



## **Ratoath Tennis Club (RTC) WhatsApp Usage Policy**

### **1. Purpose**

Ratoath Tennis Club recognises that digital platforms such as WhatsApp and social media are useful tools for organising matches, sharing updates, and building community. However, these tools must be used responsibly and in line with RTC's Code of Conduct, to protect member's privacy, reputation, and enjoyment of the club. This policy applies to all RTC members, administrators, and visitors using WhatsApp or any other digital communication tool in connection to the Club.

RTC has official WhatsApp groups administered by current members of the Executive Committee. Members who wish to create their own groups for league teams or other purposes may apply to the Executive Committee to register their group. Members may also elect to have informal groups for which RTC accepts no responsibility.

### **2. Acceptable Use**

Official RTC WhatsApp groups may be used only for tennis-related communication, such as match organisation, cancellations, events, or official club notices.

Disrespectful commentary, gossip, political or divisive content are not permitted.

Abusive language, harassment, bullying, or the sharing of inappropriate or harmful content will not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action. The sharing of inappropriate or illicit images or materials that breach member safety, dignity, or privacy is strictly prohibited and may result in immediate disciplinary action and, where applicable, legal consequences.

The inappropriate use of social media by a Club official, WhatsApp Admin or a member will be treated with the utmost gravity by RTC and may result in disciplinary action.

Prior members who have lapsed membership should remove themselves from the groups. The Club will periodically remove lapsed members from all communication, but the ultimate responsibility rests with those prior members themselves.

All members are reminded that RTC's Code of Conduct applies equally online as it does on Club premises.

### **3. Privacy and Data Protection**

Members' personal data (e.g. phone numbers, photos, names) must be used only for the purpose for which it was shared.

Consent must be obtained before adding anyone to a WhatsApp group. Ideally, members should join by scanning a QR code or clicking an invite link.

Group administrators must delete data or remove members if requested, in line with GDPR rights.

Screenshots or sharing of private messages outside the group, without consent, is strictly prohibited.

### **4. Safeguarding and Under-18 Members**

No member under 18 may be included in adult groups.

Any communication with juniors must include parents/guardians and be approved by the Club Safeguarding Officer.

Adults must not privately message junior members

### **5. Group Administration:**

Use of the Ratoath Tennis Club name, or acronym, or any other readily identifiable image or name associated with the Club, should only be used if the Group is formally registered with the Club.

The Group must agree that the guidance in this document is followed.

A Group Purpose should be added to the Group Description section to allow all members to be informed as to the topic and use of the group.

Members should not be prevented, impeded, or restricted from joining any age and gender-appropriate Group unless the purpose and membership of that group is restricted due to the confidentiality of the information being discussed.

Members can choose to leave a group at any time. No comment should be passed if a member exercises their right to leave a group.

Individuals who are not current members of RTC, are not permitted to be added to official RTC groups.

### **6. Respecting of Choice**

Participation in WhatsApp or Social Media groups is voluntary. Members who choose not to join these groups will continue to receive official club information through other channels.

If members decide to use WhatsApp as an informal means of communication (in addition to official club channels), they must do so with explicit consent from every person to be included in the WhatsApp group. If a member elects to join a group and joins via one of the following three mechanisms, explicit consent is implied:

- 1) Direct addition of a member by a group Admin at the formal request of the member
- 2) Members can join by scanning a QR code
- 3) Members can join by clicking on an Invite Link

Members should never be automatically added to any group without their formal consent. It is imperative that **consent is always sought** through a formal request to join. To ensure GDPR compliance, it is strongly advised to send new Participants a QR code or Invite Link, so that they can elect to join the group themselves.

When administrating a group, or creating a new one, please take time to research which is the safest format for your participants and ensure that the group's intended use is clear from the outset.

## **7. Enforcement**

Content that does not comply with this policy, may be removed by club administrators. Any member found to have misused WhatsApp or digital communication platforms may face disciplinary action in line with the RTC Constitution and Code of Conduct.

The Club reserves the right to request that a group be closed, renamed, or have administrators changed if it is not complying with this policy.

## **8. WhatsApp Community**

RTC has introduced a WhatsApp Community which is managed by nominated members. WhatsApp Community is a feature introduced to help members organise and manage larger groups more effectively by creating a structured environment for multiple related group chats.

Members can discover and join groups within the community based on their interests or needs, which makes it easier to connect with like-minded individuals or stay informed on specific topics. It allows members to find groups that are currently elusive due to the nature of WhatsApp.

Group Admins can propose to add a group to the Community, but as it is only for members, only RTC "member only" groups will be accepted.

If you wish to have your group added to the community, open the group info page in WhatsApp and click on Add group to a community. It is recommended you change the security of the group to ensure Admins must accept members requests to join. The participants of the group must be RTC members and have reviewed and accepted the RTC WhatsApp policy.

## **9. Official vs Unofficial WhatsApp Groups**

Official RTC groups are approved by the Executive Committee, use the RTC logo or name, and follow this policy.

Unofficial groups are informal and social but must still respect the RTC Code of Conduct and Club reputation.

Use of the RTC name, logo, or branding requires prior approval.

If you wish to propose a new WhatsApp Community group or suggest that an existing chat group, be brought under the official RTC Community structure, please email **[enquiries@ratoathtennisclub.ie](mailto:enquiries@ratoathtennisclub.ie)** with the purpose of the group, the nominated administrator(s), and the anticipated duration or need for the group.