

**BEFORE THE UK ATHLETICS DISCIPLINARY PANEL
BETWEEN:**

UK ATHLETICS LIMITED

Complainant

and

CHRIS BARNES

Respondent

DECISION

UPON UK Athletics prosecuting the Respondent pursuant to the UK Athletics Disciplinary Rules and Procedures (the “**UKA Rules**”);

and

UPON UK Athletics and the Respondent having in writing agreed to the terms of this Decision by mutual consent;

and

UPON the Panel having discretion under paragraph 16.5 of the UKA Rules to ratify or reject a Decision that is agreed by the parties and the Panel exercising its discretion to ratify the terms of this Decision.

IT IS DECIDED THAT:

DECISION

Background

1. UK Athletics brought charges against the Respondent regarding Misconduct under Section 2 of the UKA Rules.
2. The Respondent was Charged following an investigation by Sport Resolutions into whether the Respondent’s behaviour and conduct breached the UK Athletics Code of Conduct for Coaches (the “**Codes of Conduct**”).

3. UK Athletics appointed the following members of a disciplinary panel (the 'Panel') to adjudicate this case:
- i) Shamini Nainappan Grayson, Chair of the Panel
 - ii) Denzil Johnson
 - iii) Scott Murray

Charges and findings

4. Upon the conclusion of an investigation by Sport Resolutions, UK Athletics raised nine charges against the Respondent. The charges related to alleged Misconduct pursuant to Section 2 of the Disciplinary Rules. The behaviour complained of was alleged by UK Athletics to amount to a breach of the Codes of Conduct. The charges and the Respondent's responses are set out in paragraphs 5-28 below:

Charge 1: The Respondent engaged in an intimate relationship with [REDACTED] whilst acting as her coach.

5. Between March 2019 and January 2021, the Respondent conducted an intimate relationship with [REDACTED] whilst acting as her coach.

According to the Code of Conduct March 2018

As a responsible athletics Coach you will:

- i) Develop appropriate working relationships with athletes based on mutual trust and respect, especially with those athletes under 18 years or vulnerable adults.*
- ii) A coach MUST strictly maintain a clear boundary between friendship and intimacy with athletes and do not conduct inappropriate relationships with athletes. Relationship with athletes can cause significant problems for other team members, raising concerns of favouritism and/or victimisation should the relationship later end.*

6. Charge 1 is admitted.

Charge 2: The Respondent sent sexually explicit and inappropriate images and messages to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] whilst acting as their coach.

7. Between March 2019 and January 2021, the Respondent sent various sexually explicit images and messages to [REDACTED]
8. Additionally, the Respondent sent two sexually inappropriate images to [REDACTED].

According to the Code of Conduct March 2018

As a responsible athletics Coach you will:

- i) *Develop appropriate working relationships with athletes based on mutual trust and respect, especially with those athletes under 18 years or vulnerable adults.*
- ii) *A coach MUST strictly maintain a clear boundary between friendship and intimacy with athletes and do not conduct inappropriate relationships with athletes. Relationship with athletes can cause significant problems for other team members, raising concerns of favouritism and/or victimisation should the relationship later end.*
- iii) *Never engage in inappropriate or illegal behaviour.*

9. Charge 2 is admitted.

Charge 3: The Respondent used racist slurs and inappropriate language in messages sent to [REDACTED].

10. Between September 2013 and August 2020, the Respondent made inappropriate remarks during conversations over Facebook messenger to [REDACTED], including:
 - i) “it’s simple tomorrow I’ll just blame the pakis for losing our license” (18 August 2020)
 - ii) “Bloody paki shop worker” (19 January 2020)

- iii) When discussing his football match, when asked whether he was captain he responded “yep in a game against blacks and browns”...”with a brown ref”. (29 September 2019)”

According to the Code of Conduct March 2018

As a responsible athletics Coach you will:

- i) *Avoid swearing and abusive language and irresponsible behaviour including behaviour that is dangerous to yourself or others, acts of violence, bullying, harassment and physical and sexual abuse.*
- ii) *Never engage in inappropriate or illegal behaviour.*

11. Charge 3 is admitted.

Charge 4: The Respondent made inappropriate comments bringing Athletics into disrepute.

12. Between 19 March 2019 and 4 April 2019, the Respondent made inappropriate remarks about [REDACTED] on Strava including:

- i) “if you’d ran at your ‘morning’ pace it might have been lunch you big K****”
- ii) “24 bad runs. Incredible yeah”
- iii) “[REDACTED] you are absolutely useless”

13. Between March 2019 and March 2020, the Respondent would tell [REDACTED] to run every morning at a certain pace and made inappropriate comments such as:

- i) “3 mile... Go before I change my mind...new deal...If you run all between 7.15/7.30 we won’t again”
- ii) “3 miles ALL between 7.15/7.30 or no sex ever again”

14. On 15 September 2020, the Respondent posted a Tweet stating: “This years Turkey Trot theme is dress like a tw*t...No race limit”.

15. On 20 September 2020, the Respondent posted a Tweet stating:

“Imagine the Olympic 100m final not being the fastest 8 runners but the most diverse.

1 gay, 1 Asian, 1 obese, 1 black, 1 OAP, 1 wag and 2 actually good sprinting...

#BakeOff”

According to the Code of Conduct March 2018

As a responsible athletics Coach you will:

- i) Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every athlete and others involved in athletics and treat everyone equally.*
- ii) Act with dignity and display courtesy and good manners towards others.*
- iii) Avoid swearing and abusive language and irresponsible behaviour including behaviour that is dangerous to yourself or others, acts of violence, bullying, harassment and physical and sexual abuse.*
- iv) Avoid critical language or actions, such as sarcasm which could undermine an athlete’s self-esteem.*
- v) Develop appropriate working relationships with athletes based on mutual trust and respect, especially with those athletes under 18 years or vulnerable adults.*
- vi) A coach MUST strictly maintain a clear boundary between friendship and intimacy with athletes and do not conduct inappropriate relationships with athletes. Relationship with athletes can cause significant problems for other team members, raising concerns of favouritism and/or victimisation should the relationship later end.*
- vii) Never engage in inappropriate or illegal behaviour.*

16. Charge 4 is admitted.

Charge 5: The Respondent engaged in an intimate relationship with [REDACTED] whilst acting as her coach.

17. Between February 2020 and June 2020, the Respondent conducted an intimate relationship with [REDACTED] whilst acting as her coach. The Respondent did not tell [REDACTED] that he was married during their relationship.

According to the Code of Conduct March 2018

As a responsible athletics Coach you will:

- i) Develop appropriate working relationships with athletes based on mutual trust and respect, especially with those athletes under 18 years or vulnerable adults.*
- ii) A coach MUST strictly maintain a clear boundary between friendship and intimacy with athletes and do not conduct inappropriate relationships with athletes. Relationship with athletes can cause significant problems for other team members, raising concerns of favouritism and/or victimisation should the relationship later end.*

18. Charge 5 is admitted.

Charge 6: The Respondent engaged in inappropriate practices

19. Between 2019 and 2021, the Respondent was obsessive over food and body weight and told athletes what they could or could not eat.
20. Between 2019 and 2022, during a trip to Lancashire with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], the Respondent refused to allow [REDACTED] to purchase food. This proceeded to an argument whereby the Respondent told [REDACTED] “this is why your parents don’t want anything to do with you”.

According to the Code of Conduct March 2018

As a responsible athletics Coach you will:

- i) Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every athlete and others involved in athletics and treat everyone equally.*
- ii) Place the welfare and safety of the athlete above the development of performance.*
- iii) Make the athlete's health and welfare your primary and overriding concern.*
- iv) Act with dignity and display courtesy and good manners towards others*
- v) Avoid swearing and abusive language and irresponsible behaviour including behaviour that is dangerous to yourself or others, acts of violence, bullying, harassment and physical and sexual abuse.*

21. Charge 6 is admitted.

Charge 7: The Respondent made demeaning comments concerning athletes' weight.

22. Between January 2019 and January 2021, The Respondent made comments on female athletes' bodies, such as:

- i) That [REDACTED] was "slim".
- ii) That [REDACTED] "had a big bum".
- iii) [REDACTED] was overweight.
- iv) In August 2022, with regards to one female athlete, "she's got a fucking huge arse", "she's a fucking heffer", "she's put on so much weight" "she's massive" and "she's blown up".
- v) That [REDACTED] was "a chubby fucker".
- vi) To [REDACTED], that he had "had coached lots of other athletes who were overweight and the one thing they needed to do to help their training was to lose weight".

According to the Code of Conduct March 2018

As a responsible athletics Coach you will:

- i) Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every athlete and others involved in athletics and treat everyone equally.*
- ii) Act with dignity and display courtesy and good manners towards others*

iii) Avoid swearing and abusive language and irresponsible behaviour including behaviour that is dangerous to yourself or others, acts of violence, bullying, harassment and physical and sexual abuse.

23. Charge 7 is admitted.

Charge 8: The Respondent engaged in inappropriate behaviour (including manipulative, coercive, controlling and / or unsafe behaviour)

24. In October 2019 the Respondent encouraged [REDACTED] to participate in a race whilst she was undergoing [a serious medical procedure.]¹.

25. In January 2020, without the requisite medical qualifications to do so, the Respondent told [REDACTED] to take medication for depression.

According to the Code of Conduct March 2018

As a responsible athletics Coach you will:

- i) Place the welfare and safety of the athlete above the development of performance.*
- ii) Be aware that your attitude and behaviour directly affects the behaviour of athletes under your supervision.*

26. Charge 8 is admitted.

Charge 9: The Respondent failed to follow regulations and procedure

27. In late 2019 to early 2020, a 15-year-old athlete joined Ribble Valley Running Club. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] informed the Respondent that he had to obtain a DBS check as he was the coach. The Respondent refused.

According to the Code of Conduct March 2018

¹ A wording alteration has been made here in respect of this paragraph in order to protect the anonymity of the witness.

As a responsible athletics Coach you will:

- i) Be appropriately qualified including obtaining DBS/Disclosure Scotland/Access NI clearance, update your licence and education as and when required by UKA and adhere to the terms of the coaching licence.*

28. Charge 9 is admitted.

Sanctions

29. As a result of the breaches set out in paragraphs 5-28 above, the Disciplinary Panel sanctions the Respondent as follows:

Chris Barnes permanently banned from participation in any and all roles in athletics including coaching and organising events including athletics or athletics competitions taking place under the Rules of World Athletics and/or the UKA Competition Rules in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

30. Neither party shall have the right to Appeal the Decision.

31. The parties shall bear their own legal costs of the case.

32. This Decision will be published on the UK Athletics website. UK Athletics may make such redactions to the Decision as it considers are necessary.

Shamini Nainappan Grayson

Chair of the Disciplinary Panel



17th June 2025