

1. POLICY TITLE

Reckless Endangerment (Dangerous Conduct) Automatic Suspension Policy

2. POLICY STATEMENT

In all LSA competitions, an automatic suspension shall be applied where match officials assess a Major Foul against a player or participant for deliberate, avoidable or dangerous contact to another player, including but not limited to contact to the head or neck, where that contact results in the injured player being removed from play to receive medical assessment or treatment.

This suspension:

- Is mandatory
- Applies immediately following the match
- Carries a minimum one (1) match suspension

This policy applies to all dangerous contact that presents a significant risk of injury, with particular emphasis on head and neck contact due to its heightened risk profile.

It may also apply to other serious dangerous contact incidents where the conduct presents a comparable risk of significant injury.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- All LSA-sanctioned competitions
- All lacrosse disciplines under LSA governance
- All participants, including:
 - Players
 - Coaches
 - Bench personnel
 - Any team-affiliated individuals

4. PURPOSE

To create a safer playing environment by:

- Reducing the incidence of serious preventable injuries
- Reinforcing accountability for dangerous conduct
- Establishing a clear and consistent minimum consequence framework

5. DEFINITIONS

Participant: Any individual directly involved in a match, including players and team-affiliated personnel.

Major Foul: Any foul classified as a “Major Foul” under the applicable rules of the relevant lacrosse discipline.

Medical Removal: The removal of a player from active participation by medical staff, trainers, or team officials for the purpose of assessment or treatment following an incident.

This includes situations where the player is unable to safely continue due to the apparent severity of the injury.

Examples may include, but are not limited to, suspected concussion, loss of consciousness, suspected fracture, joint injury, spinal concern, significant soft tissue injury, or other conditions requiring immediate assessment.

Reckless Endangerment/Dangerous Conduct:

Conduct that involves:

- Deliberate, reckless, or avoidable actions
- A high likelihood of causing injury
- Including, but not limited to:
 - Contact directed at vulnerable areas (eg, head/neck),
 - Excessive force or high-speed impact,
 - Contact against a defenceless or vulnerable opponent

6. RATIONALE

Lacrosse is a high-speed, physical sport where player contact is inherent. However:

- Head, neck, and other serious injuries can be debilitating, cumulative, and life-altering.
- These injuries pose increasing duty-of-care, legal, and insurance risks to the sport.
- Standard foul penalties alone are insufficient deterrents.

This policy establishes a clear behavioural boundary, ensuring all participants understand that dangerous conduct carries immediate and meaningful consequences.

7. PRIORITISING PLAYER SAFETY THROUGH CLEAR CONSEQUENCES

While this policy applies to all forms of dangerous contact that present a significant risk of injury, the introduction of an automatic suspension for any reckless endangerment involving contact to the head or neck represents a necessary evolution in safeguarding participant welfare.

The head and neck are particularly vulnerable areas, with even seemingly minor contact capable of resulting in serious injury, including concussion, spinal trauma, or long-term neurological implications.

This policy change is grounded in three key principles:

- **Risk Minimisation:**
By establishing a clear, non-negotiable consequence for dangerous contact to high-risk areas, the policy reinforces a proactive approach to injury prevention rather than reactive management.
- **Behavioural Deterrence:**
Evidence across sport demonstrates that consistent and predictable sanctions are the most effective mechanism for influencing player behaviour. Removing discretionary ambiguity for head or neck contact sends a strong signal that such actions are unacceptable regardless of intent.
- **Duty of Care and Modern Standards:**
Sporting organisations have an increasing obligation—both ethically and legally—to align with contemporary safety expectations. This includes adopting stricter interpretations of dangerous play in line with evolving medical understanding of brain injuries and cumulative trauma.

Ultimately, this change ensures that match officials, players, and stakeholders operate under a shared understanding: **any avoidable contact to the head or neck is inherently unsafe and warrants immediate and meaningful consequence**, regardless of competitive context.

8. AUTOMATIC SUSPENSION MECHANISM

An automatic suspension is triggered when ALL of the following occur:

- a. A Major Foul is assessed
- b. The foul involves:
 - Dangerous contact involving:

- Direct force to the head or neck, OR
 - Any other high-risk contact involving excessive force, avoidable impact, or a vulnerable opponent
- c. The injured player is removed from play for medical assessment or treatment

When criteria are met:

- The offending participant receives a minimum 1-match suspension
- Suspension applies to the next scheduled match(es) in any LSA competition

Participant Review Rights (Challenge to Automatic Suspension)

A participant subject to an automatic suspension under this policy may seek review where they believe the triggering criteria were incorrectly applied.

A review may be sought where:

- a Major Foul was incorrectly assessed,
- the contact did not meet the definition of Dangerous Conduct, or
- the medical removal requirement was not satisfied.

All such applications:

- must be lodged in accordance with LSA Regulations and prescribed timeframes,
- will be referred to the Tribunal for determination as a first-instance decision,
- must be supported by relevant evidence.

The Tribunal will assess the matter in accordance with:

- the Constitution, Regulations and this Policy,
- principles of natural justice and procedural fairness.

Outcomes may include:

- confirmation of the automatic suspension,
- removal or amendment of the suspension,
- referral for further disciplinary consideration (if appropriate).

Appeal rights (if any) remain governed by separate Regulations or Appeal Tribunal processes.

9. FURTHER DISCIPLINARY REVIEW

Any incident under this policy may be referred for further review where warranted.

Additionally, review may occur where:

- A serious injury occurs,
- No Major Foul was assessed at the time,
- Sufficient evidence exists that a Major Foul should have been applied.

Review considerations may include:

- Degree of force,
- Player vulnerability (e.g., defenceless position),
- Nature and severity of injury,
- Whether conduct was reckless, avoidable, or intentional.

Outcomes:

- Additional sanctions (extended suspension, grading penalties, etc.) No further action

Club-Initiated Reports (Failure to Apply Automatic Suspension)

Where a Club believes that an incident meeting the criteria for automatic suspension was not identified or acted upon during a match, the Club may lodge a formal report in accordance with LSA Regulations ("Club Reports").

Such reports:

- must be submitted within the prescribed timeframe and in the approved format,
- must provide sufficient supporting evidence (e.g. video, medical verification),
- may result in referral to the Tribunal for determination.

The Tribunal will determine:

- whether the criteria for automatic suspension were met, and
- whether a suspension or further sanction should be applied retrospectively.

10. ONGOING REVIEW, DATA ANALYSIS AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

To ensure the policy remains effective, equitable, and aligned with best practice, a structured review framework will be implemented following its introduction.

This review process will include:

- **Incident Monitoring and Trend Analysis:**
All instances of reckless endangerment and head/neck contact will be recorded and analysed to identify patterns in gameplay, enforcement consistency, and behavioural response over time.
- **Medical and Welfare Outcomes:**
Data relating to injuries particularly concussions or suspected head/neck trauma will be evaluated to determine whether the policy is contributing to a measurable reduction in high-risk incidents.
- **Stakeholder Feedback:**
Structured input from players, coaches, match officials, and medical personnel will be gathered to assess clarity, fairness, and practical application of the rule.
- **Adjudication Consistency Review:**
Match decisions and tribunal outcomes will be periodically reviewed to ensure alignment with the intent of automatic suspension and to minimise interpretative variation.
- **Benchmarking Against Comparable Codes:**
The policy will be assessed against evolving standards and rule changes in similar sporting codes to ensure continued alignment with leading safety practices.
- **12-Month Formal Review Point:**
A comprehensive review will be conducted after the first full season of implementation, with recommendations for refinement if required.
- **Policy Oversight and Review Authority:**
Oversight of this Policy sits with the LSA Board, which may delegate review functions in accordance with the Constitution and Tribunal Charter.

A formal review process will be undertaken as follows:

- The **Executive Officer** will coordinate the annual policy review process,
- A **Review Panel** comprising:
 - at least one Board representative,
 - one competition or officiating representative, and
 - one independent member (not affiliated with impacted clubs), will assess policy operation and outcomes.
- The Tribunal may provide advisory input based on trends, decisions, and procedural observations,
- Any recommended amendments must be approved by the Board in accordance with its

powers to make and amend Regulations and policies.

The Board retains ultimate responsibility for ensuring the policy remains:

- consistent with the Constitution and Regulations,
- aligned with player welfare obligations, and
- enforceable within the LSA disciplinary framework.

11. RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING RULES

This policy operates:

- In addition to standard rules and penalties,
- Without replacing match officials' authority or disciplinary processes.

This Policy operates subject to, and in conjunction with, the LSA Constitution, Regulations, Tribunal Charter and any applicable disciplinary frameworks.

12. IMPLEMENTATION

- Effective upon approval by LSA Board.
- Supported by:
 - Match Officials' Application Guide.
 - Education sessions for match officials and clubs.