



# DEVELOPMENTAL FOOTBALL INTERNATIONAL

Monday, October 29, 2018

**To Whom It May Concern:**

Developmental Football International is founded upon 'Above the Line' tenets designed to produce 'Game Ready Players, Life Ready Men.' The standards of accountability that we demand of our players, coaches, staff and executives are framed by personal codes of conduct that must be strictly enforced.

Today, the Office of the Commissioner was presented with an overview of the aggravating and mitigating factors from the disappointing conclusion of this past Sunday's game between the California Sharks v. Cali Wolfpack, two-member DFI organizations.

Evidence was heard through written statements from both teams; DFI staff in attendance; game officials who presided over the contest; law enforcement; and other eyewitnesses. Game film was reviewed in its entirety. With help from our DFI executive staff and Competition Committee, we took into consideration the culpability of each individual involved from both teams; past circumstances; other provocations, stress or emotional issues (that might not excuse the offenses, but might offer an explanation); and remorse, if any, from those involved.

Ultimately, the bottom line for both teams is that a blatant personal foul injured a player out of the field of play; an altercation followed that resulted in an incomplete DFI contest that was called before its conclusion in regulation; there were threats, real and implied, to players, staff and fans; and regardless of who called, and for whatever reason, law enforcement became involved.

Each of those are egregious circumstances. DFI will not publicly discuss each of the specific factors relating to the circumstances of each offense committed by both teams, but my office has discovered baselines on which to rule that are true beyond any reasonable doubt.

Consequences are the pillars of compliance. When non-compliant actions of a player, team or coach insult the integrity of our sport or threaten the extraordinary efforts of our league, they must be met with consequences that shape the future of DFI through our interpretations and rulings based upon the precedents we set, relying upon a preponderance of the evidence.

Further, an underlying message must be delivered to all DFI participants that any time aggravating offenses occur in a public venue, where there is vulnerability to DFI game officials, fans and especially children, and these offenses result in physical injury or incapacitation, they will be treated with the highest degree of severity.



Lou Holtz, my coach at Notre Dame, preached that adversity is a common denominator in great individuals, who have ultimately learned from crisis and become stronger because of it. My grandparents, who were on the frontlines of our nation's civil rights movements in the 1960s, taught me that it boils down to a single word.

### **DIGNITY.**

The ENTIRE Civil Rights Movement was about that one word...DIGNITY.

As a league, as a people, we must aspire to it. If our young men are to succeed outside our game - in the game of life, it is paramount they acquire it and apply it. Can you walk humbly and maintain composure, and dignity, in the face of opposition?

Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King took pride in how they spoke, how they dressed and how they held their composure in the face of tremendous adversity. My grandfather was a 'handler' for the great heavyweight champion Joe Louis. He taught the champ how to tie a tie, how to moderate himself in public, and how to succeed with dignity in the face of overt racism and opposition.

It is my job as Commissioner to nurture our players, coaches and staffs to do the same, one that I don't take lightly, and one that cannot be 'blown out of proportion.' There is no place in our communities for lack of composure. Our jails, prisons, and penitentiaries are full and have proven to be an ineffective deterrent to young men in our culture who cannot control their anger, maintain their composure, or treat others with dignity.

Sadly, each day another young black male gets taken into custody, wrapped up and wound up in laws and rules of law, is because no one in a position of love and leadership interrupted his lifestyle and behavior to teach him the significance of dignity.

In DFI, this is our highest calling. We must be noted for remarkable character and character development. A tree is known by the fruit it produces and a man speaks out of the abundance of his heart. Dignity is pride in self-image and respect for those around you. Your character must precede you and speak for you. Your reputation should say that you are special, that you are unique, which is why you signed a personal code of conduct to play in this league – and to make a difference in our homes, in our families, in our culture, and in our communities.

As for DFI, Sunday's behavior can not and will not be tolerated, not now, not ever. Dr. King so famously wrote that 'we are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.'



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Whatever affects one of us directly, affects us all indirectly.

**It is regrettable that the actions of a few have forced me to render a verdict that impacts so many.**

- Both teams must receive a double-forfeit for their actions.
- A forfeit automatically eliminates both teams from post-season participation.
- Both teams will be notified that they each had an offending player, who will be suspended through the first six games or half of the 2019 season, whichever comes first.

It's devastating that nearly 100 players, and their coaches and staffs, will be affected by the outcome of this ruling, which is final. It is my hope that every individual involved lays awake at night replaying their own culpability in this experience. I pray it sears within them a resolve, a pause, that allows them to think twice, for the rest of their lives.

It's only in accepting full responsibility and embracing those consequences we have wrought upon ourselves, that our dignity may be restored.

Sincerely,

Commissioner Joel Williams