

**IN THE MATTER OF COMPLAINTS BROUGHT UNDER
THE ROWING CANADA AVIRON CODE OF CONDUCT**

BETWEEN:

██████████, LILY COPELAND, SARAH CRAVEN,
SAMANTHA HERON, AND ██████████

(the Complainants)

-and-

BARNEY WILLIAMS

(the Respondent)

(collectively, the Parties)

Corrected Decision and Reasons

Hearing Panel: Luisa Ritacca, Ann Peel and Michael Smith

Hearing Dates: December 17-20, 2020, January 7-8, 19, 2021

Decision Date: April 1, 2021 (*corrected decision released April 21, 2021*)

Overview

1. The Complainants ██████████, Lily Copeland, Sarah Craven and ██████████ were student athletes with the University of Victoria (“UVic”) women’s rowing program for the 2018-2019 rowing season. Samantha Heron was, at all material times,

a Rowing Canada Aviron (“RCA”) NextGen Hub coach with assistant coaching duties with the UVic women’s rowing program.

2. The Respondent, Barney Williams has been the Head Coach of the UVic women’s rowing program since the summer of 2018.
3. In August 2019, the Respondent was advised that he was the subject of several complaints filed under the RCA’s Prevention of Abuse, Harassment and Bullying Policy, adopted by the RCA on April 29, 2019. Four of the current Complainants made the original complaints. An additional former rower was also involved as an original complainant, but was not involved as a party in the proceedings before this Panel.
4. Following a challenge to the intake process followed by the RCA and its Independent Third Party, and an appeal by the Respondent in relation to the investigation process and the investigator’s preliminary findings, the parties agreed to attend a mediation in September 2020. As a result of the mediation, the parties agreed to a hearing before an independent Panel.
5. This panel was appointed in the late fall of 2020. The hearing proceeded over several days in December 2020 and January 2021. Pursuant to the Parties’ agreement, the panel was tasked with determining whether, in relation to the Complainants’ allegations, the Respondent breached the RCA Code of Conduct and/or the NCCP Code of Ethics¹.

Nature of the Allegations

6. The Complainants allege that during the 2018-2019 UVic women’s rowing season, the Respondent engaged in conduct and behaved in a manner contrary to the RCA Code of Conduct and the NCCP Code of Ethics. In particular, the Complainants allege broadly that:
 - a. During the training and selection camp which took place in the early Fall 2018, the Respondent required the student athletes to complete a 10km race which had not been previously scheduled, and for which many of the athletes, including some of the Complainants, did not have proper shoes or clothing. The Respondent did not advise the athletes that they did not have to participate in the run;
 - b. During the 2018-2019 UVic women’s rowing season, Mr. Williams used a small room within the UVic boat bay referred to as “the sauna” to meet with his coxswains, including the Complainant Ms. Copeland on multiple occasions. Ms. Copeland alleged that these meetings were often tense and made her feel uncomfortable. She alleged that she would often leave these meetings in or close to tears;
 - c. During the 2018-2019 rowing season, the Complainants, except for Ms. Heron, participated in a SWOT meeting with Mr. Williams and Ms. Heron where they

¹ RCA Code of Conduct (Nov 2014) and National Coaching Certification Program Code of Ethics (NCCP Code of Ethics) (version 3.1, 2018)

were asked to discuss their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. These meetings made at least some of the Complainants uncomfortable, as Mr. Williams did not engage in any sort of constructive dialogue and instead made the Complainants insecure and anxious.

- d. During the 2018-2019 rowing season, the Respondent engaged in various coaching tactics which were unsafe and inconsistent with the athletes' physical and mental well-being, including overuse of land training for some athletes and unsafe boating assignments.
 - e. During the 2018-2019 rowing season, the Respondent engaged in demeaning and aggressive coaching both on and off the water, including shouting and using profanity. In addition, he displayed the athletes' grades during a team meeting, causing some of the Complainants to feel embarrassed.
 - f. During the 2018-2019 rowing season, the Respondent created a culture whereby some athletes felt as though they were on the "inside" while others felt that they were on the "outside" and as such did not receive any or adequate coaching attention from the Respondent.
 - g. Finally, during the 2018-2019 rowing season, the Respondent engaged in an unprofessional and overly aggressive manner in his interactions with Ms. Heron, his assistant coach. When Ms. Heron raised her concerns, the Respondent froze her out of coaching decisions, which made it difficult for her to properly perform her role as assistant coach.
7. In support of their allegations, each of the Complainants testified and provided the Panel with contemporaneous email and text exchanges. In addition, the Complainants called two teammates and two other witnesses to provide evidence to corroborate that certain events took place as alleged.
 8. The Respondent denied that any of his conduct amounted to a breach of the RCA Code of Conduct or the NCCP Code of Ethics. He acknowledged in hindsight that his coaching style was not effective for some, but he denied that he was ever aware of the negative effects his coaching had on the Complainants or any of his other athletes. Similarly, while Mr. Williams acknowledged that his relationship with Ms. Heron was sometimes challenging, he believed that over the course of the 2018-2019 rowing season they developed clear boundaries, which resulted in a professional and positive working dynamic.

The RCA Code of Conduct and NCCP Code of Ethics

9. As part of their settlement, the Parties agreed that the RCA Code of Conduct (November 16, 2014) and, by incorporation the NCCP Code of Ethics shall apply to the complaints for the purpose of determining whether the Respondent breached any of the provisions described therein.
10. The RCA Code of Conduct provides, in part, that rowing participants must demonstrate through words and actions the spirit of sportsmanship, sport leadership and ethical conduct; refrain from the use of profane, insulting or otherwise offensive conduct or

language; and refrain from behaviour that constitutes harassment, where harassment is defined as a course of comment or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome. The Code of Conduct imposes further responsibilities on coaches to display high personal and professional standards and project a positive image of the sport and of coaching; ensure a safe training environment; be mindful of the safety of athletes under their direction at all times; assist in sustaining the present and future health of athletes; and direct comments or constructive criticism to focus on performance rather than the athlete personally.

11. The RCA Code of Conduct specifically incorporates by reference the obligations and responsibilities set out in the NCCP Code of Ethics, which itself emphasizes the importance of five core ethical principles for coaching:
 - a. Physical safety and health of athletes;
 - b. Coaching responsibly;
 - c. Integrity in relations with others;
 - d. Respect of athletes; and
 - e. Honouring the sport

The Evidence

Credibility

12. The Panel heard evidence from sixteen witnesses and marked over fifty exhibits. Many of the witnesses, including the Complainants, were young athletes, who were asked to provide detailed and often difficult evidence about events that took place over two years ago.
13. As is set out in more detail below, for the most part the Panel found the witnesses credible, in that they appeared to sincerely believe the evidence they were providing. This was particularly true of the Complainants, many of whom became emotional when recounting their experiences during the 2018-2019 rowing season. The issue before the Panel, however, was not simply whether the Complainants' evidence was credible, but whether the conduct complained of amounted to a particular Code of Conduct or Code of Ethics violation. While in some instances the Panel has concluded that it did, in several others the Panel was unable to reach the same conclusion.
14. Below, the Panel has summarized the evidence of each Complainant and of the Respondent. The Panel has not summarized the evidence called from supporting witnesses. For the most part, that evidence was merely corroborative of each side's position and did not prove particularly helpful to the Panel in reaching its decision.

Evidence of the Complainants

(i) Lily Copeland

15. Ms. Copeland is a former member of the UVic women's rowing program. She joined the rowing program as a novice coxswain during her second year of university in the fall of 2017. Prior to that, Ms. Copeland had no rowing experience.
16. Ms. Copeland described that she coxed novice crews at three regattas during the fall of 2017. She further described how in 2018 she was selected to cox the varsity lightweights. At the time, the head coach of the women's rowing program was Rick Crawley. He coached the athletes, together with Erin Moen and Alan Roaf. In the summer of 2018, Ms. Copeland was coached by Samantha Heron, who was acting head coach for the summer program.
17. Ms. Copeland explained that she learned a lot from each of her coaches during the 2017-2018 race season. She said that during the summer program, Ms. Heron gave her opportunities to work in the coach's boat, in addition to coxing approximately twice per week.
18. Ms. Copeland returned to the rowing program for the 2018-2019 season. She was the only returning coxswain. Ms. Copeland was 20-years old at the start of the season.
19. While the Respondent attended the summer training program on one or two occasions starting in July 2018, Ms. Copeland testified that she did not interact with him until the team travelled to the Henley Regatta in St. Catharines Ontario in August 2018. At the time, Mr. Williams told Ms. Copeland that he wanted her help in recruiting junior rowers, and so he asked her to watch junior races and record race times during the Regatta. Ms. Copeland said that her first impression of the Respondent was that he was observant and that he didn't really talk a lot. She described feeling a little uncomfortable around him.
20. At the start of the 2018-2019 rowing season, Ms. Copeland said she was excited. She felt strong in her role as coxswain on the team. She had a lot of faith in herself and in her performance.
21. As did the other Complainants, Ms. Copeland provided the Panel with her detailed memory regarding training and selection camp, and in particular the 10km run that took place on one of the final days of the selection camp. Ms. Copeland testified that the athletes were not specifically advised that there would be a run during selection camp, and, as a result, many of the athletes did not have proper footwear or clothing to complete the run comfortably. Ms. Copeland testified that she ran for approximately 1 km. She came upon a teammate who had injured herself and so Ms. Copeland walked back to the finish line with her injured teammate.
22. Ms. Copeland testified that several of the other athletes returned from the run bleeding and chafing as a result of not having the proper footwear or clothing. She said that it was not nice to see.

23. While Ms. Copeland acknowledged that the athletes were advised to be “prepared for anything”, she understood that to mean to be prepared for anything on the water. She did not understand that Mr. Williams expected the athletes to run as part of the selection process. Ms. Copeland testified that Mr. Williams did not advise the athletes the run would not count as part of the selection process or whether they could defer from running if they did not have proper running gear.
24. Ms. Copeland described her interactions with Mr. Williams on the water as “stressful”. She testified that he would use his megaphone when he was only 5 or 6 feet away from her in his coach boat. He was aggressive and demeaning. Ms. Copeland recalled that Mr. Williams would say things like, “what’s in your head” and “what the fuck are you thinking”. She found the process demeaning and highly distracting.
25. In addition to her interactions with Mr. Williams on the water, Ms. Copeland described meetings they would have in the “sauna” room in the boathouse, typically after morning practice. Ms. Copeland said that Mr. Williams would use these meetings to talk to her about her performance. His feedback was almost always negative and Mr. Williams would often yell at her during the meetings. These meetings usually took place without anyone else present. Ms. Copeland also testified that Mr. Williams would shut and sometimes lock the door of the sauna, which made her feel particularly vulnerable. Mr. Williams and Ms. Copeland would usually be standing only a few feet apart given the limited space in the room.
26. Ms. Copeland explained that she took these meetings very seriously, as she was trying her best every day. She really wanted to be selected as the coxswain for the varsity 8 boat, and she thought that Mr. Williams ought to have noticed how hard she was working. Instead, Ms. Copeland said that these meetings caused her further stress and anxiety. She said that she was often in or near tears during and after these meetings with Mr. Williams.
27. As Ms. Copeland recalled, in the fall of 2018, the sauna meetings usually involved a lot of criticism about her performance as a coxswain. She characterized Mr. Williams’ behaviour during these discussions as loud, aggressive and harsh.
28. In the winter season leading up to the Brown Cup selection, Ms. Copeland explained that the tone of the meetings shifted. Mr. Williams would talk to her about “being all better”, but that she still needed to “be more of a bitch”.
29. In addition to the above interactions, Ms. Copeland testified that:
 - a. She had to take a couple of days off during the fall season due to illness. Upon her return, Mr. Williams asked her if she was “ok”. She told him she was better, but he cut her off and said, “you’re fine”. Ms. Copeland explained that she was not fine but she felt that she had no choice but to attend practice.
 - b. Mr. Williams assigned Ms. Copeland to a bow loaded boat for the Western Canadian University Rowing championships in the fall of 2018 (“Western CUs”). Ms. Copeland had never coxed in a bow loaded boat and as a result was anxious about her safety and her performance. Ms. Copeland testified that she felt that she did not have sufficient time to train with the bow loaded boat ahead of the

championships. Ms. Copeland described being sick the night before the race because she was so scared and nervous about the bow loaded boat. She described the race as “awful” and that they came in second place, which was disappointing for her and her teammates.

- c. Mr. Williams was harder on her than he was on the only other team coxswain, Olivia Zachariah. Ms. Copeland testified that Mr. Williams did not demean or yell at Ms. Zachariah in the same way he did her.
 - d. Ms. Copeland observed that Mr. Williams would assign certain of the same athletes to land training, depriving them of the same opportunity for on-the-water training and coaching. It was Ms. Copeland’s view that Mr. Williams would use land squad to punish athletes for missing practice or for being injured. He rarely assigned any of the varsity athletes to land squad and there was almost never a coach or coxswain present to assist with the land training. Ms. Copeland said that the athletes regularly assigned to land squad felt sad and unwanted Ms. Copeland testified that to her it “looked like they were being tossed to the side.”
 - e. On one occasion, Mr. Williams displayed the athletes’ grade point averages during a team meeting. While Ms. Copeland acknowledged that this may have been unintentional, she said that she was embarrassed by the incident, because at the time she was doing poorly in school.
 - f. Mr. Williams encouraged the team to use the chant, “FTT”, which stood for “Fuck the Thunderbirds”, in reference to their rivals at the University of British Columbia.
30. Ms. Copeland testified that near the end of the fall of 2018, her mental health was poor. She stopped attending classes and she eventually dropped two of her four classes. She said that she would cry about going to rowing practice and that she started to feel upset and even destructive. She explained that she developed a habit of throwing up her food to punish herself for how terribly she was doing.
 31. Ms. Copeland testified that despite the mental and emotional drain, she did not want to quit the rowing program. She said she spoke with Ms. Heron about her mental health during the winter break. Ms. Heron advised her to “stick it out”.
 32. Prior to the winter break, Ms. Copeland attended a SWOT meeting with Mr. Williams and Ms. Heron. She understood that the purpose of the meeting was for athletes to share their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats with their coaches. The discussion was meant to be athlete-driven. At her meeting, Ms. Copeland told Mr. Williams that she was scared of him and that the training program and his coaching was affecting her mental health. In particular, she said that she told Mr. Williams about her obsessive compulsive disorder, something she had been diagnosed with previously. Ms. Copeland testified that in response, Mr. Williams said “honey you sound suicidal, like you need 24 hour care” or words to that effect. He told her to “turn the paper over” and to come back to the program after the winter break with no weaknesses.
 33. Following the SWOT meeting and her discussion with Ms. Heron, Ms. Copeland did return to the rowing program after the winter break. She testified that she decided that

she would show no weakness and that she would just come in and do her job. She felt she had no choice but to hide any concerns or anxiety she was feeling.

34. Ms. Copeland testified that her interactions with Mr. Williams were more positive in the winter of 2019. She acknowledged sending Mr. Williams a “Merry Christmas” text over the holiday period. It was her impression that so long as she did not show any weakness or emotion, he was a lot more comfortable working with her. Mr. Williams selected her for more boats and ultimately chose Ms. Copeland, over Ms. Zachariah, to cox the varsity 8 boat at the Brown Cup in the spring of 2019.
 35. Ms. Copeland explained that she was both glad for and uncomfortable with the new positive attention she received from Mr. Williams. She said she would still cry everyday going into practice and that she was constantly thinking about rowing. She was not doing well in school, as she had nothing left to give.
 36. Ms. Copeland testified that by the end of the spring 2019, she was struggling emotionally and mentally. Ms. Copeland believed that she could not confide in or confront Mr. Williams with her issues. She was told by Ms. Heron that the Respondent was “emotionally unstable” and when she did raise her OCD with him during her SWOT meeting, Mr. Williams accused her of being suicidal.
 37. Ms. Copeland stopped coxing after the 2018-2019 season. She explained that she is no longer involved in the sport because of Mr. Williams’ impact on her. She said that she used to be a happy person, but that everything changed because of the Respondent. Ms. Copeland said that she was both terrified of the Respondent and also convinced that she needed to listen to him in order to be a good coxswain and good person in general. To this day, she said that she finds it difficult to see his car at the lake.
 38. Ms. Copeland explained that since September 2019 she has been dealing with a number of mental health issues including PTSD and anorexia. She has been on anti-depressant medications and said that she is sad all the time.
 39. Ms. Copeland acknowledged that in addition to filing this current complaint through RCA, she filed a complaint against Mr. Williams through UVic, and commenced a civil action against the Respondent, UVic and others. She also acknowledged that she spoke with the media regarding her experiences with the Respondent and the UVic complaint process.
- (ii) [REDACTED]
40. [REDACTED] began rowing with the UVic women’s program in 2017 and was a member of the program for the 2018-2019 rowing season. While [REDACTED] was a competitive athlete, she had not been involved in the sport of rowing until her novice year in 2017.
 41. During her first year with the rowing program, [REDACTED] was coached primarily by Erin Moen, whom she described as “super fun, very challenging”. [REDACTED] said that every day she was learning new things and improving. She learned to love the sport of rowing over her first year in the program.

42. ██████ testified that Ms. Moen was very positive and even when she was feeling discouraged, Ms. Moen made her feel uplifted. Ms. Moen told ██████ that she was the best novice sculler that the program had ever seen.
43. ██████ participated in the 2018 summer rowing program, at which she was coached by Ms. Heron. ██████ said that Ms. Heron provided her with a lot of training regarding her technique and that she spent a lot of time training on the erg as well.
44. By the end of the summer of 2018, ██████ testified that she was the fittest she had ever been in her life and that she felt confident going into the next rowing season.
45. ██████ testified that she was nervous during the selection camp in the early fall 2018. Mr. Williams told the athletes that he was going to cut the overall size of the team and as a result ██████ thought that there was a pretty low chance that she would actually make it. She was surprised and happy to learn that she had made the team.
46. ██████ described the 10km run during the selection camp. While she had proper footwear for the run, she did not have proper clothing. She participated in the race wearing a one-piece wetsuit she normally wore for rowing. As a result, ██████ explained that her legs were bleeding due to chafing. ██████ said that she did not bring proper running clothes as she did not expect to have to run as part of the selection camp. ██████ acknowledged that she did not ask to be excused from the run, nor did she advise Mr. Williams of her injuries after the fact.
47. Between the selection camp and the start of the training season, ██████ met with Mr. Williams and Ms. Heron who told her that being on the team was not going to be easy. They asked her if she was committed to giving them 100%. ██████ said that she texted Ms. Heron after the meeting to advise her that she was willing to be fully committed to the program.
48. ██████ recalled that during her first practice she was assigned to an 8-person boat with more experienced athletes. She said that Mr. Williams, who did not appear to know her name, kept calling out her seat number to get her attention. ██████ said that Mr. Williams gave her the same correction over and over again. She did not understand what the Respondent thought she was doing wrong and so was unable to make the correction. She said that Mr. Williams was about 10-feet away from her and that his voice became more and more aggressive during this interaction.
49. ██████ described her training schedule as twice per day, six days per week. Generally, there was on-water training in the morning and land training in the afternoon. She explained that fewer athletes were able to attend afternoon training sessions, but that she tried to attend particularly when they were on land. ██████ said that she did not like to attend afternoon water training, as there was more one-on-one time with Mr. Williams, who she felt only ever corrected her, and that he only ever directed anger towards her.
50. ██████ described her experience on the land squad during the 2018-2019 season. At the start of the season, ██████ understood that athletes would be kept on land

squad if they were unable to reach their 6km erg time, plus or minus 2%. Once athletes were able to reach their 6km erg time, they would be placed on the water for training. [REDACTED] testified that she always met her 6km erg time, but despite that she was often assigned to land squad. She said that she was never given a reason why she was assigned to train on the land or any direction as to how she could be taken off of the land squad assignment and assigned to the water for training.

51. [REDACTED] said that Mr. Williams was hardly ever present for land training, and so the athletes on the land squad were often left to complete the assigned workout on their own, with little or no coaching input.
52. When she did have the opportunity to train on the water, [REDACTED] was assigned to row with the novice rowers, who were brand new to rowing and as such barely able to row correctly. Mr. Williams did not typically coach the novice boat and so [REDACTED] interaction with him was limited.
53. When she did receive coaching from Mr. Williams, [REDACTED] testified that the feedback was non-specific. She described Mr. Williams saying things like “paddle your power into your strokes”. [REDACTED] did not find this coaching helpful or effective.
54. [REDACTED] described an incident leading up to the Elk Springs Regatta on March 2-3, 2019 when Mr. Williams assigned [REDACTED]. She testified that they were not given sufficient time to practice in the boat, which ultimately impacted their race performance. Prior to the race, Mr. Williams told [REDACTED] that he wanted to make sure they were prepared to race, since there would be recruits watching and he did not want them to think, “why is that [REDACTED] out there”. [REDACTED] took this comment to mean that Mr. Williams did not want [REDACTED] to embarrass him or the team.
55. Near the end of the fall season, [REDACTED] participated in a SWOT meeting with Mr. Williams and Ms. Heron. She prepared by writing down her strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Before her meeting, she overheard Mr. Williams, Ms. Heron and another athlete laughing and engaging in what sounded like a positive dialogue. [REDACTED] expected a similar interaction, however, when she entered Mr. Williams’ office he made a disparaging comment about the fact that she had brought her paper into the meeting and then said nothing further to her. She did not feel that the meeting was positive or that she was supported. [REDACTED] acknowledged that she did not ask Mr. Williams for more water training because she was too shy to do so.
56. [REDACTED] did reach out to Ms. Heron for support. Ms. Heron told [REDACTED] that she needed to verbalize her commitment to the program more. She encouraged [REDACTED] to be more engaged and did suggest that [REDACTED] talk to Mr. Williams about her concerns. [REDACTED] told Ms. Heron that she was afraid of Mr. Williams. In response, Ms. Heron said that she was afraid of him too.
57. [REDACTED] explained that she found the Respondent unapproachable and intimidating. She felt as though he did not want her to be part of the team. [REDACTED] described his body language as being closed off around her and that oftentimes

she felt ignored by him. [REDACTED] also felt as though Mr. Williams treated other athletes better – he had a more open line of communication with them.

58. [REDACTED] testified that as a result of her negative experience with Mr. Williams she did not return to rowing after the 2018-2019 rowing season, and that as a result of her experiences, has been diagnosed with depression, anxiety and PTSD, for which she is receiving ongoing treatment.

(iii) [REDACTED]

59. [REDACTED] testified that she started rowing in grade 11 and that in addition to rowing, she had been involved in a number of other sports, including [REDACTED].
60. During her high school rowing career, [REDACTED] worked with Mr. Williams as part of [REDACTED].
61. [REDACTED] described Mr. Williams' coaching style as intense. She acknowledged that she liked his one on one coaching and that he made her feel like she had potential and had a future in rowing. [REDACTED] said that during the [REDACTED] training she was always very excited to go to practice in the mornings. She said she felt like Mr. Williams "knew (her) pretty well" as an athlete.
62. During her involvement with the [REDACTED], [REDACTED] training took place mostly on the water, however, Mr. Williams did incorporate some land training. Mr. Williams provided her with feedback based mostly on standard scores.
63. [REDACTED] testified that in grade 12 it was Mr. Williams who helped her decide to go to university at UVic, in large part because of the rowing program. [REDACTED] said she assumed she would make the UVic women's rowing team, given Mr. Williams' encouragement to attend university in Victoria.
64. In the fall of 2017, [REDACTED] was a freshman at UVic. She secured a spot with the women's rowing program and was selected by her then-coach, Rick Crawley, to row in the junior varsity boat at Western CUs that fall.
65. [REDACTED] was [REDACTED] in the winter of 2018, and so had to take the winter semester off from school and training. She returned to rowing in April 2018. At the time, Rick Crawley made clear to her that she had to work on her rowing fitness level and that she had a lot of room to grow. [REDACTED] said throughout the 2017-2018 season, Mr. Crawley allowed her and the other athletes a lot of time rowing on the water both in pairs and in eights. She said she received a lot of feedback and believed that the feedback she received made her a better rower. [REDACTED] also testified that she participated in the 2018 summer rowing program, including racing [REDACTED] at the Royal Canadian Henley Regatta in St. Catharines.
66. As did the other Complainants, [REDACTED] provided the panel with her recollection of the 2018 selection camp, including the 10km run around Elk Lake. She testified that while the run was not on the schedule, due to inclement weather, the athletes could not

complete their training for the day on the water. Like many of the other athletes, [REDACTED] did not have proper running gear or footwear to participate. [REDACTED] was also dealing with a knee injury at the time and so asked Ms. Heron if there was an alternative exercise she could complete. Ms. Heron told [REDACTED] that the run was part of the selection criteria, because she reported that Mr. Williams had told her (Ms. Heron) that “everything was for selection”. As a result, [REDACTED] felt she had no choice but to try to participate in the run. [REDACTED] acknowledged that she did not ask Mr. Williams if she could be excused from the run and she did not advise him that she was not wearing proper running gear. [REDACTED] did testify however, that Mr. Williams had been told about her knee injury early on during selection camp.

67. Following the selection camp, [REDACTED] was selected as one of the members of the rowing team. She understood that Mr. Williams had cut the team from about 45 to about 20 athletes. [REDACTED] testified that she was excited about working with Mr. Williams again, but recognized that anything could happen – given the size of the team and her fitness level at the time.
68. [REDACTED] testified that she was assigned to train on land the majority of the training days. She understood that athletes would be placed on land squad if they did not meet (plus/minus 2%) their 6km personal best on the erg machine. While [REDACTED] was still building up her fitness level [REDACTED], she did reach her personal best on the erg machine and so expected that she would be training on the water.
69. In September 2018, [REDACTED] missed training for a few days due to illness. Upon her return, she was again placed on land squad. After several days of being on land squad, she spoke with Mr. Williams about it, who advised that she needed to work on her technical skills and to bring her fitness level up to be on par with other athletes on the team. [REDACTED] testified that Mr. Williams never told her where she needed to be or how to improve her technique on the erg machine.
70. [REDACTED] testified that despite her requests for feedback, she did not receive concrete feedback from Mr. Williams with regard to her technique or her fitness goals. He told her that she was in the “grey zone”, but did not tell her how to get out of the grey zone, other than to keep working on her erg scores and her fitness level.
71. It was [REDACTED] impression that the larger athletes were more regularly placed on land squad. While there was very little discussion about weight or weight management with Mr. Williams, [REDACTED] recalled that he did speak to her and some of the others about power to weight ratio and the importance of being able to pull your weight in a boat.
72. [REDACTED] recalled a team meeting where Mr. Williams momentarily displayed the GPAs of the team members up onto a projection screen. [REDACTED] was embarrassed because at the time she was on academic probation. [REDACTED] acknowledged that the purpose of the meeting was to talk about whether the rowing program should institute an academic standard higher than the minimum standard the University required for its athletes. The intent of the meeting was not to embarrass or single out any of the athletes.

73. As did the other Complainants, ██████████ prepared and was excited for her SWOT meeting to take place with Mr. Williams and Ms. Heron. At the time she felt unsure about her position on the team and believed that the meeting would provide her with the feedback she needed to move forward. ██████████ testified that she was disappointed by the meeting. She said Mr. Williams did not look happy during the entire meeting. He sat with his arms folded and just stared at her in silence as she reviewed her strengths and weaknesses, as required. ██████████ received none of the feedback she expected to receive at the meeting.
74. ██████████ confirmed that ██████████ were assigned to race ██████████ for the Elk Lake Regatta. She said that they were given four or five days notice and virtually no time to practice. ██████████ said she specifically asked for coaching time and was advised by York Langerfeld, an assistant coach, that Mr. Williams said there were no boats available for practice.
75. ██████████ testified that a few days before the race, Mr. Williams spoke with ██████████ about the race. He asked them if they were prepared to race and advised them that he wanted to make sure that they were “racing for the right reasons”. ██████████ said that she understood Mr. Williams to mean that he did not want ██████████ to embarrass him or the team.
76. ██████████ provided the panel with her impression of Mr. Williams’ interaction with Ms. Copeland. She testified that in her view Mr. Williams treated Ms. Copeland differently and much more harshly than he treated the other coxswain, Ms. Zachariah. ██████████ said that she would often wait for Ms. Copeland while she was speaking with Mr. Williams in the sauna and that “every time” she came out of those meetings, Ms. Copeland was crying or “completely wrecked”.
77. ██████████ said that she and her friends would discuss Mr. Williams’ treatment during the season, but that once they each made the decision to complain about him, they did not ask each other about what they alleged in their separate complaints.
78. ██████████ explained that as a result of Mr. Williams’ behaviour she does not row anymore. She suffers from insomnia and anxiety, and is attending therapy on a regular basis. ██████████ said she no longer feels comfortable being in the UVic rowing environment.

(iv) Sarah Craven

79. Ms. Craven began her rowing career in 2010 in Saskatchewan. She started competing more seriously in 2012 and was a Saskatchewan Sport funded athlete from 2015 to 2018. In 2018, she received funding from Sport Canada. She was recruited to join the UVic rowing program in 2016. She competed as a varsity lightweight for the University starting that same year.
80. As with the other athletes, Ms. Craven was coached by Rick Crawley up until 2018, at which time Mr. Williams took over as head coach for the UVic women’s program. Prior to that, Ms. Craven had the opportunity to be coached by Ms. Heron (summer 2018) and to compete internationally in the United States and in New Zealand. Ms. Craven advised that following a rib injury she suffered in 2019, she did not return to

rowing, save for a brief stint as coxswain for the men's program in June-July and November 2019.

81. Ms. Craven testified that in the fall of 2018, she believed she was the fittest, strongest and fastest she had ever been. She was excited to be working with Mr. Williams and believed that the team could win the Canadian University banner. Personally, Ms. Craven's goal was to make the under-23 world championship team and ultimately compete at the Olympics.
82. Ms. Craven's initial impression of Mr. Williams was that he was coming into the program with fresh, innovative ideas. He was ambitious for himself and the team and he was "hungry" to prove how good a coach he was. Ms. Craven said that Mr. Williams was well aware of her national team ambitions.
83. Ms. Craven described Mr. Williams as taking a segregated approach to coaching. He identified an inside group of athletes, who he wanted to nurture and foster development. Ms. Craven recognized that she was one of those athletes and that there were others who he kept on the outside.
84. Mr. Williams would tell Ms. Craven that he was building the team for her and he would call on her for inside information about the rest of her teammates. He wanted Ms. Craven to tell him who she believed were underperforming. Ms. Craven testified that she felt like she had to provide him with this information otherwise she would lose his attention and validation.
85. In hindsight, Ms. Craven recognized that Mr. Williams' approach to coaching was unhealthy. She explained that it made her uncomfortable to see how upset Ms. Copeland was, for example, when Mr. Williams was yelling. Ms. Craven said that she did not believe that the yelling made Ms. Copeland a better coxswain.
86. Ms. Craven also testified that throughout the season, Mr. Williams pitted her and another rower, Eden Hardcastle, against each other. Even though she and Ms. Hardcastle were rowing partners and friends, Ms. Hardcastle was always vying for Mr. Williams' attention. Ms. Craven explained that once she left the rowing program, Ms. Hardcastle became one of Mr. Williams' confidantes and supporters. As a result, she and Ms. Hardcastle no longer have a relationship.
87. Ms. Craven also provided the Panel with her observations of Mr. Williams' conduct and interaction with others, as follows:
 - a. While she was never assigned to land squad, Ms. Craven said that all of the athletes were nervous about being put onto land squad. It seemed to her that the land training was used to single out athletes and that it was demoralizing for many of them;
 - b. Ms. Craven noticed that constantly being assigned to land squad had a negative impact on both [REDACTED]. She said that they had no real chance to interact with the team or develop any sort of comradery. Further, she noted that Mr. Williams was quite demanding of [REDACTED] and when he did put either [REDACTED] in a boat, it was often with the novices;

- c. Contrary to Mr. Williams' position, Ms. Craven did not think there was any safety reason why all of the athletes couldn't have been in boats during morning training. She noted that there were enough coaches around and that both [REDACTED], in particular, were experienced enough to be out on the water, with minimal supervision;
 - d. Ms. Craven said that she often observed Ms. Copeland after her meetings with Mr. Williams in the sauna. She described Ms. Copeland as "shell shocked". Ms. Craven said that she would text Ms. Copeland to see if she was ok. Ms. Copeland did not share details with her, but would advise that she was anxious and nervous about performing. Ms. Craven said that as the season progressed, Ms. Copeland became more closed off – she would attend practice, do her job and go home.
 - e. Ms. Craven noted that Ms. Heron was very guarded around Mr. Williams. She was normally a really happy and passionate person. She was very invested in her athletes. Ms. Craven said that Ms. Heron did not express herself in this manner around Mr. Williams. They clearly did not have a close relationship and so Ms. Heron remained very closed off. She did not participate in any of the group meetings.
 - f. Ms. Craven recalled Mr. Williams' introduction of the team cheer, "Fuck the Thunderbirds". She thought it was inappropriate and while the team later changed it to "For the team", Ms. Craven said that they all knew what "FTT" really stood for. She acknowledged that she did not tell Mr. Williams that she thought the cheer was inappropriate.
88. Ms. Craven acknowledged that during the 2018-2019 season she was training a great deal. In the fall she competed in a number of regattas and in the national team trials. Ms. Craven trained between 24 and 28 hours per week. As a lightweight, she had difficulty keeping her weight up given the training schedule, however, she said she did not speak with anyone about her weight, including Mr. Williams.
89. Ms. Craven was selected to compete in three events at the University Championships, which she said was an exhausting experience. She had only known one other lightweight who had done three events at one championship. She did not believe she could complain about the schedule to Mr. Williams. Ms. Craven believed that Mr. Williams would lose respect for her if she told him that she was anxious about the championship and the over-training.
90. In March 2019, Ms. Craven suffered a rib injury. She said she was devastated as she could no longer be part of her team. Ms. Craven blamed Mr. Williams for her injury as she felt like a guinea pig in Mr. Williams' process – overtraining and overtaxing her body as a lightweight rower – all to get his approval.
91. Ms. Craven left the women's program following her injury and joined the men's program for a brief period of time to participate as a coxswain. While the experience was a positive one, Ms. Craven ultimately decided she had to leave the UVic program entirely.

92. Ms. Craven dropped out of school, stopped rowing and testified that as a result of her year under Mr. Williams, suffered from mental health issues, including panic attacks, dissociation and suicidal thoughts. Ms. Craven said that she never had to attend counselling for anxiety or depression before her experiences with Mr. Williams.

(v) Samantha Heron

93. Ms. Heron was involved in the sport of rowing since she was in middle school in 2008. Ultimately, she attended the University of Michigan on a full athletic scholarship for rowing. In 2015, she was injured and chose to transfer to UVic, where she obtained her BA in psychology in 2019. Ms. Heron is in the process of completing her Masters Degree from Royal Roads University in conflict analysis.
94. In 2018, Ms. Heron became an RCA Performance Rowing Coach and was hired as an RCA NextGen Hub coach, to identify and help support university level athletes with national team potential. Ms. Heron was embedded within the UVic women's program, which required her to work alongside of Mr. Williams. Prior to that, Ms. Heron stepped in as acting head coach for the summer program at UVic, upon Rick Crawley's retirement, and prior to Mr. Williams' start date.
95. Ms. Heron explained that she ultimately switched from the women's program to the men's program due to her working relationship with Mr. Williams. While both she and Mr. Williams remain involved with rowing at UVic, she no longer works directly with him.
96. Ms. Heron testified that while she did not know Mr. Williams personally prior to the 2018-2019 season, she was aware of him from the rowing community and was excited to have a new coach starting in the fall of 2018. Her initial impression was that they had a good working dialogue and that he was keen to make their coaching relationship work.
97. That said, Ms. Heron did note several "odd" or "aggressive" incidents right from the outset. For example, she found it odd that Mr. Williams did not want to engage with any of the team until he assumed his head coach duties. She said that he did not want to engage with the summer program, even though he was present at the lake on occasion. In addition, Ms. Heron found it odd that Mr. Williams asked her to pick him up from the airport while they were away for the Henley Cup in St. Catharines. She felt like it was a disruptive request, but that she could not say no to him.
98. Ms. Heron testified that her working relationship with Mr. Williams progressed well in the first few weeks of the fall, but that over time the relationship became more challenging. Eventually, as a result of certain particular instances, Mr. Williams would only consult with Ms. Heron on a "need to know" basis. She described feeling frozen out of the coaching decisions by the end of the relationship.
99. Ms. Heron testified with respect to two interactions with Mr. Williams, which in particular, made her feel uncomfortable. The first took place in a hotel lobby during the Canadian University Rowing Championships in St. Catharines, Ontario in November 2018. Ms. Heron had been feeling more and more unsure of her role within the coaching team and wanted clarity from Mr. Williams. She had not expressed any

dissatisfaction up to that point, but felt at that moment it was necessary. Ms. Heron said that the discussion became heated quickly and that Mr. Williams became physically imposing and unwilling to end the conversation, even though they and others had planes to catch. She said that after the interaction in the lobby, Mr. Williams called her repeatedly to try to recast the lobby conversation as something positive.

100. Ms. Heron described another tense conversation with Mr. Williams which took place in December 2018, at the back of the team's workout room. The conversation followed a meeting in which Ms. Heron, Mr. Williams and others from the RCA had discussed the need to better profile the RCA NextGen Hub program, something Mr. Williams was opposed to. Following the meeting, Mr. Williams had a tense and aggressive conversation about it with Ms. Heron. Again, Ms. Heron described feeling uncomfortable. She said Mr. Williams was moving into her physical space in a manner which added to her feelings of being uncomfortable. This interaction was observed by a visiting coach, who followed up with Ms. Heron to make sure she was ok.
101. Ms. Heron said that she understood that Mr. Williams was angry during this conversation, but that he was angry about things she could not control. She kept telling Mr. Williams that James Keogh, Associate Director, Sport at UVic and the men's program coach, Albert Van Schothorst, should be present for the discussion. Mr. Williams ignored her and kept coming into her personal space. Ms. Heron said she ended the interaction by telling Mr. Williams that she did not want to "have this conversation anymore".
102. In follow-up communications, Mr. Williams downplayed the nature of the interaction. Ms. Heron said that it was not a "discussion", as he described it after the fact.
103. Ms. Heron acknowledged that after this interaction, her relationship with Mr. Williams changed. He stopped talking to her, froze her out of decision making and would only speak to her regarding pure logistics. She said this went on until the end of January 2019.
104. At the end of January 2019, Ms. Heron arranged for another meeting with Mr. Williams and Mr. Scott Swinkels, the other NextGen Hub coach. In that meeting, Ms. Heron said she was able to have a more open dialogue with Mr. Williams and that after that they started to interact more amicably. Mr. Williams acknowledged at that meeting that he did not know how to interact with Ms. Heron after December 2018 and that as result he had frozen her out.
105. Ms. Heron provided the panel with her observations of Mr. Williams' interaction with several of the athletes, including the Complainants. For the most part she recognized that the Complainants were unhappy with Mr. Williams' coaching, but she acknowledged that she did not address these concerns with Mr. Williams at the time. She said she did not feel comfortable standing up for the athletes or for herself.
106. Ms. Heron further testified that Mr. Williams did not handle issues well around the athletes' mental or physical well-being, including weight management and injuries. Mr. Heron explained that she felt like if she challenged Mr. Williams, it would result in

a hostile interaction, and believed that ultimately Mr. Williams was not able to support the well-being of the athletes in the manner they needed.

107. Ms. Heron acknowledged that reflecting back now, she felt ashamed for not taking steps to protect the athletes. In particular, Ms. Heron acknowledged:
- a. In one instance an athlete (not one of the Complainants) confided in her about her mental health. Ms. Heron told this athlete not to speak with Mr. Williams about it and further Ms. Heron did not share anything with Mr. Williams about it.
 - b. With respect to selection camp, Ms. Heron did not tell Mr. Williams that there were athletes who were unable to complete the 10km run because they did not have the proper gear, even though she was aware.
 - c. Ms. Heron did not seek clarity for herself or the athletes regarding land squad selection.
 - d. Ms. Heron did not challenge Mr. Williams regarding boating decisions, as she viewed it to be the head coach's ultimate responsibility.
 - e. Ms. Heron did not advise Mr. Williams that the SWOT meetings were not positive experiences for at least some of the athletes.
 - f. Ms. Heron observed Mr. Williams being aggressive or "more on" with [REDACTED] and Ms. Copeland. She did not voice any concerns regarding this observation with Mr. Williams.
108. Ultimately, Ms. Heron explained that she decided to file a complaint with UVic and with RCA to make the coaching environment better for the athletes and the working environment better for herself.

Evidence of the Respondent – Barney Williams

109. Mr. Williams became the head coach of the UVic women's rowing program in the fall 2018.
110. As a rower, Mr. Williams was a student athlete at UVic from 1995 to 1999. He was on the Under-23 Canadian National Team in 1997 and 1998, and the senior national team in 1999. He returned to rowing in 2002. He rowed for the Canadian team at the 2004 Olympics, where he won a silver medal in the men's four event.
111. In 2007, Mr. Williams began doing volunteer coaching at UVic, and in 2011 took on the role of assistant coach with the men's program. Mr. Williams also worked as a coach within the RCA system and in 2017 took on a role at Cornell University as a guest coach and then interim coach for their women's heavy weight program.
112. Mr. Williams confirmed that he has received training as a coach and has a diploma from the National Coaching Institute. In addition to the training he took for his Level 4 NCCP coaching designation, Mr. Williams explained that he has taken various training modules throughout the years.

113. Mr. Williams testified that he was not aware of any concerns or the athletes' complaints until the formal complaints were filed with the University and subsequently with the RCA. Mr. Williams said that he was genuinely shocked and saddened to hear how the Complainants perceived his coaching and the 2018-2019 rowing season.
114. Mr. Williams described his coaching philosophy for the 2018-2019 season as one where he wanted to help each member of the roster become the best version of themselves. He said that he placed significant ownership into the hands of each athlete. He also introduced an election for a Athletes Leadership Council, and encouraged those selected to prepare a team charter. The Council members were also encouraged to address concerns with him as they arose. In that regard, Mr. Williams explained that he instituted a "yellow and red flag" concept, where the athletes were told to identify "yellow and red flag" concerns to the coaching staff.
115. Mr. Williams explained that his coaching philosophy has not changed since becoming aware of the complaints. He employs the same team charter/ownership approach to coaching. He acknowledged that his intensity has changed and that he is more self-aware than he was during his first year with the UVic program.
116. Mr. Williams explained that he started as the head coach in the fall of 2018, having completed his contract with Cornell University in June. During the UVic summer program, Mr. Williams said that he was still coming up to speed on the relationship between the RCA NextGen Hub program and the UVic program. He saw Ms. Heron as a pivotal member of the coaching staff. He identified Mr. Langerfeld as someone else who could round out the staff.
117. At the outset, Mr. Williams believed that the program had good momentum, which he wanted to keep moving. He and Ms. Heron had extensive dialogue to try to present a vision for the athletes, which would involve a collaborative effort between the coaching staff and the team. He believed that together they created a positive vision for the team.
118. With respect to the selection camp, Mr. Williams said that he worked with Ms. Heron to put together what he believed were their expectations and vision for the camp. He acknowledged that there was no specific mention of a run for the selection camp, but that as a result of the inclement weather he decided that the run would be a good alternative to the on-water training. Mr. Williams said that the run took place on the last day of the selection camp. He denied ever suggesting that the results of the run would be part of the "selection process". He also denied ever being advised that some of the athletes did not have proper running gear or shoes. Mr. Williams said that for anyone who was injured or unable to run, they were or could have been excused. He recalled only one athlete asking to be excused because of a pre-existing injury. No one else asked to be excused and Ms. Heron did not advise him that some of the athletes were concerned because of their gear.
119. Mr. Williams testified that following the camp, he chose to select a much smaller team than had been done in previous years. He wanted a leaner team, so that he could better focus their resources. Mr. Williams decided that there would be a varsity team, who would work toward competing in the season and a junior varsity/development group who would be part of the program's long term planning and success.

120. Mr. Williams denied ever using land squad or land training as a means to punish or keep athletes on the outside. He explained that initially land squad was used for those athletes who had yet to hit within 2% of their personal best for the 6km row on the erg. Land training was also an important part of his program more generally so that his athletes could safely work on their fitness levels and technique. Mr. Williams explained that it was sometimes not safe to send an athlete out onto the water in a single, particularly when the coaching staff was otherwise occupied with the athletes on bigger boats.
121. At the time he started in the fall of 2018, Mr. Williams explained that the Western CUs were only 10-weeks away. His focus was on the two 8-crew boats. They had more than 18 athletes in the program, and so that necessarily meant some athletes would not be able to train on the water and/or in the bigger boats.
122. Mr. Williams explained that he believed the land squad assignment would prove to be a more meaningful experience for the athletes than being on the water in a small boat with little to no guidance. He noted that they even created a title, “Queen of the Land” for those athletes who excelled on the daily land program. Further, Mr. Williams noted that athletes were given on-water opportunities in the afternoon. In theory then, athletes should have had on-water time at least three to four times per week.
123. Mr. Williams denied the allegation that land squad assignments had anything to do with an athlete’s body size or weight. Further, he denied ever placing an athlete on land squad due to her mental health. He said that if an athlete asked for time away, he might have suggested that she work on her land training, but he said he would never have used land squad to “punish” an athlete.
124. Mr. Williams said no one on the coaching staff questioned his use of the land training. Mr. Langerfeld did want to get athletes on the water, but Mr. Williams believed that Mr. Langerfeld understood that they had to balance safety, individual progress and the goal of targeting a national championship as a team.
125. Contrary to the evidence of several of the Complainants, Mr. Williams recalled that coaches were involved in the land training as much as possible. He did, acknowledge, however, that it could be difficult to assign a coach to the land training on a regular basis, because he was working with one of the varsity 8-crews, Ms. Heron the other crew, and Mr. Langerfeld with the novices.
126. Mr. Williams acknowledged that he had a lot of interaction with athletes in the “sauna”, as it was a space designed to store tools and coaches’ gear, as well as the coxswains’ equipment. As such, he and the coxswains, including Ms. Copeland, would have occasion to speak with one another in the “sauna”, typically following morning practice. Mr. Williams did not consider these interactions formal meetings, but more like debrief sessions, to discuss how things went out on the water. Mr. Williams believed that many coaches would use the same space to have similar conversations with their athletes. Mr. Williams said he never heard an athlete express concern about meeting him in the “sauna”.

127. The Respondent admitted that he spoke with Ms. Copeland in the “sauna” on a regular basis. He explained that it was not unusual for coaches and coxswain to have daily meetings both ahead and after the training sessions. This was particularly true for he and Ms. Copeland during the fall season.
128. Mr. Williams explained that when he selected the team following the selection camp, he had only two coxswains– Ms. Copeland and Ms. Zachariah. As a result, he needed both to succeed. He said that he met with Ms. Zachariah in the sauna as well.
129. Mr. Williams acknowledged that the conversations with Ms. Copeland were difficult at times. He believed she deserved honest feedback. Mr. Williams said that Ms. Copeland needed to understand his expectations of her and so some of their conversations were difficult. He acknowledged that he would provide Ms. Copeland with critical feedback. Mr. Williams said that he understood that it could be difficult for a young person to handle the criticism, but that his feedback was rooted in growth and development. He said “we all knew (Ms. Copeland) was headed toward being a varsity coxswain”.
130. With respect to the space in the “sauna” itself, Mr. Williams acknowledged that it is a challenging space to “spread out”, but that no one ever told him that Ms. Copeland was uncomfortable speaking to him there. Further, Mr. Williams testified that he did not see Ms. Copeland cry during his interactions with her in the “sauna”.
131. At the time, Mr. Williams did not have any concerns about meeting with Ms. Copeland one on one in the “sauna”. He explained that they used the “sauna” to touch base as a matter of efficiency. He said that he would try to leave the lake by 7:50am and that sometimes they would not be off the water until 7:30am, which meant that he and the coxswain would have a few minutes to debrief. The “sauna” was the only heated area in the bay and it did not make sense to Mr. Williams to have the debrief in a more formal meeting room upstairs.
132. Mr. Williams denied ever yelling at Ms. Copeland, but he did acknowledge that he likely spoke to her with a certain level of intensity which in hindsight he accepts she might have found troubling. Mr. Williams acknowledged that these interactions in the “sauna” would have taken place with the door open or closed – but he denied ever purposely locking the door to prevent Ms. Copeland from leaving or anyone else from coming in.
133. The Respondent testified that he brought the concept of SWOT meetings to the women’s program in 2018. He had used SWOT meetings in his role with the RCA’s row to podium program. He believed that the SWOT meeting was a powerful tool that brought structure and purpose to his meetings with his athletes. Mr. Williams explained that he followed the same process for each athlete’s SWOT meeting. He accepted that the meeting could be challenging for some athletes, but he denied that he ever refused to provide feedback or engage in dialogue, if that is what the athlete wanted. In Mr. Williams’ view, it was the athlete’s responsibility to drive the agenda during the meeting. Mr. Williams further confirmed that Ms. Heron was present for the SWOT meetings.

134. With respect to his interaction with Ms. Heron, Mr. Williams testified that his ideal scenario was that he and Ms. Heron would have a weekly coaching session so that they could develop a training program together. He said Ms. Heron had a great background and he valued her input.
135. Throughout the fall, he and Ms. Heron spoke about integrating the novices into the training program, but Mr. Williams explained that he took the lead running the program. He and Ms. Heron decided that the NextGen Hub athletes, who had been identified as potential national athletes, would work with his varsity athletes and would be provided additional support and training opportunities. At the time, Mr. Williams said that none of the athletes complained to him about the training load.
136. Mr. Williams denied ever requiring an athlete to train through sickness or injury. He acknowledged that over-use injuries were common. He explained that his message to an injured athlete was to consider whether training could be modified so that lost training time could be minimized, however if an athlete had an acute injury, they might have to stop training altogether. Mr. Williams testified that his number one priority was to “do no harm” with regard to injured and rehabilitating athletes.
137. Mr. Williams was asked about the athletes who left the program throughout the fall season. He testified that it was not unusual for athletes to leave for a variety of reasons. He acknowledged that one athlete who testified (but who is not a Complainant) told him she was leaving the program to deal with her mental health. She said that the training load was not sustainable and she told Mr. Williams that there was a big transition between his coaching and that of the previous coach. That said, Mr. Williams also advised that in the spring of 2019, that same athlete approached him to return back to the program. She was reintegrated into the training sessions for a brief period of time, but ultimately did not return for the fall.
138. Mr. Williams denied ever being told that an athlete left the program because of his coaching style.
139. With respect to the FTT cheer, Mr. Williams acknowledged that he introduced the cheer to the team. He explained that there was a similar cheer used when he rowed for Oxford U against their rival team at Cambridge. No one told Mr. Williams that they found the cheer offensive, but he explained that he came to realize that some of the athletes thought the cheer was not appropriate and quickly decided to change its meaning.
140. Mr. Williams admitted that he did use profanity in front of his athletes from time to time, but that he did not direct it toward an individual and did not use it in a derogatory or negative way.
141. Mr. Williams also admitted that he may have accidentally posted the athletes’ GPAs on a screen during a meeting for a few seconds. He did so accidentally and he did not intend to embarrass or humiliate anyone. He received the athletes’ GPAs from the University twice per year. The meeting was about academic performance and the importance of making academic success part of the team’s success.

142. With respect to the specific complaints filed by Ms. Copeland, the Respondent provided the panel with the following evidence:
- a. Ms. Copeland was selected for the team not only because they needed two coxswains in order to contest the championship events, but also because her performance during selection camp and in the athlete election process confirmed that she would be a great fit for the team. His meetings in the “sauna” with Ms. Copeland did not last 20-30 minutes as she alleged. Mr. Williams believed that they lasted no more than 5 or 10 minutes at most.
 - b. Mr. Williams specifically denied telling Ms. Copeland to be “more of a bitch” or that she was “too nice to be a coxswain”. Further, he denied ever berating her on or off the water.
 - c. During the 2018-2019 season, Mr. Williams acknowledged that he became aware of Ms. Copeland struggling with performance anxiety and that her anxiety was taking a toll on her academically. He said that he was not aware that she suffered from OCD or more generalized anxiety. Further, he denied knowing that she was taking medication for depression.
 - d. Mr. Williams recalled discussing Ms. Copeland’s performance anxiety during her SWOT meeting, but denied every suggesting that she “sounded suicidal” or that she needed to be on a 24-hour watch. He did advise her to “turn her page over” meaning that she should take all of the negative things she had identified during the meeting and turn them into strengths.
 - e. Mr. Williams was not concerned about Ms. Copeland or Ms. Zachariah’s weight management. He explained that while there is a weigh-in requirement for coxswains, both young women were at a good starting point at the outset of the racing season. He told them to come to him if they were having issues, however neither did.
 - f. Mr. Williams was proud of Ms. Copeland’s performance at the Brown Cup in April 2019. He testified that in his view, Ms. Copeland had every reason to feel incredibly excited about the season and her ongoing rowing career. At the time, he believed that they were headed in the right direction together.
 - g. Mr. Williams denied using harassing or abusive language in his communications with Ms. Copeland or others during on-water training. He stated that he used a megaphone, so that the athletes could hear him over the noise of the boats and other people in the water. He denied ever using his megaphone in close proximity to Ms. Copeland’s boat. Mr. Williams explained that it was simply not possible for him to get within 6-feet of the race boat, while he was in the coach boat.
 - h. Mr. Williams acknowledged that he said things like “what were you thinking” to Ms. Copeland both on and off the water. He denied every using profanity towards her.

- i. Mr. Williams disagreed with the suggestion that he put Ms. Copeland in an unsafe position by requiring her to cox a bow-loaded 4 for the first time at the Western Canadian CUs. He said that it was not unsafe as the equipment is quite advanced. He had no concerns about Ms. Copeland's ability to adapt to the new boat and believed that the race environment was safe.
143. With respect to [REDACTED], Mr. Williams believed that he provided her with direct and clear feedback. He denied ever seeing her cry while he was coaching her, and he denied ever purposely ignoring her. He acknowledged that he had little one on one time with [REDACTED] during the fall season.
144. Mr. Williams did not deny that he may have used [REDACTED] seat number to call out instructions to her during an on-water training session. He explained that at the time he was still getting to know the team and probably did not know her name.
145. Mr. Williams denied ever observing [REDACTED] crying while he provided her feedback, which he did describe as "direct and objective". He said that his feedback was meant to give [REDACTED] an opportunity to improve her movement.
146. Mr. Williams acknowledged that [REDACTED] sometimes trained with the novice athletes. He denied that this created any disadvantage for her. Mr. Williams said he believed it gave her a chance to train on the water and to be a leader – he saw it as an opportunity for her to inspire new athletes and to develop her own skills.
147. Mr. Williams said he first learned of [REDACTED] concerns about his coaching upon being advised of her complaint to UVic.
148. Mr. Williams confirmed that he first interacted with [REDACTED] through the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] prior to her arrival at UVic. Mr. Williams believed he had a good relationship with [REDACTED] through [REDACTED]. He said that it was "neat" to work with a multi-sport athlete. At the time, [REDACTED] was playing [REDACTED], in addition to rowing.
149. As with [REDACTED], Mr. Williams denied singling out [REDACTED] for land squad. Mr. Williams believed that [REDACTED] had rehab work to do, given a knee injury she suffered and that she was not one of the top 16 rowers on the team. He believed that she could gain confidence and strength by focusing on her dry-land skills.
150. Similar to his evidence regarding [REDACTED], Mr. Williams stated that he believed that allowing [REDACTED] to train with the novices was beneficial to both her and the novice rowers.
151. Mr. Williams testified that he never received a complaint from [REDACTED] about his coaching style.
152. Mr. Williams described Ms. Craven as a top athlete in the rowing program. He said that he would describe her as a "high performance athlete". He believed that her position on the team and with NextGen Hub would be a tremendous advantage to her.

153. He acknowledged that he would ask Ms. Craven for feedback about other athletes. Mr. Williams said he did this because he was not in the boat with the other athletes and so it was helpful for him to have feedback as to whether there were any issues he should be aware of.
154. Mr. Williams stated that Ms. Craven never suggested that she was uncomfortable sharing information with him about other athletes or that his inquiries placed too much responsibility on her.
155. With respect to the decision to enter Ms. Craven in three events at the Canadian University Rowing Championships, Mr. Williams did not see this as an extraordinary request. He explained that most of the other athletes were required to compete in two events. While he did not view this as ideal, he believed that Ms. Craven could handle all three events, even though fatigue would be a factor. He believed that Ms. Craven supported the decision.
156. Mr. Williams confirmed that rib injuries were common for rowers, and that, at the time of Ms. Craven's injury, he supported her decision to focus on rehabilitation and then ultimately in the spring 2019 to leave the team. Mr. Williams testified that Ms. Craven never told him that the training was too much.
157. As with the other Complainants, Mr. Williams first learned of Ms. Craven's concerns through the UVic complaints process.
158. As described above, Mr. Williams testified that his coaching relationship with Ms. Heron started off as positive. Mr. Williams said he was optimistic that the NextGen Hub program was good for the student athletes and the sport. He understood that Ms. Heron had obligations to both the NextGen Hub program and the UVic program.
159. He acknowledged that as the season progressed the relationship between the two programs presented certain challenges and that created communication challenges between Ms. Heron and himself.
160. With respect to Ms. Heron's specific complaints, Mr. Williams provided the following information:
 - a. Mr. Williams did not believe it was inappropriate or problematic for him to ask Ms. Heron for a ride from the airport to the Henley Regatta in St. Catharines, Ontario. He said Ms. Heron never advised him that it would be a challenge for her to do so.
 - b. Mr. Williams acknowledged that following the Canadian University Championships in the early fall, he and Ms. Heron had a "challenging" conversation in the hotel lobby. They discussed a couple of troubling performances in the lightweight athletes, whom Ms. Heron was coaching. He recognized that by the end of the conversation Ms. Heron was frustrated and had found the weekend and the conversation challenging. Mr. Williams did not deny Ms. Heron's account of the interaction.

- c. Mr. Williams explained that after this conversation, Ms. Heron did ask for more clarity regarding her role and that he tried to provide her with that a few times.
 - d. Mr. Williams acknowledged that he had a heated interaction with Ms. Heron in December 2018, following a meeting with others from RCA about the NextGen Hub program and cross-marketing with the UVic program. He explained that the conversation took place in the workout room at the lake, where athletes were present and working out. He acknowledged that he was physically close to Ms. Heron during the discussion and that he recognized that she was “not thrilled” with the discussion. He denied realizing that Ms. Heron was uncomfortable, but he confirmed that Ms. Heron asked him to take up the conversation at another time so that others could be present.
 - e. Following the December 2018 interaction, Mr. Williams agreed to a meeting with Ms. Heron and Mr. Scott Swinkels, the other NexGen Hub coach who was working with the UVic’s men’s program. Mr. Swinkel was present to help facilitate Mr. Williams’ and Ms. Heron’s discussion. This meeting took place in February 2019.
 - f. Mr. Williams acknowledged that after the February 2019 meeting, his interaction with Ms. Heron changed. He said that he made a conscious effort to raise his broader concerns about the NextGen Hub program with personnel at RCA at a higher level. Mr. Williams explained that he took the formal step not to have those conversations with Ms. Heron.
 - g. Mr. Williams denied “freezing out” Ms. Heron after their February 2019 meeting. He acknowledged that they had less interactions, but that there was no intent to disengage with her or to exclude her.
 - h. Mr. Williams denied ever telling Ms. Heron that he would like to “punch” an athlete in the face. Mr. Williams further denied that Ms. Heron ever advised him about any of the athletes’ mental health, save for general discussions about performance anxiety.
161. Mr. Williams confirmed that following a workplace complaint made by Ms. Heron in the spring of 2019 and an investigation, he entered into a workplace behavioural agreement so that he and Ms. Heron could work within the UVic rowing program on an ongoing basis.

Findings and Discussion

162. Good coaches are able to tease out of their athletes success and high performance by challenging and supporting them. It is clear from the evidence presented that Mr. Williams’ approach to coaching did not resonate with the Complainants. While some of them experienced rowing success, they clearly did not feel supported by Mr. Williams.
163. The Panel accepts, however, that its role is not to assess Mr. Williams’ coaching style in general or to comment on examples of where his approach clearly failed to achieve the intended result.

164. The Panel considered whether the evidence presented supported the Complainants' position that Mr. Williams had breached the requirements imposed on all rowing participants and coaches as set out in the RCA Code of Conduct and the NCCP Code of Ethics.
165. The Panel concluded that in his interactions with Ms. Copeland and Ms. Heron, the Respondent breached his responsibilities under both the Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics.
166. With regard to the other complaints, the Panel was unable to conclude that Mr. Williams' conduct gave rise to conduct violations as alleged.
167. Mr. Williams knew or ought to have known that the manner in which he communicated with Ms. Copeland was harmful and was negatively impacting her. While Mr. Williams denied ever seeing Ms. Copeland cry or close to tears during his meetings with her in the "sauna", that is difficult for the panel to accept, in light of Ms. Copeland's compelling and emotional account of those same meetings. Even if he did not see Ms. Copeland cry, Mr. Williams acknowledged that she was clearly upset by their interactions.
168. As her coach, Mr. Williams should not have continued to put Ms. Copeland in a position where she was made to be "upset". He could have employed different methods given that it was clear or should have been clear to him that his "direct feedback" approach was harmful.
169. Ms. Copeland's evidence with respect to her SWOT meeting also raised concerns for the panel. Ms. Copeland described Mr. Williams as minimizing and making light of her mental health concerns. While Mr. Williams denied suggesting that she would need 24-hour monitoring, the panel preferred Ms. Copeland's recollection of the event. Ms. Copeland's memory of the meeting was clear and detailed. Further, Mr. Williams did acknowledge that there was some discussion of Ms. Copeland's mental health during the meeting, at least in relation to anxiety around performing. Further, following the SWOT meeting, it was uncontested that Ms. Copeland's mood and approach to her role as coxswain changed. This strongly suggests that Mr. Williams' conduct and comments during the SWOT meeting had a negative impact on Ms. Copeland going forward.
170. In the circumstances, the Panel concluded that Mr. Williams made an inappropriate and unhelpful comment about Ms. Copeland's mental health during the SWOT meeting, in a manner contrary to his role and responsibilities as her coach.
171. The Panel found Mr. Williams to have breached the requirements set out in sections 8(p), 9(a)(i), (iii), (xi) and (xvi) of the RCA Code of Conduct. He failed to put Ms. Copeland's best interests ahead of his personal desire to build a successful team, seemingly at any cost. His "direct feedback" approach with Ms. Copeland was unwelcomed and ultimately harmful to Ms. Copeland's well-being. He failed to ensure that Ms. Copeland was able to participate in a safe and nurturing environment and as a result failed in his obligation to project a positive image of the sport and of coaching.

172. Mr. Williams' relationship with Ms. Heron was complicated by the fact that neither appeared to have a clear understanding of how Ms. Heron's dual role (with NextGen Hub and with the UVic women's team) was meant to facilitate Mr. Williams' role as head coach. This undoubtedly contributed to the tension in their relationship. The panel accepted that Mr. Williams tried throughout the 2018-2019 season to respond to Ms. Heron's concerns when raised.
173. Despite Mr. Williams' efforts, the Panel found that his interactions with Ms. Heron in the hotel lobby in the fall of 2018 and with her in the workout room in December 2018 violated the RCA Code of Conduct. In particular, Mr. Williams engaged in conduct that was unwelcomed and inappropriate particularly given the power dynamic between him and Ms. Heron. Such conduct amounted to harassment as that is defined in section 8(p) of the Code. As head coach, Mr. Williams was Ms. Heron's direct supervisor. Ms. Heron was a young woman, clearly trying to do her best to manage the demands of both her roles within the program. As someone older, who had more coaching experience, Mr. Williams should not have taken his frustrations regarding team performance or regarding the NextGen Hub program out on Ms. Heron.
174. The two interactions clearly impacted their working relationship going forward, such that Ms. Heron did not feel comfortable sharing information about individual athletes with him, even when it would have been appropriate to do so.
175. As alluded to above, the panel could not conclude that Mr. Williams' interactions with the other Complainants amounted to a violation of the RCA Code of Conduct or the NCCP Code of Ethics:
 - a. Mr. Williams' decision to ask the athletes to complete a 10km run during selection camp was not inappropriate. There was no evidence to suggest that he knew or ought to have known that the athletes felt compelled to participate and/or that athletes chose to run, even though they did not have proper running shoes or attire. While it is obvious in hindsight that Mr. Williams could have made it clearer to the athletes that the run was not for selection, there was no real way for him to know that there was such a concern – particularly since Ms. Heron did not tell him about the athletes' concerns prior to the run.
 - b. Other than as discussed with respect to Ms. Copeland's SWOT meeting, the Panel could not conclude that Mr. Williams' conduct during the SWOT meetings involving [REDACTED] violated the Code of Conduct or the Code of Ethics. While Mr. Williams' approach was clearly not effective or helpful for these athletes, it did not give rise to a coaching violation.
 - c. Mr. Williams' decision to use land training as a significant component of his program was clearly not well received by many of the athletes, including the Complainants. That said, this was clearly a coaching decision – to focus on higher performance athletes in the water – rather than give all athletes equal or similar time in boats – which does not give rise to any Code of Conduct or Code of Ethics violation. Again, clearly in hindsight, this approach was not effective for at least some of his athletes and Mr. Williams ought to have been more attuned to the needs of each athlete, rather than simply focussed on those athletes

he perceived as higher performing. At the very least, Mr. Williams should have better communicated with the athletes on land training, so that they could understand his expectations and so that they could work toward more on the water training.

- d. The Panel was not persuaded that Mr. Williams' coaching style on the water or use of profanity gave rise to a Code of Conduct or Code of Ethics violation. While there is no doubt that some of the athletes may have felt like they were being yelled at or singled out, the evidence suggested that given the number of boats and people on the water during training, it made sense that Mr. Williams would have to use a loud speaker and "shout" in order to be heard.
176. In summary, the Panel concluded that the Respondent's one on one interactions with Ms. Copeland and his conduct at two meetings with Ms. Heron in 2018 violated his obligations under the RCA Code of Conduct and amount to a clear failure to maintain the standards set out within the NCCP Code of Ethics.

Sanction

177. The Complainants submitted that Mr. Williams ought to be subject to a permanent ban as a rowing participant within the sport in Canada.
178. Mr. Williams argued that if the Panel made findings, it ought not to impose any ban or any significant sanction, given that he has already been through an investigation and appeal within the UVic process, during which time he was removed from his position as the team's coach. Further, Mr. Williams argued that given the media scrutiny, he has already been through enough.
179. Considering its findings and the parties' submission regarding sanction, the Panel concluded that a suitable sanction in this case must send a clear message to both Mr. Williams and to the rowing community as a whole. Aggressive and unwelcome coaching behaviour is a violation of the standards and obligations spelled out in both the RCA Code of Conduct and the NCCP Code of Ethics. It is important to note that several women, many of them promising athletes, testified that Mr Williams' coaching led them to leave the sport prematurely to the detriment of the sport and to these athletes.
180. In the circumstances and pursuant to section 33 of the RCA Discipline Policy (the "Discipline Policy"), the Panel makes the following Order with respect to sanction:
- a. The Respondent is suspended from participating in all RCA activities for a period of 12-months. The full 12-month suspension is to be remitted if the Respondent complies with the following terms:
 - i. The Respondent shall work with a coach evaluator, to be selected by the RCA within 30-days of the date of this decision.
 - ii. The Respondent shall receive one-on-one mentoring from the coach evaluator for the full 12-month period, or such longer time as the coach evaluator deems necessary.

- iii. The coach evaluator will initiate contact with the Respondent and review this decision with the Respondent to develop a remedial plan, to include course work offered through the RCA certification program, emphasizing coaching ethics, integrity, working with developing athletes and working with female athletes.
 - iv. The Respondent shall have bi-weekly contact with the coach evaluator for the first six months, and at least monthly contact thereafter.
 - v. The Respondent must complete the remedial work to the satisfaction of the coach evaluator, who will provide the RCA with a minimum of four status reports confirming the Respondent's progress.
- b. If, at any time, in the opinion of the coach evaluator, the Respondent fails to participate in the remedial plan, the Respondent shall be required to complete whatever months are remaining on his suspension.
 - c. Further to section 42 of the Discipline Policy, this decision shall be available to the public with the names of the Complainants redacted. In order to give effect to our sanction and given that this matter has already received significant public attention, the Respondent's name should not be redacted.

181. The Panel is satisfied that the sanction imposed will act as a deterrent for both the respondent and the rowing community as a whole. The remittance of the suspension offers the Respondent an opportunity to learn from his wrongdoing and minimizes the risk that he will engage in similar behaviour again.



Signed by Panel Chair Luisa Ritacca on behalf of:

Michael Smith, Panel Member
Ann Peel, Panel Member

April 1, 2021