



Athletic Handbook

Updated 2017

To provide academic excellence from a biblical perspective in order to develop servant leaders of all walks of life who live and love like Jesus Christ.

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this athletic handbook is to provide a way to maintain consistency through the athletic program and to set forth the standards, policies, and guidelines by which we expect the sports program to operate. The rules/procedures of the athletic department are in place to promote safety, order, and assist the student-athlete in reaching their maximum potential for God's glory. This athletic handbook is comprehensive, yet not exhaustive. The athletic director and administration will make any decisions regarding questions or issues not discussed in this handbook.

It is this athletic department's sincere desire that parents and student-athletes thoroughly enjoy their sport experience with Grace Christian Academy (GCA). Parents and student-athletes should familiarize themselves with the rules and procedures explained in this handbook. Please feel free to contact the athletic director or coaches with any questions or concerns you have regarding this handbook or the athletic program. Thank you for your involvement with this sports program.

2. Athletic Philosophy

a. Mission Statement

To glorify God by establishing and maintaining a Christ-centered athletic program that fosters athletic excellence and the development of Biblical character qualities and athletic skills in our student-athletes that prepares them for Christian life and service.

b. Philosophy & Purpose

The GCA athletic program is an integral and important part of the student's total educational experience. Naturally, the athletic administration will purpose to promote and advance the overall educational goals and philosophy of GCA. The athletic administration will strive to maintain an athletic program that is established and rooted in Biblical principles of Christian education. Biblical principles that support a well maintained athletic program include:

- i. God created man in His own image, Genesis 1
- ii. Man's body is fearfully and wonderfully made, Psalm 139
- iii. Man's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, I Corinthians 3, 6
- iv. Man is given the responsibility of stewardship, I Corinthians 3, 6
- v. Man's body is a living sacrifice to God, Romans 12
- vi. Christian are to live their life "by the Spirit", Galatians 5
- vii. Man is a "whole" being, reality is earthly and spiritual, I John 4
- viii. Man is created to be a member of the "Body of Christ", I Corinthians 12
- ix. God has created each individual with unique gifts and abilities, I Peter 4
- x. Man should do all things to the Glory of God, Colossians 3

The purpose of the athletic program is to:

- i. Support the overall mission of the school
- ii. Bring glory to God through all athletic pursuits
- iii. Promote the development of Christian character
- iv. Represent the Lord and the school well in the community
- v. Improve competency and excellency in sport
- vi. Provide an atmosphere of Christ-centeredness and teamwork
- vii. Encourage total development of the student-athlete (spiritual, physical, mental, & social growth)
- viii. Prepare student-athletes for Christian life and service
- ix. Promote school unity and school spirit

c. Objectives

We aim to accomplish the following objectives through the athletic program at Grace Christian Academy:

- i. To model Christian character and to promote the development of Christian character qualities in the students
- ii. To glorify God in word and deed by presenting a positive witness and testimony for Jesus Christ to all, I Timothy 4
- iii. To honor the Lord by stressing the development of excellence in all things, I Corinthians 10, Colossians 3
- iv. To teach students to use/develop one’s God-given talents and abilities to serve and glorify the Lord, I Peter 4
- v. To support the student in spiritual, physical, mental, social, and emotional growth by providing a positive environment that fosters such growth, Luke 2
- vi. To teach the Biblical principle of respect for authority and for God, I Thessalonians 5
- vii. To instill within every player the principle of setting aside our individual desires and goals for the good of the team, Romans 12, Ecclesiastes 4
- viii. To provide opportunities within athletic competition to learn/develop self-discipline and self-control, Hebrews 12, I Corinthians 9
- ix. To endorse an understanding of the fundamentals of movement, sport, and physical activity through efficient training and instruction, Titus 2
- x. To encourage students to maintain healthy stewardship of their bodies, I Corinthians 6
- xi. To inspire a desire to continue in sport and physical activity after graduation
- xii. To provide an experience and atmosphere of joy, Proverbs 28, I Corinthians 15

3. Philosophy of Competition

The athletic administration will strive to equip and empower coaches to develop team competitiveness and excellence in athletics. We take this assignment seriously and seek God’s direction and wisdom to carefully and prayerfully develop and implement the strategy that we believe will result in, and lead to, a truly excellent Christian school athletic experience. Competition through athletics provides student-athletes the opportunity to learn valuable life lessons in a setting where coaches are available and consequences are minimal.

We believe that “winning” is giving 100% at all times to your teammates, yourself and the Lord. We are not content with failure for the sake of “good sportsmanship.” Winning games is most often accomplished in advance through practice, preparation and effort. We wish to instill the desire to play hard, win or lose, to win with humility and lose with dignity. Athletic success is said to be the confidence that comes from knowing that one did his/her very best. **Our emphasis in this area will be two-fold: prepare to win and give 100%; then allow God to exercise His will and accept that joyfully.**

- ❖ Success = Ability + Preparation + Effort + Will
- ❖ Pride = Personal Responsibility in Daily Effort

4. Eligibility

a. Age Eligibility

Students are not eligible for athletic participation if they turn 19 yrs. of age or older prior to the first day of the GCA school year.

b. Grade Eligibility

A student must be in grades 6-8 in order to participate on middle school teams. Students in grades 9-12 are eligible for the varsity teams. Special circumstances may allow for some upper elementary participation, or for middle schoolers to play up on a varsity team. The athletic director makes the decision on any special circumstances.

c. Academic Eligibility

Students must be academically eligible to participate in the athletic & extra-curricular programs. Failure to attain and/or maintain eligibility may warrant suspension from participation. An athlete is considered ineligible if they have an "F" or a GPA lower than 2.25.

If a student is ineligible to participate due to grades, the student-athlete is ineligible for a (four) week period until the mid-term. During this time period, the student will not be permitted to practice or travel with the team/group. Athletes may, however, sit with the team for home games out of uniform, if the coach agrees. If at progress report the student has no "F" grades and a GPA above a 2.25, then he/she is eligible to participate in sports or school clubs. If the grades do not reflect the necessary improvement, the student will remain ineligible until the next marking period.

Appeals for eligibility waivers to practice must be submitted to and reviewed by the Director of Student Affairs.

While progress report grades do not automatically remove a student from a team, the coach/instructor is encouraged to work with the student/parents to plan a course of action to improve the academic grades. Coaches/Instructors may use their own discretion to place a student on temporary probation from practices or games/performances.

d. School Attendance Policy

Absences which are not excused will result in partial or full loss of playing time in the next scheduled game. Unless the student has prior administrative approval (appointments, college visit, etc.) or a doctor's note, students must be in school at least half of his/her scheduled day in order to participate in a practice or game. Athletes who have physical education are expected to fully participate in class in order to participate in after-school athletics (practice or game). If a student is not healthy enough for PE, he/she is not healthy enough for athletics. A pattern of this problem will result in a loss of team membership.

e. School Discipline

Athletes must understand that any type of school discipline takes priority over athletics. School administration schedules detentions and they are not required to check an athlete's schedule in advance. A teacher may detain an athlete after school if required work is not completed. If an athlete is unable to travel with the team due to a school discipline issue such as detention, the student may participate that day with the team if they are able to arrange transportation. Students may not participate in a game on the day of serving an in-school or out-of-school suspension.

f. Athletic Forms & Fees

There must be an up-to-date physical form, athletic participation form, and parent athletic agreement form on file in the school office in order for a student to tryout or practice for a sports team.

Parents/guardians must fill out the athletic participation form – this gives permission for the student to participate in the GCA athletic program.

Physicals are regarded as valid for a one year period. It is much better for all concerned if these can be obtained during the summer months. At that time you have a 2-3 month window of opportunity to have them completed which would validate your student for the entire school year for any school activity for which your student chooses to try out. The physical form you will need can be obtained in the school office by request, or online at the school website. Simply take it to your doctor at the time of your appointment and then return it, properly signed and completed, to the school office before practices begin.

A sports fee will be automatically charged to the parents' account once a student dresses in uniform for a game or scrimmage. If a student is given a uniform but decides not to play before dressing for a game/scrimmage, then that parent/student is still required to return the entire uniform in the same condition as they received it.

5. Tryouts

It is the desire of this athletic administration to provide as many opportunities for student participation in athletics as possible. Tryouts, however, may be necessary at the middle school or high school level for various sports. The decision whether to have a tryout will be by the coach and athletic administration and may be based on numbers, skill, or coach's decision.

Anyone interested in trying out for a team ought to be at every day of the tryout. The coach must be notified in advance if there is an excusable reason for missing a tryout date. Tryouts may last from 1 practice to upwards of a week. Coaches will communicate roster cuts to the student-athletes.

Students will generally not be granted a separate tryout after teams have been chosen. Decisions on special exceptions will be made by the athletic administration. New students that enroll in GCA or the homeschool umbrella after teams have been chosen will be granted the opportunity to try out for a team, however, they will be added to the team and will not replace any current members.

a. Homeschooler Tryout Rule

Home school students that are members of the GCA umbrella may try out for sports teams. There is no limit to homeschoolers on a team if there are no cuts made for a team (Coaches, however, must stay within the roster limit). A team roster is limited to no more than 33% homeschoolers if cuts are made during the team tryout process.

b. Multi-Sport Participation

It is not advisable for a student to participate on two different sports teams during the same season. It is possible, however, to play on two different sports teams during the same season if both head coaches, parents, and the athletic director give approval.

6. Playing Time

Playing time is at the discretion of the coach. While our athletic mission statement certainly applies in full, there are some differences in philosophy between the middle school level and the varsity level. The varsity level has been established to fully embrace and enthusiastically represent our Lord and school while competing at an interscholastic high school varsity level. At the varsity level, many decisions in the area of playing time are determined by a number of factors. The emphasis shifts from the middle school participation philosophy to a more mature competitive philosophy. Using all our athletic statements and without compromising our integrity, it now becomes more important to give the team their best chance of succeeding. This will, in many cases, mean that some players, either because of disciplinary action or individual talent level, will see smaller amounts, or in some cases, no playing time in any given event.

Middle school teams will emphasize participation and skill development while also trying to give the team opportunity for success. Absence from practice or a poor attitude displayed will have an effect on participating in a contest. One goal for middle school teams is to generate enthusiasm and improved skills that can transfer to later years on a varsity squad.

a. Factors That May Affect Playing Time

- i. The skill the player demonstrates
- ii. The growth and development of skills as the season progresses
- iii. The ability to function effectively as part of a team, to follow the game plan and to put the teams success first
- iv. The effort, attitude and seriousness devoted to practice sessions
- v. The way a player fits into the strongest combination of players that the coach can put on the field/court

b. Ways To Try To Increase Playing Time

- i. Practice so intensely that the coach feels pressure to reward you with playing time. Coaches notice intensity in practice, not occasional periods of intensity, but every day, every-minute intensity. To have any legitimate reason to talk to a coach about playing time concerns, a player must bring to that meeting a history of practicing with excellence.
- ii. Understand everything the team does, both offensively and defensively. A player can't expect to play if his/her coach has doubts about his understanding of what to do in the game.
- iii. Develop knowledge of as many positions as possible. You never know when the opportunity may come, due to another player's injury, illness, or another reason. Be ready to go whenever and wherever needed.
- iv. Want to play, whether for long or short periods of time; be ready by staying in the game mentally, while on the bench. When the coach starts to think about whom to sub into a game, your chances of being chosen will be increased if he/she sees you focused, aware of the game situation, and encouraging your teammates from the bench.
- v. If you are a player that comes off the bench, genuinely cheer for those who are playing. A true team player will cheer for their teammate's success. Team success also enhances the opportunity for all players to get playing time.

7. Commitment Policy

Athletes and parents must understand they are making a commitment to the Lord, their teammates, and their coach when participating in the athletic program. This commitment carries with it the expectation of attendance at all games, practices, and meetings unless excused by either illness or the coach's permission in advance. Participation on teams outside of school should be considered secondary and therefore should have secondary priority when there is a conflict, unless prior arrangements can be agreed upon between the athlete and the coach. This commitment extends to getting proper nutrition and rest, and even to sacrificing personal activities in order to keep up with school work. This commitment also extends to quitting a team. Once selected to a team, the athlete and his or her parent/guardian have committed themselves to supporting the school and team through the completion of the sport season. Each athlete has a responsibility to him or herself and the team to finish the season unless, in consultation with the coach, early release from the team is advisable.

It is the responsibility of the student-athlete to fully communicate to the coach any tardiness or absences pertaining to games or practices that may occur. (This also pertains to any out of the norm situation.) If they are at school, they should be at practice. If the student-athlete fails to fully communicate, disciplinary action will occur which can result in a penalty of up to a (1) game suspension.

a. Player Removal

The coach, athletic director, and/or administration retain the right to remove any athlete from an athletic team that violates the rules or philosophy of the GCA athletic program.

b. Player Ejections

Player ejection from a game may warrant further game suspension in accordance with league rules and school rules/expectations.

8. Sports Seasons/Teams Policies

a. Varsity Start Dates

- i. Fall Season: On or following 8/1
- ii. Winter Season: On or following 11/1
- iii. Spring Season: On or following 3/1

b. Post Season

- i. Every effort will be made to give each varsity team an opportunity to compete in a league post-season or an end of season tournament, but it is not guaranteed.
- ii. Most team's seasons end prior to the date of the next season, but there may be an occasion where there is overlap. Athletes are expected to fulfill their teams post-season, and special arrangements will be made for tryouts for the following season if necessary.

c. Game Limit Guidelines

- i. Every effort will be made when possible to:
 1. Schedule each team an equal amount of home and away matches
 2. Schedule 1-2 games per week for MS/JV
 3. Schedule 2 games per week for varsity
 4. Limit Wednesday matches that inhibit youth group participation
- ii. There will be no matches scheduled on Sundays, but there will be matches scheduled on Saturdays and possibly during days when there is no school
- iii. There is no guarantee that the game limit guidelines are achievable as there are many factors that affect game scheduling.

d. Game Limit Targets

There is no guarantee that GCA will be able to offer all the sports listed here. Offerings are dependent upon budget, level of interest, facilities & transportation, and available coaches. Game limit targets include post-season. Start-up sports teams generally have less games than established programs. There is no guarantee that the game limit targets are achievable as there are many factors that affect game scheduling.

i. Fall Sports

1. Varsity Volleyball & Soccer: 14-20 games
2. Middle School Volleyball & Soccer: 10-15 games
3. Varsity X-Country: 3-8 matches
4. Varsity Golf: 5-10 matches

ii. Winter Sports

1. Varsity Basketball: 20-30 games
2. Middle School Basketball: 10-20 games
3. Middle School Cheerleading: Middle school boys home games and potentially other teams' home games when necessary
4. Varsity Cheerleading: Varsity boys home games and 2 competitions when appropriate

iii. Spring Sports

1. Varsity Volleyball/Baseball/Softball: 10-20 games
2. MS/Varsity Track: 4-10 meets
3. MS/Varsity Flag Football: 5-10 games
4. Varsity Tennis: 5-10 matches

e. Practice Guidelines

The amount of practices in a week are dependent on such factors as gym/field availability, coach schedule, special school/church events, and weather. All teams have the potential to practice/play on Saturdays and/or during school breaks

i. Practice Limits

1. Varsity teams practice/play 5-6 days a week
 2. Middle school teams practice/play 3-4 days a week with the occasional need for 5 days in a week
- ii.** Parents that wish to observe practices/tryouts taking place in the gym may watch from the mezzanine.
- iii.** Students who may have late practices must be in a supervised study hall or under the supervision of an adult - parent or staff. Students leaving the building and returning must have parent permission.
- iv.** If a student is present at school but overcoming an illness they should bring a parent note and watch practice so that they don't fall behind
- v.** Family trips/church trips will be considered excused absences with advance notice, however, excused absences will probably still affect playing time because of missed game preparation

f. Roster Limit Guidelines

Roster limits are established because of constraints related to playing time, supervision, transportation, and available uniforms. Coaches have the opportunity to retain practice players and/or managers in addition to their roster limit. Any exceptions to these guidelines will be determined by athletic administration.

i. Fall Sports

1. Middle School Soccer: Up to 22
2. MSG Volleyball: Up to 15
3. BV & GV Soccer: Up to 22
4. GV Volleyball: Up to 15
5. Varsity X-Country: No limit
6. Varsity Golf: No limit

ii. Winter Sports

1. BV, BJV, & GV Basketball: Up to 15
2. MSG & MSB Basketball: Up to 18
3. MSG Cheerleading: Up to 12
4. GV Cheerleading: Up to 15

iii. Spring Sports

1. BV Volleyball: Up to 15
2. GV Softball/BV Baseball: Up to 18
3. MS Flag Football: TBD
4. Varsity Flag Football: TBD
5. Varsity Tennis: No limit

9. Athletic Uniform Policy

The student-athlete is fully responsible for the care of his/her school-issued athletic uniform. Athletic uniforms must be worn properly and completely, and worn only for games. The athletic administration does not keep extra uniforms on hand in case a student forgets their uniform on game day. Any lost or damaged uniform will be paid for by that individual at a replacement cost. Uniforms that must be re-ordered outside of normal purchasing often cost much more because of the special ordering process.

10. Transportation Policy

Athletes are encouraged to travel to athletic events with the team in school-provided transportation. Boys and girls traveling together will sit in separate rows of the vehicle except when not possible in which case the coach will be in charge of seating assignments. Athletes that drive on their own must have written permission from parents if driving to a game – they may not transport any other players. Athletes may travel home after away events with their parents, but must be signed out properly. If athletes need to travel with someone other than their own parents, a parent's note must be provided before they can be signed out.

a. Stewardship

Each athlete should treat the bus/van with respect. All trash must be removed from the vehicle when the athletes exit the vehicle. The athlete should refrain from any activity which has the potential to damage the bus seats, doors, or windows. When exiting the bus, all windows should be closed.

b. Schoolwork

Students should be doing schoolwork on the way to away games.

c. Personal Electronic Devices

An athlete is allowed to bring a personal electronic device for the purpose of personal music or schoolwork but it is at the discretion of the coach. Earbuds should not be shared. Students are only allowed to text/call with permission from their coach. Students should not be on social media, playing video games, or taking pictures without permission from their coach. These personal electronic device rules apply for the entirety of the sports trip.

d. Dress Code

The dress code for away trips will be: 1) school dress for that day, or 2) a uniform look (not game uniforms) such as team warm-ups, ties or sports jackets. School dress code rules apply when traveling for GCA sports. This applies to travel to and from competitions. Any exception to this rule is at the discretion of the coach and athletic director.

11. Inclement Weather Policy

Weather conditions often result in adjustments to the practice and game schedule. In all cases, the considerations are player and spectator safety, safe transport, field conditions, and long-term field health. Decisions on game postponement, cancellations, and terminations (after game has started) will be made collaboratively by the administrator, coaches, and game officials. Decisions to cancel games or practices will be made by the athletic director no later than 1:00 p.m. on game/practice day. News of cancellations will be made available to office personnel by 1:00 p.m.

a. Heat

Practices and games may be postponed, cancelled or halted in the event of excessive heat.

b. Rain

Practices and games may be postponed, cancelled or halted in the event of excessive amounts of rain. Practices are not usually cancelled because of rain. The team will go indoors during heavy rain

for chalk-talks or conditioning exercises. If practice is cancelled it will be done before 1p.m. that day. Student-athletes should always bring indoor shoes to be prepared in case practices are moved indoors.

c. Snow

- i. Late opening—All practices and games will proceed as scheduled (pending facility availability)
- ii. Early dismissal—All practices are cancelled and games postponed
- iii. School cancellation—All practices are cancelled and games postponed. Tournament games are the exception to this rule.

d. Lightning

- i. An athletic contest in progress will be suspended immediately by the administrator, the official in charge of the contest, or the head coach when the first sighting of lightning is observed. Under no circumstances should a contest be resumed until at least 30 minutes have passed since thunder was heard or lightning observed.
- ii. If the contest should be resumed, the official in charge will inform the head coach of both teams that the contest may be continued if both head coaches agree to play.

12. Athletic Scholarships

Grace Christian Academy does not currently offer athletic scholarships. Parents may apply for need-based financial aid.

13. Athletic Awards

a. Certificates

Each player on the team at the MS/JV/Varsity level will receive a certificate of participation

b. Varsity/JV/MS

- i. Most Improved Player – The player that has improved the most at their sport from the beginning of the season to the end of the season
- ii. Christian Character Award – The player that most consistently represents Christ on and off the playing surface
- iii. Knight Award – This player demonstrates consistent excellence at their sport, and represents the program well in academics, athletics, leadership, & character

c. Varsity Only

Varsity teams may give two additional trophies/awards at the discretion of the coach

d. Varsity Only – Letters/Pins

- i. First year varsity players that competed in at least 50% of the competition time will earn a letter (Not per sport, but once for varsity).
- ii. Second year and beyond varsity players that have competed in at least 50% of the competitions will receive a pin

*In order to receive any of the above awards, the student-athlete must complete the season with the exception of injury and remain eligible the entire season.

14. Student-Athlete Responsibilities

a. Committed to Team

- i. Be committed to your team. Attend every practice and game.
- ii. Be punctual and prepared for all games and practices. Use your time wisely.
- iii. **Fulfill your academic obligations on time and in full.**
 1. When it is necessary to miss class time due to travel to an athletic event, the following regulations will apply:
 - a. All due assignments should be turned in to the teacher prior to leaving.
 - b. All new assignments should be obtained before leaving. Late penalties may be assessed by the teacher for work not completed upon the student's return.
- iv. An athlete that receives a detention that forces him to miss practice must serve the detention. Coaches have the right to discipline players who are late or miss practice for detentions.

b. Support your Coach and Team

- i. Remain positive towards coaches and teammates
- ii. Support team goals and coach objectives before personal goals
- iii. Follow team rules established by your coach
- iv. Engaging in hazing of other athletes or students will not be permitted.

c. Strive to Represent GCA Well

- i. Respect officials and respect/obey their decisions (All authority comes from God—I Pet. 2:13).
- ii. Play hard within the rules of the game. Achieve a thorough understanding and application of the rules of the game.
- iii. Be a good steward of facilities and equipment. Continue this principle when traveling.
- iv. Win with humility, lose graciously, and congratulate opposing players and coaches.
- v. Show proper respect to your opponent

15. Parent Responsibilities

a. Concessions/Gate

Parents will be required to help with concessions and/or gate at some point during the season. If your student is on a team, we are relying on you to help carry the work load. Parents will be contacted by a member of the GCA athletic department with the service schedule. It is the parent's responsibility to find a substitute worker if they are unable to serve during the designated time. Please help with clean up after home games whenever you can so that the job is easier for all.

b. Carpool

Grace Christian Academy personnel will make every effort to provide school transportation to athletic events. Under some circumstances, parents may have to carpool players to away games (dependent upon bus/driver availability). In this instance, parents are responsible for transportation while school personnel will assist in arrangements.

c. Meetings/Information

Parents ought to make every effort to attend any informational meetings offered by the athletic department and/or coach. Also, please be familiar with the athletic policies.

d. Support Student Commitment

- i. Release your athlete to the coach and the team. Ensure that your athlete attends all scheduled practices and athletic contests, and abides by the athletic department's training/athletic rules. Help your student-athlete stay eligible academically by monitoring and encouraging progress.
 - ii. Be flexible whenever possible. As carefully as planning is done, changes in times and schedules sometimes need to be made.
- e. Support the Coach**
- i. Believe in and support the coach's judgment, character, actions, strategy, and overall philosophy and this will help your child do the same. In contrast, criticism and constantly questioning a coach's actions and overall program will likewise lead the student-athlete in that way. The attitudes and ideas communicated in the home will often be carried out in the heart and mind of the athlete.
 - ii. Pick up players on time after practices/games. Our coaches work to finish on time.
 - iii. Help your child's team by being a scorekeeper, team mom or dad, driver, scoreboard operator, stat keeper, giving a devotional, etc...
 - iv. Attempt to relieve pressure for the coach, not increase it.
- f. Support the Team**
- i. View the game with team goals in mind. Accept the goals, roles, and achievements of your athlete. Realize that all players cannot be on the "starting team," but each player is critical to the team's success.
 - ii. Accept the judgment of the officials and coaches; remain in control.
 - iii. Shout encouragement from the sidelines, and refrain from coaching, criticizing officials, or condemning a child during the game.
 - iv. Be an encourager—encourage athletes to keep their perspective in both victory and defeat.
 - v. Pray regularly for the athletic team and coaches.

16. What to Expect from Coaches

Coaches should be men and women that are committed to Christ, love young people and are knowledgeable in their sport. Coaches are expected to hold meaningful, organized practices emphasizing the fundamentals of their sport. Coaches will be expected to abide by the GCA athletic and coach's handbook. Coaches are expected to:

- a. Serve as a positive role model for players. Exemplify godly character, behavior and leadership at all times.
- b. Be competent and knowledgeable teachers of their respective sport
- c. Inspire in players a love for the game and a desire to compete
- d. Teach Christian character qualities and take advantage of teachable moments in athletic situations
- e. Encourage academic success
- f. Show restraint and respect when dealing with officials and opposing coaches
- g. Reinforce respect and good sportsmanship in practice and game situations and hold their players accountable for sportsmanship and behavior

Coaches are not perfect. They are individuals that are growing personally and professionally, and are at different stages of maturity in their coaching careers. Please extend grace and gratitude to the GCA coaches. Additional coaching guidelines include:

- h. Coaches will have the authority to set and enforce team rules and standards of their sport within the guidelines of school and athletic policies.
- i. Coaches will be reviewed by the athletic director on a regular basis

- j. Coaches are the designated individuals to relay game results and athletic accomplishments to the media. All other scheduled interviews with the news media need to be approved by the athletic director and/or school director.

17. Communication & Conflict Resolution

Both parenting and coaching are difficult responsibilities. By keeping lines of communication open between parents and coaches, many potential problems can be avoided. This begins with clear communication from the coaching staff to the parents and the student-athletes. The following guidelines are in place to help resolve conflicts, if and when they occur, in an appropriate manner that upholds the dignity of the student-athlete, parents and coaching staff.

- a. **Communication you should expect from your student-athlete's coach:**
 - i. Philosophy
 - ii. Team requirements and athlete expectations
 - iii. Procedure should student-athlete be injured during participation
 - iv. Consequences
 - v. Location and times of all practices and contests
 - vi. Approximate return times for all away games
- b. **Communication coaches should expect from parents/student-athletes:**
 - i. Concern expressed directly to the coach. Student-athlete should make this first step. (See protocol for conflict resolution at the end of this section)
 - ii. Notification of schedule conflicts well in advance
 - iii. Concerns about philosophy/expectations before commitment is made to the team
 - iv. Positive role-modeling at contests and practices
- c. **Appropriate concerns to discuss with coaches:**
 - i. Treatment of your student-athlete, mentally and physically
 - ii. Ways to help student-athlete improve
 - iii. Concerns about student-athlete's behavior
 - iv. College options and recruiting
 - v. Coaching philosophy

****Do not attempt to confront a coach before or during an athletic competition or before/during a practice. Meetings of this nature rarely promote resolution. Therefore, the "24 hour rule" will always be in effect. This rule simply allows for time of reflection and prayer, as well as emotionalism to ebb so rational, facts-oriented discussions can take place.**

One of our goals is to instill in our student-athletes a sense of ownership and responsibility for their actions. Therefore, it is important that student-athletes learn necessary communication skills and learn how to resolve conflicts in a God-honoring way (Matthew 18 principle). Please note the order of the conflict resolution policy:

Protocol for Conflict Resolution

1. Player—Coach—role, improvement, etc...
2. Parent/Player—Coach—Athletic Director
3. Parent/Player—Coach—Athletic Director—Director of Student Affairs – School Director

18. Spectator Sportsmanship Policy

The role of the fan is vital to the GCA athletic department. The athletic department, players and coaches appreciate the support of the parents and fans through prayer, finances, attendance, cheering, and participation.

It is important to make guests to our school activities feel welcome. All visitors should feel as though they have been treated fairly and dealt with in a sportsmanlike way. The skills of the visiting team should be recognized and appreciated. Everyone needs to work to create a positive atmosphere at GCA.

The following behavior is not acceptable at any contest: booing or jeering, mocking or taunting, yelling negative comments to officials or other teams. Never confront officials, coaches, or other participants during or following a contest. If a problem occurs, inform the athletic director or school administration and allow him/her to deal with the situation. A game official, school administrator, athletic director, or a school board member has the authority to remove anyone from the confines of an athletic contest for unsportsmanlike behavior. The school may also deny the privilege of attending future contests.

19. College Athletics

If the student-athlete plans to enroll in college as a freshman and wishes to participate in NCAA Division 1 or 2 sports, he/she must be certified by NCAA Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse and must meet academic guidelines. Please see the school guidance counselor or athletic director for more details. Helpful resources include: *The Guide for College Bound Student Athletes*, www.ncaa.org, www.eligibilitycenter.org, www.playnaia.org