

November 11, 2022

To the Austin Ultimate (AU) Board Members,

We, as players of the Austin Torch, past and present, are writing to express strong opposition to your recent decision to select the Austin Sol over Texas Ultimate Summer Camp 365 (TUSC365) to run Austin's Youth Spring League (YSL).

We want to be clear that this letter has been written, edited, and signed only by Torch *players*. As you know, Bonesaw Kepner is one of our founding members and a Co-President of the Austin Torch. However, given that he is married to Colleen Kepner, owner of TUSC365, we feel it is important that you know our opposition to your choice is coming directly from the players, not from Bonesaw, thus we have drafted and signed this letter independently.

The decision to select the Austin Sol over TUSC365 stands in antithesis to our mission, so we feel the need to speak out. The Torch is committed to centering marginalized voices and standing with those who champion the needs of underrepresented, underserved communities. For years, TUSC365, under Colleen's leadership, has done just this. She developed high quality ultimate leagues and summer camps where youth players of all ages, races, sexualities, genders, and socioeconomic statuses could come together and grow as athletes and people. Colleen's business model offers a sliding scale of payments to enable any youth players in the community the ability to learn and compete in this sport that we all love. This sliding scale also allows Colleen to pay the coaches and organizers that put on TUSC365 events, thus making the organization both sustainable and equitable.

In contrast, the AUDL is an organization designed in line with capitalist values that leave little space for marginalized voices. The organizers of the league and its franchise in our community, the Austin Sol, do not mention a desire to promote social equity or combat the racial and gender inequities that exist in ultimate in their mission statements. The organizers of the Austin Sol have a history of using the Torch, specifically, in insincere attempts to demonstrate a passion for equity. One demonstration of the Austin Sol's faux-equity is from earlier this year when the Torch were informed that the Austin Sol had submitted a proposal to run YSL, in which they suggested that other local teams and organizations might be willing contributors to aid in their endeavor. A member of the AU Board reached out to the Torch to clarify our involvement, as it seemed to imply that we might assist. While the Torch are strong supporters of developing youth ultimate in our city, we believe in the work being done by TUSC365 and were never directly consulted about a partnership with the Austin Sol for YSL.

Another example involves our inaugural professional ultimate game, showcasing women and non-binary players on an international stage. We recall that Torch and Sol agreed to play back-to-back at the same stadium that night. Over 1,000 spectators showed up to support the Torch. Due to the high level of competition, the game went longer than expected, and Patrick Christmas, the owner of the Austin Sol, demanded that the Torch shorten their fourth quarter so the Austin Sol could start their game on time. Through these actions, it is clear that the Austin Sol prioritize themselves in this community, and we believe our youth deserve better.

Finally, we would like to express concern about the procedures that Austin Ultimate used to make the decision about YSL. Our understanding is that TUSC365 has been endlessly collaborative and communicative with you and consistently promoted AU to the youth players who participated in

TUSC365 events. However, these gifts were met with the poorly explained decision of selecting the Sol over TUSC365 to run YSL. This choice also resulted in some propriety business information of Colleen's being commandeered by the Austin Sol. To us, this is an example of men stealing a woman's work in an effort to make money off of the thriving business that Colleen worked tirelessly too create.

Additionally, AU did not create specific opportunities for community feedback on the YSL decision, specifically from those it would affect most: youth players and families. The Town Hall event on October 22 was described as "a chat" about "what we're doing, how we're growing, and where we see our organization growing" but gave no specific mention of the YSL decision. Had the Town Hall agenda been transparent, Torch players would have shown up in support of Colleen and TUSC365. Overall, we find these procedures unacceptable, and we ask you to reconsider your decision.

While we do not know what discussions were had during AU Board meetings, we hope you understand what is at stake in this decision. We feel protective of youth ultimate players in Austin, many of whom have been coached by and even played alongside us, and we will always work to keep our youth ultimate spaces equitable and safe. TUSC365 has a history of providing that. The Austin Sol does not.

Thank you for the time, energy, and work you at AU give our community. We are truly appreciative of the way you continuously create opportunities for play in this city, and we know you will make the right choice.

Sincerely,

Players of the Austin Torch

Professional Ultimate Frisbee Team for Non-Binary and Women Athletes

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