



**GRACE ACADEMY**  
QUALITY CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

# **Student Athlete Handbook**

**Grace Academy  
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(updated 2019)

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## STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY AND EDUCATIONAL GOALS

### Introduction

The athletic program at Grace Academy is an extension of the larger educational program of the school. Sports provides an experiential basis to help develop in our students Godly qualities such as self discipline, endurance, self control, diligence, sportsmanship, submission to authority, teamwork, and numerous other qualities under the Godly oversight of the coaches. Sports can provide our students with "real life" experiences; with God's help, our goal is to see godly character developed in their lives through this program.

It is our experience that sports, because of its competitive nature, often brings out the worst in our sinful human nature. We must not be surprised when we see this less desirable aspect of human nature; however, it is in the context of these real life situations that we must recognize and capitalize on the opportunities as coaches and staff to role model, mentor and instruct our students in the Godly qualities that can be taught in the face of adversity, winning and losing, discouragement, the need to endure, and the other highs and lows so common to sports.

While playing to win is a byproduct of our Christian value system, we must be committed to higher educational and character building goals if our program is to be successful. We, as role models, must remember at all times that winning and losing are not the primary goals. The outcome of the event is always in God's hands; how we compete and how, as teachers, we mentor our students is the dynamic that is in our realm of control. With God's help, we must always seek to retain this higher goal. If we ever become more concerned with our win/loss record than the building of Godly character, we have lost our way as teachers and may do more harm than good to our stated cause. We have seen the dynamic of less than desirable attitudes in a coach trickle down to the athletes; such a reality is a sobering reminder to coaches of their sacred trust as those who can have a profound impact on the character development of our young people.

In all cases, how we conduct our sports program must reflect our basic mission statement as a school, which is *to enhance the God-given potential in each student through quality Christian education so they may be servants of Jesus Christ in the world.* If the sports program does not reflect the clearcut distinctives of Biblical faith, it may cause far more harm than good.

## **Sportsmanship Creed**

The GA sports creed follows:

*Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the needs of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear. Ephesians 4:29*

Many would suggest this is too idealistic a standard for the rough and tumble world of sports. Regardless, it is the standard to which all who participate in the program – coaches, students, parents and auxiliary staff – must be committed if they wish to be involved. We have determined that we will be committed to a higher standard of Christ rather than the commonly practiced standard of the world. If we do not strive to maintain such a standard by the grace of God, then we are settling for something far less than what would be Christ pleasing or worthy of the label “Christian.”

We ask for a commitment from all involved to have the attitude contained in Ephesians 4:29 in their attitude toward officials, the athletes and coaches, fans from other schools, and each other. Critical words spoken toward any are never pleasing to our Lord, nor do they ever have any constructive result. When there are concerns, those concerned should prayerfully approach others and humbly express their concerns. If necessary, constructive appeals can be made to the GA Athletic Director..

## **GENERAL POLICIES AND GUIDELINES**

### **Sports Offered**

The following sports are offered at Grace Academy: (pending sufficient interest)

#### **FALL**

Boys Soccer	Varsity, Middle School
Girls Volleyball	Varsity, Junior Varsity, Middle School
Coed Cross Country	Varsity, Middle School
Coed Golf	Varsity, Middle School

#### **WINTER**

Boys Basketball	Varsity, Junior Varsity, Middle School
Girls Basketball	Varsity, Middle School

#### **SPRING**

Girls Soccer	Varsity, Middle School
Boys Baseball	Varsity, Junior Varsity

**Athletic Conference Affiliation**

Grace Academy is a member of the *Mason Dixon Christian Conference* (MDCC). Members of the MDCC include: Broadfording Christian Academy, Calvary Christian Academy, Cumberland Valley Christian School, Faith Christian Academy, Heritage Academy, New Life Christian School, and Shalom Christian Academy. The athletic directors from each member school meet several times annually to determine conference policy concerning scheduling, conference season and tournament play, and other issues concerning our athletic programs. The conference is governed by a written constitution. Grace Academy is also a member affiliated with the Maryland Public Secondary School Athletic Association which allows GA to schedule and play non conference games with Maryland Public schools.

**School Colors/Mascot**

Red, White, and Blue. The mascot is the GA Knight.

**Finances**

1. The athletic program attempts to operate financially on a self sufficient basis. Most of the funds will be raised through a per family sports fee each season. The fee will be set at the beginning of each school year by the athletic director with final approval by the administrator.

2. The sports fees for the current school year are:

<b>Varsity Sports:</b> \$150.00 Volleyball, Soccer, Basketball, Baseball
<b>Junior Varsity/ Middle School Sports:</b> \$125.00 Volleyball, Soccer, Basketball
<b>Cross Country &amp; Golf:</b> \$125.00

3. Additional funding for the sports program will be necessary, and will come from the Grace Academy Athletic Booster Club (GAABC) in the form of contributions, concession sales, and fundraising.
4. Money from the sports fees are used to pay coaching salaries, game officials/referees, association and conference dues, tournament fees, equipment, transportation and fuel costs, first aid supplies, and other miscellaneous costs related to the sports program.

## **Guidelines for Structuring of Teams**

The goal of our athletic program is to place students on teams that will provide them with the best environment to develop emotionally, socially, physically and spiritually. We will do everything possible to avoid advancing younger athletes to higher levels of competition than they are ready, even if their sports skills may be more advanced than most in their age group.

Varsity Athletes—Grades 9-12

Junior Varsity Athletes- Grades 9-11

Middle School Athletes- Grades 6-8

Exceptions to these guidelines will be made only when the parents, coaches and athletic director believe it will be in the athlete's best interests.

The makeup of each team will be determined by the Head Coach with input from the Athletic Director.

## **Registration**

In order for the athletic director and coaches to plan, there will be a preliminary signup sheet posted before every season. Before the season starts, notice will be given to all players via email about the first practice and/or tryouts.

## **Season Start Dates**

A team may not participate in a regularly scheduled game until at least 20 calendar days have elapsed after and including the first day of practice. NATA heat acclimatization guidelines mandate a minimum of 14 practices before a regularly scheduled game.

Fall - August 6.

Winter - November 1

Spring - March 1

## **Playing Time**

The following guidelines are established concerning game time for the athletes at the various team levels:

**Middle School** – Middle school athletics are focused on skill development and preparation for Varsity level play. Coaches are encouraged to allow each player some playing time during the season. During playoffs a coach may decide who to play based on the players who give them the best opportunity to win.

**Junior Varsity/Varsity** – Coaches at both levels will play their best players to be competitive. The coach will play to win by using their judgment in placing what he/she feels to be their best team in the playing arena. Much is to be learned both by those who play more and those who play less in terms of putting the interests of the team above those of individual players. This dynamic of playing time provides a real life experience for our athletes in this regard.

### **Practices**

Practices on Wednesdays may be scheduled by coaches until 5 pm. These practices are considered non-mandatory in the event there are players who attend church services/youth group on Wednesday evenings.

Practices may be scheduled on Saturdays.

Practices scheduled over holiday breaks will be optional for those who will be traveling and out of the immediate area. Coaches must be notified if you are not attending a game or practice.

Alumni and post graduates are not eligible to participate in pre-season or in-season workouts or practices.

### **Commitment to Team**

Athletes should agree to commit to the team, as their commitment affects coaches, their teammates, our school. There are situations or family dynamics that are at times out of a student's control. In those situations we ask that a player or family meet with the coach and or Athletic Director before leaving a team.

### **Parent Communication with Coaches/Chain of Command**

If an athlete has a concern with the coach, he/she should talk to the coach and work out the issue. If the concern cannot be worked out, then the parent should set up a meeting with the coach to discuss the issue. If the issue cannot be resolved, then a meeting should be scheduled with the athletic director.

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION**

### **Eligibility**

1. All student athletes must be enrolled at Grace Academy.
2. Grace Academy will abide by eligibility requirements as outlined in the conference constitution.
3. If a player misses a portion of the preseason practices, the coach and athletic director will decide when the athlete is eligible to begin participating in games.
4. It is considered a privilege for students to be able to represent their school through participation in athletic and other extracurricular activities. However, such participation is predicated upon each student fulfilling his/her primary responsibilities in everyday school affairs. Students who fail to consistently abide by basic school policies, respect attendance and punctuality guidelines, and maintain responsible classroom performance standards may lose their eligibility to participate in athletic and extracurricular activities. When such concerns are raised, the Athletic Director will consult with relevant staff in order to evaluate a student's eligibility for extracurricular/athletic participation.

### **Practice and Game Attendance**

1. Athletes are expected to attend all practices and games except for illness or important family emergency(s). Routine doctor and dental appointments should not be scheduled during practice and games. Athletes should notify their coach as far in advance as possible if he/she plans to miss practice.
2. If a student athlete misses a game(s) or practice(s) due to a planned "family pleasure" trip the athlete will need to give prior notice to the coach of the trip and understand that playing time may be impacted to allow other players who continued to come to practices a fair amount of playing time.
3. Punctuality is important. Players are expected to be on time for all practices and games. The coach will communicate to players the consequences of tardiness.
4. If a player must miss a practice due to illness, he/she should contact the coach and let him/her know directly. Most coaches have text, voicemail, cell phones, email, etc. If the coach cannot be reached, communication should be made to the Athletic Director. Students should not ask fellow teammates to relay messages to coaches.

5. If a player has an injury (sprained ankle, etc.) he/she will be expected to attend all practices and games unless arrangements are made with the coach. Injured players should dress in \ game day attire (or warmups where appropriate) and sit on the bench with the team during a game.
6. **Students must be in school and in class by 8:20 in order to be able to participate in a game. Unexcused tardies will result in the player being ineligible to play that day. Students with a partial day schedule must attend all scheduled classes. Athletes excused absence or tardy may be approved to play by the administration. Example: doctor appt., funeral. (Parent notes for illness are only accepted 6 times per semester)**
7. Students returning from athletic trips or late night games are expected to be on time for school the next day, unless given special permission by the Athletic Director.
8. Students who plan to play on outside travel/club teams during a school sports season are required to meet with the respective Coach and Athletic Director and satisfactory arrangements must be made.

### **Academics**

Student athletes are expected to maintain reasonable academic performance in order to maintain eligibility for sports participation. Grades are checked each semester at mid- term and end of semester. Student athletes who have 2 D's and or one F will become academically ineligible. For students who are ineligible, grades will then be reviewed every 2 weeks to determine if progress has been made. If after the two week period a student's) grade(s) improves above the eligibility criteria, the student athlete will be reinstated. Student athletes are permitted to practice during their time of ineligibility; however, after school academic support will be required. If the Athletic Director/and or Principal determines that a student is not maintaining reasonable grades or is incomplete in assignments, they have the authority to place the athlete on academic probation or temporarily suspend him/her from the team.

### **Discipline**

If a student athlete receives an after school detention, it will be the athlete's responsibility to contact the coach in the event the detention interferes with a scheduled practice. Three (3) or more behavioral detentions in a sports season will result in a one (1) contest suspension per detention, conduct ineligibility or suspension from a team.

### **Physical/Concussion/Medical Release Forms**

All athletes are required to have a physician signed GA Sports Physical, Concussion and Medical Release Forms before they are allowed to participate in sports practices and games. Forms should be turned in to the respective coach and/or athletic director. The Sports Physical will be valid for the entire calendar year. Any athlete who has not turned in the completed forms or the physical has expired may not play or practice.

### **Use of Tobacco, Alcohol, Drugs, or Profanity**

The use of tobacco (including vaping), alcohol, or illegal drug products will result in dismissal from any GA sports team. In addition, students who use profane or abusive language, or demonstrate unacceptable behavior will be subject to suspension as determined by the coach, athletic director, and administrator.

### **Preseason Meeting**

At least one parent of each athlete should attend a scheduled preseason meeting with the coach and athletic director.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **Transportation to Practices**

In sports where another facility is used, athletes may be shuttled via school vans for after school practices.

### **Away Games**

1. As a general rule, athletes will be transported to away games via school vans, school bus driven by a school approved/ CDL licensed driver. In addition, athletes may be transported in private vehicles driven by parents. When transported by a GA vehicle, all drivers should meet school criteria to serve as an approved driver and fill out Approved Driver Form (on file in the school office) and show certification of the SafeSchool 15 passenger van course. .
2. In no cases are unauthorized personnel allowed to drive any GA vehicle or transport GA athletes in private vehicles on school trips unless pre arranged by the Athletic Director. Students are never authorized to drive school vehicles.

3. Students are not permitted to drive private vehicles to away games without written parental permission by parents and approval by the athletic director. This will only be approved for select and specific circumstances.
4. Players should ride as a team in school vehicles or in their parent vehicle to and from games. Players may not leave away games with other student's parents unless written permission has been granted by both parents and approved by the athletic director.
5. In no case should any vehicle be loaded beyond capacity. Each driver is to ensure that all passengers are seatbelted and their conduct appropriate to the safety of the students during the trip. Any student behavioral problems should be reported immediately to the coach and/or athletic director.
6. Drivers should not exceed the posted speed limit.
7. GA Vans/Bus will return to Grace Academy from away contests.

### **Van/Bus Behavior**

Athletes represent Grace Academy – whether on the court or traveling “down the road.” When traveling to away games on the school van(s)/bus, the following guidelines should be adhered to by players:

- Players should not stand while the vehicle is moving.
- Students must wear seat belts in vans - it's the law
- No hands, heads, or talking out the vehicle windows.
- No throwing of any object outside of or in the vehicle.
- Electronic devices are allowed only with permission from coach
- Students are to enter and exit from the appropriate vehicle areas.
- Cell Phones – see section “Supervision of Athletes”
- Only drinks with caps/tops may be brought on the bus.

Coaches are to ensure that the team thoroughly cleans the vehicle in which they were riding in upon return to the school. All team members should be involved in this cleanup process. No team member is to be dismissed from the dismissal area until the coach has inspected the vehicle and declared it clean.

## **COMMUNICATION**

### **Pre-Season Coaches Meeting**

A pre-season interest meeting will be conducted by the head coach of each sport. During that meeting coaches will inform players of off-season expectations, try-out information, practice information, and start date.

### **Athletic Director/Parents/Players Meeting**

At the beginning of each athletic season the Athletic Director will conduct an informational meeting for parents and players. Athletic department policies and procedures will be addressed during this meeting. One parent/guardian must attend this meeting.

### **R School Today**

All game schedules and rosters will be posted on R School Today.  
POSTPONEMENTS/CANCELLATION WILL BE UPDATED BY 12 NOON on R School Today WHEN POSSIBLE. .

## **TEAM PICTURES**

Team pictures will be taken each season on a predetermined day by Lifetouch. Order forms will be sent home at the beginning of each season for team pictures. Parents may choose from a variety of package sizes. Pictures will be delivered at the end of the season. Checks will be made payable directly to Life Touch and be presented to the photographer.

## **TEAM MANAGERS**

Team managers must be approved by the Athletic Director. Team managers will be considered part of the team and will be treated in all respects as a team member.

Team managers should attend all home and away games. Managers are responsible for water bottles and/or coolers/cups, and other equipment/supplies. The coach should give each manager a list of additional responsibilities, such as helping keep stats, helping with first aid supplies, ice, etc. Managers should wear GA polo shirts on game days. All school and athletic policies apply to the team managers.

## **TEAM CAPTAINS**

Team captains will be appointed by the coaches. Qualities of team captains should include leadership, knowledge of the game, dedication, and commitment. Coaches will communicate to captains a list of what is expected, responsibilities, etc.

## **SENIOR NIGHT**

One of the last home varsity games of each season will be designated as “Senior Night.” Senior players will be recognized (before game, at half time, or after the game). Seniors and their parents will be called come to center court/field as a short description of player’s accomplishments are read by an administrator, athletic director, or other designated person. Seniors will present their parents with a flower (provided by the athletic department). Senior Athletes will be recognized at the All Sports Banquet.

## **Sports Awards**

### **Presentations**

Grace Academy will recognize the accomplishments of GA athletes. Varsity Athletes will be recognized by GA Letters/Pins/Bars as well as special MDCC individual/team awards.

### **Varsity Letter Qualifications**

Athletes will receive an athletic letter at the completion of his/her first varsity year in a particular sport. A bar will be given for every year after that. Students not lettering will receive a Certificate of Participation.

The head coach has the prerogative to issue or withhold a letter for extenuating circumstances such as early season injuries, team or league violations, etc. In all cases, students must complete the season in good standing as a member of the team in order to letter. In cases of special circumstances, each situation will be reviewed by the Athletic Director.

### **Criteria for Lettering for each sport:**

Students must have completed the entire season

Student must attend practices and games unless excused by the coach

All equipment must have been turned in

## UNIFORMS

Teams wear uniforms to show unity. After all, we play as a team – not as individuals! Athletes are required to wear uniforms issued to them. Teams are not permitted to independently purchase additional or different items to be worn as part of the team uniform ***unless approved by the athletic director.***

Uniforms are to be cared for by athletes and returned in good condition at the end of each season.

Some uniform items will need to be purchased by players in each sport, including shin guards, cleats, and soccer socks (soccer); kneepads, socks, and court shoes (volleyball); and socks and basketball shoes (basketball).

### **Purchase of Uniforms/Sports Apparel**

No private purchases of shirts, warm ups, or other team athletic apparel is to be authorized unless first approved by the athletic director.

### **Uniform Guidelines**

Parents and student athletes will be asked to sign and be committed to the Uniform Guidelines for use of team uniforms. These guidelines include the following:

1. Athletes are issued uniforms at the beginning of each season.
2. Uniforms must be returned in a labeled bag at the end of the season. They should be laundered and in the same condition as they were issued, assuming normal wear and tear. Students will be charged for replacement of any damaged and/or lost uniforms or parts of uniforms.
3. Game uniforms are only to be worn at games. They are not to be worn to practices or any event outside of school. This includes jerseys, shorts, shooting t's, and warmups.
4. On game days, students should travel to and from games in their game day attire. If a coach gives the team permission, they may travel to and from games in their entire game uniforms.
5. On days of home games, players are to arrive at the gym in either their complete uniform or their game day attire. Students may change back into their school clothes or wear warm ups after the game.
6. Please follow washing instructions on the tags for uniforms and warm ups. Please avoid drying any part of uniforms in dryers.

7. Jewelry should not be worn during practices and games. This includes bracelets, earrings, watches, and rings. You are responsible for the security of your jewelry if it is worn to a game or practice.
8. Players are encouraged to wear good athletic shoes that protect feet and ankles.
9. Temporary tattoos or other markings on athletes are not allowed. In addition, glitter, excessive makeup, and metal hair clips are not allowed.

### **Inclement Weather Policy**

On days when school is closed or dismissed early due to inclement weather, there will be no practices or games. Coaches will contact athletes through prearranged communication plans (phone chain, email, text, etc.) If the snow emergency plan is in effect there will be no practice or games.

For teams that practice and play outside during the fall and spring, rainy weather can be a factor. Games and/or practice may be cancelled due to wet field conditions. In case of thunder or lightning, all teams should be removed from the field immediately and a waiting period of 30 minutes must be followed before play can be reevaluated/resumed.

### **Fields/Gym/Equipment**

- Skateboards are NOT permitted on campus.
- Park in designated parking spots not on grass.
- No dogs or other pets are allowed on soccer/baseball fields.
- Portable toilets will be available for outside fields.
- Fans are not to play on playing fields at halftime or after games.
- Fans are to sit on the opposite side of the playing field from the players' bench.

### **Gymnasium**

- Everyone must sit in the bleachers..
- Avoid street shoes on the gym floor if at all possible.
- No hanging on the baskets.
- No balls may be kicked inside the gym that are not approved indoor soccer balls.
- Only Coaches, players and managers are allowed in annex and locker rooms.
- Please enter and exit by front glass doors (except in cases of emergency).
- Team members are to leave locker room clean after games and practices.
- Please report any damage to coach or athletic director. Students will be expected to pay for any damage done resulting from their actions.
- No unsupervised children in/outside of the gym.
- Fans are not allowed on the court during halftime unless an activity is scheduled.

**Equipment/Warm Up Music**

GA Athletics wants to be good stewards of our sports/team equipment. During volleyball and basketball season, balls are not allowed outside of the gym. Players/coaches on all GA Sports teams are responsible to ensure that all respective equipment is put away after practice and/or games.

All Warm Up music must be approved by the Athletic Director.