



To: AGM participants and the BIFC community

From: BIFC Board

Dear club members:

We'd like to begin by thanking everyone who came to the AGM. During the open session and via prior communications received from club members, several questions were posed that we felt deserved thoughtful responses. In order to foster an open environment, we have posted these responses to our website, as well as responded directly to those who asked the questions.

We also want to take a moment to acknowledge the pain that past events have caused in our community. We do not expect anything we say today to solve all of these problems. We do feel this is an important first step as we continue to reflect and act on the issues and suggestions that deserve the full attention of club leadership.

We will never stop working to make a safe, joyful, inclusive soccer environment for every coach, player, official, parent, and community member.

While our staff and board have been and continue to work hard to improve the club's operation and culture, we understand that the pace at which we've been able to provide information has clearly been a point of frustration. We (the new BIFC executive board) are providing answers to the questions received from the community because we want to be clear how integral the entire soccer community is to BIFC. At the same time, please understand that there are some questions that enter employee and club member privacy protections and therefore we've answered to the clearest extent possible.

Comments and questions regarding the mechanisms in place to ensure the safety of youth players, coaches, and other club members:

Every day the club, via its coaches, staff, and board work diligently to keep your children safe. The following are specific examples of things the club does to ensure the safety of our children:

- **Hiring coaches:** Before a person can coach for BIFC, they are required to undergo a rigorous background check process performed by Washington Youth Soccer. We are expanding this process to include cross-referencing names against the historical records of our Conduct Review Board.
- **Volunteers and Board members:** Any person who volunteers in a role with access to minors or who will serve on our Board must also pass the Washington Youth Soccer background check process, and our internal cross-reference check.
- **Training:** Coaches and staff are trained to respond to a wide variety of health and safety issues on the field, including sudden cardiac arrest, head injuries, lightning risk, and general first aid. We also teach our coaches strategies for responding to hostile spectators or coaches and/or referee abuse, including techniques for de-escalation up to the abandonment of the game. No game is so important that a referee (who is frequently a minor) or player should be subject to

abuse.

- **Internal Health and Safety Policies:** We as a club also have a history of developing and promoting forward-looking policies for responding to environmental risks including safe, fact-based return-to-play guidelines and surveillance during the COVID pandemic and in the context of heightened smoke levels. During the COVID pandemic, other clubs in the region relied on and utilized our return-to-play guidelines and daily notifications tracking infection levels. During the height of the COVID pandemic and before vaccines became widely available, our club did not experience a single incident of intra-team transmission. This is due at least in part to the efforts the club made to track the pandemic, develop policies, and train our coaches, players, and parents.
- **Conduct Review Board and Process:** The club has invested significant resources to formalize its conduct review practices, including creating a Conduct Review Board
- **Independent Safety Officer:** The club has its own independent Safety Officer. That person's role is to monitor the operation of the Conduct Review Board, ensure that safety concerns are addressed, and offer recommendations for improvements to our safety and conduct practices.
- **Administrative Policies:** We have a number of administrative policies that support our safety practices, including a document retention system; an employee handbook; and codes of conduct for players, parents, volunteers, and staff.
- **Complaint Mechanism:** Any player, parent, or community member is welcome and encouraged to report any safety concern to any BIFC representative. We also offer an anonymous/confidential reporting system, and other similar measures.
- **Coordination with Law Enforcement:** In the event of potential criminal conduct, BIFC works with local law enforcement to ensure that any potential criminal conduct is promptly reported.

Questions Related to Terminated Coach, or Other Past Allegations, or Investigations

We have received questions asking for more information regarding the employment history of the coach who was terminated in September. While we understand the desire for more information, the club took the most severe action possible, termination of that person's employment and reporting that incident as required. We have also received a request for internal records related to past allegations or investigations of misconduct. BIFC does not publicly disclose the contents of an employee's personnel file or other confidential HR records. As an initial matter, federal and state laws can limit an employer's ability to share information about its employees. Moreover, sharing such information may re-victimize a complainant as well as deter complaints from being brought forward. If a person reports misconduct, they have the reasonable expectation that the details of their experience and communication with the club will not be shared publicly. Without that expectation of privacy, people will be dissuaded from making reports of potential misconduct in the future, thus undermining the club's ability to provide a safe environment for its members.

We understand that a timeline of allegations involving the terminated coach has been circulated, suggesting a lack of action on the part of the club. The timeline is incomplete and leaves out significant information about the club's actions and engagement with respect to all involved parties. But for the reasons given above, we do not intend to release more information.

Comments and questions about the mechanisms for BIFC Board handling misconduct complaints

BIFC responds to misconduct complaints by reporting it to third parties with authority to investigate and take appropriate action, and by initiating its own internal conduct review process. With all misconduct complaints, the starting point is always the Federal SafeSport Law. Under that law, if there is a reasonable suspicion of any form of child abuse, the Board (and/or other mandatory reporters including our coaches) promptly

report it to law enforcement and SafeSport as required by law. Those agencies bring their full investigative and punitive powers to bear on such allegations, including criminal prosecution, suspension of licenses, lifetime bans, and the like. In addition, the Board reviews misconduct complaints according to the club's conduct review process. If a complaint is directed to a member of the Conduct Review Board itself, that member must recuse themselves from the review process.

We invite you to review our conduct review process (linked on the BIFC website) and welcome any feedback.

Retaliation is unethical and disallowed under various codes of conduct, such as the WA Youth Soccer Code of Conduct and Safe Sport rules, as well as state and federal law in some cases. We take great care to honor and act on complaints and concerns that are brought to our attention and do not retaliate against or discourage complaints.

Comment and questions regarding input from women and girls at the club and their experience within the club and community

The club has participated in many forms of listening with coaches and others, in individual and group settings. Based on a September 2023 meeting with the female coaches at the club and additional input from those coaches and other club members, the club leadership identified concrete improvements to be made to the club's processes.

In response to a direct request from several female coaches, we have implemented a confidential and anonymous reporting system to allow concerns to be reported by those who wish to do so anonymously or are concerned about retaliation. All reports from the system are brought to the attention of multiple board members in addition to our independent Safety Officer, Meghan Frazer.

Apart from concrete actions already taken, the club plans to invest more of its time and volunteer hours into addressing broader issues raised during that meeting. We intend to schedule more meetings to ensure an ongoing and robust dialogue between the club and coaches.

Since September, the club, various coaches and members of the community have been engaging around a variety of practical and cultural issues as part of our goal towards growth and improvement. These steps will continue in perpetuity as we believe in a culture of continuous improvement.

Questions and comments regarding the Safety Officer and Conduct Review Board

In order to provide multiple safeguards, we have introduced an impartial Safety Officer,

Meghan Frazer. She is highly qualified in employment law, having performed many conduct-related investigations during her career. We think she will be terrific in this role and are grateful for her volunteerism.

Details regarding the makeup of the Conduct Review Board (CRB) are included in the

[Conduct Review Process](#) which is listed on our website. Additionally, the CRB rules

require reporting not only to the CRB, but mandate reporting to the Safety Officer as well as the wider board.

Questions regarding the transparency of the international tour budget

The international tour is entirely self-funded by the payments made by the participants in the tour. As an independent project that does not use any BIFC funds, it is not part of the BIFC budgeting process.

The tour participants have also engaged in fundraising. We are deeply thankful for donations made for our silent auction at the club's 40th birthday party. In recognition that donations were made by teams that do not have members attending the tour, we have allocated 30% of the proceeds to the club's scholarship fund to provide assistance for club fees. The other 70% of the proceeds are used to reduce the cost of the tour for tour participants. BIFC Annual Financial Reports are included with our Board Meeting minutes and other public reports. They can be found on our website at <https://www.bifc.net/bylaws-meetings>. BIFC's monthly financial statements are available for all club members upon request. If you have further questions about any of our accounting, feel free to contact our Treasurer, Brett Deits.

What can we expect from the club around communications?

We are committed to improving communication throughout the organization. With this goal in mind, the club plans to explore potential structural changes to the organization as well as directing more resources and volunteer hours into addressing broader issues raised by the community over the last several months, including by the female coaches during our September 2023 meeting. We intend to create improved development and mentoring opportunities and regular meetings focused on creating improved culture and ongoing and robust dialogue between the club members, coaches, and the board.

Equally important is our commitment to improving our communications with families. Executive committee members plan on visiting many select practices and games in January as one example of how we plan to create greater direct face-to-face communication opportunities. Strengthening our trust, relationships, and commitment with/to each other will be foundational to improving communication and culture at the club. We always welcome your feedback and we are committed to doing everything we can do to communicate with the entire club in an improved, accurate, timely, and constructive manner.

In conclusion

There is still work to be done, and we are committed to that work. We will continue to work on opportunities to engage with the community and are always open to questions or to ideas people have for contributing to a positive soccer environment for everyone. While proud of the new and improved CRB process, we expect it will continue to be refined to work us towards the best possible environment for all to participate in this beautiful sport.

Many club members have reached out to BIFC with words of encouragement and support. We embrace all of the feedback that we've received during the past few months because we recognize that our entire community desires and deserves the same common goal. Our club is filled with smart, caring, passionate, and hard-working people. As we move forward, we must all find a way to come back together, unified in our pursuit to make BIFC the best soccer club for EVERYONE.

We want to recognize all of the hard work that our coaches, players, families, and administrators will be putting in as we get prepared for the upcoming tournament season.

We're so proud of everyone, and hope that we can all pause as we watch all the work that goes into these upcoming games to fully embrace the joy of the sport and our club.

BIFC is made up of all of us, the club continues to rely on your involvement and support. If you have any ideas or suggestions, we encourage you to reach out. As much as it seems like "everyone knows" something, please don't assume we do. As trite as it may seem, if you see something, SAY SOMETHING.

Please direct any follow-up questions or comments to eboard@bifc.net.