because phones cannot be used. Cell phone use during a meet session will result in a minimum penalty of phone confiscation.

CONSEQUENCES:

Any action that NOVA deems to be harmful to another athlete, coach, staff member, or the NOVA image will be subject to consequences as outlined in the NOVA swimmer’s code of conduct