
Our letter to the RDTC Board about the Code of Conduct

FRIENDS OF RED DEER TENNIS · MAY 17, 2025

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Dear tennis friends,

Happy long weekend! We hope you are out with family and friends, enjoying this long weekend break as we head into summer.

Our Thursday issue highlighted our concerns with the Board's proposed new Code of Conduct and encouraged you to send in your own feedback. We hope you have done so!

We have just submitted our own feedback to the Board and thought we would share it with you (it's included at the bottom of this newsletter). If you agree with our concerns and don't have much time - (it's the long weekend, Board Directors!!) - feel free to write a short note to echo any feedback herein. If you are busy doing something fun this weekend (we hope you are!) but you care about the tone this Code of Conduct would set for the Club, please consider the quick action of writing the Board to ask for more time to submit feedback.

Concerns about Intentions - Looking Ahead

We remain concerned about the very short timeframe for this feedback and what it reflects about the Board's true desires to hear from its members and players. We are also concerned about the authority this Code will give the Board over individuals without any due process or oversight.

These concerns together seem ominous in light of the upcoming Town Hall on May 25 and the Special Meeting to review the revised Bylaws on June 8. If implemented after tomorrow, as seems to be the Board's plan, this Code would be in place before those meetings. **In fact, anyone who wanted to attend those meetings - being held on Club premises - would have to sign this Code before attending.** And that means that anyone who speaks up at those meetings or raises concerns about the Board's decision-making is subject to the Board's interpretation of whether these concerns by individuals are "appropriate" or could be subject to sanctions.

We have to say - it does not make us want to go. Does it make you feel comfortable going?

The whole point of a Code of Conduct should be to create a feeling of safety, a shared set of expectations for behaviour, and some trust that those around you will behave well. We do not feel like this Code conveys that tone. We are worried that the Board will use their authority, as given them through this Code, **to discourage healthy dissent and to reprimand anyone raising questions or concerns.** In short, we fear that they will use it to squash any opposition to their plans and kick out of the meetings and/or the Club anyone who does not agree with them. This is not the kind of democratic Club environment that would ensure safety.

Our Recommendations to the Board

To help promote engagement and a democratic environment, without fear of reprisals or sanctions, we have asked the Board for a more reasonable timeframe for review and feedback. We have also asked them to provide a summary of all the feedback they have received as well as a commentary on what feedback they have incorporated and what they have not, and why. We have then also asked for a full membership vote on the revised draft.

The Board Directors are your elected representatives. As such, they owe you this respect of

considering your feedback and ensuring that your concerns are heard and addressed. For the sake of transparency and trust, this Board should be accountable for their decision-making around this Code by making their rationale clear to all of us. Finally, if they are making your membership (or even presence!) contingent on this document, a formal membership vote - the space for you to voice your power - should not be by-passed.

Please join us in asking them for this!

Keep Rallying,

The Friends

Dear RDTTC Board of Directors,

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft Code of Conduct. We have shared our concerns about this draft in our recent newsletter. We attach this newsletter here (see forwarded content) as our feedback for your review. We are happy to discuss any of these concerns in more detail should any of you have questions.

In order to address our concerns, we make the following recommendations:

1. **Provide more time for members and players to review this Code**, to provide feedback on it, and to officially endorse it **through a membership vote** before it is implemented at the Club.

- A Code cannot be successfully upheld as a player agreement if people do not have a chance to read it and review it properly. Six days, and over a long weekend, is very little time for people to review a lengthy document, to give it sufficient thought, and to write and submit feedback. The 21 days provided for the review of the revised Bylaws feels appropriate for this document as well.
- Without providing this adequate review time and by requiring that people sign it before they can make a booking or play a match, you risk people standing in the entrance of the bubble and signing it without reading it just because their tennis buddy is waiting for them on the court.
- If the goal of this Code is to ensure better behaviour at the RDTTC and a safer place for all, then setting up conditions where people do not even have a proper chance to read, review or commit to it will not serve this purpose. It will be more of a rote waiver signed to allow entry rather than any kind of commitment to fair and respectful behaviour.

2. **Include information in the Code about who will be holding members, players, and facility users accountable.**

Individuals signing this code should know ahead of time who violations will ultimately be reported to, who will be assessing those violations, and who will be making decisions about what consequence is warranted in any particular case. For individuals to sign an agreement, it is important to know who will be holding them accountable for their behaviour and what process will be followed to do so.

3. **Include an explanation, criteria, or examples of circumstances in which the Club may be justified in waiving or modifying this Code in its sole discretion.**

In order to ensure trust and transparency, Individuals signing an agreement that they are expected to adhere to ought to have some idea of when it might be appropriate for one party, in a position of authority, to waive or dismiss the agreement.

4. **Include in the Code a clearer connection between infractions and consequences.**

For example, we presume that the consequences for having shoes in poor condition would be a lesser consequence than engaging in harassing or abusive behaviour. Please attach each expectation in this Code with the consequence that would follow for the user if they do not follow it. This clarity will help to ensure that people's agreement to this Code is informed and that their signature acknowledges their understanding of the consequences if they do not follow the expectations detailed in Code.

5. **Be particularly clear which behaviours could warrant a consequence to**

membership (e.g. a suspension or a ban).

For members to be fully informed about their obligations when buying (or continuing) a membership at the RDTC, it is important for these expectations to be made explicit. This clarity is additionally important since - as the draft is currently written - people can experience suspensions or a ban of their membership due to the behaviour of their guests. As a result, members will need to be able to explain the rules of coming to the RDTC to their guests in a clear and concise way, although presumably guests will also be expected to sign the Code to access the facilities, in which case they are also indicating responsibility for their own behaviour.

- 6. Define in the Code all terms that could warrant a reprimand, in particular a suspension or a ban in membership or entry to the grounds.**

In particular, please define the following terms: 'harassment', 'abusive language', 'discrimination', 'arguments', 'aggressive behaviour', and 'shouting'. In our experience with the Board, the Board's understanding of these terms do not always match with common definitions of these terms. If people are to commit to following this Code with a proper understanding of how these behaviours will be assessed by others, then it is essential for all parties to rely upon an explicit and shared understanding of the meaning of these terms.

- 7. Include in the Code more explicit detail about how violations of the Code, or reports of others violating the Code, will be followed up on.**

Who will initially review these concerns and assess whether they are frivolous or legitimate? What will the criteria for this assessment be? What will be the next steps? Will the concern go to the full Board of Directors? Will there be a sub-committee of the Board to review concerns or will a group of people be established at the Club (perhaps made up of some Board members and some other members or players) to review these concerns and determine appropriate consequences? How will judgments be made about what is "inappropriate" or "not tolerated"?

What process will this body follow to investigate each concern to ensure that what was reported is accurate? (For example, a discussion with the alleged perpetrator or statements from witnesses.) Please include the process by which the defendant will be able to explain their actions and provide context.

Will this process be transparent and open to the defendant so that the investigation process and/or decisions made can be fully scrutinized to ensure legitimacy and fairness? What will be the appeal process if users do not feel like their case was handled fairly or that they were not given a proper opportunity to explain themselves?

- 8. Include clear timeframes and terms for any suspensions or bans.**

How will timeframes for these bans be established? What will be the review process for determining when they will be lifted? What would be the conditions for someone who has been subject to a suspension or a ban to be let back into the facility?

- 9. Provide more explanation about how sanctions will be applied to individuals who do not report on the infractions of others.**

If someone behaves in a way thought to be in violation of the Code, and did so in a place where they were observed by several others (e.g. in the bubble, in the club house, or on the sidewalk around the courts), would all those people be required to report the behaviour to staff and management? If one or more people report, will the others be sanctioned for not having done so?

If no one makes a report, how will that situation be addressed? Will the Board be reviewing camera footage to monitor the grounds on a continual basis to ensure that people are reporting on the behaviours of others?

What will be the process for reviewing the infractions of people who fail to report? Will they also have an opportunity to provide some context and explanation for their actions (or lack thereof)? Will the consequences to those who fail to report be equal to those of the person who violated the Code or will they be assessed according to different criteria?

- 10. Include within the Code how this Code will apply to the RDTC Board of Directors.**

Is the Board exempt from this Code? While there is an explicit statement that Coaches shall be held to the same standards as members, there is no such statement about the expectations of Board Directors. If this Code applies to Board Directors as well, please include an explicit statement to this effect. If the Board is exempt, please provide a rationale for why Board members will be held to a different standard than other members and players of the Club and what these standards will be.

If the Code does apply to Board Directors, then please include information in the Code about who will assess any violations of this Code by Board Directors; clearly, there is an inherent Conflict of Interest for a person or entity to investigate themselves. An explicit description of this process will help to ensure that the Code is indeed applied in a way that is fair and respectful for all parties.

11. Explain how you are going to make all Club policies available to members, users, and guests, before they enter the premises and are required to sign the code.

In order for people to be able to provide a valid agreement that they are “aware and understand all Policies of the Club that pertain to them before entering onto the Club Premises”, they must be provided with those policies and a chance to review them prior to entering the Club or signing this Code. Will these policies all be posted on the RDTC website, emailed to members and players, or handed out to guests upon entrance to the grounds prior to their being granted entry?

Since the Club can “introduce or amend policies” from “time to time” and individuals can be sanctioned for not following these policies, please explain what process the Board is proposing to adopt so that all new policies or amendments are communicated to members and players for their awareness.

We look forward to reviewing a revised draft that has addressed our concerns. For any recommendations made herein that the Board chooses not to accept, we request a written response with an explanation for why the recommendation was not incorporated into the new version.

We also request that the Board provide a summary to all members and players of the feedback that was received, and a commentary on which comments will be incorporated into a new draft and which will not be. For any feedback that will not be incorporated, we request that the Board provide an explanation for why the comment was not incorporated.

This transparency around feedback is vital as it will show responsiveness by the Board and also a commitment by the Board to a fair and transparent process in creating and incorporating a new Code of Conduct. Failure to be open and transparent will give the impression of there being a hidden agenda behind the creation of this document and a desire by the Board to not be held accountable for potential flaws in the document.

Transparency is important as it will increase the buy-in of the membership, thereby helping to achieve the stated goal of a safer and more respectful RDTC.

We look forward to your response.

Regards,

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