

# Spirit of the Game – UKU policies

*“The integrity of Ultimate depends on each player’s responsibility to uphold the Spirit of the Game, and this responsibility should remain paramount.”*

## INTRODUCTION

UKU seeks to protect the long-term use of SOTG as a method for running ultimate. We wish to see:

- Our major tournaments played in a positive spirited atmosphere with all teams and players upholding the spirit of the game.
- Teams representing UK Ultimate showcasing the best of spirit of the game. This covers GB national teams and also club teams that are taking up UKU allocated places in international events such as World clubs or EUCF.

We recognise that from time to time there will be challenges to our goals and so the policies below set out our responses to these challenges. It is important to read the definitions in the appendix alongside the main policies. We are mindful of the fact that it is each player’s responsibility to uphold the Spirit of the Game and the first aim of these policies is therefore to encourage all teams and players to uphold their existing responsibilities. Where it appears that these responsibilities may not be being followed then the policies act to encourage adherence by use of notification, education and if necessary sanctions.

## 1. How should UKU respond to a TRIGGERING SPIRIT SCORE (see appendix 1 for definition)

The principle here is to make sure that the team is aware of their score and how the spirit system works. They should be able to understand what their score means, recognize that they have received what we consider to be a score that requires a response and take appropriate action themselves. UKU should offer support where possible. We expect that most teams will use this trigger and take appropriate action internally – the steps and sanctions referred to later in this document are only required if we do not consider that appropriate steps are taken. Thus if the team does not take effective action then UKU will be able to take further steps.

Here is a guide to the initial UKU response:

- a. Email from UKU to team representative outlining:
  - the facts of the scores (average scores, and if possible detailed game scores that have been made anonymous)
  - a request that the team responds to acknowledge that the information has been given to them and that they will investigate and take action internally. We would expect that they will also follow up their initial acknowledgement with an outline of the steps they will be taking.
  - An offer of support at next tournament if they wish to discuss methods to improve their spirit (This would take the form of a representative of the UKU (Board member, SOTG committee member, or other designated

person) talking through with them where they think their problems are, and suggested methods to take action. If requested by the team, and if a person is available there may be the opportunity to watch one of the team's games and provide further feedback.

- the importance of SOTG in ultimate

b. Put team on a monitoring list. SOTG committee to receive team's name and to then check their scores at future events while they remain on the list. To stay on monitoring list until the team plays 3 consecutive major events with either a score above 10 or in the top three quarters of scores given in a tournament. If team comes off the list then UKU should again contact them to let them know.

## **2. How to respond to teams on the monitoring list that receive a further TRIGGERING SPIRIT SCORE.**

The aim of these policies is to encourage teams to take their own responsibilities towards SOTG seriously. If a team that is being monitored then achieves a further triggering SOTG score it is an indication that they may not be taking effective steps to improve SOTG.

These teams should be informed of their scores and SOTG committee will email the team captain/ other appropriate contact noting that despite prior notification SOTG does not appear to have improved and that now a formal response is required. The team must respond to this within 30 days stating acknowledgement of scores and steps taken (both the actions that were previously taken, if any, and a new plan). SOTG committee to consider whether response is adequate:

- If adequate, team to remain on monitoring list for a further 12 months during which time further TRIGGERING SPIRIT SCORES will require further emails and responses and may trigger SANCTIONS (see below)
- If not adequate then SOTG committee will refer the matter to the UKU Conduct Committee who may consider possible sanctions.

### **POSSIBLE SANCTIONS**

(Note: sanctions will not be applied based solely on the scores that a team is given by other teams, but because the UKU feels that a team has not responded correctly to the process and the warnings given. The scores a team receives are only part of the information that will be used to determine whether sanctions are appropriate. A team will not have the power to force sanctions upon another team by deliberately giving a low score, and any such attempt would be treated severely.)

The SOTG committee will review all SOTG scores received to date on the team in question and the responses and action plans proposed so far. If desired SOTG committee can ask individual teams for feedback on any games they have had with the team in question. SOTG committee to then propose sanctions from the list below (any combination of sanctions may be selected depending on facts of the case) to the UKU Conduct committee who will make final decision on whether or which sanctions to impose:

- Compulsory attendance of captain/all of team to a SOTG training session
- Disqualification of team from previous events where a TRIGGERING SPIRIT SCORE has been received – including loss of titles and any ranking points
- Monitoring of future games at major events by a UKU appointed person to report on their SOTG. UKU's costs for this to be paid by team (ie. the travel and time costs of the appointee, likely to be in the range of £100-£200 per event)
- Elimination of team from all future major events that season
- Deselection of any or all players on that team from current or future GB programmes – this step would only be taken after considering the individual's personal contribution towards the poor spirit scores
- Elimination of that team from all future UKU ultimate events
- Non selection of that team for future representative events (eg EUFC, World Clubs)
- Loss of UKU membership for captain/all players on the team for up to 6 months – no refunds to be given

Note that sanctions will be decided by the appropriate committee based upon the severity of the breaches of this UKU SOTG policy.

### 3. What training to give to GB teams

As representatives of UKU GB teams should have a discussion within the whole team on SOTG prior to competing in any tournament. This can be led by the captain or by a UKU representative. During this discussion it should be emphasized that UKU wants all national teams to play with good spirit and respect for their opponents and to lead the way internationally with regard to SOTG.

If a tournament is more than 3 days long then there should be another team discussion of SOTG so far in the tournament before the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of play.

### 4. Feedback from Representative teams (see appendix 1)

UKU will ask all team captains for feedback on their team's approach to SOTG and the score that they have received. **For teams finishing in the bottom third of their division this feedback will be compulsory.** The feedback should:

- State whether (and how many) 'formal' SOTG discussions were had within the team
- State whether in their view the SOTG scores that they received were appropriate
- Give an assessment of their view of the reasons for the score and for a list of significant events that occurred
- State whether they consider that any particular players share extra responsibility for the score

- State whether or not changes were made during the tournament because of SOTG issues
- Give suggestions for how improvements can be made in the future

After the event UKU should gather the feedback above – ensuring a response is received from all teams in the bottom third. Feedback should be reviewed and consideration as to whether to make improvements for the future should be considered. For teams that finish in the bottom 15% the UKU should consider what action to take (if any). This may include:

- Taking no action (after reviewing feedback)
- Not entering GB teams in that division until SOTG issues are resolved
- Providing better SOTG training to GB captains and players in future
- Barring certain players/captains from one or more future GB teams
- Barring the players/team involved from taking up UKU allocated places at 1 or more future international events
- Any other training, sanctions or actions considered appropriate

## **5. What to do if a team does not use the SOTG scoring system properly?**

The SOTG scoring system relies on teams submitting scores for all opponents that have been fairly considered.

If it appears to a tournament director that a team does not use the scoring system properly then advice should be given and the scores that that team has submitted should be forwarded to UKU for consideration. Not using the system properly MAY be indicated by giving out of extremely high or low scores (say 0,1,2,3 or 18,19, 20) although these may be perfectly correct.

If there is suspicion that scores at a major event have been deliberately ‘rigged’ in order to affect overall averages rather than to report upon an individual game then this should be treated very seriously by UKU and all potential sanctions could be considered.

UKU should periodically ensure that the SOTG scoring system is explained in captains’ pack notes.

## **6. What to do if a team does not submit SOTG scores**

The SOTG scoring system relies on all teams assessing and scoring the SOTG displayed by their opponents. If scores are not submitted to the tournament director then the system cannot work properly.

All teams should therefore make time to submit properly considered scores. It is up to all players on a team to help this process. If your captain does not involve you in the scoring process then please remind them of their responsibilities to ensure that properly considered scores are submitted (perhaps they have just forgotten to score the game).

Tournament directors will be asked to submit a list of teams that failed to submit SOTG scores in their event to [admin@ukultimate.com](mailto:admin@ukultimate.com). UKU may publicise this data at its own choice.

If a team does not submit scores for 2 consecutive major tournaments then UKU will contact them to note the omission. If that team then fails to submit scores at the next event then UKU may consider sanctions against them which may include:

- Loss of all or some ranking points from any events where SOTG scores have not been submitted
- A fine of up to £100 for each event for which scores have not been submitted in the last 12 months

Note that UKU accepts that at times, adverse weather conditions and time pressures make submission of scores more difficult. UKU will take this into account when considering actions to take against a team that has not submitted scores.

## APPENDIX 1 – DEFINITIONS

### 1. What is a TRIGGERING spirit score?

We expect the publication of SOTG scores will tend to apply peer pressure on teams and players to respond if they feel their marks indicate that they are displaying below average spirit. However we feel that as a governing body there comes a point where we must ensure that teams are aware of their scores and are encouraged to take action to improve if required.

Under the WFDF current scoring system a score is out of 20 and a score of 10 could be considered reasonable. Scores tend to be above 10 so any score below this level can appear to be poor. In Worlds 2012 only 4 teams out of around 50 scored an average score of below 9. Clearly a low spirit score is not proof of poor spirit but it does provide the most objective measure currently for indicating issues with spirit. The UKU defines a TRIGGERING spirit score requiring a response as:

- 2 major UK events in a season with an average score below 9
- 1 major UK event with an average score of below 8
- 2 or more individual game scores in a single major UK event of 6 or below

(these scores to be reviewed by SOTG committee annually to assess whether they are still appropriate indicators for triggering further action)

### 2. Major UK event

Defined as each of:

- Tour event (open, women and mixed, all divisions – ie A, B and C)
- Nationals qualifiers
- Nationals
- Student regionals and finals (indoors, outdoors, and all gender divisions)
- Any other event from time to time considered by UKU as a major event (allowing flexibility to include one-off events)

### 3. REPRESENTATIVE TEAMS

This is either a national squad – playing at the international tournament for which they have been selected or at any warm up tournament, or a team taking up UKU allocated places in an international event such as EUCF or world Clubs.

We would like such teams to provide a great example of SOTG. As such we ask such teams to emphasise the importance of playing with SOTG and we hope that they strive to represent UKU as well in the SOTG rankings as they are able to in tournament finishing positions.

## **APPENDIX 2- Spirit of the Game guidance in the rules:**

### 1. Spirit of the Game

1.1. Ultimate is a non-contact, self-refereed sport. All players are responsible for administering and adhering to the rules. Ultimate relies upon a Spirit of the Game that

places the responsibility for fair play on every player.

1.2. It is trusted that no player will intentionally break the rules; thus there are no harsh

penalties for breaches, but rather a method for resuming play in a manner which simulates what would most likely have occurred had there been no breach.

1.3. Players should be mindful of the fact that they are acting as referees in any arbitration

between teams. In such situations, players must:

1.3.1. know the rules;

1.3.2. be fair-minded and objective;

1.3.3. be truthful;

1.3.4. explain their viewpoint clearly and briefly;

1.3.5. allow opponents a reasonable chance to speak;

1.3.6. resolve disputes as quickly as possible; and

1.3.7. use respectful language.

1.4. Highly competitive play is encouraged, but should never sacrifice the mutual respect

between players, adherence to the agreed-upon rules of the game, or the basic joy of

play.

1.5. The following actions are examples of good spirit:

1.5.1. informing a team-mate if they have made a wrong or unnecessary call or caused

a foul or violation;

1.5.2. retracting a call when you no longer believe the call was necessary;

1.5.3. complimenting an opponent for good play or spirit;

1.5.4. introducing yourself to your opponent; and

1.5.5. reacting calmly towards disagreement or provocation.

1.6. The following actions are clear violations of the spirit of the game and must be avoided

by all participants:

1.6.1. dangerous play and aggressive behaviour;

1.6.2. intentional fouling or other intentional rule violations;

1.6.3. taunting or intimidating opposing players;

1.6.4. disrespectful celebration after scoring;

1.6.5. making calls in retaliation to an opponent's call; and

1.6.6. calling for a pass from an opposition player.

1.7. Teams are guardians of the Spirit of the Game, and must:

1.7.1. take responsibility for teaching their players the rules and good spirit;

1.7.2. discipline players who display poor spirit; and

1.7.3. provide constructive feedback to other teams about how to improve their adherence to the Spirit of the Game.

- 1.8. In the case where a novice player commits an infraction out of ignorance of the rules, experienced players are obliged to explain the infraction.
- 1.9. An experienced player, who offers advice on rules and guides on-field arbitration, may supervise games involving beginners or younger players.
- 1.10. Rules should be interpreted by the players directly involved in the play, or by players who had the best perspective on the play. Non-players, apart from the captain, should refrain from getting involved. However for calls relating to “out-of-bounds” and “down”, players may seek the perspective of non-players to assist them to make the appropriate call.
- 1.11. If players cannot agree what occurred in a play, the disc shall be returned to the last non-disputed thrower.