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WASHTENAW CHRISTIAN ATHLETICS HANDBOOK



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1. Introduction

Welcome to the Washtenaw Christian Academy (WCA) Athletic Program. Through participation in WCA athletics, it is the school's goal that every student athlete will mature in his/her Christian faith, physical ability, and teamwork. The handbook is meant to be an informational guide for athletes, parents, coaches, booster club members and the school athletic staff. Currently, WCA's middle school athletic teams compete in the Ann Arbor Independent Athletic Association (AAIAA), while Varsity teams compete in the Southeast Michigan Athletic Conference (SMAC) and the Michigan Association of Christian Schools (MACS).

2. Mission Statement

The WCA Athletic Department is dedicated to providing a quality athletic program with a unique Christian atmosphere that promotes a positive educational experience for each student athlete. WCA's athletic program will foster spiritual, physical, emotional, and social growth while encouraging the development of individual and team skills.

3. Athletic Philosophy

The Christian experience at WCA is centered in Jesus Christ. Our athletic program must be an extension of the educational and spiritual experience of our school. Coaches, parents, and administrators have a unique and significant influence on student athletes. The interaction of coaches, parents, and student athletes in the sporting experience should have a positive effect on the way our children feel about themselves and those around them, improving self-esteem as an everlasting gift.

WCA athletics will teach student-athletes to have fun in conjunction with their participation in athletics. Each team's preparation and efforts will be conducted with the goal of victory in competition, understanding that winning is not the most important objective. On the other hand, winning, as a team goal, demands that all preparation and efforts exerted are done so with excellence in mind.

WCA seeks to glorify God through athletics and recognizes that winning is not, in and of itself, glorifying to God. Rather, God is glorified when our athletic teams honor Him by exerting their best effort, demonstrating exceptional sportsmanship, rejoicing in the Lord in victory or defeat, demonstrating respect and obedience to officials and coaches, and interacting with opponents with humility.

Our entire athletic program must operate on all levels with common courtesy, patience, pride and respect. We embrace the following for our Athletic Program:

- The top priority of our athletic programs will always be the health, safety and welfare of our student athletes.
- We demand that all coaches, parents, and student athletes exhibit respect and common courtesy towards each other, officials, and our opponents. (1 Peter 2:17)

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- We demand that our student athletes exhibit respect towards uniforms, athletic equipment, and athletic venues, and use them exclusively for the purposes intended.
- We will strive to create a competitive atmosphere in which winning is valued, but does not become the only priority.
- We will encourage our student athletes to be positive, encourage others to do their best, and be considerate of the weaknesses of others. (Ephesians 4:29)
- We will endeavor to create an athletic culture that fosters competitiveness and teaches teamwork, discipline, and perseverance.
- We will demand that our coaches, parents, and student athletes exhibit self-control in their emotions and tempers. (Galatians 5:22-23)
- We will strive to create an environment in which our student athletes feel a sense of pride in themselves and their team, treat others as they would wish to be treated, and develop a sense that they are a part of something larger than themselves.
- We will recognize that participation in our athletic programs is a privilege, not a right, and teach our student athletes to be appreciative towards administrators, teachers, coaches, and parents whose hard work and dedication make it possible for them to engage in athletic competition.

5. Athletic Opportunities at WCA

The availability of athletic programs at WCA is based on student interest, coach availability, and funding.

| Fall Sports | Winter Sports | Spring Sports |
|---|--|--|
| MS Volleyball (4 th -8 th) | MS Boys Basketball (4 th -8 th) | Varsity Baseball |
| Coed MS Soccer (4 th – 8 th) | MS Girls Basketball (4 th – 8 th) | Varsity Girls Soccer |
| Varsity Volleyball | MS Cheer (3 rd – 8 th) | Golf (6 th – 12 th) |
| Varsity Boys Soccer | Varsity Girls Basketball | |
| Cross Country (6 th – 12 th) | Varsity Boys Basketball | |
| | Varsity Cheer | |
| | Wrestling (3 rd – 12 th) | |

6. Academic Requirements

It is the policy of the WCA Athletic Department that student athletes emphasize academics as a priority over their participation in any athletic endeavor. It is crucial that students prioritize classroom work, homework, and their academic progress. Involvement in WCA Athletic Program does not exempt a student from homework or study and should not be used as an excuse for failing to complete assignments in school. Students are still expected to be in school, *on time* on school days following games.

Athletic Eligibility:

To participate in athletics, student-athletes must maintain a minimum average grade of 65% in each individual class. Students may not have three or more grades below a 70% at any one time. Additionally, student-athletes must demonstrate proper citizenship, abiding by all school rules and policies.

- Eligibility checks will occur each Monday morning at 8 am beginning the 3rd week of each grading period
- At the time of the eligibility check, student-athletes must have a minimum grade of 65% in each individual class and may not have three or more grades below 70%. Student-athletes who have a grade that is lower than 65% or who have three or more grades lower than 70% will be considered ineligible.
- Students declared ineligible will be ineligible from the Monday of the eligibility check through the next eligibility check (i.e. the following Monday).
- Each week is viewed individually, thus, students may be ineligible for consecutive weeks until grades have improved.
- Students who earn a grade lower than a 65% or who earn three or more grades lower than 70% as a Quarter or Semester grade will be counted as ineligible until the first eligibility check of the following quarter.
- A third period of ineligibility over the course of a school year (may be in different sports seasons) may result in the player losing eligibility to participate in WCA's athletic program for the duration of the school year.
- Fall sports eligibility will be based on the student's second semester grades from the previous school year.
- The Athletic Director, in concert with the Head of School, has the discretion to alter the consequences and make final decisions regarding the eligibility of a student-athlete.

Other Requirements:

1. A student must be enrolled at WCA to participate on a WCA sports team, except when the Plus Policy can be applied (See Section 10).
2. All student athletes must comply with all preliminary requirements including the submission of all registration materials including registration forms, physical/medical forms, player contracts, team contracts, parental consent forms, and release and indemnity forms.
3. All student athletes must pay all applicable participation fees before being allowed to play in any games.
4. Student-athletes must be present for at least the second half of the school day (12p to 3:30p) in order to practice or play in any athletic events on the same day.
 - a. Exceptions may be made for excused absences from school (e.g. College Visits, Funerals, Doctor's Appointments, etc.)
 - b. Students who are dismissed from school early due to illness will not be permitted to return with the purpose of practicing or playing in athletic events, unless they have returned to class.
5. No student will be allowed to drive themselves to or from a game unless prior permission is granted by the AD. This practice will not be encouraged.

7. Tryout Policy

It is the goal of the WCA Athletic Program to structure our teams in a manner that allows for maximum participation of all student athletes. We will strive to allow every student athlete the opportunity to be a part of a team in the sport of their choice. WCA through its administration, Athletic Director, and coaches, reserves the right to deny participation to any student athlete for "good cause." Good cause includes but is not limited to the health and safety of the individual student athlete, the health and safety of other participants and/or opponents, and the failure on the part of an individual student athlete to adhere to the requirements for participation as outlined in this handbook and/or by an individual coach.

Each school year, every sport is reviewed to determine the number of teams that can be entered into competition at all levels of participation. Depending on the number of student athletes who wish to participate, it may be necessary to divide student athletes in a given grade between an A Team and a B Team. The respective coaches, in accordance with the Athletic Director, are empowered to make judgments and decisions as to which players will participate on a given A Team or B Team. The head coach and the Athletic Director will make all final decisions as to the distribution of players. In the event there are insufficient coaches to handle the number of student athletes who try out, the Athletic Director may require limited participation to a reasonable team roster.

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Decisions as to the assignment of players to A Teams or B Teams will be based on merit/talent exclusively. Placement on an A Team or B will be re-evaluated annually. There will be no preference or priority extended to a student athlete because of their designation in previous years.

8. Student-Athlete Promotion

As a general rule, players will play on the team that corresponds with their grade level. Exceptions may be made in the following circumstances:

- a. A grade level appropriate team is unable to be formed due to enrollment numbers or level of interest amongst the student body
- b. A student-athlete possesses exceptional skill and would benefit from competing at a higher level of competition

All discussion regarding the promotion of a student-athlete to a higher level of competition will be initiated by the Athletic Director. The Athletic Director will discuss the possible promotion of a student-athlete with both the middle school and Varsity level coaches. If all parties agree with the decision to promote a student-athlete, the Athletic Director will discuss the situation with the student-athlete’s parents. With parent approval, a student-athlete will be promoted to the higher level of competition.

9. WCA Home School Students

Home School students who are enrolled in at least one class at WCA are eligible to fully participate in WCA’s athletic program, including post-season tournaments.

10. Plus Policy for Non-WCA Home School Students

Home School students who are not enrolled in any classes at WCA may participate in Middle School or Varsity athletics *if the total number of student-athletes is less than the standards set below*). These students will not be eligible to participate in the MACS or AAIAA tournaments, but are eligible to participate in the SMAC tournament. Non-enrolled home school students may not compose more than 50% of the team. All decisions regarding athletic participation of Non-enrolled Home School students will be addressed on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Athletic Director and will be in effect for one year only.

| Sport | Plus Policy Threshold |
|---------------|--|
| Volleyball | 10 |
| Soccer | 15 |
| Cross Country | Open to All |
| Basketball | 10 |
| Cheerleading | Open to All |
| Wrestling | Open to All (Not eligible for MACS Tournament) |
| Baseball | 14 |
| Golf | Open to All (Not eligible for MACS Tournament) |

11. Practice Policy

Practice is essential for the development of student athletes and to the success of the team. It is imperative that our student athletes participate regularly in formal practice sessions to obtain rudimentary knowledge of the game and master fundamental skills necessary to protect their safety and the safety of their teammates. Additionally, practice time and space throughout the WCA Athletic Program are always at a premium. As a result, players in all sports are expected to attend all scheduled practices. Players must contact coaches in advance if they cannot attend practice.

Excused absences from practice may affect the playing time a student athlete receives in any given game. Unexcused absences will affect playing time and may result in a student athlete missing a game entirely. These decisions will be left to the exclusive discretion of the coaching staff and the Athletic Director.

12. Game Policy

WCA's athletic teams train to compete and win. While winning is not the sole definition of an athlete's success, it is goal to which to aspire. Since team success is important, playing time will be dictated by the competitive circumstances in each game.

13. Game Day Dress Code

On Game Days, student-athletes are afforded the privilege of dressing nice above and beyond the normal dress code. Men are expected to wear dress pants, a dress shirt, and tie. Ladies may wear a dress, skirt, or dress pants, but **must** adhere to the normal school dress code standard which states skirts, "may be no shorter than 3" above the knee, including slits. Skirts worn above the knee and up to the 3" criteria require under-shorts, solid leggings, or tights..." All student-athletes dressing for Game Days are **required** to wear dress shoes. *Game Day attire is not required to be of the same color and pattern guidelines of the normal dress code (i.e. Attire does not necessarily have to be solid black, red, gray, navy, or white).* On Friday Game Days or Spirit Days, students may wear their team-issued jersey top or warm-up shirt with dress pants, jeans, or their team-issued warm-up pants.

14. Athletic Department Awards

To recognize the outstanding efforts of our student-athletes, the following awards will be conferred:

- **Play Hard Award**
 - To be awarded to one student-athlete per team for consistent hard work in games and practice, leadership, and exceptional performance through the season. To be awarded at the seasonal banquet.
- **Play Smart Award**
 - To be awarded to one student-athlete per team for excellence in academics, high sports IQ, and making good decisions and avoiding mental lapses during game play. To be awarded at the seasonal banquet.
- **Play Together Award**
 - To be awarded to one student-athlete per team for consistently demonstrating a Christlike attitude, encouraging and supporting teammates, and exhibiting a dedication to glorify God in all actions and words during competition. To be awarded at the seasonal banquet.
- **Scholar Athlete Award**
 - To be awarded to every student-athlete who successfully maintains between a 3.5 – 3.74 GPA during an athletic season (Fall, Winter, or Spring). To be awarded at the seasonal banquet.
- **Distinguished Scholar Athlete Award**
 - To be awarded to every student-athlete who successfully maintains at least a 3.75 GPA during an athletic season (Fall, Winter, or Spring). To be awarded at the seasonal banquet.
- **Shield Award & Junior Shield Award**
 - To be awarded to one male and female high school student (or middle school for the Junior Shield) who best exemplifies academic and athletic excellence, spiritual maturity and leadership, and servant-minded citizenship throughout the entire school year. To be awarded at the end of year Awards Chapel.
- **Legacy Award**
 - To be awarded to any Coach who serves as an Assistant or Head Coach for at least fifteen years

15. Selection of Coaches

The selection of all coaches is the responsibility of the Athletic Director, with the approval of the Head of School and the School Board.

16. Uniforms and Equipment

Student athletes and their parents are responsible for all uniforms and/or athletic equipment issued to them. Athletic uniforms are supplied for the sole purpose of participating in the WCA Athletic Program and should not be used for any other purpose. Upon completion of the athletic season, all uniforms and equipment should be properly cleaned and promptly returned in good condition. If uniforms or equipment are not returned or are returned in unacceptable condition, the student-athlete will be billed for the replacement costs.

17. Code of Conduct

It is our hope that all those associated with our athletic programs will pattern their behavior in keeping with the principles of our Statement of Faith. Additionally, student-athletes, parents, and coaches will be held to the following standards:

A. Student Athlete Conduct

It is expected that all our student athletes will conduct themselves in a manner that is courteous, respectful, and sportsmanlike. We expect that they will strive to adhere to the following principles:

- To accept and understand the seriousness of the responsibility of representing Christ, the school, community, and your family when participating in WCA Athletics.
- To always place the health, safety and welfare of teammates, opponents, and yourself above all else.
- To always treat your teammates, opponents, coaches, game officials, parents, teachers, spectators, and yourself with respect, courtesy, and sportsmanship on and off the field.
- To refrain from the use of any profane or derogatory comments.
- To always treat uniforms, equipment, and athletic facilities with respect, and recognize that these items and venues are expensive and are available to you as a result of the hard work and dedication of others.
- To be responsible and accountable for your actions recognizing that everyone makes mistakes but that there are consequences for the choices you make.
- To always do your best and approach your athletic pursuits with maximum effort, recognizing that your talent and abilities are gifts from God.

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- To listen to your coaches and make every effort to comply with their requests on and off the field understanding that what is demanded of you is in the best interest of the team.

To play with competitive spirit, strive to contribute to your team's success, win with humility, and experience defeat with grace.

B. Parental Conduct

We believe that parental participation and support is an indispensable component of the success of our athletic program. The WCA Athletic community is blessed to enjoy the support of hard-working, dedicated, loyal and responsible parents.

However, it would be shortsighted if we did not acknowledge that all of us can be susceptible to engaging in questionable conduct caused by our love and support of our children in the context of a heated athletic contest.

In recognition of our imperfections, we offer the following as a guide and reminder of our responsibilities as adult role models:

- Prioritize the health, safety, and welfare of all student athletes .
- Treat coaches, officials, other parents, spectators and student athletes with respect and courtesy.
- Support your child and his/her team and refrain from using profane, derogatory, or negative commentary with or towards others.

C. Coach Conduct

Rev. Billy Graham said:

“A coach can have more impact on a player, in a single season than a Pastor has in their entire lifetime”

The WCA Athletic Program exists as a direct result of the willingness of parents and other adults to giving their time and talent to coach our teams.

However, coaches by nature are competitive individuals. As a result, we recommend our coaches periodically reassess their coaching style and methods to be certain they are on track with the following principles:

- Prioritize the health, safety, and welfare of all student athletes .
- Never engage in profane or demeaning commentary.

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- Treat coaches, officials, other parents, spectators and student athletes with respect and courtesy.
- Always be aware that you are an important role model to your student athletes.

In addition to the above, coaches conduct must be consistent with school policy; coaches job description, and the interest of student athlete's protection.

18. Role of the Athletic Director

The Athletic Director is responsible for the overall coordination and administration of the WCA Athletic Program. The Athletic Director is hired by and responsible to the Head Administrator, the School Board, and is held to the requirements outlined in the Athletic Director's job description.

19. Booster Club Attendance

The WCA Athletic Department and its administrators and coaches respectfully request that all parents search for ways to dedicate their time and talent to foster a positive and educational athletic environment. The Booster Club has been organized to assist with the Athletic Programs at WCA. This organization meets once per month during the school year and we request that parents endeavor to attend these meetings in search of ways to become a contributing member in our athletic programs.

20. Conflict Resolution Policy

It is inevitable that conflicts will occasionally arise among the adult participants in our Athletic Program. We request that conflicts be resolved by following the Matthew 18 principle as outlined in the Lower School & Upper School Handbooks. With athletics, we require a 24 to 48 hour "cooling off period" prior to confronting another individual, whether it a coach, official, or other individual in the athletic arena.

21. Indemnity

A release/Indemnification Agreement must be signed by parents/guardians on behalf of student athletes prior to participation in the Athletic Program. The Athletic Director and/or coaches will distribute form approved by the school to registrants prior to commencement of the season.

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