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DISTRICT JUDGE

SIM MEI LING

30 September 2026

IN THE STATE COURTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE

[2026] SGDC 321

District Court Originating Claim No 492 of 2024

Between

Tan Wee Jin (Chen Weiren)

... Claimant

And

1. German Dragons Singapore
2. Alexander Koch
3. Saunak Biswas
4. Regina Isabel
5. Tracie Ooi
6. Alexander Lamprecht
7. Xia Chenhui
8. Sujathe Samarakkody
9. Kevin Truong
10. Perima Lousie Seck Lee Low
11. Esteban Benjamin Alban
12. Debra Halverson

... Defendants

JUDGMENT

[Tort] — [Conspiracy]
[Tort] — [Defamation] — [Justification]
[Tort] — [Defamation] — [Publication]
[Tort] — [Defamation] — [Qualified privilege]

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Tan Wee Jin (Chen Weiren)
v
German Dragons Singapore & 11 Ors

[2026] SGDC 321

District Court Originating Claim No 492 of 2024
District Judge Sim Mei Ling
23-24 October 2025, 2-6 February 2026, 9-11 February 2026, 15 April 2026
and 17 July 2026

30 September 2026

Judgment reserved.

District Judge Sim Mei Ling:

Introduction

1 The 1st defendant (“GDS”) is a registered society under the Societies Act 1966. Its objects include participating in both national and international dragon boat races and organising social and competitive events for members and non-members.¹

2 The claimant was formerly GDS’ Team Coach from February 2015 until 11 August 2023. The 2nd to 12th defendants were at the material time, members of GDS. Some of them were also officeholders.

¹ Claimant’s Bundle of Documents Vol. 1 (“1 CBD”) 188.

3 The present proceedings arise out of a deck of slides which were presented at GDS’ extraordinary general meeting on 1 September 2023 (the “EGM”).

4 The claimant alleged that the contents of the slides were defamatory and that the defendants conspired with the intention to injure him.

5 The defendants denied that the slides were defamatory and additionally relied on the defences of justification and qualified privilege. They also denied the existence of any conspiracy.

6 After considering the evidence and parties’ submissions, I find that the claimant has failed to establish his claims in defamation and conspiracy. These are my reasons.

Brief facts

7 GDS is administered by an Executive Committee (the “Ex-Co”). This consists of a President (Team Captain), Secretary, Treasurer, Men’s Captain, Women’s Captain, Sports Director and a Team Affairs Officer.²

8 GDS has a Technical Committee which is entrusted with training and race aspects of all competitions (“Tech-Co”). It comprises the Team Captain, Women’s Captain, Men’s Captain, and Sports Director.³

9 The 2023 Ex-Co initially comprised:

Position	Name
Team Captain	Ms Connie Ip (“Ms Ip”) ⁴

² 1 CBD 191.

³ Defence (Amendment No. 2) (“Defence”), [7].

⁴ Ms Ip’s Affidavit of Evidence-in-Chief (“AEIC”), [5].

Position	Name
Secretary	Ms Erin Tham (“Ms Tham”) ⁵
Treasurer	The 12 th defendant, Ms Debra Halverson (“Ms Halverson”) ⁶
Men’s Captain	The 8 th defendant, Mr Sujathe Samarakkody (“Mr Sujathe”) ⁷
Women’s Captain	The 10 th defendant, Ms Perima Louise Seck Lee Low (“Ms Low”) ⁸
Sports Director	The 11 th defendant, Mr Derel Esteban Benjamin Alban (“Mr Alban”) ⁹
Team Affairs Officer	The 9 th defendant, Mr Kevin Truong (“Mr Truong”) ¹⁰

10 Sometime in early July 2023, Mr Sujathe informed Ms Ip that some members had asked him to sign a petition calling for an emergency general meeting to be convened to consider if the claimant should be removed as Team Coach (“Petition”).

11 Ms Ip informed the claimant of the Petition in early July.¹¹

12 On 9 August 2023, Ms Ip resigned as Team Captain.¹²

⁵ Ms Tham’s AEIC, [6].

⁶ Statement of Claim (Amendment No. 1) (“SOC”), [13]; Defence, [15].

⁷ SOC, [9]; Defence, [11].

⁸ SOC, [11]; Defence, [13].

⁹ SOC, [12]; Defence, [14].

¹⁰ SOC, [10]; Defence, [12].

¹¹ The claimant’s AEIC, [26].

¹² Ms Ip’s AEIC, [17].

13 On 11 August 2023, the claimant sent a message in the WhatsApp chatgroup titled “GDS Booking”, informing GDS members that he would not continue with GDS.¹³ He asserted that there was a petition by a group of “keyboard warriors”¹⁴ who “think they know better how a team should be like”¹⁵. He stated that all his “decisions have been made in the best interest of the team” but it “seems people are trying to twist things around”.¹⁶ He also accused an unnamed Tech-Co member of having an “interest [that] is not aligned with this team”¹⁷ and asserted that he would in future choose a sports director who will be “actually contributing to the team and not starting some petition while thinking weights training is too hard”.¹⁸

14 As of the date of the claimant’s resignation, the Petition had not been submitted to the Ex-Co.¹⁹ It was Ms Low’s and Mr Alban’s evidence that it was not eventually submitted.²⁰

15 On 12 August 2023, Ms Tham resigned as Secretary.

16 Notice of the EGM was circulated on 21 August 2023. The proposed agenda was to address allegations of bullying and harassment, the Petition, identify a new coach, elect a Team Captain and Secretary, and any other agenda items as requested by members.²¹ A further email with the finalised agenda was sent on 29 August 2023.²²

¹³ Claimant’s Bundle of Documents Vol. 2 (“2 CBD”) 1158 – 1167.

¹⁴ 2 CBD 1158.

¹⁵ 2 CBD 1160.

¹⁶ 2 CBD 1162.

¹⁷ 2 CBD 1163.

¹⁸ 2 CBD 1166.

¹⁹ Defendants’ Bundle of Documents (“DBD”) 36.

²⁰ Certified Transcripts (“CT”), 6 February 2026, 71:29 – 31; CT, 10 February 2026, 64:17 – 25.

²¹ 2 CBD 1419 -1421.

²² 2 CBD 1422 – 1423.

17 The EGM was held on 1 September 2023. Based on the minutes of the EGM, a total of 46 members attended: 41 in person, and 5 online.²³ 2 of the claimant’s witnesses, Mr Abhinava Moreddy (“Mr Abhinava”) and Ms Tan Shu Yi (“Ms Tan”), were members who attended the EGM in person.²⁴ The claimant was not in attendance as he was not a member of GDS. There is a dispute as to whether 2 alleged non-members were also present.

18 Several of the defendants presented at the EGM, in the following order²⁵:

- (a) Ms Low and Mr Sujathe, who were the acting co-Captains, delivered an opening address;
- (b) Mr Truong addressed members on the slides titled “Allegation of Bullying and Harassment”;
- (c) The 6th defendant, Mr Alexander Lamprecht (“Mr Lamprecht”), who was an honorary auditor of GDS in 2023²⁶, gave a presentation on GDS’ constitution;
- (d) The 4th defendant, Ms Regina Isabel (“Ms Isabel”) and the 5th defendant, Ms Tracie Ooi (“Ms Ooi”) presented various slides on the Petition (Ms Isabel was GDS’ Women’s Captain in 2022 and a general member in 2023.²⁷ Ms Ooi was GDS’ Secretary in 2022 and a general member in 2023²⁸);
- (e) Ms Low reported on the steps taken to identify a new coach; and

²³ 1 CBD 214.

²⁴ Mr Abhinava’s AEIC, [18]; Ms Tan’s AEIC, [30].

²⁵ 1 CBD 195; DBD 34 -37.

²⁶ Defence, [9].

²⁷ SOC, [5], Defence, [7].

²⁸ SOC, [6]; Defence, [8].

(f) Mr Alban conducted an election to fill the vacant Ex-Co roles.

19 The 2nd defendant, Mr Alexander Koch (“Mr Koch”), was elected the new GDS Team Captain at the EGM.²⁹

20 On 23 October 2023, Mr Abhinava contacted Mr Sujathe to request a copy of the slides. Mr Sujathe provided the slides to Mr Abhinava, who forwarded them to Ms Ip. On 6 November 2023, Ms Ip forwarded the slides to the claimant.³⁰

The Proceedings

21 The claimant commenced these proceedings on 20 March 2024. Apart from GDS and the 9 individual defendants identified earlier, the claimant also sued:

(a) The 3rd defendant – Mr Saunak Biswas (“Mr Saunak”), GDS’ Team Captain in 2022³¹; and

(b) The 7th defendant – Mr Xia Chenhui (“Mr Xia”), a GDS member.³²

22 The claimant subsequently discontinued his action against Mr Koch, Mr Saunak, Mr Xia and Mr Sujathe. Ms Isabel initially participated in proceedings but did not eventually attend trial. I will refer to GDS, Ms Ooi, Mr Lamprecht, Mr Truong, Ms Low, Mr Alban, and Ms Halverson collectively as the “Remaining Defendants.”

²⁹ Mr Koch’s AEIC, [24(a)]; SOC, [5]; Defence, [5].

³⁰ 1 CBD 166.

³¹ SOC, [4]; Defence, [6].

³² SOC, [8], Defence, [10].

23 There was initially a dispute as to which slides were presented at the EGM. The claimant had pleaded that the slides annexed to the Statement of Claim (totalling 39) were presented.³³ This included a slide titled “Bonus Track: Why was WJ not removed at end of 2022?” (“Bonus Track Slide”).³⁴ The defendants denied that the Bonus Track Slide was displayed at the EGM or shared with members and claimed that it always remained on the server.³⁵

24 The claimant conceded on the stand that Mr Abhinava had informed him that the Bonus Track Slide was not presented at the EGM.³⁶ In the claimant’s closing submissions, the claimant did not refer to the Bonus Track Slide as containing words defamatory of him³⁷. He also took the position that only 38 slides were presented at the EGM³⁸.

25 I therefore take it that the claimant is no longer maintaining that the Bonus Track Slide was also presented at the EGM or asserting that it was defamatory. I will henceforth refer to the 38 slides presented at the EGM (i.e. excluding the Bonus Track Slide) as the “Slides”.

26 It transpired in the course of these proceedings that Ms Ooi had drafted the Petition and ran the Petition by Ms Isabel, Ms Low and another GDS member, one Ms Christiane Meissner (“Ms Meissner”).³⁹ Ms Isabel⁴⁰ and Ms Meissner⁴¹ had signed the Petition. Among the Remaining Defendants, only Ms

³³ SOC, [18].

³⁴ 1 CBD 74.

³⁵ Defence, [22(i)]; Ms Ooi’s AEIC, [15]; Ms Low’s AEIC, [28]; Mr Alban’s AEIC, [18], [25]; Ms Halverson’s AEIC, [12].

³⁶ CT, 23 October 2025, 25:7 - 26:26.

³⁷ The claimant’s closing submissions (“CCS”), [47].

³⁸ CCS, [16].

³⁹ CT, 11 February 2026, 20:5 – 32.

⁴⁰ Ms Ooi’s AEIC, [16]; CT, 10 February 2026, 12:13 – 21.

⁴¹ CT, 9 February 2026, 8:12 – 9:10.

Ooi⁴², Ms Low⁴³, Mr Alban⁴⁴ and Ms Halverson⁴⁵ signed the Petition. Mr Truong did not sign it.⁴⁶ While the claimant has submitted that Mr Lamprecht was also a signatory, for the reasons I will come to further below, I am not convinced that he was. For ease of reference, I will refer to a person who had signed the Petition as a “Petitioner”.

Are the elements of defamation made out?

27 To establish defamation, the claimant must show:

- (a) There was a statement bearing a defamatory meaning;
- (b) There was publication to a third party; and
- (c) The statement referred to the claimant.

Golden Season Pte Ltd and others v Kairos Singapore Holdings Pte Ltd and another [2015] 2 SLR 7518 (“*Golden Season*”) at [35].

Was there publication?

28 The claimant pleaded that the Slides were published in the following manner⁴⁷:

- (a) The Slides were presented to at least 46 members of GDS and 2 non-members during the EGM;

⁴² Ms Ooi’s AEIC, [16]; CT, 10 February 2026, 12:13 – 21.

⁴³ Ms Ooi’s AEIC, [16]; CT, 10 February 2026, 12:13 – 21.

⁴⁴ Mr Alban’s AEIC, [19]; Ms Ooi’s AEIC, [16]; CT, 10 February 2026, 50:20 – 51:1; CT, 10 February 2026, 12:13 – 21.

⁴⁵ CT, 10 February 2026, 11:12 – 20.

⁴⁶ CT, 9 February 2026, 99:1 – 8.

⁴⁷ SOC, [19].

- (b) The minutes of the EGM were disseminated by email to at least 81 members of GDS;
- (c) The Ex-Co of GDS would provide a copy of the Slides upon request by a member of GDS; and
- (d) The Slides have since been circulated outside of GDS as the claimant was sent a copy of the Slides on or around 6 November 2023.

29 The defendants denied that there was publication. They claimed that the Slides were only shown to members of GDS who had attended the EGM.⁴⁸

Were the Slides also shown to members who attended the EGM virtually?

30 The Remaining Defendants said that the Slides were only shown to the 41 members who physically attended the EGM and not the 5 members who attended the EGM virtually.⁴⁹

31 The claimant has not adduced any evidence that the Slides were also shown to the 5 members who attended the EGM virtually.

Did presentation of the Slides to members of GDS amount to publication?

32 I find that presenting the Slides to GDS' members at the EGM amounts to publication.

33 Publication occurs when the defamatory statement is communicated to a third party: *Halsbury's Laws of Singapore – Defamation (Volume 8(2A))*, (LexisNexis Singapore) at [96.065].

⁴⁸ Defence, [21].

⁴⁹ Mr Koch's AEIC, [34]; Ms Ooi's AEIC, [15], [24]; Mr Truong's AEIC, [16]; Ms Low's AEIC, [17]; Mr Alban's AEIC, [18]; Ms Halverson's AEIC, [15].

34 A third party for the purpose of establishing publication is a recipient that is distinct and external to both the alleged defaming party and the alleged defamed party: *Karan Baga v Stichting Chemical Distribution Institute* [2024] 5 SLR 1104 (“*Karan Baga*”) at [39].

35 In *Karan Baga*, the court found that publication was not made out as the statements complained of were directed by the defendant, a non-profit-making foundation, to the defendant’s board of directors, executive board and an accreditation committee. These bodies were held to be internal to the defendant and were therefore found not to be “third parties’ relative to the defendant.

36 In contrast to *Karan Baga*, GDS’ members cannot be said to be a ‘body’ internal to GDS.

37 The effect of the Societies Act 1966 is to give societies registered under it a legal persona, such that in effect they are a “near-corporation” or “quasi corporation”: *Chen Cheng v Central Christian Church* (“*Chen Cheng*”) [1995] 3 SLR(R) 806 at [38]. This can be gleaned from provisions such as s 35(1)(b) which provides that a registered society can sue or be sued in its own name, and s 35(1)(d) which provides that no judgment in any suit against a registered society shall be put into force against the person or property of any officer or member of the society. A distinction is therefore drawn between the members of the society and the registered society itself.

38 GDS’ members also did not attend the EGM in the ordinary course of business on behalf of GDS, but in their personal capacity.

39 GDS’ members, as a group of natural persons, are therefore third parties that are distinct and external from the claimant, Ms Isabel and the Remaining Defendants for the purpose of establishing publication.

Were non-members in attendance at the EGM?

40 Even if GDS’ members are not third parties, there was still publication as 2 non-members of GDS also attended the EGM⁵⁰.

41 According to Mr Abhinava, he noticed Ms Wakana Sasaki (“Ms Wakana”) and Ms Nirasha, 2 non-members, at the EGM. Ms Wakana was Mr Koch’s girlfriend, while Ms Nirasha is the wife of another member, Alex Gummenscheimer, who himself was present at the EGM.⁵¹

42 The defendants pleaded that Ms Wakana was a member of GDS.⁵² However, they have not adduced any proof of this. On the contrary, Ms Wakana’s name was not reflected in the EGM’s minutes under the list of GDS members who attended.⁵³

43 As for Ms Nirasha, the defendants pleaded that she only accompanied her husband and did not participate in the EGM, and that GDS had no knowledge of the duration she was at the EGM.⁵⁴ However, the Remaining Defendants have adduced no evidence of this. Ms Ooi, Mr Lamprecht, Mr Truong, Ms Low, Mr Alban and Ms Halverson’s affidavits of evidence-in-chief (“AEICs”) were silent on this. Mr Koch merely claimed that he was unaware of

⁵⁰ The claimant’s Further and Better Particulars, [6(iii)].

⁵¹ Mr Abhinava’s AEIC, [18] – [19].

⁵² Defence, [18].

⁵³ 1 CBD 214.

⁵⁴ Defence, [18].

the 2 non-members allegedly present, as the room was crowded on the night of the EGM.⁵⁵

Were the Slides provided to GDS members after the EGM?

44 I am not convinced that the Ex-Co provided the Slides to members of GDS, beyond one instance where Mr Sujathe provided a copy to Mr Abhinava on his request.⁵⁶

45 The Remaining Defendants' evidence was consistent. Before the EGM commenced, Ms Low informed GDS members who were present that the Slides were not to be printed, distributed electronically or otherwise, or disclosed outside the meeting room. She also requested members not to photograph the Slides or record the proceedings.⁵⁷

46 There is no evidence before the Court that the Slides were circulated after the EGM or were sent by the Ex-Co to any other GDS member other than Mr Abhinava. Only the minutes of the EGM had been emailed by GDS' Secretary to 83 members.⁵⁸ The claimant has not alleged that the minutes⁵⁹ were also defamatory of him.

47 That was also the claimant's witnesses' evidence. Ms Tan⁶⁰ and Ms Tham⁶¹ did not receive the Slides. Mr Abhinava said he only requested a copy

⁵⁵ Mr Koch's AEIC, [41].

⁵⁶ Mr Abhinava's AEIC, [63]; 1 CBD 162 – 163.

⁵⁷ Mr Koch's AEIC, [38]; Ms Ooi's AEIC, [20]; Mr Lamprecht's AEIC, [34]; Mr Truong's AEIC, [18] – [19]; Ms Low's AEIC, [18] – [19]; Mr Alban's AEIC, [28]; Ms Halverson's AEIC, [16] – [17].

⁵⁸ Defence, [21(b)]; Mr Koch's AEIC, [40]; Ms Ooi's AEIC, [23]; Mr Lamprecht's AEIC, [30]; Mr Truong's AEIC, [21]; Ms Low's AEIC, [21]; Mr Alban's AEIC, [29]; Ms Halverson's AEIC, [19].

⁵⁹ 1 CBD 214 – 217.

⁶⁰ CT, 24 October 2025, 118:1 – 5.

⁶¹ CT, 2 February 2026, 88:9 – 15; 89:8-21.

from Mr Sujathe because the Slides had not been sent to members.⁶² It was Mr Abhinava who provided the Slides to Ms Ip⁶³, who in turn shared them with Ms Quah Geok Choo March Steffi (“Ms Quah”), another GDS member and a witness for the claimant.⁶⁴ In fact, Ms Ip had requested a copy of the Slides from Mr Koch but he declined her request.⁶⁵

Were the Slides circulated outside GDS

48 Neither is there proof that the Slides were circulated to non-GDS members.

49 The Remaining Defendants said that the Slides remain stored in GDS’ Google Drive, accessible only to the Ex-Co.⁶⁶ The claimant agreed on the stand that he did not know the extent to which the Slides were circulated outside GDS. The only basis for his claim that they were, was because Ms Ip had sent the Slides to him.⁶⁷

50 However, as mentioned earlier, the only reason why Ms Ip had the Slides was because Mr Abhinava had requested them from Mr Sujathe, and passed them to her. This is not sufficient to show that there was circulation of the Slides to other non-GDS members.

51 Beyond this, the claimant has only relied on hearsay or opinion evidence for his claim that the Slides were circulated beyond GDS.

⁶² CT, 3 February 2026, 47:9 – 25; 48:9 – 11.

⁶³ CT, 23 October 2025, 20:21 – 22:1; Ms Ip’s AEIC, [20] – [21]; Mr Abhinava’s AEIC, [63]; 1 CBD 162 – 164, 166.

⁶⁴ CT, 4 February 2026, 6:9 - 7:26.

⁶⁵ Mr Koch’s AEIC, [44].

⁶⁶ Mr Koch’s AEIC, [40]; Mr Truong’s AEIC, [21]; Ms Halverson’s AEIC, [19].

⁶⁷ CT, 23 October 2025, 19:18 – 20:23; 22:8 – 23:23.

52 Ms Tan had assumed, based on an account from a friend that he heard negative things about the claimant, that this must have been due to the Petitioners spreading lies about the claimant (as contained in the Slides).⁶⁸ She admitted that her friend did not say that it was the defendants who had spread the alleged rumours.⁶⁹ She confirmed that she did not know if the Slides were shared with anyone.⁷⁰

53 Similarly, Ms Ip claimed that she heard rumours that the claimant was fired from GDS and assumed this meant that news of the EGM and/or the contents of the Slides had circulated beyond GDS.⁷¹ However, she conceded this was just her opinion, and she did not know if the Slides were circulated.⁷²

54 I therefore find that there was publication of the Slides, but this was limited to 41 GDS members and 2 non-members who were physically present at the EGM.

Which of the defendants is/are responsible for publication?

55 The claimant submitted that the defendants collectively partook in the EGM and/or published the Slides and/or caused them to be published.⁷³

56 The Remaining Defendants argued that the claimant had to prove that each of them individually communicated the Slides to a third party; alternatively, that there was concerted action by all of them for group liability to attach. The Remaining Defendants also raised a pleading objection, relying

⁶⁸ Ms Tan's AEIC, [38] – [40].

⁶⁹ CT, 2 February 2026, 20:20 – 23: 16.

⁷⁰ CT, 24 October 2025, 118:8 -13.

⁷¹ Ms Ip's AEIC, [87] – [88].

⁷² CT, 5 February 2026, 68:7 - 70:31.

⁷³ SOC, [19].

on *V Nithia (co-administratrix of the estate of Ponnusamy Sivapakiam, deceased) v Buthmanaban s/o Vaithilingam and another* [2015] 5 SLR 1422 (“*V Nithia*”), that the claimant was bound by his pleadings and cannot rely on any specific acts of publication by each of them which have not been pleaded.

57 The claimant did not have to prove that each of the defendants individually communicated the Slides.

58 Every person who takes part in the publication of defamatory matter is *prima facie* jointly and severally liable in respect of that publication: *A Balakrishnan and others v Nirumalan K Pillay and others* [1999] 3 SLR 22 (“*Balakrishnan*”) at [42]. A person who authorises or ratifies publication by another will be taken to have participated in it: *Isabel Redrup Agency Pte Ltd v A L Dakshnamoorthy and Others* [2016] SGHC 30 (“*Isabel Redrup*”) at [137].

59 In *Balakrishnan*, the editor of a newsletter was found liable even though he had not written the defamatory article because he was involved in the publication. He was informed of the articles to be written and was involved in the approval of the subject matter and the decision to publish what was presented before him. He also appointed the appropriate persons to vet the articles in their respective languages (at [43] – [45]).

60 In the more recent decision of *Jasmin Nisban v Chan Boon Siang* [2023] SGDC 158 (“*Jasmin Nisban*”), the court noted that anyone who participates directly or vicariously in the publication of a defamatory statement is jointly and severally liable for the statement regardless of the extent of his involvement. The person who first composed the defamatory matter (i.e. the originator) is liable, provided he intended to publish it or failed to take reasonable care to prevent its publication. Further, liability also extends to any person who

participated in, secured, or authorised the publication. All persons who procure or participate in the publication of the libel are jointly and severally liable for the whole damage suffered by the claimant (at [200] to [201]). A participant in the publication is liable even if: (1) he was unaware of the presence of the defamatory words in the publication; (2) he had no knowledge or intention to defame the claimant; and/or (3) he had not read the defamatory statement: *Jasmin Nisban* at [202].

61 Hence, in *Jasmin Nisban*, the signatories to a defamatory publication were held jointly and severally liable notwithstanding that several of them had not read it before signing, as they were deemed to have authorised the publication: *Jasmin Nisban* at [215] and [217].

62 As for the Remaining Defendants’ pleading objection, one must not descend blindly into technicalities when assessing the adequacy of pleadings. Their ultimate purpose is to define the scope of the issues arising for the court’s determination and to ensure that the parties are not taken by surprise and deprived of the opportunity to adduce the relevant evidence: *BOM v BOK and another appeal* [2019] 1 SLR 349 at [40].

63 The general rule in *V Nithia* that parties are bound by their pleadings and that the court is precluded from deciding matters that have not been put into issue by the parties is subject to two qualifications: (1) only material facts supporting each element of a legal claim must be pleaded; and (2) a narrow exception exists where the court may permit an unpleaded point to be raised and determined when there is no irreparable prejudice caused to the other party that cannot be compensated by costs or where it would be clearly unjust for the court not to do so: *How Weng Fan and others v Sengkang Town Council and other appeals* [2023] 2 SLR 235 at [18] – [20].

64 I accept that save for a general assertion that the defendants participated in the publication of the Slides, the extent to which each of the Remaining Defendants participated in the publication was not pleaded. However, the extent of each defendant’s participation only came to light after the Remaining Defendants filed their AEICs and was revealed in greater detail when they were cross-examined. There is also no prejudice to the Remaining Defendants as the extent of their participation would be matters within their own knowledge. Their solicitor also had the opportunity to re-examine them, and address this issue in closing and reply submissions.

65 I now consider whether the claimant has proven that Ms Isabel and each of the Remaining Defendants participated in the publication. The evidence, in summary, is as follows:

Name	Extent of involvement
GDS	The Slides were published during the EGM convened by GDS.
Ms Isabel	She gave input on the Slides. ⁷⁴ She had presented the Slides on the topic of the “Petition” with Ms Ooi. ⁷⁵ Mr Alban ⁷⁶ , Ms Low ⁷⁷ and Ms Halverson ⁷⁸ confirmed that Ms Isabel was asked to present those Slides because she was in the Ex-Co in 2022

⁷⁴ Ms Ooi’s AEIC, [40(12)].

⁷⁵ 1 CBD 195.

⁷⁶ CT, 10 February 2026, 120:1 -26.

⁷⁷ CT, 6 February 2026, 94:9 – 21.

⁷⁸ CT, 10 February 2026, 18:4 -18.

Name	Extent of involvement
	and thus knew about the events in 2022 and had a history of working with the claimant.
Ms Ooi	She prepared the Slides.⁷⁹ She had presented the Slides on the topic of the “Petition” with Ms Isabel.⁸⁰ Mr Alban⁸¹, Ms Low⁸² and Ms Halverson⁸³ confirmed that Ms Ooi was asked to present those Slides because she was in the Ex-Co in 2022 and thus knew about the events in 2022 and had a history of working with the claimant.
Mr Lamprecht	He did not prepare the Slides or preview them before the EGM.⁸⁴ He had presented on the topic of “GDS Constitution”.⁸⁵ Either Ms Ooi, Ms Low or Mr Alban approached Mr Lamprecht to present on the Constitution.⁸⁶ Mr Alban said Mr Lamprecht was asked to do so as he was involved in drafting it.⁸⁷

⁷⁹ Ms Ooi’s AEIC, [40(12)]: CT, 10 February 2026, 119:8 – 10.

⁸⁰ 1 CBD 195.

⁸¹ CT, 10 February 2026, 120:1 -26.

⁸² CT, 6 February 2026, 94:9 – 21.

⁸³ CT, 10 February 2026, 18:4 -18.

⁸⁴ Mr Lamprecht’s AEIC, [39]

⁸⁵ 1 CBD 195.

⁸⁶ CT, 15 April 2026, 34:27 – 35:6.

⁸⁷ CT, 10 February 2026, 120:1 – 121:6.

Name	Extent of involvement
Mr Truong	He read through the Slides before they were presented at the EGM.⁸⁸ He presented on the topic of “Allegations of bullying and harassment”.⁸⁹
Ms Low	She gave input on the Slides.⁹⁰ She chaired the EGM together with Mr Sujathe.⁹¹
Mr Alban	He gave input on the Slides.⁹² He also reviewed the Slides before the EGM.⁹³ He presented on the topic of “Election of vacant ExCo roles”.
Ms Halverson	She was not involved in preparing the Slides.⁹⁴ She did not remember if she saw the Slides before the EGM⁹⁵, though Mr Truong and Ms Low’s evidence was that the Slides were shared with the Ex-Co before the EGM.⁹⁶

⁸⁸ CT, 9 February 2026, 100:19 – 28.

⁸⁹ Mr Truong’s AEIC, [22].

⁹⁰ Ms Ooi’s AEIC, [40(12)].

⁹¹ Ms Low’s AEIC, [19].

⁹² Ms Ooi’s AEIC, [40(12)]; CT, 10 February 2026, 52:27 – 54:6.

⁹³ CT, 10 February 2026, 116:25 – 117:9.

⁹⁴ CT, 10 February 2026, 14:29 – 31.

⁹⁵ CT, 10 February 2026, 15:1 – 25, 18:19 – 30.

⁹⁶ CT, 9 February 2026, 121:21 – 29; CT, 6 February 2026, 94:22- 26.

66 Among Ms Isabel and the Remaining Defendants, I find that only Mr Lamprecht did not participate in the publication of the Slides. His role was limited to presenting the slide on GDS’ constitution, which the claimant has not alleged to be defamatory. There is no evidence that he was aware of the contents of the rest of the Slides or given a chance to review them before they were presented at the EGM.

67 While the extent of involvement of Ms Isabel and the Remaining Defendants (other than Mr Lamprecht) differed, it cannot be denied that they had participated in the publication of the Slides. They were either involved in presenting the specific slides which the claimant alleged contained defamatory statements (Ms Isabel and Ms Ooi), preparing the Slides (Ms Ooi), giving input on specific slides (Ms Isabel, Ms Low, Mr Alban), or, at the very least, had the opportunity as Ex-Co members to review the Slides before they were presented at the EGM (Mr Truong and Ms Halverson).

Did the Slides refer to the claimant

68 The claimant pleaded that he could be identified from the Slides, as he was expressly identified by his full name “Tan Wee Jin”, the initials “WJ” and the title of “Team Coach”.⁹⁷ Save for the slides headed “Allegations of bullying and harassment”, the Remaining Defendants admitted that the other Slides did identify the claimant.⁹⁸

69 Mr Abhinava agreed that the slides headed “Allegations of bullying and harassment” contained general advice to the members not to harass or bully each other and were not targeted at the claimant.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ SOC, [21].

⁹⁸ Defence, [22(ii)]; [24].

⁹⁹ CT, 3 February 2026, 54:13 – 55:13.

70 In any case, the claimant did not maintain that the Slides titled “Allegations of bullying and harassment” contained words defamatory of him¹⁰⁰.

71 I therefore find that the requirement of reference to the claimant has been satisfied.

Did the Slides have a defamatory meaning

72 The claimant has in his submissions, identified the specific words in the Slides which he asserted were defamatory¹⁰¹. These are set out in Annex A.

73 The claimant pleaded that the Slides bore a total of 19 natural and ordinary meanings which were defamatory.¹⁰² The defendants deny that the Slides bore any of the pleaded defamatory meanings or any meanings defamatory of the claimant.¹⁰³

74 A statement is considered to be defamatory if: (1) it lowers the claimant in the estimation of right-thinking members of society generally; (2) causes the claimant to be shunned or avoided; or (3) exposes the claimant to hatred, contempt or ridicule: *Golden Season* at [36].

75 Whether a statement is defamatory is generally determined based on a construction of the natural and ordinary meaning of the words used. The following general principles apply (*Golden Season* at [37]):

¹⁰⁰ CCS, [47].

¹⁰¹ CCS, [47].

¹⁰² SOC, [22].

¹⁰³ Defence, [26].

- (a) The natural and ordinary meaning of a word is that which is conveyed to an ordinary reasonable person;
- (b) As the test is objective, the meaning which the defendant intended to convey is irrelevant;
- (c) The ordinary reasonable reader is not avid for scandal but can read between the lines and draw inferences;
- (d) Where there are a number of possible interpretations, some of which may be non-defamatory, such a reader will not seize on only the defamatory one;
- (e) The ordinary reasonable reader is treated as having read the publication as a whole in determining its meaning, thus “the bane and the antidote must be taken together”; and
- (f) The ordinary reasonable reader will take note of the circumstances and manner of the publication.

76 Given that this is an objective test based on a construction of the words used, the court is not bound to accept the opinions of the witnesses on whether the Slides were defamatory.

77 I find that the natural and ordinary meanings of the Slides were as follows:

- (a) The claimant had overstepped his bounds in his role as Team Coach and undermined the authority of GDS’ Ex-Co, such as by unilaterally imposing rules on GDS’ property¹⁰⁴;

¹⁰⁴ SOC, [22(c), (h), (i)].

- (b) The claimant was cavalier towards the safety and health of GDS members¹⁰⁵;
- (c) The claimant caused past GDS members to get injured¹⁰⁶.
- (d) The claimant participated in the decision to circumvent the Singapore Dragon Boat Association (“SDBA”)’s water ban which was unethical or unprincipled¹⁰⁷;
- (e) The claimant prioritised his own interest over that of GDS¹⁰⁸;
- (f) The claimant encouraged toxic behaviour within GDS, was overbearing, excessively controlling and self-centred, deliberately bullied and harassed members and committed psychological misconduct against GDS members¹⁰⁹;
- (g) The claimant practised favouritism within GDS¹¹⁰;
- (h) The claimant failed to discharge his role and responsibility as a competitive dragon boat coach professionally¹¹¹;
- (i) The claimant’s conduct resulted in members losing interest in dragon-boating and caused GDS to lose members¹¹²; and
- (j) The claimant was not competent as a coach.¹¹³

¹⁰⁵ SOC, [22(e)].

¹⁰⁶ SOC, [22(m)].

¹⁰⁷ SOC, [22(g)].

¹⁰⁸ SOC, [22(q)].

¹⁰⁹ SOC, [22(d), (o), (p), (r)].

¹¹⁰ SOC, [22(j)].

¹¹¹ SOC, [22(l)].

¹¹² SOC, [22(b), (n)].

¹¹³ SOC, [22(a), (k)].

78 I set out below, by way of example, the relevant statements which bear out the above imputations.

79 In respect of the imputation that the claimant had overstepped his bounds in his role as Team Coach and undermined the authority of GDS' Ex-Co, such as by unilaterally imposing rules on GDS' property:

Slide	Statement
The 2 nd slide titled "Overstepping Team Coach Scope" ¹¹⁴	"AGM 2022: EXCO wanted to schedule AGM at 12:30pm but WJ called up Paulaner, undermining the authority of Exco as he believed we wanted to go for an IDBC social event after that."
The 3 rd slide titled "Overstepping Team Coach Scope" ¹¹⁵	"Controlled Exco and members regarding the use of the kayaks...prohibited members to fix the kayaks in first 6 months"
The 1 st slide titled "GDS Equipment – Weights" ¹¹⁶	"One of the largest friction topics between Exco/Coach/Members... Exco had to start earlier/end later than members to shift weights up and down WJ's HDB due to his privacy rules"

80 In respect of the imputation that the claimant was cavalier towards the safety and health of GDS members:

Slide	Statement
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¹¹⁴ 1 CBD 203.

¹¹⁵ 1 CBD 204.

¹¹⁶ 1 CBD 210.

The slide titled “Petition for Removal and Subsequent Change of Team Coach” ¹¹⁷	“We have reason to believe that Tan Wee Jin is no longer deemed suitable to coach German Dragons Singapore for the following reasons: ...4. Technical reasons such as... lack of Safety and Health precautions”
The 3 rd slide titled “Technical training related reasons” ¹¹⁸	“WJ organized, against suggestions from Techco, a make-up fitness test (2.4KM + strength tests) at 1pm on a Saturday before a paddle session, while the country was experiencing the highest temperature this year (34+°C), risking heat injuries”

81 In respect of the imputation that the claimant caused past GDS members to get injured:

Slide	Statement
The 1 st slide titled “Concluding Remarks” ¹¹⁹ :	“many long-standing members who raced in the past stopped showing up/lapsed membership because they lost trust in his coaching or got injured”

82 As for the imputation that the claimant participated in the decision to circumvent the SDBA’s water ban which was unethical or unprincipled:

Slide	Statement
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¹¹⁷ 1 CBD 200.

¹¹⁸ 1 CBD 209.

¹¹⁹ 1 CBD 211.

The 3 rd slide titled “Preventing GDS from fulfilling its objectives in Constitution” ¹²⁰	“Participated in the decision to circumvent SDBA water ban... which was unethical and unprincipled (Had to avoid carrying anything revealing GDS logos...for fear of being found out)...”
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I did not accept the claimant’s pleaded meaning that the claimant was unethical or unprincipled, because per *Isabel Redrup* at [96], specific allegations do not automatically attract a wider meaning.

83 In respect of the imputation that the claimant prioritised his own interest over that of GDS:

Slide	Statement
The 2 nd slide titled “Preventing GDS from fulfilling its objectives in Constitution” ¹²¹	“Refused to train paddlers interested in the Pesta Sukan 200m race in 2022. He felt that the members did not prove that they were dedicated enough to be worth his time to train”
The 1 st slide titled “Concluding Remarks” ¹²²	“WJ manner of speech/writing/delivery - only interested in members following, not invested in finding ways to motivate”

84 In respect of the imputation that the claimant encouraged toxic behaviour within GDS, was overbearing, excessively controlling and self-

¹²⁰ 1 CBD 202.

¹²¹ 1 CBD 202.

¹²² 1 CBD 211.

centred, to the extent that he deliberately bullied and harassed members and committed psychological misconduct against GDS members:

Slide	Statement
The 4th slide titled “Promoting Toxic Culture within the team” ¹²³	“Demanded for ‘traitor’ and to be kicked out <u>before checking facts</u> ... Name-calling, wanting Exco members to ‘do something’ to people he took issue with” (underline original)
The 5 th slide titled “Promoting Toxic Culture within the team” ¹²⁴	“As Exco members, one had to deal with unnecessary and toxic messages from WJ. Exco members subject to belittling behaviour, no constructive manner of teaching”
The 4 th slide titled “Technical training related reasons” ¹²⁵	“Constantly changing instructions with regards to giving feedback to each other → creating a toxic environment of fear and scolding”
The 2 nd slide titled “Concluding Remarks” ¹²⁶	“Some incidents → psychological misconduct under <u>Safe Sport Unified Code 2021</u> ... Toxic manager... Inspire by Fear” (underline original)

85 In relation to the imputation that the claimant practised favouritism within GDS:

Slide	Statement
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¹²³ 1 CBD 206.

¹²⁴ 1 CBD 207.

¹²⁵ 1 CBD 209.

¹²⁶ 1 CBD 211.

The 1 st slide titled “Overstepping Team Coach Scope” ¹²⁷	“WJ picked and chose 3 GDS members to paddle for the race. Exco only found out when a member was seen taking the lifevest from the GDS rack. WJ replied with complete disregard when EXCO raised the concern”
The 4 th slide titled “Overstepping Team Coach Scope” ¹²⁸	“2023: Wee Jin selectively chooses few members to train in the OCBC weights training. Out of GDS training schedule without entire Tech-co knowledge...WJ was providing additional training to only a select group of paddlers, and not the rest of the club, which is opaque selectivity → breeds favouritism and distrust.”

86 With respect to the imputation that the claimant failed to discharge his role and responsibility as a competitive dragon boat coach professionally:

Slide	Statement
The slide titled “Petition for Removal and Subsequent Change of Team Coach” ¹²⁹	“We have reason to believe that Tan Wee Jin is no longer deemed suitable to coach German Dragons Singapore for the following reasons: 1. Preventing GDS from fulfilling its ‘Objects’... 2. Overstepping the scope of his role...

¹²⁷ 1 CBD 203.

¹²⁸ 1 CBD 204.

¹²⁹ 1 CBD 200.

	3. Promoting a toxic culture... ...4. Technical reasons such as... lack of Safety and Health precautions”
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87 That the claimant’s conduct resulted in members losing interest in dragon-boating and caused GDS to lose members, is borne out by the following statements:

Slide	Statement
The 3 rd slide titled “Overstepping Team Coach Scope” ¹³⁰	“Controlled Exco and members regarding the use of the kayak...Prohibited members to fix the kayaks in first 6 months...GDS lost several members due to the non-availability of kayaks, especially those coming out of injury or ease back into training.”
The 1 st slide titled “Concluding Remarks” ¹³¹	“WJ wanted a club for ‘serious paddlers’ but actions have lead to ‘serious paddlers’ leaving (2 from exco, 1 vice captain from 2022), many long-standing members who raced in the past stopped showing up/lapsed membership because they lost trust in his coaching or got injured”

88 Lastly, on the imputation that the claimant lacked competence as a coach:

¹³⁰ 1 CBD 204.

¹³¹ 1 CBD 211.

Slide	Statement
The slide titled “Petition for Removal and Subsequent Change of Team Coach” ¹³²	“We have reason to believe that Tan Wee Jin is no longer deemed suitable to coach German Dragons Singapore for the following reasons: ...4. Technical reasons such as... lack of Safety and Health precautions”
The 1 st slide titled “Concluding Remarks” ¹³³	“...many long-standing members who raced in the past stopped showing up/lapsed membership because they lost trust in his coaching or got injured”

89 The claimant has not made out the remaining pleaded defamatory meanings:

- (a) The Slides did not go so far as to assert that the claimant was unqualified or negligent.¹³⁴ There was no assertion that he lacked the necessary skills or expertise to coach dragon-boating or that his conduct fell short of a reasonable standard of care;
- (b) While the Slides asserted that the claimant was unethical and unprincipled in trying to circumvent the water ban, they did not say that he was dishonest or lacked integrity¹³⁵; and
- (c) There was also no assertion that the claimant had been removed as Team Coach because of alleged issues with his conduct.¹³⁶ All the

¹³² 1 CBD 200.

¹³³ 1 CBD 211.

¹³⁴ SOC, [22(a), (k)].

¹³⁵ SOC, [22(f)].

¹³⁶ SOC, [22(s)].

Slides purported to put forward were the existence of the Petition and the reasons why the claimant should be removed as Team Coach. The ordinary reasonable reader who attended the EGM would already have been aware that the claimant had himself resigned prior to the EGM.

90 In my view, the natural and ordinary meanings which I have found would lower the claimant in the estimation of right-thinking members of society.

91 In the circumstances, the elements of the tort of defamation have been made out as against Ms Isabel, Ms Ooi, Mr Truong, Ms Low, Mr Alban and Ms Halverson, but not Mr Lamprecht.

Can Ms Isabel or any of the Remaining Defendants avail themselves of a defence?

92 For the reasons further below, I find that Ms Isabel and the Remaining Defendants (assuming the claimant had also established the elements of defamation against Mr Lamprecht) are entitled to rely on the defence of qualified privilege. That is sufficient for disposing of the defamation claim.

93 However, as some of the matters relied on by the claimant to argue malice overlap with whether the defamatory imputations were justified, I deal first with the defence of justification.

The defence of justification

94 The burden rests on a defendant to plead and show that the imputation is true or substantially true. A defendant must prove the meaning which the relevant statement is held to bear, and it is insufficient to prove the truth of a materially less serious meaning. The defendant however need not prove the

literal truth of the words, but the imputation in the words, or the ‘sting’ of the charge: *Chan Cheng Wah Bernard and others v Koh Sin Chong Freddie and another appeal* [2012] 1 SLR 506 (“*Bernard Chan*”) at [43] - [44].

95 The defendants had pleaded various matters which they said justified the pleaded meanings, without specifying which of the pleaded meanings each of these matters would justify. In the Remaining Defendants’ closing submissions, they have referred to some of these matters in respect of several pleaded meanings. I therefore take reference to their closing submissions in determining if they have proven the meanings which I have found the Slides to carry.

96 In my view, only 5 of 10 defamatory meanings have been proven, being that:

- (a) The claimant had overstepped his bounds in his role as Team Coach and undermined the authority of GDS’ Ex-Co, such as by unilaterally imposing rules on GDS’ property;
- (b) The claimant was cavalier towards the safety and health of GDS members;
- (c) The claimant had participated in the decision to circumvent the SDBA’s water ban which was unethical or unprincipled;
- (d) The claimant prioritised his own interest over that of GDS; and
- (e) The claimant failed to discharge his role and responsibility as a competitive dragon boat coach professionally.

The imputation that the claimant had overstepped his bounds in his role as Team Coach and undermined the authority of GDS' Ex-Co, such as by unilaterally imposing rules on GDS' property

97 The Remaining Defendants said that the claimant's duties were restricted to preparing a training and recovery plan, conducting a technical analysis of training sessions, formulating race strategy, liaising with Tech-Co on the lineup for race participants and performing a video/GPS analysis of training sessions.¹³⁷

98 The claimant agreed that the Ex-Co determined the vision and trajectory of GDS¹³⁸ and had members' authority to run GDS and its training.¹³⁹ He agreed that he could not override the Ex-Co or tell them how to run GDS.¹⁴⁰ There was however a verbal agreement back in 2015 with then-Team Captain, Mr Thomas Gascou ("Mr Gascou"), that the Ex-Co would "listen" to him on all training-related matters. He assumed that this information would have been passed down to subsequent Captains.¹⁴¹ All training-related matters should be in accordance with his plan as discussed with the Team Captain at the start of the year.¹⁴²

99 I accept that the claimant had also reached such an understanding with the 2023 Ex-Co. The minutes of the Ex-Co meeting of 8 January 2023 recorded an agreement that "[the claimant] has always been in charge of race matters (e.g. line-ups, race programme, training programme, anything to do with fitness and training)."¹⁴³

¹³⁷ Defence, [28(7)].

¹³⁸ CT, 23 October 2025, 73:2 -9.

¹³⁹ CT, 23 October 2025, 54:9- 55:3.

¹⁴⁰ CT, 23 October 2025, 55:4 – 57:2.

¹⁴¹ CT, 23 October 2025, 60:5 - 61:31.

¹⁴² CT, 23 October 2025, 57:1 - 58:15.

¹⁴³ DBD 802.

100 Nonetheless, this did not give the claimant an unfettered licence or sole authority to decide on all training or race-related matters. Ms Tham agreed that the Ex-Co had ultimate authority.¹⁴⁴ Ms Ip agreed that she would go back to the Ex-Co for their agreement after her discussions with the claimant on the races GDS would enter.¹⁴⁵ Ms Tan agreed that GDS was run and managed by the Ex-Co, not the claimant, and the claimant was answerable to the Ex-Co¹⁴⁶.

101 Further, some of the specific events which the Remaining Defendants asserted as instances where the claimant overstepped his bounds were not solely training or race-related matters.

(1) The claimant's control over GDS' weights

102 According to the defendants, the claimant had shifted weight-training sessions from Kallang to the common area of the claimant's residence at Queenstown. After the Covid-19 restrictions were lifted, the Ex-Co decided to move the weight-training sessions back to Kallang. The claimant however insisted on keeping the weights at Queenstown and only allowed selected members to bring the weights back to his residence after the sessions. After his resignation, he told an Ex-Co member to collect the weights which he had left at the common area, but when members tried to do so, the weights were nowhere to be found.¹⁴⁷

103 The claimant acknowledged that he did not agree to moving the weights back to Kallang. However, he explained that he had good reasons for this. Under GDS' licence agreement with the SDBA, GDS was only permitted access to the

¹⁴⁴ CT, 2 February 2026, 10:6 - 11:29.

¹⁴⁵ CT, 5 February 2026, 11:8 - 12:11.

¹⁴⁶ CT, 24 October 2025, 64: 11 – 18.

¹⁴⁷ Defence, [28(21) – (22)].

nursery from 6.30 am to 7pm, whereas GDS' weight-training sessions were conducted from 7.30 pm to 9.30pm. It also did not permit the storage of free weights. Any breach would entitle the SDBA to terminate GDS' licence with 14 days' notice. The Ex-Co did not offer an alternative venue for weight-training. He did not want his training plan to be jeopardised. He also denied compelling anyone to assist in packing up the weights, and any member who did, did so voluntarily. ¹⁴⁸

104 The claimant also acknowledged that he had left the weights at the common area on 16 August 2023. However, he said no one from GDS had reached out to him to collect the weights following his resignation on 11 August 2023. It was only after he messaged Mr Sujathe on 16 August 2023 to retrieve the weights that the Ex-Co did so in the evening of 18 August 2023. ¹⁴⁹

105 I accept that the claimant did not unilaterally move the weights to Queenstown. The Ex-Co had agreed to this, as evidenced from its announcement in the WhatsApp group chat titled "GDS Daily" on the move of the weights to the claimant's residence.¹⁵⁰ Mr Lamprecht also agreed that the change in location was necessitated by Covid-19 restrictions.¹⁵¹ The minutes of an Ex-Co meeting of 8 January 2023 also recorded that there will not be a move back to Kallang until the SDBA took the agreement "off the table".¹⁵²

106 However, it was the Ex-Co's prerogative to decide when to shift the weights back to Kallang. The claimant agreed that GDS was entitled to retrieve its weights anytime.¹⁵³ Likewise, Ms Tham agreed that it was for the Ex-Co to decide when the weights were to be returned from Queenstown to Kallang, subject

¹⁴⁸ The claimant's AEIC, [157] – [167]; CT, 24 October 2025, 3:4 – 4:3; 45:4 – 47:3.

¹⁴⁹ 2 CBD 1168 - 1171; CT, 24 October 2025, 9:14 – 10:31.

¹⁵⁰ Bundle of Affidavits of Evidence-in-Chief Vol. 1 ("1 BA") 382.

¹⁵¹ CT, 15 April 2026, 46:20 – 48:28.

¹⁵² 2 CBD 1381.

¹⁵³ CT, 24 October 2025, 11:1 -12:5; 13:24 -14:9.

to the SDBA's guidelines.¹⁵⁴ While the claimant's motivations for keeping the weights at Queenstown were well-intentioned, it was not his decision to make.

- (2) The claimant's cessation of training when Ms Isabel released the line-up for Singapore Regatta Waterfest ("SRW") 2022 race without his prior approval

107 According to the defendants, Ms Isabel, who was then a Tech-Co member, had published a provisional participant line-up for the SRW 2022 race. The claimant was displeased with this decision. On or about 30 October 2022, the claimant ceased communications with the Ex-Co for 4 days and did not conduct training sessions for the SRW 2022 race that was scheduled for November 2022.¹⁵⁵

108 The claimant agreed this had happened. However, he explained that he was frustrated with Ms Isabel's release of the provisional line-up which went against his instructions to the Tech-Co, which could give members a false hope and/or impression that they had secured a spot on the boat. He was also not obliged to respond to anyone immediately or to conduct extra training sessions as he was paid on a per-session basis.¹⁵⁶

109 The Remaining Defendants accepted that the claimant has a role in deciding the race line-up together with Tech-Co.¹⁵⁷ Hence, I do not find that the claimant had acted beyond his role as Team Coach in insisting that only the finalised race line-up be released. However, by suddenly ceasing

¹⁵⁴ CT, 2 February 2026, 92:19 -31.

¹⁵⁵ Defence, [28(10)]; Ms Ooi's AEIC, [40(5)].

¹⁵⁶ The claimant's AEIC, [19] – [20], [120] – [124]; CT, 23 October 2025, 133:1 - 134:30; 24 October 2025, 31:26 – 32:15.

¹⁵⁷ Defence, [28(7)].

communication with the Ex-Co and stopping training, he had overstepped his bounds as Team Coach and undermined the authority of the Ex-Co.

(3) The claimant’s communications with Paulaner Brauhaus Singapore (“Paulaner”)

110 According to the defendants, the Ex-Co was responsible for fronting GDS’ communications with their main sponsor, Paulaner. However, there was an instance before GDS’ annual general meeting (“AGM”) in 2022 where, without obtaining the Ex-Co’s prior consent, the claimant contacted Paulaner directly to find out about their peak business hours.¹⁵⁸

111 The claimant accepted that he had contacted Paulaner. He also agreed that responsibility for GDS’ general meetings lay with the Ex-Co.¹⁵⁹ However, he explained that he called Paulaner only to ask about their busiest times, because the Ex-Co wanted to shift the 2022 AGM from their usual timing later in the afternoon to 11 am to 2pm, and he was concerned doing so would disrupt Paulaner’s business and therefore affect Paulaner’s sponsorship of GDS. He disagreed that he had no right to communicate with Paulaner as he had previously been put in direct correspondence with Paulaner’s general manager. In any event, he had called merely as a customer and did not mention GDS or the AGM.¹⁶⁰

112 I do not find that the claimant had overstepped his boundaries as coach or undermined the Ex-Co’s authority simply by calling Paulaner in the capacity of a customer.

¹⁵⁸ Defence, [28(14)].

¹⁵⁹ CT, 23 October 2025, 101:4 – 105:14.

¹⁶⁰ The claimant’s AEIC, [74] – [80].

(4) The claimant’s control over GDS’ kayaks

113 The defendants asserted that the claimant unilaterally made decisions regarding GDS’ kayaks.¹⁶¹ First, he had sent a message to the WhatsApp chatgroup titled “GDS Kayak Certified” on or about 5 February 2023 stating that all kayaks were no longer available for use¹⁶², without the Ex-Co and Tech-Co’s prior knowledge or consent. Without first obtaining the Ex-Co’s authorisation, he then proceeded to contact a vessel inspector who was his friend to inspect the kayaks, which resulted in the kayaks being declared unsafe for use. The claimant had signed off on all the inspection forms even though it went beyond his duty and he was not authorised by the Ex-Co. The inspection should not have failed because a subsequent inspection (after minor adjustments were made) certified the kayaks fit for use.

114 The claimant said that he had the authority to decide all matters relating to kayaks. He was responsible for introducing kayaking to complement GDS’ trainings, and had agreed with Mr Jamues Ng (a previous Team Captain of GDS) (“Mr Ng”) that they would set ground rules on the kayaks’ use due to safety concerns and GDS members’ lack of experience with kayak maintenance. He was not informed by the subsequent Ex-Cos that this position would change.¹⁶³ He maintained that the kayaks were badly damaged at the start of 2023, so he decided to disallow their use due to safety concerns. He denied preventing members from fixing the kayaks, and instead attributed it to lack of manpower and bad weather.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Defence, [28(15) – (17)]; Ms Ooi’s AEIC, [40(9)].

¹⁶² 2 CBD 1392.

¹⁶³ CT, 23 October 2025, 106:22 – 108:1.

¹⁶⁴ The claimant’s AEIC, [82] – [89].

115 I accept that there was an arrangement whereby the claimant would have a say over the use of kayaks. However, this did not extend to the claimant having the sole authority to decide all matters relating to the kayaks. In Mr Ng’s email sent in 2020, he merely stated that members can only use the kayaks after the claimant assessed members’ proficiency.¹⁶⁵ Similarly, the description of the WhatsApp chatgroup titled “GDS Kayak Certified” stated that the claimant must assess a member’s ability to use kayaks, and in all other cases, kayaks must be taken out under the claimant’s supervision.¹⁶⁶

116 Ms Ip confirmed that Mr Ng had informed her of these ground rules which he had set with the claimant.¹⁶⁷ Likewise, Ms Tham’s evidence was that the Ex-Co did not retract the authority that had been given to the claimant regarding the use of kayaks.¹⁶⁸ However, Ms Tham agreed that it was ultimately for the Ex-Co to decide whether to accept the claimant’s recommendations on whether the kayaks can be used and by whom.¹⁶⁹

117 Nevertheless, the claimant was entitled to take the kayaks out of use in February 2023. I accept that the kayaks were in a poor condition at the start of 2023. There had been discussions in the Tech-Co’s WhatsApp chatgroup on 4 February 2023 about the poor condition of some of the kayaks and taking some of them out of use. The claimant had informed the Tech-Co that he would send a message later that the kayaks were “in a ridiculously bad shape” and that no one would be allowed to use the kayaks until they have all been maintained.¹⁷⁰ It was against this background that he then sent his message in the WhatsApp

¹⁶⁵ 2 CBD 1309- 1310.

¹⁶⁶ 2 CBD 1391.

¹⁶⁷ Ms Ip’s AEIC, [43] – [46]; CT, 5 February 2026, 82:1 – 83:25.

¹⁶⁸ CT, 2 February 2026, 108:17 – 110:6.

¹⁶⁹ CT, 2 February 2026, 110 -25- 111:3.

¹⁷⁰ 1 CBD 316 – 317.

chatgroup titled “GDS Kayak Certified” on or about 5 February 2023 stating that all kayaks were no longer available for use.¹⁷¹

118 That the kayaks were in bad shape was also evidenced from the failed inspection on 21 May 2023.¹⁷² While Ms Meissner had alleged that the claimant went around pointing out issues with the kayaks to the inspector¹⁷³, she was unable to conclude that the inspection failed for this reason.¹⁷⁴ Further, some of the kayaks still failed a subsequent inspection conducted on 20 August 2023, after the claimant had resigned from GDS.¹⁷⁵ As of GDS’ AGM on 12 November 2023, some of the kayaks remained under repair.¹⁷⁶

119 The claimant did not prevent members from fixing the kayaks. Ms Meissner had asserted that the claimant did not arrange the necessary tools for the maintenance session on 4 February 2023.¹⁷⁷ However, the claimant had given instructions in the Tech-Co’s WhatsApp chatgroup on what equipment was required.¹⁷⁸ There are also WhatsApp messages in evidence showing that plans were made for further kayak maintenance sessions and some sessions had to be postponed due to rain.¹⁷⁹

120 Neither did the claimant overstep his authority by arranging for the kayaks’ inspection or putting himself as the contact person on the kayak inspection forms.

¹⁷¹ 2 CBD 1392.

¹⁷² 2 CBD 1230 – 1240.

¹⁷³ Ms Meissner’s AEIC, [17].

¹⁷⁴ CT, 9 February 2026, 60:12 – 61:23.

¹⁷⁵ Exhibit D1; Exhibit C5, p 4.

¹⁷⁶ Exhibit C5, p 19.

¹⁷⁷ Ms Meissner’s AEIC, [13] – [21].

¹⁷⁸ 1 CBD 310 – 311, 318 – 319.

¹⁷⁹ 2 CBD 1391 – 1393; 1394 – 1397.

121 The Ex-Co was also aware that there would be an inspection carried out in May 2023.¹⁸⁰ As for the kayak inspection forms, while Mr Saunak was listed as the contact person for the inspection in 2022 (when he was Team Captain)¹⁸¹, the inspection forms of August 2023 were signed off by Mr Ng who did not occupy any position in the Ex-Co or Tech-Co in 2023.¹⁸² Mr Koch said that was because Mr Ng had volunteered and no one objected.¹⁸³ There was therefore no rule that only the Team Captain could be the contact person for any kayak inspection.

(5) The claimant’s alleged displeasure shown towards social races

122 The defendants pleaded that the claimant discouraged GDS’ members from participating in social races and refused to train members for them.

(a) The claimant expressed his displeasure with GDS’ participation in events organised by the International Dragon Boat Committee (“IDBC”), such as the Mardi Gras race¹⁸⁴. He demanded that the Ex-Co investigate why certain members were allowed to participate in the Mardi Gras 2023 race and who had encouraged them to do so¹⁸⁵;

(b) The claimant was not supportive of members’ participation in the Australian Chamber of Commerce (“Austcham”) 5 km race scheduled in October 2022. Members therefore had to train on their own outside of coached sessions. This was even though the Ex-Co and Tech-Co had the final say on such matters¹⁸⁶;

¹⁸⁰ 1 CBD 187.

¹⁸¹ 2 CBD 1216 – 1229.

¹⁸² Exhibit D1.

¹⁸³ CT, 10 February 2026, 6:28 - 7:30.

¹⁸⁴ Defence, [28(1)]; Ms Low’s AEIC, [43(1)].

¹⁸⁵ Defence, [28(8)].

¹⁸⁶ Defence, [28(3)], see for instance Ms Halverson’s AEIC, [37(1)].

(c) The claimant refused to train members who wanted to participate in the Pesta Sukan 200 m race in 2022. He was of the view that these members were not worth his time training. He refused to reschedule the training sessions so that other members could support participating members¹⁸⁷;

(d) The claimant discouraged members from participating in the Austcham 5 km race on 14 October 2023, which the Ex-Co had scheduled for members' participation at the beginning of the year¹⁸⁸;

(e) He expressed his displeasure over GDS' participation in the Siargao International Race in July 2023¹⁸⁹;

(f) He was unhappy when he saw a GDS member wearing GDS' vest during an IDBC event on 28 July 2023 even though that member had the captain's prior consent.¹⁹⁰

123 The Remaining Defendants have in their closing submissions, only referred to the claimant's alleged discouragement of members' participation in IDBC events, and his lack of support for members' participation in the Austcham 5 km race and the Pesta Sukan 200 m race (i.e. (a) to (d) above). However, they did not specify which defamatory imputation(s) these alleged incidents above were intended to justify.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Defence, [28(4)].

¹⁸⁸ Defence, [28(8a)]; Ms Low's AEIC, [43(4)].

¹⁸⁹ Defence, [28(8b)].

¹⁹⁰ Defence, [28(8c)]; Ms Low's AEIC, [43(6)].

¹⁹¹ The Remaining Defendants' Closing Submissions ("DCS"), [33(a), (c)].

124 Based on how they have been pleaded, these matters, if true, could, in my view, go towards justifying the imputation that the claimant overstepped his bounds as coach and undermined the Ex-Co’s authority.

125 According to the claimant, it was the practice since 2015 to plan the training programme at the start of the year with 2 target races in mind, being the Singapore Dragonboat Festival (“SDBF”) and the Singapore River Water Festival. GDS would only participate in non-target races if there were sufficient interest and availability, and if it did not take time away from training for the target races¹⁹². The target races for both 2022¹⁹³ and 2023¹⁹⁴ had been agreed upon with the Ex-Co.

126 I accept that the claimant had his reasons for wanting to focus on training GDS members for the target races. However, he did not have an unfettered licence or sole authority to decide on which races to enter and which to train for.

(6) Conclusion

127 In summary therefore, I find that the claimant had overstepped his bounds as Team Coach and undermined the Ex-Co’s authority insofar as he had disregarded the Ex-Co’s directions to move the weights back to Kallang, when he ceased communication with the Ex-Co and stopped training in response to Ms Isabel’s release of the provisional race line-up for the SRW 2022 race, and when he refused to train GDS members for non-target races.

¹⁹² The claimant’s AEIC, [44] – [50].

¹⁹³ 2021 AGM slides, 2 CBD 1323.

¹⁹⁴ Minutes of the Ex-Co meeting of 8 January 2023, 2 CBD 1378 - 1379; Minutes of the kick-off meeting for 2023, 2 CBD 1385, 1388.

*The imputation that the claimant was cavalier towards the safety and health of
GDS members*

(1) Breach of the SDBA's steering rules

128 The defendants pleaded that the claimant knowingly broke the SDBA's steering rules which led to the SDBA imposing a 4-week water ban on GDS. He had allowed 23 persons on a boat meant for 22, the 23rd person being Ms Ip/Mr Truong's daughter.¹⁹⁵

129 The claimant accepted that this incident happened. However, he sought to explain how this came about. Ms Ip was the one who wanted to bring her daughter on board. He had allowed it because he did not see it as a risk – the boat was able to handle the weight of 22 adult males and it was carrying a mixture of both males and females at that time. He also denied being solely responsible for the ban. Other than Ms Ip, there were other certified steers on the boat (being Ms Isabel, Ms Low, Mr Alban, Ms Meissner and another member, one Ruo Ting) who did not object to it. Mr Truong, who was also on the boat, did not prevent this from happening.

130 Additionally, the claimant relied on the SDBA's letter stating that the certified coach and the certified steers named in the report should shoulder the responsibility of ensuring that the SDBA's safety rules are adhered to.¹⁹⁶ The claimant also referred to how the Ex-Co, in particular, Ms Low, were thereafter focused on defending the incident.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ Defence, [28(5)].

¹⁹⁶ The claimant's AEIC, [54] – [58]; CT, 23 October 2025, 88:19 - 91:9; 2 CBD 1210.

¹⁹⁷ Exhibit C2, pp 374 – 382.

131 Ms Low’s evidence was that she was not aware that Ms Ip’s child had been on the boat.¹⁹⁸ While she had in her earlier messages with the Ex-Co seemed to disagree with the SDBA’s response, she said she later realised it was more serious than she initially thought.¹⁹⁹ Mr Truong’s evidence was that he too, did not know that his child was on the boat. He would not have allowed it if he had known, as there were already 22 persons on the boat.²⁰⁰ Ms Ip agreed that exceeding the maximum head count may compromise on safety.²⁰¹

132 Regardless of whether there were other persons who should also share responsibility for the decision to allow Ms Ip’s daughter on the boat, the claimant was one of them. He had, by allowing Ms Ip’s daughter on the boat, displayed a cavalier attitude towards members’ safety.

133 In the SDBA’s email dated 11 June 2023²⁰², it stated that there should not be any assumption that the 22 person-configuration takes reference to the load in the boat or the number of male or female adults. It also described this incident as “one of the more severe violations of safety rules by a team SDBA has ever encountered.” The claimant, as well as the 2 certified steers that were identified to the SDBA, were given a conditional warning and not allowed to steer for other teams during the suspension period.

134 Despite the ban, the claimant participated in the decision to circumvent the ban by paddling under the Paulaner Dragons in July 2023. The claimant accepted that he did so, but explained that he was merely following the Ex-Co’s instructions.²⁰³

¹⁹⁸ CT, 6 February 2026, 87:9 – 32; 91:7 – 13.

¹⁹⁹ CT, 6 February 2026, 85:11 – 88:23.

²⁰⁰ CT, 9 February 2026, 105:15 – 113:13.

²⁰¹ CT, 5 February 2026, 73:8- 16.

²⁰² DBD 162 – 163.

²⁰³ The claimant’s AEIC, [63] – [67].

(2) Not meeting minimum crew advisory

135 The defendants pleaded that sometime on or about 29 or 30 October 2022, Ms Meissner, who was on a boat with the claimant, informed the claimant that they did not meet the minimum safety requirements to enter the Marina Channel. There were 5 crew members on a 12-seater boat but the minimum requirement was for 7 crew members. This requirement was imposed by the SDBA in its DB-Safe Plan dated 27 April 2022. The claimant dismissed Ms Meissner's safety concern.²⁰⁴

136 The claimant accepted that Ms Meissner had raised this issue. However, he denied simply dismissing her concerns. He said he had asked 2 other members on the boat, Mr Saunak and one Suri, who were then Tech-Co members, about the rule. They both said that they were not aware of the rule, and he took their word for it. In any case, the safety requirement was only an advisory. There were no strong winds or waves that day and many other teams out in the water had a similar configuration.²⁰⁵

137 Ms Meissner agreed that the minimum crew stated in the SDBA's DB-Safe Plan²⁰⁶ was an advisory.²⁰⁷ She did not recall there having been a thunderstorm or any warnings issued.²⁰⁸ She agreed that the claimant had asked Suri about the rule, but Suri was not a certified steer.²⁰⁹

138 Even though the minimum crew stipulation was only an advisory, this was in place for safety reasons. As stated in the DB-Safe Plan, the boat may

²⁰⁴ Defence, [28(12)].

²⁰⁵ The claimant's AEIC, [59] – [62]; CT, 23 October 2025, 91:16 – 94:8.

²⁰⁶ 2 CBD 1177.

²⁰⁷ CT, 9 February 2026, 13:1 – 15: 16.

²⁰⁸ CT, 9 February 2026, 12:5 – 19.

²⁰⁹ CT, 9 February 2026, 12:20 – 31.

encounter difficulties negotiating strong winds, swift currents and high waves, and in the event of a capsize, it would be more difficult for the crew to maintain the boat. The claimant ought to have familiarised himself with the SDBA's safety rules. Even if he was not aware of this rule, given that this had been highlighted by Ms Meissner, he should not have proceeded further in the interest of safety.

(3) Organised a fitness training session in the afternoon

139 According to the defendants, the claimant had on 19 May 2023, informed the Tech-Co of his plans to organise a fitness training session commencing with a 2.4 km run at 1pm. The Tech-Co informed the claimant that they were concerned that his suggested training plan could cause heat-related medical issues. The claimant did not relent nor address these concerns.²¹⁰

140 The claimant said he had informed the Tech-Co of the intended make-up fitness lesson since 21 April 2023. No issues were raised until the day before the test, when Mr Alban shared his concerns about the test being held at 1 pm. The claimant said that there was insufficient time to make alternative plans.²¹¹

141 I do not find this incident sufficient to prove that the claimant had a cavalier attitude towards health and safety. Mr Alban agreed it was a one-off incident as fitness tests were usually conducted at night, and there were no incidents that day.²¹²

²¹⁰ Defence, [28(13)]; Mr Alban's AEIC, [56(9)].

²¹¹ The claimant's AEIC, [146] – [151].

²¹² CT, 10 February 2026, 112: 26 – 115:19.

(4) Refusal to take Covid-19 vaccination

142 In closing submissions, the Remaining Defendants additionally relied on Mr Lamprecht's evidence on the stand that the claimant did not get his Covid-19 vaccination.²¹³ However, this alone did not prove that the claimant had a cavalier attitude towards members' safety since according to Mr Lamprecht, GDS hired external steers in the claimant's place. In other words, it was not a situation where the claimant disregarded prevailing Covid-19 regulations and insisted on being on the boat despite being unvaccinated.

(5) Conclusion

143 I therefore find that Ms Isabel and the Remaining Defendants have proven that the claimant was cavalier towards the safety and health of GDS members, based on the claimant's decision to allow Ms Ip's daughter on the boat in breach of the SDBA's rules, and in proceeding to row in the Marina Channel despite not meeting the SDBA's minimum crew advisory.

The imputation that the claimant caused past GDS members to get injured

144 Mr Lamprecht asserted that many injuries occurred while the claimant was coaching. There were multiple instances of slipped discs and shoulder injuries. One specific individual identified was Maxime, the current Sports Director, who allegedly sustained an injury from having to do several 1 km sets on the boat without guidance. Mr Lamprecht also identified himself, Mr Koch and one Bianca as having sustained injuries.²¹⁴

145 However, there is no evidence proving that it was the claimant's training that resulted in these injuries.

²¹³ CT, 15 April 2026, 39:16- 40: 22.

²¹⁴ Mr Lamprecht's AEIC, [51(b)]; CT, 15 April 2026, 43:27 – 44:21.

146 Mr Lamprecht clarified on the stand that he was not saying that it was the claimant that caused the injuries on purpose, but the claimant could have provided more guidance or shown more compassion during training to prevent injuries.²¹⁵ Yet, he did not have these individuals' medical reports²¹⁶, and assumed that Mr Koch's injuries were caused by the claimant's training simply because he suffered a slipped disc after the training session. He also assumed that his shoulder injury was because of wrong technique.²¹⁷

147 I am therefore unable to find that the claimant had caused injuries to past GDS members.

The imputation that the claimant had participated in the decision to circumvent the SDBA's water ban which was unethical or unprincipled

148 The Remaining Defendants relied on the same assertions made in support of their claim that the claimant displayed a cavalier attitude towards the safety and health of GDS members and caused members to be injured²¹⁸ (see [128] – [147] above).

149 However, given the specific defamatory meaning I have found, Ms Isabel and the Remaining Defendants have to prove that the claimant participated in the said decision which was unethical or unprincipled, and not that he was generally unethical or unprincipled.

150 In any case, while the claimant did breach the SDBA's rules and minimum crew advisory, these do not cross the threshold of being unethical or unprincipled. Even more so, merely organising a fitness session in the afternoon

²¹⁵ CT, 15 April 2026, 44:28 - 46:16.

²¹⁶ CT, 15 April 2026, 43:19 – 26.

²¹⁷ CT, 15 April 2026, 43:1 – 18.

²¹⁸ DCS, [145] – [152].

or not getting his Covid-19 vaccination which thus prevented him from joining the team on the boat, did not amount to unethical or unprincipled conduct. There is also no evidence that the claimant caused past members to suffer injuries.

151 On the other hand, the claimant's knowing participation in the decision to circumvent the SDBA's water ban when he was also personally subject to the ban was unethical and unprincipled. This is regardless of whether the idea had originated from him.

The imputation that the claimant prioritised his own interest over that of GDS

152 The Remaining Defendants relied on the same assertions made in support of their claim that the claimant overstepped his role as Team Coach and undermined the Ex-Co²¹⁹ (see [97] – [127] above).

153 They have not specifically referred to the claimant's alleged discouragement of members' participation in IDBC events, and his lack of support for members' participation in the Austcham 5 km race and the Pesta Sukan 200 m race in support of this defamatory imputation. However, based on how these matters have been pleaded, these, if true, could, in my view, also go towards justifying the imputation that the claimant prioritised his own interest over GDS'. I therefore also consider these in determining if this defamatory imputation has been proven.

154 In respect of the claimant's insistence that weight-training remained at Queenstown, I accept that he wanted to ensure that GDS members could weight-train without contravening the licence agreement with the SDBA. He had also contacted Paulaner because he did not want GDS' scheduling of the AGM to

²¹⁹ DCS, [138] – [144].

affect its sponsorship with Paulaner. He had genuine concerns over the safety of the kayaks. He also believed that focusing on target races was to GDS' benefit. These were therefore not instances whereby he had preferred his own interests over GDS.

155 However, while I accept that the claimant was motivated by a desire to act in GDS' interest when he instructed that only the finalised line-up be released, he had prioritised his own interest when he chose to vent his frustration in response to Ms Isabel's disregard of his instruction by ceasing communications with the Ex-Co and stopping training for the SRW 2022 race.

The imputation that the claimant encouraged toxic behaviour within GDS, was overbearing, excessively controlling and self-centred, deliberately bullied and harassed members, and committed psychological misconduct against GDS members

- (1) The claimant's control over GDS' weights, his cessation of training for SRW 2022 race, his communications with Paulaner, and his control over GDS' kayaks

156 The Remaining Defendants relied on these assertions made in support of their claim that the claimant overstepped his role as Team Coach and undermined the Ex-Co to support the imputation that the claimant was overbearing²²⁰ (see [97] – [127] above).

157 In particular, the claimant had acted in an overbearing manner when he decided to suddenly cease communications with the Ex-Co and stop training in response to Ms Isabel's release of the provisional race line-up for the SRW 2022 race.

²²⁰ DCS, [138] – [144].

(2) The 2018 IDBC race

158 The Remaining Defendants asserted that the claimant was prone to shouting, sarcasm and unpredictable emotional volatility.²²¹

159 One such incident was during the 2018 IDBC 10 km race. Mr Lamprecht said that the claimant suddenly instructed the team to stop paddling during the race, told them that they were not “good enough to race” and ordered them to perform training drills mid-race, which was humiliating and demoralising for the GDS members.²²²

160 Mr Lamprecht’s evidence on this was not challenged by the claimant.

(3) The post-SDBF race scolding (the “Mother’s Day Incident”)

161 Another incident took place on Mother’s Day 2023, when before a scheduled training could commence, the claimant confronted and scolded the Ex-Co for over an hour over concerns they had shared with Ms Ip about the claimant’s coaching methods, while the other members were left waiting. Ms Ip broke down.²²³

162 The claimant has not disputed this incident. Instead, he claimed that the Ex-Co had, via their messages exchanged after the Mother’s Day Incident, acknowledged that there was some value in the claimant’s points, and that Ms Ip’s frustration was directed at both the Ex-Co and the claimant.²²⁴

²²¹ Ms Ooi’s AEIC, [7].

²²² Mr Lamprecht’s AEIC, [47]; CT, 15 April, 37:4 - 39:15.

²²³ Ms Halverson’s AEIC, [38]; Mr Truong’s AEIC, [36].

²²⁴ Exhibit C2, p 339- 341.

163 Whether or not there was ‘value’ in what the claimant said is separate from whether the claimant had subjected the Ex-Co to treatment that was toxic, overbearing or tantamount to bullying.

(4) The claimant’s resignation message

164 The defendants pleaded that the claimant posted discouraging messages, aimed at belittling members and making sanctimonious statements.²²⁵ The claimant said that he was very supportive of the 2022-2023 Ex-Co and provided them with advice and suggestions.²²⁶

165 In closing submissions, the Remaining Defendants have only referred specifically to the claimant’s resignation message, which they said evidenced the claimant’s pattern of conduct, as he had used inflammatory language and “bad-mouthed” several Ex-Co members.²²⁷

166 The claimant had in his resignation message²²⁸, accused the Petitioners of being “keyboard warriors” who “think they know better”. He had also made accusations against the Women’s Captain and Sports Director (see [13] above).

(5) Dismissive of social paddlers

167 The defendants said that the claimant deemed some members social paddlers, being those who were not committed to a training plan or were not keen on competitive racing. He discouraged new members from mixing with

²²⁵ Defence, [28(11)].

²²⁶ The claimant’s AEIC, [126] – [128].

²²⁷ Mr Lamprecht’s AEIC, [23] – [24]; Ms Ooi’s AEIC, [17] – [18].

²²⁸ 2 CBD 1158 – 1167.

social paddlers.²²⁹ The claimant made it clear that only members who abided by his training sessions were eligible to be considered for competitive races.²³⁰

168 The claimant denied having any issues with social paddlers. He claimed that he wanted to develop all paddlers.²³¹ However, he explained that his primary focus had to be on members who were committed to his training programme, so that he could develop GDS into a high-performance competitive dragon-boating team who could win medals in target races.²³² The claimant referred to the minutes of an Ex-Co meeting where it was recorded that the claimant did not care if one was a competitive or social paddler, so long as they were looking to improve paddling skills.²³³

169 I accept that the claimant was dismissive of social paddlers. By way of illustration, the claimant had in WhatsApp messages stated that “if people are in the team, they either follow where the team direction is or be social paddlers and just go and do their social thing or buzz off...” and “I did not stay to coach a social team i [sic] am making it very damn clear”.²³⁴

170 The Remaining Defendants also gave evidence on specific instances. Mr Lamprecht said the claimant did not consider him a serious paddler and thus did not give him proper coaching. The claimant even told him off for discussing paddling technique with a new member despite him having several years of experience.²³⁵

²²⁹ Defence, [28(19)]; Ms Ooi’s AEIC, [7].

²³⁰ Defence, [28(20)].

²³¹ CT, 23 October 2025, 114:7 - 116:20.

²³² The claimant’s AEIC, [99] – [103].

²³³ DBD 804.

²³⁴ 1 CBD 353 – 354.

²³⁵ Mr Lamprecht’s AEIC, [49].

171 Ms Halverson’s evidence was that the claimant had regularly called her husband, Klaus, a social paddler.²³⁶ Even though a specific incident of alleged abuse (when the claimant allegedly told Klaus not to touch the equipment in a demeaning tone when he was unable to lift a certain weight) was hearsay evidence as Klaus himself did not give evidence, the claimant had regularly made comments about Klaus being a social paddler in her presence.

(6) Not allowing Ms Low to steer the Pesta Sukan race

172 The claimant had allegedly remarked to members that the IDBC Barbarians Women’s crew was “one nonsense”. This had been captained by Ms Low.²³⁷ He refused to allow Ms Low to steer the boat for the Pesta Sukan race after having seen her on the Barbarian Women’s 2 km boat.²³⁸

173 The claimant said he did not remember labelling the IDBC Barbarian Women’s boat as “one nonsense”.²³⁹ However, he agreed that he took Ms Low off the Pesta Sukan race. He said this was justified because she trained with another team instead of supporting GDS’ boat maintenance efforts (during the 4-week water ban), and instead of training with other GDS members despite signing up for the Pesta Sukan race.²⁴⁰

174 Regardless, the claimant had responded to Ms Low by sanctioning her, rather than seeking a dialogue.

²³⁶ Ms Halverson’s AEIC, [37(10)(c)].

²³⁷ Defence, [28(2)].

²³⁸ Defence, [28(4)]; Ms Low’s AEIC, [43(3)].

²³⁹ The claimant’s AEIC, [105]; CT, 23 October 2025, 116: 21 – 30.

²⁴⁰ The claimant’s AEIC, [106] - [107]; CT, 23 October 2025, 117:7 – 123:27.

- (7) The claimant's complaint against Ms Ooi arising out of a post-race dinner in 2022

175 The defendants pleaded that the claimant repeatedly demanded that the Ex-Co convince members he disliked to resign as members.²⁴¹ In closing submissions, the Remaining Defendants have only referred specifically to Ms Ooi as one such member. Ms Ooi had allegedly made a comment against the claimant during a dinner after the Century Race, and he then asked that she be dismissed immediately without a formal investigation. The Ex-Co investigated and found that his allegations were unfounded.²⁴²

176 The claimant agreed that he asked for Ms Ooi to be taken off the team. However, he justified this on the basis that Ms Ooi had made inappropriate personal comments regarding another member, and had promoted outrigger paddling with Austcham Paddle Club, another dragon-boating club. He felt that this was inappropriate as outrigger paddling took the focus away from dragon boating, and Ms Ooi who was then an Ex-Co member should not be promoting other clubs.²⁴³

177 Again, whether or not the claimant's complaints were justified, he responded to Ms Ooi's alleged conduct by asking that she be sanctioned, rather than seeking a dialogue.

- (8) Conclusion

178 Having regard to the totality of the incidents relied on by the defendants, I accept that there were disagreements between the claimant and some GDS members who did not appreciate the claimant's communication style and

²⁴¹ Defence, [28(6)].

²⁴² Defence, [28(9)]; Ms Ooi's AEIC, [8] – [9], [40(4)].

²⁴³ The claimant's AEIC, [114] – [118].

coaching methods, and this had led to several unpleasant confrontations. While the claimant's style was unprofessional, his conduct did not reach a level of encouraging toxic behaviour or amount to bullying, harassment or psychological misconduct.

The imputation that the claimant practised favouritism within GDS

179 The defendants said that sometime in 2023, the claimant approached selected members for extra training with the OCBC Dragon Boat Team, which he had also been coaching. He did not inform or obtain Tech-Co's prior consent. The purpose and reasoning behind his selection process were not transparent. When a member reported this to the Ex-Co, he demanded on 30 March 2023 that the Tech-Co take action against this member.²⁴⁴

180 The claimant admitted giving some GDS members extra weight-training lessons under OCBC. However, he denied that this was done in secret. The Tech-Co was aware as they, together with the rest of the Ex-Co and several GDS members, were present when he made this offer. Ms Meissner was one of them. He explained that he made the offer so that these members could get stronger. He had assessed them based on whether they had a basic level of fitness and could take on more. He did not see the need to inform the Ex-Co or get their permission beforehand as this was in GDS' interests.²⁴⁵ The claimant also denied having demanded that the Ex-Co investigate Ms Meissner but merely mentioned it to them.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ Defence, [28(18)].

²⁴⁵ The claimant's AEIC, [91] - [97]; CT, 23 October 2025, 97:1 – 98:19.

²⁴⁶ CT, 23 October 2025, 124:31 – 126:32.

181 That there were Tech-Co and Ex-Co members present when the claimant offered extra training to several members was corroborated by Ms Ip. The members who were invited eventually declined to take up the offer.²⁴⁷

182 I do not see the claimant's offer of additional training to members who he assessed were capable of additional training, as a display of favouritism.

The imputation that the claimant failed to discharge his role and responsibility as a competitive dragon boat coach professionally

183 The Remaining Defendants have not, in their closing submissions, elaborated why this specific defamatory imputation was justified.

184 Nevertheless, the matters which the Remaining Defendants relied on to justify the defamatory imputation that the claimant's conduct was toxic and amounted to bullying, harassment or psychological misconduct, show that the claimant did not discharge his role as coach professionally (see [156] – [178] above).

185 I note that the claimant had said that his manner of coaching is necessary so that GDS can be competitive and win medals, and it had been proven to be successful.²⁴⁸ Nonetheless, the ends do not justify the means. Further, his conduct, to the extent I have found amounted to an overstepping of his role as Team Coach, and his breach of the SDBA's rules, also support this imputation.

²⁴⁷ CT, 5 February 2026, 87:1 - 89:19.

²⁴⁸ The claimant's AEIC, [173] – [176].

The imputation that the claimant's conduct resulted in members losing interest in dragon-boating and caused GDS to lose members

186 The Remaining Defendants relied on Ms Ooi's testimony that the claimant's conduct made it difficult to find volunteers to sit on the Ex-Co and Mr Lamprecht's assertion that members were unhappy because of the claimant's disdain towards social paddlers.²⁴⁹

187 Ms Ooi's and Mr Lamprecht's assertions do not prove that GDS lost members because of the claimant.

The imputation that the claimant lacked competence as a coach

188 The Remaining Defendants relied on the same assertions made in support of their claim that the claimant's conduct resulted in GDS losing members.²⁵⁰

189 These matters do not show that the claimant lacked competence as a coach.

The Remaining Defendants' reliance on s 8 of the Defamation Act 1957

190 The Remaining Defendants argued, relying on s 8 of the Defamation Act 1957, that their defence of justification succeeds even if not every charge was proven. S 8 states:

In an action for libel or slander in respect of words containing 2 or more distinct charges against the plaintiff, a defence of justification shall not fail by reason only that the truth of every charge is not proved if the words not proved to be true do not materially injure the plaintiff's reputation having regard to the truth of the remaining charges.

²⁴⁹ DCS, [33(f)], [160] – [162].

²⁵⁰ DCS, [33(j)], [160] – [162].

191 In *Lee Hsien Loong v Xu Yuan Chen and another suit* [2022] 3 SLR 924, the court found that the defendant was not entitled to rely on s 8 as he failed to justify any of the claimed meanings and in any event, s 8 was not applicable since the plaintiff's reputation was found to have been materially injured by the falsehoods (at [64]).

192 The Remaining Defendants have only succeeded in justifying 5 of 10 defamatory meanings. The remaining 5 defamatory imputations which were not proven contain some particularly serious allegations. Hence, Ms Isabel and the Remaining Defendants are not entitled to rely on s 8 of the Defamation Act.

The defence of qualified privilege

193 Ms Isabel and the Remaining Defendants argued that the Slides were displayed on an occasion of qualified privilege.²⁵¹

194 In deciding whether a defamatory statement was made on an occasion of qualified privilege, the 'ultimate question' is whether the statements were fairly warranted by the occasion. The court must consider all the circumstances and ask whether this publisher had a duty to publish or an interest in publishing this defamatory communication to this recipient and whether the recipient had a corresponding interest or duty to receive the defamatory communication: *Bernard Chan* at [87].

Was there an interest or duty to make and receive the publication?

195 I accept that Ms Isabel and the Remaining Defendants had a duty or interest in convening the EGM and presenting the Slides at the EGM.

²⁵¹ Defence, [27].

196 It is not the Remaining Defendants' case that the EGM was called because the Petition had obtained signatures from at least 25% of the members.²⁵² It was Ms Low's and Mr Alban's evidence that the Petition was not eventually submitted.²⁵³

197 The Ex-Co was entitled under GDS' constitution to convene the EGM, even without the Petition:

(a) Under GDS' constitution²⁵⁴, the administration of GDS shall be entrusted to a Committee (clause 9.1), whose duty is to organise and supervise the daily activities of GDS (clause 9.6);

(b) The Committee had the power to make an order for an extraordinary general meeting to be called at any time (clause 8.3). The Committee was also empowered to use their own discretion in the event of any question or matter pertaining to the day-to-day administration which is not expressly provided for in the constitution (clause 16.1). GDS' constitution also provided that the Committee may not act contrary to the expressed wishes of the general meeting without prior reference to it and shall always remain subordinate to the general meetings (clause 9.6); and

(c) GDS' constitution provided that in the event of any dispute arising amongst members, they shall attempt to resolve the matter at an extraordinary general meeting in accordance with this constitution, failing which they may bring the matter to a court of law for settlement (clause 17.1).

²⁵² DCS, [46].

²⁵³ CT, 6 February 2026, 71:29 – 31; CT, 10 February 2026, 64:17 – 25.

²⁵⁴ 1 CBD 188 – 194.

198 In *Bernard Chan*, a management committee of the Singapore Swimming Club was found to have a duty to safeguard club interests and thus a corresponding duty to inform members of any misrepresentations made to influence ratification of expenditure (at [88]).

199 The claimant argued that the defence of qualified privilege was not made out because the focus of the Slides was the Petition, which was never formally submitted and had already been rendered moot by his resignation. He also referred to Mr Truong’s message in the Ex-Co’s WhatsApp chatgroup stating that there was no point addressing the Petition during the EGM as the claimant had resigned.

200 From the face of the messages however, Mr Truong had merely stated that “addressing” and “confirming” the Petition were “two different things” and there was no need to confirm the Petition since the claimant was gone.²⁵⁵ Mr Truong’s evidence was that he agreed to the Slides being presented at the EGM as it was critical for members to know what was going on in GDS and to resolve any questions as to what led to the resignations by the claimant and Secretary.²⁵⁶

201 Based on the “GDS Daily” WhatsApp chatlog, there were, following the claimant’s resignation message, requests by 3 ordinary members, namely: Mr Gascou, Mr Koch and Mr Ng, asking for a list of Petitioners, and what the Petition was about.²⁵⁷ There had therefore been calls by members to discuss the Petition, notwithstanding the claimant’s resignation and even though the Petition had not been formally submitted.

²⁵⁵ Exhibit C2, 521 – 522.

²⁵⁶ CT, 9 February 2026, 118: 31 – 119:12.

²⁵⁷ 2 CBD 990 – 991; CT, 5 February 2026, 129:3 -6; CT, 6 February 2026, 62:4 - 66:24; CT, 10 February 2026, 62:6 – 18.

202 The Petition was also not the only issue to be discussed. There were also other messages calling for a wider discussion of members' concerns, and next steps.²⁵⁸ Both Ms Ip and Ms Tham had suddenly resigned in the span of days.

203 It was Mr Koch's evidence that members still wanted answers about the claimant's resignation and what led up to it²⁵⁹, and even though the claimant had left, allegations had been made by him against the Ex-Co, which had to be addressed.²⁶⁰ It was also Ms Low's evidence that she received messages sent to her privately by other members, voicing their concerns with what was going on.²⁶¹

204 The Ex-Co had a duty to address these concerns as part of its administration of GDS' affairs. The EGM was therefore convened to discuss the Petition, and other club matters such as the resignation of GDS' Secretary and Team Captain over allegations of harassment, bullying, and for members to vote for their replacements.²⁶² The contents of the Slides related to these matters.

205 GDS members had a corresponding duty or interest to receive information relating to GDS' matters at the EGM. GDS' constitution provided that members above 18 had the right to vote and hold office (clause 5.2). Further, as noted above, a general meeting of members was vested with the supreme authority of GDS.

206 As I have found that that GDS had a duty or interest to publish the Slides and the members of GDS had a corresponding interest or duty to receive them,

²⁵⁸ 2 CBD 992 – 999.

²⁵⁹ CT, 5 February 2026, 126: 16- 127:22.

²⁶⁰ CT, 6 February 2026, 14:25 - 15:16.

²⁶¹ CT, 6 February 2026, 62:4 - 66:24.

²⁶² Defence, [27]; 2 CBD 1419 – 1421.

the publication took place on an occasion of qualified privilege. The requirement of a corresponding duty/interest did not cease to be satisfied merely because the Slides did not additionally identify the Petitioners or because the majority of the Ex-Co were Petitioners. I will however deal with these in the context of the discussion on whether Ms Isabel and/or any of the Remaining Defendants were motivated by malice, which, if found, would defeat the defence of qualified privilege.

207 For completeness, I note that the claimant has not made the argument that Ms Isabel, Ms Ooi or Mr Lamprecht could not invoke qualified privilege because they were not members of the Ex-Co when the EGM was convened. In any event, they had been invited by the Ex-Co to speak at the EGM due to their knowledge of the matters being covered. As members of GDS, they too had an interest in the Slides they presented, and the other members of GDS had a corresponding interest to receive the information.

208 Neither did the claimant argue that qualified privilege did not attach because 2 non-members, Ms Wakana and Ms Nirasha, were also present at the EGM.

209 In any event, communications to persons without a corresponding interest or duty are nevertheless privileged if they are published reasonably, in the ordinary course of business, and no more widely than is required for making the communication, and if they would be privileged but for such incidental publication: *Kay Swee Pin v Singapore Island Country Club and others* [2010] SGHC 175, [94] – [96]. That was a case where the defamatory notice was posted on notice boards in the club’s clubhouse, which were a convenient mode of communication between the club and its members and part of the club’s operating procedure. Hence the fact that the notice may have been seen by

visitors other than the club's members did not defeat the defence of qualified privilege, as it was practically reasonable, and did not go beyond the exigency of the occasion.

210 Similarly in *Low Tuck Kwong v Sukamto Sia* [2014] 1 SLR 639, the court noted that in making a communication covered by qualified privilege, it may be that sometimes the communication may reach an audience without the necessary duty or interest in relation to the subject matter. The question is whether such communication was reasonably warranted by the exigency of the occasion, such that an ancillary or incidental privilege attaches (at [62]).

Is the defence of qualified privilege defeated by malice?

211 The claimant pleaded that the defendants published and caused to be published the Slides recklessly and maliciously because they did so knowing the contents to be false; and the defendants' dominant motive in publishing the Slides was to tarnish the claimant's character and reputation in the dragon-boating community.²⁶³

212 The defence of qualified privilege would be defeated if it is proven that the communications were actuated by malice. Malice for the purposes of defeating qualified privilege may be proven if it can be shown that: (1) the defendant had knowledge of falsity or where there was recklessness or lack of belief in the defamatory statement; or (2) even if the defendant had a genuine or honest belief in the truth of the statement, his dominant intention was to injure the claimant or some other improper motive: *Golden Season* at [92].

²⁶³ SOC, [23].

213 An example of improper motive would be personal spite or the abuse of the occasion to obtain some private advantage unconnected with the duty or the interest constituting the reason for the privilege: *Lim Eng Hock Peter v Lin Jian Wei* [2010] 4 SLR 331 at [38]. There would be an improper purpose if the defamatory statement was not made to protect the interest or discharge the duty which gives rise to the privilege: *Basil Anthony Herman v Premier Security Co-operative Ltd and others* [2010] 3 SLR 110 at [60].

214 Where two or more persons have participated in the publication of a defamatory article and they rely on the defence of fair comment or qualified privilege, the claimant in order to defeat the defence and succeed in his claim against an individual defendant, must prove express malice against each defendant: *Nirumalan K Pillay v A Balakrishnan* [1997] 1 SLR(R) 953 at [29] – [32], [35].

215 I therefore consider if the claimant has proven malice as against Ms Isabel and each of the Remaining Defendants.

216 The claimant argued that an adverse inference ought to be drawn from Ms Isabel and the Remaining Defendants’ failure to produce the full WhatsApp chatlog among the Ex-Co members between 5 December 2022 and 12 August 2023. He said this would have included evidence of malice. However, he has not pointed to any point during the trial where the Remaining Defendants were given the opportunity to explain why they had not disclosed the full chatlog. Regardless, it is not in every case that an adverse inference should be drawn. To begin with, there must be some evidence, even if weak, adduced by the party seeking to draw the inference on the issue in question: *Sudha Natrajan v The Bank of East Asia Ltd* [2017] 1 SLR 141 at [19] – [20].

217 For the reasons below, I find that the claimant has not proven malice on the part of Ms Isabel or any of the Remaining Defendants.

(1) Ms Isabel

218 The claimant did not in closing submissions address how Ms Isabel is said to have been motivated by malice.

219 Insofar as Ms Isabel was a Petitioner, this did not, without more, mean that she had a dominant intention to injure the claimant or some other improper motive.

220 GDS members have a right under the constitution to submit to the Secretary a request in writing for an extraordinary general meeting to be called, setting forth the business to be transacted. Under clause 8.3 of GDS' constitution, the President would have to call an extraordinary general meeting so long as this request is made by members making up not less than 25% of the total voting membership or 30 voting members (whichever is less).

221 The claimant²⁶⁴, Ms Tham²⁶⁵ and Ms Tan²⁶⁶ agreed that members had the right to raise a petition.

222 The Petition did not demand the claimant's immediate removal. While it set out the Petitioners' views that the claimant was no longer suitable to coach GDS, it called for an emergency general meeting to be held for "frank and open communication", and for a vote to be called on "the cessation/continuation" of

²⁶⁴ CT, 23 October 2025, 74:15 - 75:5.

²⁶⁵ CT, 2 February 2026, 120:9- 12.

²⁶⁶ CT, 24 October 2025, 63:21 – 64:1.

the claimant as Team Coach.²⁶⁷ As noted by Ms Ooi and Mr Lamprecht, there was still a possibility that the claimant would remain as Team Coach.²⁶⁸

(2) Ms Ooi

223 The claimant argued that Ms Ooi knew that the contents of the Slides were untrue;²⁶⁹

(a) It was not true that the claimant did not support members doing the 5 km race in October 2022. The Ex-Co had accepted the claimant's recommendation not to include the Austcham race as a target race for 2023.²⁷⁰ Members were informed that the Austcham race was not a target race for 2023²⁷¹;

(b) On the allegation that the claimant had breached the SDBA's rules leading to the water ban, Ms Ooi was not present at the material time. It was Ms Ip's decision to bring her child on the boat²⁷²;

(c) It was not true that the claimant controlled the use of kayaks or could not sign off on the inspection forms. Mr Ng had signed off on these in 2023 even though he was not Team Captain. The claimant did not prevent members from fixing the kayaks but had prepared for the kayak maintenance session on 29 January 2023;

²⁶⁷ 1 CBD 200 – 201.

²⁶⁸ CT, 15 April 2026, 12:26 – 13:4; 25:1 – 24.

²⁶⁹ CCS, [52(6), (7), (8), (10), (17), (19) and (21)], [69].

²⁷⁰ 2 CBD 1379.

²⁷¹ 2 CBD 1388.

²⁷² 2 CBD 1210.

(d) On the claimant's demand that she be removed from the team, Ms Ooi admitted that she was given a "generalised caution" arising out of her comments at the dinner after the Century Race; and

(e) Ms Ooi did not verify the accuracy of the inputs she received on the Slides but merely collated what was sent to her.

224 I am not satisfied that the threshold for knowledge of falsity of the defamatory statements has been met:

(a) On the SDBA water ban, Ms Ooi's lack of personal knowledge did not equate knowledge of falsity. In any case, the SDBA had found a safety violation, and had issued the claimant a conditional warning for his involvement;

(b) In respect of the Austcham race, the claimant relied on documents relating to the Austcham race in 2023, whereas the allegation was in respect of the race in 2022. In any case, even if Austcham was not a target race, the claimant did not have the authority to refuse to train members for it;

(c) The claimant's conduct in respect of the Austcham race in 2022, as well as his conduct regarding the kayaks, were not the only grounds the Remaining Defendants rely on for their claim that the claimant had overstepped his bounds as Team Coach, prioritised his interest over GDS' and was over-bearing. The claimant has not contended that Ms Ooi knew that all the other grounds relied on were false;

(d) On the Century Race dinner, Ms Ooi had maintained that the claimant's allegations against her were unfounded as Tech-Co had

established that she did not make the alleged statements²⁷³. In any event, the claimant did not dispute that he had responded by asking that she be taken off the team. This was also only one of the grounds the Remaining Defendants rely on for their claim that the claimant encouraged toxic behaviour within GDS, was overbearing, excessively controlling and self-centred, deliberately bullied and harassed members, and committed psychological misconduct;

(e) A mere failure to verify information did not amount to recklessness – it has to be to the point of wilful blindness, for instance, if a defendant was put on notice as to the truthfulness or accuracy of the information, such that it would be unreasonable for the defendant to accept the information as true: *Jasmin Nisban* at [356] – [357].

225 I am also not persuaded that Ms Ooi had a dominant intention to injure the claimant or some other improper motive.

226 The claimant submitted that she was motivated by personal grievances against the claimant dating back to 2016²⁷⁴ rather than actual experience with the claimant’s coaching given what he considered her “low” attendance at training sessions in 2022 and 2023.²⁷⁵ He referred to how she had drafted the Petition to ask that only voting members and not contractors be allowed to attend a meeting to discuss the Petition, which he said was designed to deliberately exclude him from any discussion. Ms Ooi had also presented “Some incidents → psychological misconduct under Safe Sport Unified Code

²⁷³ CT, 11 February 2026, 44:13 - 46:16.

²⁷⁴ Ms Ooi’s AEIC, [7], [8], [40(11)(d)].

²⁷⁵ DBD 837 - 880; C3; CT, 11 February 2026, 57: 18 -32; 71:22 – 26, 73:27- 29.

2021” (underline original) as a finding, even though no formal report was made.

²⁷⁶

227 However, it was within Ms Ooi’s rights as a GDS member to raise a petition (see [220] – [221] above). She had personal experience working with the claimant since 2016, and she was also GDS’ Secretary in 2022.²⁷⁷ I also accept Ms Ooi’s explanation that she had proposed that only members attend any emergency meeting because the claimant’s presence could hinder an honest discussion as some may be more afraid to speak up. The claimant’s exclusion would not necessarily lead to a result favouring the Petitioners as there were members who were in favour of him.²⁷⁸

228 Finally, the Slides were not just based on her own experience, but also others’.²⁷⁹ It is not clear that Ms Ooi had referred to the breach of the Safe Sport Unified Code as an actual finding of the Safe Sport Commission or as her own conclusion.²⁸⁰

229 Taking the above in totality, I am not persuaded that she had a dominant intention to injure the claimant.

(3) Mr Lamprecht

230 I have found that Mr Lamprecht did not participate in publishing the Slides. Even if he did, he would be entitled to rely on the defence of qualified privilege (for the reasons above), and this would not be defeated by malice.

²⁷⁶ 1 CBD 211; CT, 11 February 2026, 86:28 – 87:2.

²⁷⁷ CT, 11 February 2026, 74:2 – 14.

²⁷⁸ CT, 11 February 2026, 30:5 – 32:24.

²⁷⁹ CT, 11 February 2026, 74:2 – 14.

²⁸⁰ Ms Ooi’s AEIC, [40(13)].

231 The claimant alleged that Mr Lamprecht knew that the contents of the Slides were untrue:²⁸¹

- (a) It was not true that the claimant did not support members doing the 5 km race in October 2022 as the Austcham race was not a target race for 2023;
- (b) The Slides alleged that the weights were no longer at the shared common area when members attended to collect, but it was the Ex-Co that delayed the collection;
- (c) It was not true that the claimant unilaterally changed the location of the weights, because it was out of necessity due to Covid-19;
- (d) The allegation that members were injured as a result of the claimant's coaching was untrue, because he allegedly admitted under cross-examination that members' injuries were not caused by the claimant.

232 I am not satisfied that the threshold for knowledge of falsity of the defamatory statements has been met:

- (a) Even if Austcham was not a target race, the claimant did not have the authority to refuse to train members for it.
- (b) In any case, the claimant's conduct in respect of the Austcham race in 2022 and the weights were not the only grounds the Remaining Defendants rely on for their claim that the claimant had overstepped his bounds as Team Coach, prioritised his interest over GDS' and was over-

²⁸¹ CCS, [52 (6), (15), (16) and (20)], [69].

bearing. The claimant has not contended that Mr Lamprecht knew that all the other grounds relied on were false;

(c) In any case, the alleged delay by the Ex-Co in collecting the weights was only about 2 days. The Remaining Defendants’ main complaint regarding the weights was in relation to the claimant’s refusal to allow them to be moved back after Covid-19 restrictions had been lifted.²⁸² The claimant accepted that he did not allow the move back to Kallang; and

(d) As noted earlier, Mr Lamprecht only agreed that the claimant did not cause the injuries on purpose, but he maintained that the claimant could have provided more guidance or shown more compassion during training to prevent injuries.²⁸³

233 I am also not persuaded that Mr Lamprecht had a dominant intention to injure the claimant or some other improper motive.

234 The claimant argued that Mr Lamprecht was also a Petitioner. Like the Petitioners, Mr Lamprecht also wanted a discourse about the claimant and his leadership style and had personally approached Ms Ip for this²⁸⁴. Mr Lamprecht was displeased with how the claimant resigned before the Petition could be heard.²⁸⁵ Mr Lamprecht posted a lengthy message defending the Petition within 2 hours of the claimant’s resignation message and described the Petitioners as “passionate and invested”.²⁸⁶ He agreed under cross-examination that he also considered himself a “passionate and invested” member²⁸⁷. The claimant also

²⁸² CT, 15 April 2026, 46:20 – 48:28.

²⁸³ CT, 15 April 2026, 44:28 - 46:16.

²⁸⁴ CT, 15 April 2026, 18:16 – 19:11.

²⁸⁵ Mr Lamprecht’s AEIC, [7], [8], [22]. [23], [38], [45]; CT, 15 April 2026, 18:16 – 19:25; 25:1 – 24.

²⁸⁶ 2 CBD 990 – 991.

²⁸⁷ CT, 15 April 2026, 49:31 – 50:12.

argued that if Ms Ooi approached Mr Lamprecht to present at the EGM despite not being an Ex-Co member herself, then he was “highly likely” to have been a Petitioner.

235 These are however just conjectures. Ms Ooi, Ms Low, Mr Alban, Ms Halverson and Ms Meissner, who were Petitioners themselves, did not identify Mr Lamprecht as a Petitioner.²⁸⁸ Mr Lamprecht’s evidence was that he did not recall if he had seen the petition or signed it.²⁸⁹ Even if he were a Petitioner, this did not indicate malice as he was entitled to sign it (see [220] – [221] above).

236 The claimant further submitted that Mr Lamprecht was motivated by malice because he did not have a positive view of the claimant and did not have a good relationship with him²⁹⁰, rather than actual experience with the claimant’s coaching given what he considered to be Mr Lamprecht’s low attendance at training.²⁹¹

237 While Mr Lamprecht might not have had a positive view of the claimant, this is insufficient to find that his dominant intention was therefore to injure the claimant or some other improper motive.

(4) Mr Truong

238 The claimant alleged that Mr Truong knew that the contents of the Slides were untrue:²⁹²

²⁸⁸ Ms Ooi’s AEIC, [16], Ms Low (CT, 6 February 2026, 80:29 -81:6), Mr Alban (CT, 10 February 2026, 76:17 – 20), Ms Halverson (CT, 10 February 2026, 12:13-22); Ms Meissner (CT, 9 February 2026, 9:17 – 18).

²⁸⁹ CT, 15 April 2026, 18:4- 12; 33:18 – 20; 53:31 – 54:1.

²⁹⁰ Mr Lamprecht’s AEIC, [49], CT, 15 April 2026, 28:14 – 29:26; 40:27 -42:32.

²⁹¹ DBD page 837 – 880.

²⁹² CCS, [52(4) and (7)], [69].

(a) He was allegedly unable to point to any specific slides which his AEIC justified and changed his answer at least 3 times during cross-examination; and

(b) On the allegation that the claimant had breached the SDBA's rules leading to the water ban, it was Ms Ip's decision to bring her child on the boat.²⁹³ He was also on the boat when this happened.

239 I am not satisfied that the threshold for knowledge of falsity of the defamatory statements has been met:

(a) While Mr Truong was not able to identify the specific slides he sought to justify, Mr Truong stood by his AEIC which set out his position that the claimant overstepped his boundaries as Team Coach and his recollection of specific incidents: namely the claimant's decision to stop training the team for the SRW 2022 race, the Mother's Day Incident, and the events leading to the SDBA's water ban.²⁹⁴

(b) Mr Truong's evidence was that he was not aware that his child had been brought on the boat (see [131] above). In any case, the SDBA did find a safety violation and attributed fault to the claimant.

240 I am also not persuaded that Mr Truong had a dominant intention to injure the claimant or some other improper motive.

241 The claimant submitted that even though Mr Truong had expressed frustration within the Ex-Co WhatsApp chatgroup over how the Petition was managed²⁹⁵, he did not mention that he knew at the very least that Mr Alban was

²⁹³ 2 CBD 1210.

²⁹⁴ Mr Truong's AEIC, [35] – [37]; CT, 9 February 2026, 115:5 – 119:12.

²⁹⁵ C2, 503, 518 - 522; CT, 9 February 2026, 99:20 – 100:18.

one of the Petitioners.²⁹⁶ I fail to understand how this shows that Mr Truong therefore had a dominant intention to injure the claimant or some other improper motive.

(5) Ms Low

242 The claimant alleged that Ms Low knew that the contents of the Slides were untrue:²⁹⁷

(a) It was not true that the claimant did not support members doing the 5 km race in October 2022 as the Austcham race was not a target race for 2023;

(b) On the allegation that the claimant had breached the SDBA's rules leading to the water ban, Ms Low was aware that it was Ms Ip's decision to bring her child onto the boat, and Ms Low had previously defended the claimant's control of the boat; and

(c) It was not true that the claimant prevented members from fixing the kayaks because she was part of the Tech-Co WhatsApp chatgroup where the claimant had set out what was required for the maintenance session on 4 February 2023.²⁹⁸

243 I am not satisfied that the threshold for knowledge of falsity of the defamatory statements has been met:

(a) Even if Austcham was not a target race, the claimant did not have the authority to refuse to train members for it;

²⁹⁶ CT, 9 February 2026, 94:10 -31.

²⁹⁷ CCS, [52 (6), (7) and (8)], [69].

²⁹⁸ 1 CBD 310 – 311, 318 – 319.

(b) In any case, the claimant's conduct in respect of the Austcham race in 2022, as well as the kayaks, were not the only grounds the Remaining Defendants rely on for their claim that the claimant had overstepped his bounds as Team Coach, prioritised his interest over GDS' and was over-bearing. The claimant has not contended that Ms Low knew that all the other grounds relied on were false; and

(c) Ms Low's evidence was that she was not aware that Ms Ip's child had been on the boat and she later realised that the incident was more serious than she initially thought (see [131] above). In any case, the SDBA did find a safety violation and attributed fault to the claimant.

244 I am also not persuaded that Ms Low had a dominant intention to injure the claimant or some other improper motive.

245 That she was one of the Petitioners did not, without more, mean that she had a dominant intention to injure the claimant or some other improper motive (see [220] – [221] above).

246 While she preferred, based on her personal experience with the claimant, that the claimant be removed as Team Coach, she maintained that the Petition was not for his removal, but for an open discussion and a vote to be taken on whether he should remain.²⁹⁹ That is borne out by the wording of the Petition.

247 The claimant additionally submitted that Ms Low was motivated by malice because she did not identify herself as a Petitioner when Ms Tham asked Ex-Co members to pledge that they were not involved.³⁰⁰ She also allegedly used her position in the Ex-Co to push the same agenda as the Petitioners, as

²⁹⁹ CT, 6 February 2026, 70:27 – 72:23; 82:25 – 83:4.

³⁰⁰ Exhibit C2, p 503.

she asked that the Ex-Co proceed with convening an EGM so that the Ex-Co, rather than the Petitioners, could control the agenda.³⁰¹

248 I am not persuaded that Ms Low wilfully withheld the fact that she was a Petitioner so that the Petition could be discussed at the EGM and to harm the claimant. I accept Ms Low's explanation that she did not see the need to answer Ms Tham's question - she was entitled as a GDS member to submit a petition and the Petition was not submitted in the end.³⁰² She was also afraid of the backlash.³⁰³

249 I am also not persuaded that Ms Low advocated for the EGM to proceed so that she could harm the claimant. It was within the powers and duty of the Ex-Co (of which Ms Low was a member) to call an EGM. It would have been difficult to hold an EGM without discussing the Petition³⁰⁴, given calls by members to discuss it.

(6) Mr Alban

250 The claimant alleged that Mr Alban knew that the contents of the Slides were untrue:³⁰⁵

(a) It was not true that the claimant prohibited the fixing of kayaks in the first 6 months because Mr Alban admitted on the stand that he did not know if that had happened.³⁰⁶ He was also part of the Tech-Co

³⁰¹ Exhibit C2, pp 503 – 504.

³⁰² CT, 6 February 2026, 66:25 – 70:26.

³⁰³ CT, 6 February 2026, 83: 24 – 27.

³⁰⁴ CT, 6 February 2026, 73:14 - 74:11.

³⁰⁵ CCS, [52 (1), (2), (3) and (8)], [69].

³⁰⁶ CT, 10 February 2026, 112:5 – 25.

WhatsApp chatgroup where the claimant had set out what was required for the maintenance session on 4 February 2023³⁰⁷;

(b) It was not true that Tech-Co would not be aware of upcoming fitness tests until the day before, because he confirmed on the stand that when he was Sports Director, he would only not be aware of make-up tests; and

(c) The allegation that the make-up fitness test was organised in dangerous heat was not true because he agreed that this was a one-off incident, nothing untoward happened, and he was able to attend water training thereafter.

251 I am not satisfied that the threshold for knowledge of falsity of the defamatory statements has been met:

(a) The claimant's conduct regarding the kayaks was not the only ground the Remaining Defendants rely on for their claim that the claimant had overstepped his bounds as Team Coach, prioritised his interest over GDS' and was over-bearing. The claimant has not contended that Mr Alban knew that all the other grounds relied on were false.

(b) The statement on the scheduling of fitness tests was based on input from others. Mr Alban's knowledge was confined to the period when he was Sports Director.³⁰⁸ In any case, a mere failure to verify information did not amount to recklessness sufficient to amount to malice.

³⁰⁷ 1 CBD 310 – 311, 318 – 319.

³⁰⁸ CT, 10 February 2026, 112:26 – 114:7.

(c) Mr Alban maintained that he felt unwell after the make-up test even though he was able to attend water training.³⁰⁹ While there were no reported injuries, Mr Alban believed that it was still dangerous due to the risk of heat stroke.³¹⁰

252 I am also not persuaded that Mr Alban had a dominant intention to injure the claimant or some other improper motive.

253 That he was one of the Petitioners did not, without more, mean that he had a dominant intention to injure the claimant or some other improper motive (see [220] – [221] above). He also took the position that while his desired outcome was for the claimant to be removed, the purpose of the Petition was to get a platform for members to discuss whether he should be removed.³¹¹

254 The claimant additionally submitted that Mr Alban was motivated by malice because he did not identify himself as a Petitioner when Ms Tham asked Ex-Co members to pledge that they were not involved.³¹² Instead he was acting in furtherance of his interest as a petitioner rather than an Ex-Co member, and because he had a personal motive against the claimant.

255 I am not persuaded that Mr Alban wilfully withheld the fact that he was a Petitioner so that the Petition could be discussed at the EGM and to harm the claimant. I accept Mr Alban's explanation that he did not see the need to disclose that he was a Petitioner because the Petition was not submitted, and

³⁰⁹ CT, 10 February 2026, 108:16 – 109: 7.

³¹⁰ CT, 10 February 2026, 110:5 – 111:4.

³¹¹ CT, 10 February 2026, 63:9 -63:28.

³¹² Exhibit C2, p 503.

because he did not trust Ms Tham’s motivations.³¹³ In any case, there were calls from members to discuss the Petition at the EGM.

256 The claimant had made assertions against the Sports Director in his resignation message which Mr Alban agreed was specifically targeted at him³¹⁴, and sought to discredit him.³¹⁵ Even so, it did not mean that Mr Alban therefore participated in publishing the Slides to injure the claimant or for an improper motive.

(7) Ms Halverson

257 The claimant alleged that Ms Halverson knew that the contents of the Slides were untrue:³¹⁶

(a) She claimed under cross-examination that “the defence of justification” meant defending herself against the claimant³¹⁷;

(b) It was not true that the claimant did not support members doing the 5 km race in October 2022 as the Austcham race was not a target race for 2023;

(c) It was not true that the claimant was strongly against social paddlers as the minutes of the Ex-Co meeting of 8 January 2023 recorded the claimant as stating that he did not care if a paddler was social or competitive so long as they were looking to improve paddling

³¹³ CT, 10 February 2026, 64:17 - 65:9, 71:8 - 72:31.

³¹⁴ CT, 10 February 2026, 56:2 – 28.

³¹⁵ CT, 11 February 2026, 3:20 – 27.

³¹⁶ CCS, [52 (5), (6), (11), (12), (13), (14) and (18)], [69].

³¹⁷ CT, 10 February 2026, 21:6 – 21.

skills³¹⁸. She also failed to call Klaus as a witness to testify on the alleged incident of abuse. Klaus' attendance at trainings was also minimal³¹⁹;

(d) In respect of the assertion that the claimant subjected the Ex-Co to belittling behaviour, the Mother's Day incident was not as bad as Ms Halverson painted it to be, because the Ex-Co members in their messages exchanged after the incident, acknowledged that there was some value in the claimant's points³²⁰;

(e) Ms Halverson had retracted the assertion in her AEIC that the claimant's fitness benchmarks did not account for body type or gender³²¹; and

(f) She alleged that the race-crew selection by the claimant was "exclusionary" but agreed under cross-examination that the claimant was best placed to select a race crew. It had also been acknowledged by the Ex-Co in its meeting of 8 January 2023 that the claimant knew the team better than the Ex-Co.³²²

258 I am not satisfied that the threshold for knowledge of falsity of the defamatory statements has been met:

(a) Ms Halverson, as a layperson, cannot be faulted for not explaining the defence of justification accurately. Nevertheless, she did in her AEIC, and under cross-examination, elaborate on the matters which she said the statements were based on;

³¹⁸ DBD 804.

³¹⁹ CT, 10 February 2026, 33:25 – 35:28, 46:29 – 47:18; Exhibit C3.

³²⁰ Exhibit C2, pp 339- 341.

³²¹ Ms Halverson's AEIC, [37(12)(b)]; CT, 10 February 2026, 37:23 – 40:10; 2 CBD 1380.

³²² Ms Halverson's AEIC, [37(11)]; CT, 10 February 2026, 29:4 – 25; 2 CBD 1377.

(b) Even if Austcham was not a target race, the claimant did not have the authority to refuse to train members for it;

(c) In any case, the claimant's conduct in respect of the Austcham race in 2022 was not the only ground the Remaining Defendants rely on for their claim that the claimant had overstepped his bounds as Team Coach, prioritised his interest over GDS' and was over-bearing. The claimant has not contended that Ms Halverson knew that all the other grounds relied on were false;

(d) The Remaining Defendants had grounds for believing that the claimant was strongly against social paddlers;

(e) The claimant does not dispute that the Mother's Day Incident occurred. Ms Halverson maintained that what the claimant did was inappropriate³²³;

(f) Ms Halverson maintained that the claimant did not account for different fitness levels. In any case, there was no assertion in the Slides that the claimant's fitness benchmarks were not appropriate; and

(g) Ms Halverson maintained that her issue was not with the claimant having the right to select crew members, but that he did not, in her view, afford every member the equal chance to train and therefore be up for selection.³²⁴

259 I am also not persuaded that Ms Halverson had a dominant intention to injure the claimant or some other improper motive, merely because she was a Petitioner and did not disclose this to the other Ex-Co members.

³²³ CT, 10 February 2026, 43:10 - 44:7.

³²⁴ CT, 10 February 2026, 30:11 – 33:5.

260 I accept that she was entitled to sign the Petition as a GDS member and there was nothing wrong with her wanting to remain anonymous.³²⁵

(8) GDS

261 The claimant relied on several WhatsApp messages sent by Mr Koch. The first was his message agreeing with Mr Gasco that a clear list of instigators should be released.³²⁶ The claimant also relied on Mr Koch's exchanges with Mr Abhinava whereby he allegedly agreed that the EGM amounted to a character assassination of the claimant.³²⁷

262 First, Mr Koch was only elected as a member of the Ex-Co at the EGM. He was not involved in publishing the Slides. He therefore did not represent GDS, and his conduct insofar as it pre-dated his election, cannot be relied on or imputed to GDS.

263 It is not clear from Mr Koch's exchanges with Mr Abhinava that he had acknowledged that the EGM amounted to a character assassination of the claimant. Mr Koch had thanked Mr Abhinava for attending the EGM, to which Mr Abhinava said "if the coach needs to be changed it can be done in a nicer way! Character assassinating a person is very [sic]." Mr Koch then responded "yes totally agree and share the sentiment...that was not done in an upright and professional manner." Mr Koch's explanation, which is plausible based on the messages, was that he was referring to events starting from the claimant's resignation.³²⁸ Even if I accept the claimant's interpretation of Mr Koch's message, that would be just Mr Koch's opinion of how the EGM had been

³²⁵ CT, 10 February 2026, 13:18 – 14:28.

³²⁶ 2 CBD 990.

³²⁷ Exhibit C4.

³²⁸ CT, 6 February 2026, 18:1 – 19:15.

conducted, and it said nothing about whether GDS had been motivated by malice in publishing the Slides.

264 Lastly, the claimant argued that GDS was not entitled to rely on the defence of qualified privilege as it bears full legal responsibility for its Ex-Co, which at the time of the EGM, consisted of Mr Truong, Ms Low, Mr Alban and Ms Halverson. However, Mr Truong, Ms Low, Mr Alban and Ms Halverson were entitled to rely on the defence of qualified privilege, which is not defeated by malice.

The conspiracy claim

265 The claimant asserted both unlawful means and lawful means conspiracy against all the defendants. However, on the stand, he clarified that he was only maintaining that Ms Isabel and the Remaining Defendants conspired with one another.³²⁹

266 To succeed in a claim for unlawful means conspiracy, the claimant must show that:

- (a) there was a combination of two or more persons to do certain acts;
- (b) the alleged conspirators had the intention to cause damage or injury to the plaintiff by those acts;
- (c) the acts were unlawful;
- (d) the acts were performed in furtherance of the agreement; and

³²⁹ CT, 24 October 2025, 47:9 -16.

- (e) the plaintiff suffered loss as a result of the conspiracy.

ACE Spring Investments Ltd v Balbeer Singh Mangat and another
[2024] SGHC 277 (“*ACE Spring*”) at [102]

267 In contrast, the elements to constitute *lawful* means conspiracy differ in that: (1) there is no requirement for an unlawful act(s); and (2) the alleged conspirators must have had the *predominant* intention or purpose of causing damage or injury to the plaintiff, which purpose was in fact achieved: *ACE Spring* at [103].

268 The claimant had argued that an adverse inference should be drawn against Ms Isabel and the Remaining Defendants that minutes of the Ex-Co’s meeting(s) prior to the EGM would reflect a coordinated decision to manage the narrative of the EGM and involve petitioner-favouring presenters. The claimant has not pointed to any instance during trial where the Remaining Defendants were given the opportunity to state if such documents existed and if so, why these had not been disclosed. In any event, for the reasons below, the claimant has not adduced credible evidence that there was a conspiracy between them.

Was there a combination between Ms Isabel and the Remaining Defendants

269 The claimant pleaded that a combination or agreement is evident from their collective effort in doing up the Slides, providing the information in the Slides, convening the EGM, presenting the Slides during the EGM, and subsequently disseminating the Slides to all members of GDS.³³⁰

³³⁰ SOC, [25], [29].

270 I have found above that the Slides were not disseminated to GDS members (or beyond). Hence the only remaining issue is whether there is sufficient evidence of a combination or agreement, based on the decision to convene the EGM and the preparation and presentation of the Slides.

271 A combination need not be in the nature of an express agreement, and the court may infer an agreement from the acts of the alleged conspirators: *ACE Spring* at [109].

272 The decision to convene the EGM was made by the Ex-Co, which did not include Ms Isabel, Ms Ooi and Mr Lamprecht. Mr Lamprecht, Mr Truong and Ms Halverson were not involved in preparing the Slides. Additionally, Mr Lamprecht did not even review the Slides prior to their publication. The specific Slides which were alleged to contain defamatory content were presented only by Ms Isabel and Ms Ooi.

273 I note that a party may be liable in conspiracy even though they joined the execution of a conspiracy at a different time and may not be exactly aware of what the other conspirators have agreed to do, so long as they are sufficiently aware of the surrounding circumstances and share the same objective as the others: *ACE Spring* at [110]. However, the threshold for establishing conspiracy is a high one and the evidence relied upon must be of a convincing level: *ACE Spring* at [112]. I am unable to conclude that by their participation in the above acts, there was an agreement to cause the claimant harm, particularly when considering the lack of a common intention to cause the claimant harm. It is this I turn to next.

Was there an intention to cause the claimant damage or injury (whether predominant or not)

274 In relation to the element of intention, it is not sufficient for the plaintiff to show that it was reasonably foreseeable that the plaintiff would or might suffer damage as a result of the defendant's act. Injury to the plaintiff must have been intended as a means to an end or as an end itself: *ACE Spring* at [105]. A predominant intention requires more: *ACE Spring* at [108].

275 The claimant pleaded that their predominant purpose was to injure him, specifically to tarnish his character and reputation in the dragon-boating community, because they published the Slides which they knew to contain false content, and even though he had already stepped down before the EGM was convened.³³¹

276 I have found that the Ex-Co was entitled to convene the EGM, as part of their duty to address the concerns raised by GDS members. This included members' concerns over the Petition (see [201] – [204] above). The claimant has also not proven that Ms Isabel and the Remaining Defendants knew the Slides to contain false allegations (see [218] – [264] above).

Was there an unlawful act

277 The unlawful act relied on by the claimant was the act of publishing and causing to be published the Slides containing defamatory content.³³² As I have found that Ms Isabel and the Remaining Defendants were entitled to rely on the defence of qualified privilege, the requirement of an unlawful act has not been made out. On this ground alone, the claim in unlawful means conspiracy fails.

³³¹ SOC, [23], [26], [30].

³³² SOC, [24].

Did the claimant suffer loss as a result

278 The claimant asserted that he suffered loss in the form of harm and damage to his personal and professional reputation and goodwill as a competitive dragon-boating coach.³³³ He did not elaborate upon this in his submissions.³³⁴

279 In his AEIC, the claimant asserted that he was dismissed from his role as coach with the OCBC dragon boating team³³⁵ and he had been unable to find another coaching position in the dragon-boating community.³³⁶ However, his own evidence was that OCBC dismissed him because of his present lawsuit against the defendants. This is therefore loss which arose out of his own act of commencing the present suit, rather than any act on the part of the defendants. The claimant has not proven that his inability to find another coaching position was caused by the defendants' conduct.

280 Further and in any event, the claimant must prove actual pecuniary loss was caused: *ACE Spring* at [101]. There is no evidence of pecuniary loss.

Conclusion on conspiracy

281 For the above reasons, the claims in both lawful means and unlawful means conspiracy fail.

Conclusion

282 In the circumstances, I dismiss the claim in full.

³³³ SOC, [27], [31].

³³⁴ CCS, [74(d)], [75(c)].

³³⁵ The claimant's AEIC, [190] - [196]; CT, 24 October 2025, 18:25 – 30.

³³⁶ The claimant's AEIC, [197] – [199].

283 Unless parties can agree on costs, they are to file brief costs submissions, limited to 10 pages, within 2 weeks of the date of this judgment.

Sim Mei Ling
District Judge

Lim Jing Wen Tiffanie, Choy Su Wen and Paul Leng (Forward
Legal LLC) for the claimant;
The 4th defendant (in-person);
Pradeep Gurbani (DCMO Law Practice LLC) for the 1st to 3rd
and 5th to 12th defendants.

Annex A

1. Under the slide titled “Petition for Removal and Subsequent Change of Team Coach”³³⁷:

...

We have reason to believe that Tan Wee Jin is no longer deemed suitable to coach German Dragons Singapore for the following reasons:

1. Preventing GDS from fulfilling its ‘Objects’...
2. Overstepping the scope of his role...
3. Promoting a toxic culture...
4. Technical reasons such as... lack of Safety and Health precautions

...

2. Under the slide titled “Preventing GDS from fulfilling its objectives in Constitution”³³⁸:

- WJ has repeatedly shown displeasure at GDS members participating in social and competitive IDBC events...
 - ...
 - Did not support members doing 5KM race... members had to train OUTSIDE coached sessions for it to happen;
 - Exco 2023 keen to put it as part of the 2023 race schedule at the beginning of the year but was met with displeasure

3. Under a 2nd slide titled “Preventing GDS from fulfilling its objectives in Constitution”³³⁹:

³³⁷ 1 CBD 200

³³⁸ 1 CBD 201

³³⁹ 1 CBD 202

- Refused to train paddlers interested in the Pesta Sukan 200m race in 2022...
 - He felt that the members did not prove that they were dedicated enough to be worth his time to train...

4. Under a 3rd slide titled “Preventing GDS from fulfilling its objectives in Constitution”³⁴⁰:

- Breaks the SDBA rules regarding steering – 4 week water ban...
- ...
- Participated in the decision to circumvent SDBA water ban...which was unethical and unprincipled (Had to avoid carrying anything revealing GDS logos...for fear of being found out)...
- Has repeatedly demanded certain members he disliked get kicked out of the club...

5. Under a 1st slide titled “Overstepping Team Coach Scope”³⁴¹:

OCBC Corporate race end 2022: the 2022 Exco not informed when WJ picked and chose 3 GDS members to paddle for the race. Exco only found out when a member was seen taking the lifevest from the GDS rack. WJ replied with complete disregard when EXCO raised the concern.

2023: Took issue when a member used a GDS life vest for an IDBC race training → took issue with ‘Exco’ supposedly not knowing about

³⁴⁰ 1 CBD 202

³⁴¹ 1 CBD 203

the member taking it, i.e. what's going on in the club → Double standards

6. Under a 2nd slide titled “Overstepping Team Coach Scope”³⁴²:

- AGM 2022: EXCO wanted to schedule AGM at 12:30pm but WJ called up Paulaner, undermining the authority of Exco as he believed we wanted to go for an IDBC social event after that.
- ...

7. Under a 3rd slide titled “Overstepping Team Coach Scope”³⁴³:

- ...Controlled Exco and members regarding the use of the kayaks.
- ...
- Prohibited members to fix the kayaks in first 6 months
- GDS lost several members due to the non-availability of kayaks, especially those coming out of injury or ease back into training.

8. Under a 4th slide titled “Overstepping Team Coach Scope”³⁴⁴:

- 2023: Wee Jin selectively chooses few members to train in the OCBC weights training. Out of GDS training schedule without entire Tech-co knowledge.
- ...
- ...WJ was providing additional training to only a select group of paddlers, and not the rest of the club, which is opaque selectivity → breeds favouritism and distrust.”

³⁴² 1 CBD 203

³⁴³ 1 CBD 204

³⁴⁴ 1 CBD 204

9. Under a 1st slide titled “Promoting Toxic Culture within the team”³⁴⁵:

- Divisive: Strongly against people he deemed ‘social paddlers’.
- Did not want ‘social paddlers’ mixing with newbies as he was afraid of ‘newbies becoming social paddlers’”

10. Under a 2nd slide titled “Promoting Toxic Culture within the team”³⁴⁶:

Taking the Women’s Captain off steering...

...

- Labelled IDBC Barbarian Women’s 2KM boat as ‘one nonsense’...

...said in front of everybody

11. Under a 3rd slide titled “Promoting Toxic Culture within the team”³⁴⁷:

Made Exco launched an investigation...

12. Under a 4th slide titled “Promoting Toxic Culture within the team”³⁴⁸:

...

- Demanded for ‘traitor’ and to be kicked out before checking facts

- ...

Name-calling, wanting Exco members to ‘do something’ to people he took issue with

13. Under a 5th slide titled “Promoting Toxic Culture within the team”³⁴⁹:

³⁴⁵ 1 CBD 205

³⁴⁶ 1 CBD 205

³⁴⁷ 1 CBD 206

³⁴⁸ 1 CBD 206

³⁴⁹ 1 CBD 207

- As Exco members, one had to deal with unnecessary and toxic messages from WJ.
- Exco members subject to belittling behaviour, no constructive manner of teaching.
- Worked under the threat of WJ quitting if his instructions not followed.
- Exco members feel like they are always treading on eggshells

14. Under the 1st slide titled “Technical training related reasons”³⁵⁰:

- ...
- WJ selectively gives his program depending on whether he judges you are ‘serious’.

15. Under a 2nd slide titled “Technical training related reasons”³⁵¹:

- **WJ would never share his program, not until the last minute**
- Techco were never made aware of the training program of the day, not even given a rough idea in order to prepare members for long/cardio-intensive sets
- ...

16. Under a 3rd slide titled “Technical training related reasons”³⁵²:

- Techco would not be made aware of the upcoming fitness tests until the day before
- WJ organized, against suggestions from Techco, a make-up fitness test (2.4KM + strength tests) at 1pm on a Saturday before

³⁵⁰ 1 CBD 208

³⁵¹ 1 CBD 208

³⁵² 1 CBD 209

a paddle session, while the country was experiencing the highest temperature this year (34+°C), risking heat injuries.

- Dismissed Exco Members concerns.

17. Under a 4th slide titled “Technical training related reasons”³⁵³:

- Constantly changing instructions with regards to giving feedback to each other → creating a toxic environment of fear and scolding.
- Seasoned paddlers get scolded for both not giving feedback and giving feedback
- ...

18. Under a 1st slide titled “GDS Equipment – Weights”³⁵⁴:

- ...
- One of the largest friction topics between Exco/Coach/Members
- Concern from members in 2023 - after WJ ‘left the training program’ last year, similar behaviour exhibited might impact training, raised issue of weights during start of year meeting but other reasons given in spite of other teams training there
- Exco had to start earlier/end later than members to shift weights up and down WJ’s HDB due to his privacy rules

19. Under a 2nd slide titled “GDS Equipment – Weights”³⁵⁵:

- ...

³⁵³ 1 CBD 209

³⁵⁴ 1 CBD 210

³⁵⁵ 1 CBD 210

- Members went to retrieve weights before Thurs Weight training by then too late as weights were understood to have been removed by a person not matching WJ description.
- ...

20. Under a slide titled “Concluding Remarks”³⁵⁶:

- ...
- Exco spent more time managing WJ > Club priorities.
- WJ wanted a club for ‘serious paddlers’ but actions have lead to ‘serious paddlers’ leaving (2 from exco, 1 vice captain from 2022), many long-standing members who raced in the past stopped showing up/lapsed membership because they lost trust in his coaching or got injured
- WJ manner of speech/writing/delivery - only interested in members following, not invested in finding ways to motivate different individuals or develop leadership capabilities in the team
- WJ ties members’ value = no. of attended coach sessions + if follow without question...

21. Under a 2nd slide titled “Concluding Remarks”³⁵⁷:

- Retaliates instead of answering constructively if questioned/not followed
- Some incidents → psychological misconduct under Safe Sport Unified Code 2021.
- ...

³⁵⁶ 1 CBD 211

³⁵⁷ 1 CBD 211

- Toxic manager:
 - GDS revolves around him
 - Obsessively controls Exco/members
 - Inspire by Fear
 - Priorities start and end with GDS
 - Respect does not matter
 - He is never wrong