

Contents

- Article I: Bylaws 2
 - Section I: Name and Purpose 2
 - Section II: Governance 3
 - Section III: Hold Harmless and Limitation of Liability 4
 - Section IV: Governing Law 4
 - Section V: Membership 4
 - 1. Membership Categories (Collectively referred to as “Members”): 4
 - 2. Membership Agreement: 4
 - 3. Good Standing: 5
 - 4. Eligibility for Membership: 5
 - 5. Membership Revocation Due to Serious Criminal Offenses: 6
 - 6. Sharing of Disciplinary Information: 7
 - Section VI: Disciplinary Actions 8
 - I. Disciplinary Actions for violations of the Code Conduct, Bylaws, or other rules or policies. 8
 - II. Disciplinary Actions for Online Behavior (Code of Conduct): 10
 - Section VII: Sanctioned Events 10
 - Section VIII: Sanctioned Club Responsibilities 11
- Article II: Code of Conduct 13
 - Section I: Purpose: 13
 - Section II: Standard of Conduct: 13
 - Section III: Online and Digital Behavior: 14
 - 2. Standards of Behavior (Online and Digital): 14
 - Section IV: Member Responsibilities 15
 - Section V: Conflict Resolution and Reporting Processes 17
 - 1. Conflicts and Violations 17
 - 2. Reporting Violations of Online Behavior (Code of Conduct Violations): 17
 - 3. Grievances vs. Complaints, Definitions and Processes: 17
 - 4. Complaint Submission Process 18
 - I. Eligibility to File a Complaint: 18
 - II. Complaints of a Criminal Nature: 19
 - III. Requirement for Official Complaints: 19

IV. Transparency and Fairness: 19

V. Complaints Concerning PSA - AS Members Code of Conduct: 20

VI. Complaint Outcome Classifications: 21

VII. Complaint Outcome Discipline: 21

VIII. Timeline for Submitting Complaints: 22

IX. Transparency and Reporting:..... 22

Addendum: Interim Complaint Committee Procedures..... 23



PSA – AS Bylaws

Code of Conduct

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Article I: Bylaws

Section I: Name and Purpose

1. **Name:** The organization shall be known as The Protection Sports Association (PSA). PSA K9, Inc. is a North Carolina corporation. American Schutzhund (AS) is in a partnership with PSAK9. Corporate headquarters are at 230 W. Seawell Street, Sanford, NC 27330. Collectively both shall be referred to as PSA – AS herein.
2. **PSA Mission:** The Mission of PSA is to provide an outlet for civilian competition in canine obedience and controlled protection, to recognize achievement with titles and prizes, and to promote competition with club trials and championship tournaments. PSA will endeavor to set a new standard for training excellence in the protection sports, PSA shall encourage cross-over from other protection sports to provide a competitive venue that will test the best against the best, encouraging excellence, sportsmanship, and integrity throughout the dog training community.
3. **AS Mission:** To restore and maintain Schutzhund as a relevant breed suitability test for working dogs in America. Schutzhund will test the ability of the dog to withstand stress and continue to function in difficult situations. We will continue to evolve, always cognizant of the fact that the balance among the three phases of the test is what makes it so difficult and yet so important. The entire premise of the test is to determine the best dogs suitable for law enforcement, military and serving the needs of humanity. With the information gained through the rigorous phases of scent, obedience and protection work: police officers, individuals/organizations in disaster work, military forces and individuals will be able to choose canines suitable to execute the work of serving.
4. **Limits of Authority:** PSA and AS will not regulate clubs sanctioned with the organizations in either their conduct of business or their training methods or operations, other than what is provided within these bylaws and code of conduct.

Section II: Governance

1. PSA Board of Directors:

- The organization is governed by an appointed Board of Directors, consisting of regional directors, the director of judges, the director of decoys, and an executive secretary. This board is responsible for overseeing operations, establishing policies and event rules, and ensuring alignment with PSA's mission. In some cases, multiple director roles may be held by the same individual. AS administration shall be maintained in their rulebook.

2. Appointments:

- Board members and other positions within the organization are appointed based on qualifications and experience by the executive director, or the board of directors.

3. Authority to Amend:

- The PSA Board of Directors shall have the exclusive authority to amend, modify, or revoke the bylaws and code of conduct as deemed necessary for the organization's best interests.

4. Notice to Members:

- a) Upon adopting any amendments, the Board shall promptly notify all members of the changes via social media announcements.
- b) The updated bylaws and code of conduct, along with the effective date, shall be posted on the organization's official website.

5. Member Responsibility:

- a) Members are responsible for reviewing and familiarizing themselves with the current bylaws and code of conduct.
- b) Continued participation in the organization's activities signifies acceptance of the current and any amended bylaws and code of conduct.
- c) Members must stay informed about any future amendments or updates to these documents. It is the member's responsibility to remain informed about and comply with all governing documents throughout their membership.

Section III: Hold Harmless and Limitation of Liability

- a) Scope: Members acknowledge that participation in PSA - AS is a privilege, not a right.
- b) PSA - AS reserves the authority to suspend, revoke, or terminate membership based on violations of its bylaws, code of conduct, or other governing policies.
- c) Acknowledgment of Potential Impact: Members recognize that disciplinary actions may impact their personal or professional activities, including but not limited to loss of income, business opportunities, or reputational harm.
- d) Limitation of Liability: PSA - AS, its Board of Directors, officers, agents, and committee members shall not be liable for any direct, indirect, incidental, or consequential damages resulting from membership suspension, revocation, or termination.
- e) Indemnification: Members agree to indemnify and hold harmless PSA – AS and its representatives from any claims, losses, or damages arising out of or related to the enforcement of disciplinary actions.

Section IV: Governing Law

Choice of Law:

All legal matters arising out of or relating to these bylaws or the operations of The Protection Sports Association (PSA) or American Schutzhund (AS) shall be governed by, and construed in accordance with, the laws of the State of North Carolina, without regard to its conflict of laws principles.

Section V: Membership

1. Membership Categories (Collectively referred to as “Members”):

- a) **Individual Memberships:** Open to individuals who wish to participate in PSA activities and trials. Individual members are not required to be members of any club to participate in official events.
- b) **Family Memberships:** Covers two members of a single household, granting equivalent privileges as individual memberships for both listed family members.
- c) **Lifetime Memberships:** Provides lifelong membership benefits for individuals.
- d) **Club Memberships:** Required for hosting official sanctioned PSA events; clubs must be in good standing to maintain membership.
- e) **Working Memberships:** For officials serving PSA – AS in roles such as judges, secretaries, directors, decoys, helpers, or other members as designated by the appropriate Board of Directors.

2. Membership Agreement:

- a) Members must agree to comply with PSA – AS bylaws, rules, and policies, and application for membership and participation in sanctioned events indicates agreement and compliance with the terms contained herein.
- b) Only members in good standing may access the trial field or participate in official events.
- c) All membership fees are non-refundable.
- d) Members acknowledge that disciplinary actions, including suspension, revocation, or termination of membership, do not entitle them to a refund of any fees paid.
- e) By obtaining or renewing membership, individuals agree to this no refund policy as a condition of membership.
- f) All membership applications must contain accurate and truthful information. Submission of false, misleading, or incomplete information will result in the immediate revocation of membership, regardless of when the false information is discovered. PSA-AS reserves the right to verify any information provided in membership applications and take appropriate action if inaccuracies are identified.
- g) Individual and club memberships are granted for a specified term. Club memberships are valid for the current or upcoming seasons. Individual memberships are valid 1 year from date of application or renewal.
- h) Membership renewals in any category are not guaranteed.
- i) The Board of Directors or its designated representatives reserve the right to approve or deny membership applications or renewals. Decisions regarding membership approval or denial must be made in accordance with PSA's commitment to inclusivity and non-discrimination. PSA – AS does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, or any other characteristic protected by applicable law.

3. Good Standing:

- a) Members must adhere to PSA - AS rules and maintain payment of any applicable dues.
- b) Violations of PSA - AS code of conduct or bylaws may result in disciplinary actions, including suspensions, revocation of membership for the remainder of the current trial season, or lifetime bans from membership.

4. Eligibility for Membership:

- a) Membership is a privilege, not a right, and is open to individuals, families, and clubs who demonstrate an interest in PSA - AS's objectives and agree to abide by its rules, code of conduct, and guidelines.

- b) PSA - AS does not permit individuals who are listed on any publicly accessible sex offender registry to become members.
- c) PSA - AS does not permit individuals who have been convicted of Felony animal abuse or neglect.
- d) PSA - AS respects member privacy and does not prohibit membership based on prior criminal convictions. Believing in the justice system and rehabilitation, PSA - AS will not restrict membership for prior criminal history or activity that has been adjudicated in the criminal justice system, except for those being listed on a publicly accessible sex offender registry or those convicted of felony abuse of animals.
- e) Applicants for membership must submit a completed application via the online application and renewal forms along with any required fees to PSA - AS.

5. Membership Revocation Due to Serious Criminal Offenses:

I. Revocation Criteria: In the best interest of the PSA - AS organizations, the safety of its members, and the promotion of its mission, any member who is charged with the following offenses will voluntarily relinquish their PSA - AS membership to a revoked status for the remainder of the current trial season while addressing these personal matters:

The following are the offenses we consider to be serious criminal offenses requiring revocation:

- a) Felony sexual assault charges or other crimes commonly classified as "sex crimes," regardless of the specific legal terminology. Examples include, but are not limited to, rape, sodomy, carnal abuse, sexual solicitation of a minor, unlawful sexual contact with a minor, stalking, kidnapping of a minor (when the offender is not a parent or legal guardian), incest, or the sexual exploitation of a minor.
- b) Felony domestic violence charges.
- c) Offenses involving the use of a weapon against another person or causing serious physical injury to another person by means of a weapon.
- d) Felony animal cruelty or neglect charges. *

However, members who for any reason would like to relinquish their individual or club memberships for the remainder of the season may contact the executive secretary to be removed from the active published membership and club list.

II. Reapplication for Membership:

- a) Members whose membership is revoked under this section may reapply the following season with the written permission of the Board of Directors.
- b) Alternatively, members may reapply at any time by providing verifiable proof that the criminal offenses have been dismissed or are not being pursued by the relevant jurisdiction. Memberships reinstated under this provision will not incur any reinstatement fee if within the same trial season as the revocation.

III. Jurisdictional Variations:

- a) PSA - AS recognizes that legal classifications and terms vary across jurisdictions and countries. For the purposes of PSA - AS's interpretation, any of the charges listed above that carry a potential penalty of incarceration for more than one (1) year in the member's jurisdiction will meet the revocation criteria.

*A criminal conviction for felony animal cruelty or neglect violates membership eligibility, failure to disclose this when registering or renewing membership will result in an immediate lifetime ban once this is discovered and verified.

6. Sharing of Disciplinary Information:

- a) As a condition of membership, members acknowledge and agree that any disciplinary action resulting in a change in membership status, including but not limited to suspensions, revocations, or termination, may be shared with other recognized dog sport organizations upon official request or inquiry by their governing body, membership approval representative, or any agent conducting a formal or informal investigation.
 - b) This policy is intended to uphold the integrity, safety, and standards of the dog sport community while fostering the sharing of information and cooperation between organizations to promote accountability and excellence across the industry.
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Section VI: Disciplinary Actions

I. Disciplinary Actions for violations of the Code Conduct, Bylaws, or other rules or policies.

While our hope is that members handle conflicts privately and professionally, we recognize that sometimes, as a last resort, the organization may need to be involved. The following is a list of potential disciplinary actions that may result from violations of bylaws, the Code of Conduct, or other organizational policies:

- a. Disciplinary measures may include
 - i. An official letter of warning (may be issued by a Judge, Assistant Regional Director, Regional Director, Board of Directors, or a complaint review or grievance committee. In the case of decoys these may also be issued by assistant director of decoys and any secretary of decoys).
 - ii. A temporary suspension (a set period of days) of membership or certifications, (may be issued by a Judge, Assistant Regional Director, Regional Director, or Board of Directors.)
 - iii. A revocation of membership, or certifications for the remainder of the current trial season (may be issued by a Regional Director, or Board of Directors).
 - iv. Lifetime bans from membership or removal from appointments or certifications (may be issued by the Board of Directors).
- b. Disciplinary action resulting in suspensions or revocations issued by a Judge or a Director may be appealed to the entire Board of Directors through the Executive Secretary for review within seven (7) calendar days of the action being communicated.

The Board of Directors may uphold the discipline, may reinstate or eliminate the suspensions, increase the period for suspension, or elevate the issued discipline to a higher level up to a lifetime bans.

- c. Disciplinary actions issued by the Board of Directors are final.
- d. Members shall not be subject to disciplinary action more than once for the same offense, provided no new evidence or violations related to the original matter have emerged. This ensures fairness and finality in the resolution of disciplinary cases. However, ongoing or repeated violations of similar nature may be treated as separate offenses and subject to additional disciplinary actions.

- e. Authority of Event Judges to Issue Immediate Suspensions.

Official judges at PSA - AS events are authorized to issue immediate suspensions of membership or decoy certifications in any situation, they determine warrants such action. This includes, but is not limited to, breaches of the Code of Conduct, violations of event rules, or behavior that compromises the safety or integrity of the event.

 - i. Limitations on Filing Complaints Against Judges

To ensure the impartiality and authority of event judges, complaints may not be filed against judges solely for their decision to issue a temporary suspension. Judges act in the best interests of the event's safety, fairness, and compliance, and their authority in this regard is final during the event in question.
 - ii. Following the issuance of an immediate suspension, the judge must submit a written account of the incident to the regional director for the region where the incident occurred within seven (7) calendar days. The account should detail the nature of the incident, the reasons for the suspension, and any relevant supporting evidence.
 - iii. The regional director receiving the notification will either assign another director or assume the investigation of the incident. They will assess whether the issue can be handled at the regional level or requires escalation to the PSA - AS Board of Directors for further review and action.
 - iv. During the investigation, the suspended member will be notified of the suspension and given an opportunity to provide their account of the incident.

To respect the privacy of members and maintain the integrity of the system, disciplinary actions are a confidential matter between the member receiving the discipline and the Board of Directors. Official statements regarding disciplinary actions will not be issued by the PSA-AS Board of Directors and should not be publicly disclosed by any party unless the action results in a lifetime ban and the Board determines that disclosure is in the best interest of PSA-AS.

However, if the disciplinary action arises from an official complaint, the complaining party will be notified of the Board's decision and the outcome of the complaint, including whether any disciplinary measures were taken.

Additionally, disciplinary actions resulting in a change in membership status, such as suspensions, revocations, or lifetime bans, may be shared with other recognized dog sport organizations, including international organizations, upon official request or inquiry by their governing body, membership approval representative, or any agent conducting a formal or informal investigation.

Recognized dog sport organizations include, but are not limited to: Mondioring, French Ring, Belgian Ring, KNPV, APA, AKC, UKC, CPE, NADAC, Rally-O, IWDA, USCA, IGP, NACSW, USCSS, ATA, NAFA, NADD, IWPA, BHA, or any other organized dog sport organization as determined by the board of directors.

II. Disciplinary Actions for Online Behavior (Code of Conduct):

Violations of the online behavior policy do not require an investigation and may result in members being warned by any page administrator or PSA - AS official. Posts that violate PSA - AS's standards may be deleted, hidden, or declined. Members may also be removed from PSA - AS's official social media forums if their behavior is deemed inappropriate.

Other violations that are considered serious, such as cyberbullying, hate speech, copyright infringement, or sharing private member information, may be referred to a regional director or the PSA - AS Board of Directors for investigation or discipline. Such actions will be handled in accordance with the disciplinary measures outlined in the Code of Conduct below.

Section VII: Sanctioned Events

1. Approval Process:

- a) Clubs in good standing must submit requests for sanctioned events to their regional director or assistant regional director for approval.

2. Event Oversight:

- a) Sanctioned trials are overseen by trial judges, who have authority over trial operations, dispute resolution, and may issue temporary suspensions of memberships or decoy certifications.

3. Public Access:

- a) PSA - AS events are generally open to the public and we welcome spectators regardless of membership status. Property owners retain authority over access to their property.

4. Participation Requirements:

- a) Only members in good standing may enter the trial field or participate on the trial field or in any official capacity (secretary, steward, field set ups, clean ups, etc.)

Section VIII: Sanctioned Club Responsibilities

1. Adherence to PSA - AS Bylaws and Policies:

- a) Clubs must comply with all PSA - AS bylaws, rules, and policies.
- b) Clubs are required to ensure their members and leadership are familiar with PSA - AS's Code of Conduct, event rules, and organizational standards.

2. Hosting Sanctioned Events:

- a) Clubs must maintain good standing to host PSA - AS-sanctioned events.
- b) Clubs are responsible for submitting event sanctioning requests to their regional director in a timely manner.
- c) Clubs must ensure events are conducted in accordance with PSA - AS rules and guidelines.
- d) Clubs are responsible for securing appropriate event insurance through PSA - AS and collecting waivers of liability from participants if appropriate.
- e) Clubs are solely responsible for managing all financial aspects of hosting an event. PSA - AS does not impose regulations on how clubs handle registration fees or establish event registration policies.

3. Fostering a Safe and Respectful Environment:

- a) **Encouragement to Report:** Clubs are expected to encourage any individual who discloses being a victim of sexual assault to report the incident to the proper authorities. Clubs are strongly encouraged to provide victims with resources and support to facilitate reporting.
- b) **Prohibition of Discouragement:** Clubs and their members shall never discourage or attempt to dissuade any individual from reporting incidents of sexual assault to the proper authorities.
- c) **Creating a Safe Environment:** Clubs should strive to create an environment where individuals feel safe and supported when raising concerns or disclosing incidents related to sexual assault.
- d) **Respect for Privacy:** Any disclosures made to club members should be handled with sensitivity and respect for the individual's privacy, while still encouraging appropriate reporting.

- e) **Accountability:** Failure to adhere to these expectations may result in disciplinary action by PSA - AS, including but not limited to suspension or revocation of the club's sanctioned status. Complaints or concerns regarding non-compliance will be reviewed by PSA - AS leadership, and appropriate action will be taken based on the findings.
4. **Promoting PSA - AS's Mission:**
- a) Clubs should actively promote the values and mission of PSA - AS, including sportsmanship, excellence, and community engagement.
 - b) Clubs are encouraged to foster an inclusive and welcoming environment for all participants and spectators.
5. **Recordkeeping and Reporting:**
- a) Clubs are required to submit all event documents as requested by PSA - AS and outlined in the PSA - AS Rulebooks.
6. **Club Conduct:**
- a) As a condition of membership, clubs are responsible for ensuring ethical treatment of dogs and maintaining a positive reputation within the PSA - AS community.
7. **Financial Responsibilities:**
- a) Clubs are responsible for paying any required fees to PSA - AS, including membership dues and event fees in accordance with the PSA - AS Rulebooks.
8. **Responsibility for Sanctioned Event Conduct:**
- a) Clubs must ensure that events are conducted safely, ethically, and professionally.
 - b) Clubs are responsible for addressing any incidents or violations that occur during their events and reporting them to PSA - AS officials as needed.

Code of Conduct

Article II: Code of Conduct

Section I: Purpose:

- 1) The PSA - AS Code of Conduct exists to:
 - a. Uphold the highest standards of integrity, sportsmanship, and respect in all PSA - AS activities and events.
 - b. Provide guidelines for acceptable behavior during events, trials, and interactions.
 - c. Promote a safe and welcoming environment for all PSA - AS members.
 - d. Protect the privacy and rights of PSA - AS members.
 - e. Maintain the reputation of PSA - AS and its community.

Section II: Standard of Conduct:

- a) **Treatment of Dogs:** Any criminal form of neglect, or abuse, of dogs is prohibited.
- b) **Sportsmanship:** Members shall exhibit respect, fairness, and integrity in competition. Unsportsmanlike behavior, such as taunting, dishonesty, arguing with trial officials, disorderly conduct, or any form of cheating shall not be tolerated.
- c) **Interpersonal Behavior:** Members must treat other members and member clubs with respect and refrain from discriminatory or harassing behavior.
- d) **Event Conduct:** Members must comply with all trial rules, safety protocols, and property regulations.
- e) **Conduct Unbecoming:** PSA - AS members shall conduct themselves in such a manner as to reflect most favorably on the PSA - AS organization. Conduct unbecoming shall include that which brings discredit upon the operation or efficiency of the PSA - AS organization, sanctioned events, or its membership.
- f) **Drug and Alcohol Policy:** No alcohol, marijuana, or any illegal drug use including abuse of prescription drugs not prescribed to the user will be allowed during any PSA - AS sanctioned event. There are no exceptions. PSA - AS Directors or Judges viewing such conduct will implement immediate suspensions and send a written report to the executive secretary to be forwarded to the Board of Directors for further disciplinary action.

Section III: Online and Digital Behavior:

1. Purpose: To maintain the integrity, professionalism, and inclusivity of PSA - AS's community in all digital interactions. To establish clear expectations for member conduct on official social media, online forums, and other digital platforms where they are representing themselves as member or advertising an association with the Protection Sports Association via any medium.

2. Standards of Behavior (Online and Digital):

- a) **Respect and Professionalism:** Members must treat others with respect in all online communications. Disparaging, harassing, or discriminatory remarks about individuals, clubs, PSA, AS, or other dog sports will not be tolerated.
- b) **Constructive Communication:** Discussions and feedback shared online, especially about PSA - AS events, policies, or members, must remain constructive and solution-oriented.
- c) **Protection of PSA - AS's Reputation:** Members are expected to represent PSA - AS positively in all digital interactions and avoid behavior that could harm its reputation or contradict its stated mission.
- d) **Confidentiality:** Members must refrain from sharing sensitive or private information about PSA - AS members, events, or disciplinary actions without explicit written authorization to do so.
- e) **Compliance with Policies:** Members must adhere to PSA - AS's bylaws, Code of Conduct, and applicable laws in all digital interactions.

3. Prohibited Conduct Within PSA - AS Group(s):

- a) **Harassment or Bullying:** Threats, insults, or targeted attacks against individuals or groups are strictly prohibited.
- b) **Sharing Misinformation:** Spreading false or misleading, unverified information, or rumors about PSA - AS, its members, or events is not allowed.
- c) **Inappropriate Content:** Posting offensive, obscene, or illegal content on platforms associated with PSA - AS or its members is prohibited.

d) **Unauthorized Use of PSA - AS Branding in any Forum:** Members may not use PSA - AS's logo, or branding in personal or business-related online activities without prior written approval.

e) **PSA - AS's Role for Online Behavior:** The Protection Sports Association (PSA) reserves the authority to oversee and actively monitor all official digital platforms, including but not limited to PSA - AS forums, event pages, and other online spaces. This oversight is conducted to ensure that all content shared on these platforms aligns with the established policies and guidelines of the organization. PSA - AS further maintains the right to moderate, edit, or remove content as necessary to uphold compliance and maintain the integrity of these digital spaces.

Section IV: Member Responsibilities

1. **Compliance with Rules and Policies:** Members are required to adhere to all PSA - AS bylaws, rules, and policies, including those outlined in the Code of Conduct and specific event guidelines.
2. **Maintenance of Current Contact Information:** Members are required to provide a valid email address and phone number upon joining and must promptly notify in writing via direct message or private message any PSA - AS national secretary or executive secretary of any changes to their contact information to ensure continuous and effective communication.
3. **Sportsmanship and Integrity:** Members must exhibit honesty, fairness, and respect during all PSA – AS related activities and interactions. Members are expected to foster a spirit of cooperation and encouragement among competitors and clubs.
4. **Treatment of Dogs:** Members are expected to adhere to ethical and lawful practices in their interactions with dogs. Any behavior that may be considered, neglectful, or in violation of applicable laws is strictly prohibited.
5. **Event Participation:** Members are responsible for registering for events in compliance with PSA - AS guidelines and meeting all deadlines. Members must respect the authority of judges and event officials.
6. **Reporting Violations:** Members are encouraged to report any violations of PSA - AS rules or the Code of Conduct to the appropriate authority via the official complaint process. Members must cooperate in any investigations of reported violations.
7. **Respect for Privacy and Property:** Members must respect the privacy of other members and refrain from sharing any private personal information without consent. Members must also respect the property of PSA - AS, clubs, and event hosts.

8. **Financial Obligations:** Members are responsible for paying any applicable dues, event fees, or other financial commitments to PSA - AS in a timely manner.
9. **Promotion of PSA - AS's Mission:** Members should actively promote PSA - AS's mission by encouraging excellence, sportsmanship, and community engagement within the protection sports community.
10. **Reporting of Serious Criminal Offenses:** Members should notify in writing to their regional director or the executive secretary within 30 calendar days of being arrested, (charged, or released on bond) with a serious criminal offense as outlines in these bylaws and code of conduct. Failure to report applicable criminal charges may result in a lifetime ban.
11. **Withdrawing from Official Events:** If a member needs to withdraw from an official PSA - AS event, they are expected to promptly notify the host club as soon as possible. Timely communication ensures the host club can make any necessary adjustments to the event schedule or logistics. Members should also seek further guidance or instructions from the event host regarding any additional steps or requirements related to their withdrawal.

No-shows without prior notification are considered unprofessional and should not occur except in emergency situations. Members are encouraged to prioritize communication with the host club to maintain the integrity and professionalism of PSA - AS events.

12. **Cooperation in Investigations:** Members are expected to fully cooperate with any official investigations or inquiries conducted by PSA - AS or its representatives. This includes providing accurate and timely information, responding to requests for clarification, and assisting in resolving any issues or allegations related to PSA - AS policies, events, or member conduct. Failure to cooperate may result in disciplinary action, up to and including a lifetime ban of membership.
13. **Knowledge of Bylaws, Rules, and Regulations:** Members must stay informed about any future amendments or updates to these documents. It is the member's responsibility to remain informed about and comply with all governing documents throughout their membership.
14. **Events Involving Members with Restraining or Protection Orders:** To ensure the safety, professionalism, and smooth operation of PSA - AS events:
 - a. **Advance Notification Requirement:** Members who are subject to a legal restraining or protection order, whether as the restrained or protected party, involving another PSA - AS member must provide a minimum of 30 calendar days' advance written notice to the PSA - AS Secretary if they plan to attend a PSA - AS event where the other party may also be in attendance or scheduled to work the event in any official capacity.

- i. This applies exclusively to restraining or protection orders between PSA - AS members, as they may both be in attendance at the same event.
 - ii. This notification is necessary to allow for appropriate planning and measures to ensure compliance with the terms of the order and to maintain the safety and integrity of the event.
 - iii. Failure to provide the required notice may result in disciplinary action by PSA - AS if the failure leads to any disruption of the event, in the opinion of the Board of Directors or the Judge on record.
- b. **Discouragement of Conflict:** PSA - AS strongly discourages attendance by any party—whether restrained or protected—if such attendance could foreseeably lead to violations of legal orders or disrupt the event. Members are encouraged to resolve any legal or personal matters independently of PSA - AS events.
 - c. **PSA - AS's Role:** PSA - AS does not assume responsibility for enforcing restraining or protection orders. The organization will cooperate with law enforcement as required by law and take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of all participants and spectators.

Section V: Conflict Resolution and Reporting Processes

1. Conflicts and Violations

PSA - AS encourages members to resolve disputes informally through direct communication or facilitated discussions where appropriate. Filing a formal complaint should be considered a last resort after informal resolution attempts have been unsuccessful.

2. Reporting Violations of Online Behavior (Code of Conduct Violations):

Members who witness or experience inappropriate online behavior should report the incident to any page administrator or PSA - AS Board Member including Assistant Regional Directors, and should include supporting documentation (e.g., screenshots, links) where possible.

3. Grievances vs. Complaints, Definitions and Processes:

I. Grievances:

Grievances pertain to issues arising specifically during sanctioned events, such as disputes about judging decisions, decoy or helper actions on the field, field operations, or other procedural matters. These are typically event-specific concerns that require timely resolution to ensure fairness and timely collection of evidence and investigation. Complaints received that should be grievances will be returned to the complainant to follow the proper process. Submission through incorrect process does not change any advertised time periods for filing requirements.

a) Process:

Grievances are handled according to the guidelines outlined in the respective PSA or AS

Rulebook(s). Members should refer to the Rulebook(s) for detailed procedures on submitting and resolving grievances. These matters are generally addressed by event officials, such as judges, or regional directors as appropriate.

b) **Scope:**

Grievances are limited to addressing concerns related to the operation, performance, or outcomes of a specific sanctioned event. They do not address broader behavioral or organizational violations.

II. Complaints:

Complaints involve violations of PSA - AS's Code of Conduct, bylaws, or other organizational policies. These may include, but are not limited to, allegations of serious misconduct by members, unethical behavior, or other actions that conflict with PSA - AS's mission and values. Complaints may also address issues occurring outside of PSA - AS events that impact the integrity or reputation of the organization.

a) **Process:**

Complaints are submitted and handled as outlined in the PSA - AS bylaws. This process typically involves review by regional directors, with the possibility of escalation to the PSA - AS Board of Directors for serious or complex matters.

b) **Scope:**

Complaints address issues that extend beyond event-specific concerns, often requiring detailed investigation and careful review to determine appropriate disciplinary or corrective action.

c) **Limits of Authority:** Complaints will only be accepted if they pertain to individuals or clubs that are active members of the organization at the time of the alleged violation and when the complaint is submitted. Complaints about former members or clubs no longer in good standing or affiliated with PSA - AS fall outside the jurisdiction of the organization's disciplinary process.

4. Complaint Submission Process

I. Eligibility to File a Complaint:

a) PSA - AS encourages members to file complaints when they are directly involved in or directly affected by an incident that violates the Code of Conduct, bylaws, or organizational standards.

b) **Exceptions for Witness Reports:** While PSA - AS prioritizes complaints from directly involved parties, it recognizes that some serious situations may require witness reports. In such serious cases, witnesses may submit a complaint if they can provide specific, credible evidence directly related to the incident. Complaints should originate from individuals who have firsthand knowledge of the incident or who were present when it occurred. This ensures the process remains focused on addressing relevant and

substantiated issues. Complaints based solely on hearsay or speculative information may not be considered.

II. Complaints of a Criminal Nature:

- a) PSA - AS is not equipped to investigate or adjudicate allegations of criminal activity. Members who have knowledge of or are involved in incidents of a criminal nature, such as sexual assault, domestic abuse, violations of protection orders, animal abuse or neglect, assault, or other illegal activities, are strongly encouraged to report such matters immediately to the relevant law enforcement or legal authorities.
- b) **Follow-Up with PSA - AS:** Complaints of a criminal nature may only be submitted to PSA - AS after they have been reported to the appropriate authorities and official documentation, such as police reports or court filings, is made available to PSA - AS. This ensures that PSA - AS's involvement remains focused on addressing its internal policies and does not interfere in any way with legal proceedings or inadvertently discourage members from reporting criminal behavior to the proper authorities.

III. Requirement for Official Complaints:

All official complaints must be submitted via email to officialcomplaints@psak9-as.org to ensure proper documentation and review.

Complaints must:

- a) The subject line of the email should be labeled "Official PSA-AS Complaint",
- b) explicitly state the name and membership number of the filing complainant,
- c) clearly identify the bylaw, rule, or standard of conduct alleged to have been violated,
- d) include the resolution the complaining party seeks,
- e) provide the date(s) and time(s) of the alleged violation(s),
- f) and provide all relevant proof of violation in possession of the complainant,
- g) must include the following statement: **"I hereby affirm that the statements made in this complaint are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief and are made in good faith."**

This ensures clarity in the review process, promotes accountability, and helps guide the appropriate resolution.

IV. Transparency and Fairness:

The identity of a complainant will generally be disclosed to the accused to ensure fairness and allow for a full defense. However, in cases involving safety concerns, harassment, or potential retaliation, the identity of the complainant may remain confidential unless required to properly investigate. The accused will still be provided with sufficient details of the complaint to prepare

a response. All complaints will be handled with sensitivity and fairness to both parties.

V. Complaints Concerning PSA - AS Members Code of Conduct:

- a. Complaints regarding PSA - AS general members or clubs code of conduct or bylaw violations, should be submitted to officialcomplaints@psak9-as.org and include all required elements as listed in “requirements for official complaints section”. However, we recognize the possibility that the complaint may involve a member of the complaint review committee who receives the email. If the complaint involves anyone directly involved in the complaint review process the complaint may be submitted directly to the executive secretary of PSA - AS, who will then route the complaint to the appropriate person(s) for investigation.
- b. ***Discouragement of Abuse:*** PSA - AS encourages the responsible use of the complaint process to address genuine serious concerns related to code of conduct or bylaw violations. The submission of complaints with malicious intent, including those aimed at harassing, embarrassing, or annoying another member without legitimate cause, is strictly prohibited.
- c. ***Personal Relationships:*** Complaints arising from personal disputes, including those between individuals who are currently or were previously romantically involved, must demonstrate a clear and relevant connection to PSA - AS’s mission, activities, or standards. Complaints based solely on personal grievances unrelated to PSA - AS events or operations will not be considered.

Such misuse of the complaint process undermines its integrity and may result in disciplinary action, including revocation of membership privileges. PSA - AS will review all complaints to ensure they align with its mission and objectives and to prevent the system from being used as a means of personal attack.

- d. **Complaint Committee Review:** The complaint committee will review all submitted complaints to ensure they meet the requirements outlined in the bylaws and code of conduct. After an initial assessment, the committee may assign a classification consistent with the complaint outcome categories detailed herein. It is also authorized to issue official letters of warning and letters of exoneration. In cases involving serious or repeat violations, the complaint committee will forward the complaint, along with its investigative findings and recommendations, to the Board of Directors for further review and potential disciplinary action.
- e. **Transparency and Timeliness:** PSA - AS will strive to handle complaints in a timely manner while ensuring fairness and due process for all parties involved. This is a volunteer organization, and as such, we are unable to provide an exact resolution date. However, everyone involved in the process is expected to make reasonable efforts to investigate and resolve the issues without undue delay. The complainant will receive

notification that the complaint has been received within 72 hours of complaint submission to verify successful delivery of email. If confirmation is not received in 72 hours the complainant should contact the executive secretary to notify them that a complaint was filed but receipt has not been verified. At the conclusion of the investigation, they will be advised of the outcome of the complaint and if any disciplinary action was taken.

VI. Complaint Outcome Classifications:

- a) **Not Accepted**: The alleged incident does not meet the organization's requirements within the bylaws and code of conduct or other procedures as outlined herein to be accepted or investigated as an official complaint.
- b) **Exonerated**: The alleged incident or conduct occurred but was not determined to be a violation.
- c) **Substantiated**: As a result of the review, evidence sufficient to prove the allegation was identified.
- d) **Unsubstantiated**: As a result of the review, evidence sufficient to prove the allegation was not identified.
- e) **Unfounded**: Allegation was determined to be false or not factual.
- f) **Previously Addressed**: The alleged incident or conduct has already been investigated or handled, and disciplinary action has been administered. As such, no further action will be taken regarding the complaint.

VII. Complaint Outcome Discipline:

- a) **Official Letters of Exoneration**: Exonerated complaints will have no action taken.
- b) **Official Letters of Warning**: Formal warnings issued to members by authorized PSA - AS officials, including judges, assistant directors, regional directors, and members of the disciplinary review or grievance committees.
- c) **Membership Suspensions**: Temporary suspension of membership privileges for a specified number of calendar days, during which the member is prohibited from officially participating in PSA - AS events.
- d) **Revocation of Membership**: Termination of membership privileges for the remainder of the calendar year, during which the individual is prohibited from officially participating in any PSA - AS events.
- e) **Lifetime Ban**: Permanent denial of membership, prohibiting the individual from ever joining or participating in official PSA - AS events.

VIII. Timeline for Submitting Complaints:

- a) **Complaints Regarding Code of Conduct or Bylaws Violations:** Complaints related to violations of the PSA - AS Code of Conduct or bylaws should be submitted within fourteen (14) calendar days of the violation. Complaints submitted outside of the prescribed timeline may, at the discretion of PSA - AS officials, not be considered. This policy ensures that the process remains fair, efficient and focused on timely resolutions.

IX. Transparency and Reporting:

- a) PSA - AS will publish an annual summary of complaints and resolutions, providing an overview of issues addressed and outcomes without disclosing specific member identities. This summary will promote accountability while preserving member privacy.

Addendum: Interim Complaint Committee Procedures

Effective immediately and until further notice, the following procedures shall apply to the handling of official complaints submitted to PSA–AS, in accordance with the PSA–AS Bylaws and Code of Conduct. This Addendum is a temporary measure and will be discontinued once the Complaint Committee is fully established.

1. Interim Complaint Committee

1. Board of Directors as Interim Committee

Until the Complaint Committee is formally staffed, the Board of Directors will collectively serve as the Complaint Committee. All emails sent to **officialcomplaints@psak9-as.org** will be received by each member of the Board of Directors.

2. Scope and Authority

While serving in this capacity, the Board of Directors will follow the procedures outlined in the PSA–AS Bylaws and Code of Conduct, including assigning complaint outcome classifications, issuing letters of warning or exoneration, and forwarding serious or repeat violations to the full Board for further disciplinary action.

2. Final Complaint Committee Structure

1. Composition

Once established, the Complaint Committee will consist of:

- **Four at-large members** (PSA and AS members) selected from the general membership (Not including members already serving in an official capacity such as decoys, judges, directors, helpers, national secretaries, etc.) representing both PSA and AS as applicable.
- **One Board Member** who will serve as an adviser and have tie-breaking authority during investigations, if necessary.

2. Transition to Permanent Committee

- When the Complaint Committee is fully staffed and operational, it will take over responsibility for initially receiving, reviewing, and investigating complaints.
 - At that time, the interim process described herein will automatically cease, and this Addendum will be considered expired and removed from circulation.
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3. Sunset Clause

This Addendum is **temporary** and is **not** intended as a permanent amendment to the PSA–AS Bylaws and Code of Conduct. Its provisions will remain in effect only until the Complaint Committee is duly formed, functioning, and listed in the online administration information on the official website. Any references in the Bylaws or Code of Conduct to the “Complaint Committee” shall be interpreted, during this interim period, to include the Board of Directors in its temporary role.