



Gateway

CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

INTEGRITY
RESPECT
SAFETY
RESPONSIBILITY
HUMILITY



GCA Athletic Handbook

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Handbook for Student Athletes

Introduction

Thank you for allowing your student to participate in Gateway Athletics. We would ask parents and students to prayerfully consider the commitment involved, and we welcome all those who seek the challenges and fun that lie ahead. We desire that our athletes be taught and challenged in their relationship with Christ, their performance in academics, and their participation in athletics. We praise God for each participant and for the privilege we have to work with each one. We are excited about all that God is going to teach us about ourselves, each other, and, most of all, Himself this year.

The purpose of this handbook is to describe the rules, procedures, and framework within which Gateway Christian Academy's Athletic Department functions. The content should be carefully reviewed by both parent/guardian and athlete. Upon reviewing the contents, the student and parent/guardian should sign the contract and then submit it to the coach prior to the first contest.

Our Philosophy

Athletics in the Christian school must complement and reinforce the basic goal of Christian education: to bring the student to a position of conformity to the image of God through Christ (Romans 8:28, 29). The athletic program is not the main focus of the school, but when used correctly, will support the school's purpose of training young people for God. Since the ability to perform in athletics is a God-given talent, it should be used to glorify God, which is in fact required by God (Matthew 25:14-30). Athletics cannot be a "spiritual neutral"; it must be a positive influence for the cause of Christ. It is our desire to see young people trained to do the will of God, and athletics is just one of the tools that we use.

League Information

The Metro Athletic Conference is a league that consists of Christian and other private school programs from the Hampton Roads area. GCA is a full member of the conference and participates in regular season and postseason tournaments. GCA is also a member of the Virginia Independent Schools Athletic Association (VISAA) and is eligible to participate in state tournaments if teams or individuals qualify.

Eligibility

Any student desiring to be a member of any sports team or cheerleading squad must meet certain eligibility requirements. These requirements are outlined below.

1. Maintain a "C" average with no "F"s in any course.
Student's grades will be reviewed at the end of every academic quarter. At that time, any athlete having below a "C" average (anything below 2.0) or an "F" in any classes will be placed on *Active Probation*, which allows the athlete to participate in practice but not in games. The athlete's grades will be re-evaluated in three weeks.
At the three weeks evaluation, if an athlete is unable to bring all "F"s to a "D" or he fails to bring his grades up to a "C" average (after he has been on Active Probation), he/she will be placed on *Inactive Probation*, which will remove the athlete from the team until the average has been raised to a "C" or all "F"s are brought to a "D" (or both if applicable). Any student that is removed from the team forfeits any post-season awards and will not be included in the team pictures. The school administration may make exceptions based on an individual's situation.
2. Attend church faithfully.
Each athlete is expected to attend church services each week. Representing GCA's athletic department includes publicly adhering to the school's minimum standards of conduct.
3. Accumulate no more than 8 demerits within a semester.
4. Practice with the team at least 2 weeks before being allowed to play in an official game.
5. Follow other regulations set by the coach or sponsor.

Tryouts

Tryouts are available to each student that is enrolled in Gateway Christian Academy who is in good academic and behavioral standing with the school. Team rosters are determined by the coaching staff and verified by the Athletic Director and school administration.

A student who wishes to be on a team must be present for every day that tryouts are being held or receive permission to be absent **prior to the beginning of tryouts** (exceptions will be made for those students not enrolled at the time of tryouts). A roster will be posted in the school once tryouts have been conducted. We ask that no parents be in the gym or on the field during tryouts.

Practice

Practice Attendance

Practice is an integral part of any sport and is necessary to achieve the maximum amount of preparation for games. It is expected that athletes be present for every regularly scheduled practice. Appointments and other scheduled events should be scheduled at a time other than practice. Illness and other extenuating circumstances are the only valid excuses for being absent for practice. In addition, tardiness to practice will not be tolerated.

Athletes should always let a coach know as far in advance as possible if they will be unable to attend a practice. Failure to attend practice without a valid reason or pre-approval may result in team discipline including additional conditioning, drills, or loss of playing time. Extreme or repeated instances could result in removal from the team.

Summer Practices

Because our fall sports begin so early in the school year, it is necessary to hold practices during the summer break. It is understandable that athletes will miss a few of these practices due to vacation and other family-oriented events. With that being said, it is expected that these absences from practice be **minimal and pre-approved**. Communication is the key whether school is in session or not.

Games

Game Day Guidelines

- Be present for a minimum of one-half of the day's class periods in order to be eligible to play in that day's game. Unforeseen or extenuating circumstances will be taken into consideration and may be excused by school administration.
- Before, during, and after a game, be dressed properly as determined by the coach.
- Be present at least 45 minutes prior to the start of your game.
- If involved in a Physical Education class the same day as a game, still bring P.E. clothes as though you are going to participate in P.E. class as normal, even if your team is leaving early.
- Have everything needed to play in the game (uniform and equipment).
- At the end of an away game, inform the coach whether or not you are riding back on the bus or with your parents/guardians.

Conduct During a Game

The athlete must realize that, as a Christian, he represents Christ at all times, even in athletic events. The athlete should never show disrespect to an official, a coach, or another participant. Athletes should not express dissatisfaction with an official's call, as this is an open show of disrespect for authority. This disrespectful action cannot be rationalized by saying, "It is only a sports game." The athlete needs to understand that he is a Christian, representing Christ, regardless of what others are doing. If the athlete exhibits conduct unbecoming to a Christian, he will be removed from the contest.

It is expected that athletes conduct themselves in a manner that is honoring to both their school and their Lord. This includes refraining from negative remarks toward coaches, teammates, opponents, opposing coaches, referees, and fans. This includes booing and yelling in any form.

Transportation and Bus Policy

- In order to protect the reputation of our athletes, males and females are not permitted to sit together unless specifically approved by a coach or sponsor in the front of the van or bus.
- No headphones/earbuds are allowed at any time.
- The only riders on the bus will be sponsors, drivers, coaches, and student athletes, unless other permission is given.
- Athletes should be ready to help clean the bus/van after returning from a trip.
- Students are not permitted to ride with anyone other than their parent/guardian to and from practices and games. A note must be signed or verbal agreement given by a parent/guardian in order to allow any other riding arrangements. Athletes who plan to ride home with their parent/guardian must notify the coach prior to leaving.

Game Attendance

Players are expected to be at all games during the season. Any appointments or other extracurricular activities should be scheduled at times so as not to interfere with the player's participation in games and practices. However, if the player needs to miss a game for illness or other excused reason, he must communicate with the coach.

Athletes should always let a coach know as far in advance as possible if they will be unable to attend a game. Failure to attend a game without a valid reason or pre-approval may result in team discipline including additional conditioning, drills, or loss of playing time. Extreme or repeated instances could result in removal from the team.

Conduct

Drugs/Steroids

The use of any controlled dangerous substance including steroids can present serious health issues. Such use places the quality of life for the student-athlete in jeopardy. Further, his coaches and teammates are depending on him, and it is important that the athlete be ready mentally and physically. Use of any substances not prescribed by a physician can place an athlete in serious jeopardy. In the case of a violation, the GCA Student Handbook will be enforced first. However, the minimum athletic policy is that if use or possession of these substances by a student-athlete during the sport season is verified, he or she will receive a 30-day suspension. A second violation will incur a 12-month ban from all athletic participation. Any substance violation will also preclude the athlete from receiving any awards at the end of the season.

Hazing

In athletic settings, some may view hazing as a harmless rite of initiation or an important activity for team bonding. However, it is actually a form of harassment and is considered a serious offense. Hazing, therefore, cannot and will not be condoned or permitted in the athletic program. This includes on the field, in the locker room, on the bus, or at any other time.

Equipment and Uniform Care

Uniforms are loaned by the school to the athletes and must be returned in good shape. Athletes have one week after the last game to wash and turn in their uniform. This includes anything that they did not purchase for themselves. The player will be responsible for a minimum charge of \$50 for any damaged or lost items. Many of the school's uniforms are very expensive, and therefore, may cost well above the \$50 minimum.

Dress Requirements

Before, during, and after practice, all athletes must be dressed according to the school dress code. All t-shirts and shorts must meet school standards.

For athletic events where a locker room is provided, varsity athletes should wear their provided Crusader team gear to the venue and should change back into it following the competition. For younger teams this may be the team uniform. At events without locker rooms, players should arrive and depart in their team uniforms.

Participation on Outside Teams

While participating on a school team, students are permitted to participate in other sports outside of school during the sports season, as well. However, the outside participation must not conflict with the sports schedule of the school, including practices, games, and tournaments.

Quitting a Team

It should be understood that participation on a team is a season-long commitment. Any athletes that choose to quit the team prior to the end of the season should be aware that this decision may impact their selection to play on future GCA teams.

Gym Floor

All students must wear **non-marking, athletic shoes** (must meet both those requirements) while on the gym floor. In addition, cleats are not to be worn on the gym floor at any time. Any athlete having practice in the gym may not wear the same shoes that were worn outside, since this may bring in rocks and grit that can damage the floor. Athletes must always have a clean pair of athletic shoes for practice.

Requirements for Participation

- Students are required to complete a sports physical each year. There is a form available on the school website to use at your doctor's appointment and turn in to the school office.
- Medical Information Form must be completed.
- Student-Athlete Code of Conduct must be signed by the athlete and his/her parent/guardian.
- Risk of Participation Form must be signed by athlete and parent/guardian.
- Any other forms given by the coach must be completed.

Concussion Protocol

All members of GCA's athletic staff should be trained in the concussion guidelines and all coaches, parents, and players should abide by the NHFS Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion in Sports. These include:

Warnings Signs: A player exhibiting one or more of these signs of concussion should be immediately removed from participation. This is not an exhaustive list. Please refer to the BFHS document for the complete list.)

- Loss of consciousness
- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Double or blurred vision
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Dazed or stunned appearance
- Forgetfulness
- Clumsy movement
- Slow response to questions
- Inability to recall events prior to hit or fall
- Inability to recall events after hit or fall

When in doubt, sit them out!

Returning to Play

Players may return to competition only after an individual trained in concussion recognition says they are symptom-free and okay to return to the activity.

Handbook for Parents of Athletes

Introduction

Being a parent is often challenging. This effort and responsibility is frequently complicated by being the parent of an athlete. The best way to help your athlete is to provide encouragement and to be positive, both at home and in the stands. Don't add pressure and unrealistic expectations on any athlete, especially your child. Allow them to grow and enjoy their experience. Know that you are the most important person in your child's life, and that he/she wants you to be proud of him/her.

Relationship with Coaches

Always show respect to the coaches and allow them to do their job without any interference. Be supportive of each team, coach, and the overall athletic program. Remember that your negative comments can be absorbed by your children and carried to their practices and games.

Further, allow the coach to determine playing time for his players. Any concerns about your child's playing time must be voiced to the athletic director only, and never to the coach.

Expressing Concerns

If there is a problem, please follow these steps to find a solution:

1. Have your child talk to his or her coach.
2. If the problem is not resolved or if it is serious enough in nature, then call the coach yourself.
3. If no solution can be reached at that point, call the athletic director to set up a meeting with all parties involved.

When expressing a concern to the coach, please refer to the following guidelines:

- Never approach a coach immediately after a game. This is not the proper time and place to discuss a problem concerning your child or the team.
- Call the following day and make an appointment which is convenient for both you and the coach.
- Raise your concern in a calm and civil manner. Yelling and being rude is entirely unacceptable.
- Once you have stated your question or concern, listen to the explanation. Listen receptively as the explanation may bring understanding to the situation.

Relationship with Officials

Remember, the home team does not choose the officials, but rather they are assigned by a commissioner. They do not have a vested interest in either team winning. Further, The officials are a very necessary part of the game; we could not play without them. While you may not agree with all calls, do not harass or taunt them.

Coaches and athletic directors work hard to establish a relationship with officials and will likely see them several times during a season.

Expectations for Spectator Behavior

Since athletics should be educational in nature, it is important that all parents demonstrate good sportsmanship and serve as role models for our athletes and students. Sportsmanship is an overt display of respect for the rules of sport and for all others. It also involves a commitment to fair play, ethical behavior, and integrity. This involves the following:

- Accept all decisions of officials by not booing, yelling, or arguing.
- Treat the competition as a game and not war.
- Congratulate the opposing team's players and coaches for a job well done.
- Show concern for an injured player regardless of which team he/she plays for.
- Maintain class and dignity even when the game is not going well for your team.

- Never talk badly about a player from another team, whether or not you feel it is true; remember how you would feel if someone were saying those things about your child.
- Vulgar or inappropriate language will not be tolerated.
- Never say anything negative to the other team's players during a game, which includes taunting or trash talking,
- Spectators cannot enter onto the court or field during a contest.
- Fans should be supportive and positive; cheering should be done for our team and not against the other team.
- Allow the cheerleaders to lead their selected cheers; it is not appropriate for fans or parents to take this responsibility into their own hands.
- Never impede, interrupt, or interfere with our opponent's cheerleaders as they are leading their cheers.
- In some specific sports such as basketball and volleyball, do not yell when an opponent is shooting a free throw or serving the volleyball.

School officials have the authority to remove a spectator from a contest for unruly or improper conduct. The individual may be removed for the duration of the contest or for any extended period of time depending on the severity and frequency of the improper conduct.

Additional Expectations

- We strongly encourage all parents of participating athletes volunteer to help in the concession stand, gate (charging admission), scorekeeping, and/or running the clock occasionally throughout the season. Any training needed will be provided. Parents will receive free admission into the game at which they volunteer. The Athletic Director is responsible for setting up the schedule, but it is the responsibility of the parent to reschedule if a conflict exists.
- Possession of intoxicants and/or illegal substances is prohibited. Smoking is also prohibited on school property.
- While this section of the handbook is specifically for parents, the beginning section *Handbook for Student Athletes* is to be read and agreed upon by the parents, as well.