

Grace Community School



Athletic Handbook

2022-23

The purpose of this handbook is to help student-athletes, coaches and parents understand the commitment that they are making by choosing to participate in Grace Community School Athletics. The expectations stated in this handbook are meant to develop a shared vision of the athletic department's mission and the mission of the school. This handbook is intended to provide limits and boundaries that govern a biblical worldview of athletics. Sound reasoning, good judgment, and adherence to the school's core values will be the standard by which situations outside these stated rules and regulations will be evaluated and determined.

Grace Community School
Athletic Handbook
Revised 8/2022

Grace Community School Athletic Department Handbook

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Grace Community School Philosophy of Athletics

*“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it for the glory of God”
I Corinthians 10:31*

The mission of Grace Community School is to assist Christian parents in educating, equipping and encouraging their children to influence the world for Christ. Athletics at Grace is a component of the overall curriculum of the school, and as such will be approached through a biblical worldview. We understand that athletics is part of a fallen creation, and like all expressions of human activities, can influence participants either positively or negatively. Grace athletics are intended to bring glory to God as our student-athletes, coaches, and spectators use the opportunity to compete as an act of worship (Romans 12:1).

A widely held cultural assumption states that athletics, in and of itself, produces positive character development among participants; we as believers know this to be untrue. At Grace, athletics provides a means to an end, with that end being Christ-like character qualities such as integrity, sportsmanship, service, discipline and a commitment to excellence. As part of the Grace Community School curriculum, which means to “run its course”, we understand that spiritual, mental and physical development are part of the process of sanctification. It is our goal to “teach Jesus” through athletics as a part of the greater mission of educating, equipping and encouraging our student-athletes to influence the world for Christ.

We believe that as Christians, we should be on mission at all times. Whether in the classroom or on the fields of competition we should seek to glorify God in our actions, words and deeds. Our goal is to ensure that every aspect of our athletic department is oriented toward preparing our student-athletes to influence the world for Christ.

Modern youth sports culture today is rife with unhealthy idolatry and skewed perspectives. Christ has called us to a better way. Athletics is not our God; God is our God. This approach will, by definition, render us counter-cultural and in sharp contrast to our larger communities. In order to be counter-cultural from an athletic perspective, student-athletes, coaches, and spectators must be willing to submit to the will of God, which will allow our students to emulate their Lord in growing “in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” (Luke 2:52). In doing so, we present our lives as living sacrifices for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, holy and acceptable (Romans 12:1, 2).

The Grace Community School athletic department is committed to develop student-athletes who not only enjoy success in the athletic arena, but also (and most importantly) in their spiritual walk as believers and citizens of their community. By emphasizing Christ-like character qualities, and a standard of excellence rooted in God’s Word, we believe that we will fulfill our responsibility within the mission of our school.

Participation in athletics at Grace is privilege, not a right. Just as in every other aspect of our lives, privileges are accompanied by responsibilities. Student-athletes, coaches and spectators are expected to conform to the standards of excellence established by the athletic departments, and reflected in the philosophy of athletics. The privilege of participation may be

revoked if a student-athlete, coach or spectator fails to comply with these guidelines and expectations.

This philosophy has the following implications for Grace Athletics:

- Grace athletics will, in all things, be rooted in God's Word. His Word is the ultimate standard for our dealings with each other, and how we conduct the program.
- Coaches will be developed into spiritual leaders, and they will be responsible for practicing the spiritual disciplines of reading and studying God's Word, prayer, and participation in a church body. Coaches will then be responsible for implementing God's Word as the cornerstone of their program, contextualizing it as is appropriate for the areas they lead.
- Discipleship would be at the heart of the athletic department. Administrators are responsible for discipling head coaches, or ensuring that it is done. Head coaches are responsible for discipling assistant coaches within their area of authority. Everyone is responsible for discipling student athletes.
- Coaches and administrators should use every contact with parents, especially conflicts, as an opportunity to continuously communicate the Grace Philosophy of Athletics and the gospel of Christ.
- Appropriate accountability measures will be implemented throughout the department to promote personal holiness and discipleship.
- Coaches and administrators will constantly be looking to provide "real-life" opportunities for student-athletes to be "on mission".
- Grace athletics will be typified by a "teaching, coaching, modeling, and measuring" model of development and improvement throughout each program and the athletic department as a whole

Grace athletics will "teach Jesus" through:

- A "people first, performance second" approach- coaches and programs will be evaluated first and foremost, not by the athletic performance or win-loss records of their teams, but the spiritual formation of their student-athletes.
- The program will focus on each student-athlete's "giftedness", but with a major emphasis on how that giftedness is not for personal edification, but to serve the team, the Body as a whole.
- Student-Athletes are children of God first, not athletes. Their spiritual formation as dedicated disciples of Jesus Christ will be preeminent.
- Grace athletics should be an act of worship to God. Athletes, coaches and fans will be expected to use their words and actions to build and edify the Body of Christ and bear witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 4:19) Using words or actions to tear down teammates, players, opponents, referees and guests will not be tolerated.
- We are called to bring our best to our Lord; therefore, high standards of performance and commitment are expected from everyone involved in the program. We will be committed to excellence, defined as, "giving our utmost for his highest," or doing our best, all the time, to God's glory (Colossians 3:23-24).
- Our junior high athletics programs will focus on participation and development first and foremost. Interactions between players, coaches, administrators and parents will be treated as an opportunity to reinforce that goal.
- Fans and supporters of Grace are constantly representing their Lord and Savior, and this school in words and deeds. Fans are expected to reflect hospitality, encouragement, and

respect. Fans will cheer for their team, not against the opposing team. Respect for opposing players, coaches, and officials will be defining hallmarks of our fans. Words and conduct that do not respect the dignity, value, and worth of any other participant in athletic events will not be tolerated. **Any Grace Community School family member is empowered and expected to hold their brothers and sisters accountable to this standard and to lovingly confront when it is violated (Matthew 18).**

- Grace Community School will stand for spirited competition on the field, and extraordinary recognition of the God-breathed dignity, value and worth of all participants off the field.

Grace athletics will be operated according to the following principles:

- “We lead, so we must lead as Christ lead, by serving.”
- There will be consistency throughout the department in terms of expectations, and standards of performance, spiritual development and engagement, without regard to gender or grade level.
- Coaches will consistently mentor each other and their players.
- All adjunct and new coaches will be trained in the “Grace Way”, as reflected in this philosophy.
- Teamwork and healthy conflict resolution will exist throughout the athletic department, from coach to coach and sport to sport. There is no room for silent dissent before a decision is made, or vocal dissent after it is made. There will be no individual “silos” of responsibility in the athletic department. While coaches will be empowered to have responsibility for their own sport, they will be committed first and foremost to the overall well-being of the athletic program, and the school community as a whole.
- Coaches, administrators, and fans will fight zealously against the idolatry of youth sports that is so prevalent today; Grace family members will preach, teach, and rally against the concept that one’s security, value, dignity and worth is based on athletic performance or non-performance. All of these things are rooted in Christ. **Athletics are not our god: God is our God.** This message will be seen, heard, and taught at every opportunity.

To accomplish these goals, the athletic department, coaches and administrators alike, will:

- Grace Community School will develop, implement, and monitor a GCS athletic code of conduct.
- Grace will teach fans to edify our kids (and our opponents and officials) not tear them down- fans will be warned first, then ejected from the event if they cannot carry themselves in a manner that honors Christ.
- Coaches will be teachers first (encouraging, motivating, consistent).
- Coaches will model what they expect to see in their athletes, and will be quick to seek forgiveness when they fail in these efforts.
- Each member of the Grace community will hold one another accountable as fans and participants.
- Athletes and fans alike will be empowered as missionaries and worshipers.
- God is a god of community, and we are created for community. Therefore, the core of our department will be relationships, which means that discipleship and mentorship will occur constantly.
- All Grace teams will be typified by strong, mission appropriate relationships between coaches, parents and student-athletes.

Definition of Excellence

First, let's define winning. Winning on the scoreboard is not always in our control. We cannot always control our level of talent. Certainly it is important that through a strong work ethics we maximize what we have, but everyone is born with a certain amount of God given ability. Injuries can also play a major role in whether or not a team is successful on the scoreboard. If we base our criteria for success on "winning them all," we will be needlessly disappointed most of the time. Winning must be defined in such a way that we maintain a level of control. If success is not achieved, positive steps can be taken to assure positive results. There should never be a feeling of helplessness or despair, only a continual examination of attitudes and practices that brings about improvement. How is this to be done? Our criterion for success on the field or court is the achievement of excellence. Unlike victory over an opponent, we have control of our standard of excellence. What is excellence? Simply, excellence is a standard for full achievement of potential:

EXCELLENCE

Unity in Spirit
Superior Work
Ethic
Unselfishness
Determination
Mental
Toughness
Deserving of
Victory Loving
One Another
Belief, Faith and
Trust

Excellence is not dependent upon circumstance or
ability. Excellence is not subject to the changing winds
of fortune.

Excellence is born in the human will and determined by choices made each
day by individuals working together for a common goal.

Athletic Opportunities at Grace Community School

HS Fall Season

Football

Varsity
Jr. Varsity

Volleyball

Varsity
Jr. Varsity
Freshman

Cross Country

Drill Team

Cheer

JH Fall Season

Football

8th Grade
7th Grade

Volleyball

8th A 7th A
8th B 7th B

Cross Country

HS Winter Winter

Basketball

Varsity
Jr. Varsity

Soccer

Varsity
Jr. Varsity

Swim

Varsity

JH Winter Season

Basketball

8th A 7th A
8th B 7th B

Soccer

Boys 7th/8th Combined
Girls 7th/8th Combined

Swim

Co-ed 7th/8th Combined

HS Spring Season

Baseball

Varsity
Jr. Varsity

Softball

Varsity
Jr. Varsity

Track

Varsity
Juniver Varsity

Tennis

Varsity
Jr. Varsity

Golf

Varsity
Jr. Varsity

JH Spring Season

Baseball

7th/8th Combined

Softball

7th/8th Combined

Track

Boys 7th/8th Combined
Girls 7th/8th Combined

Tennis

Co-ed 7th/8th Combined

Golf

Co-ed 7th/8th Combined

Athletic Department Rules and Regulations

Athletic Eligibility

In order to comply with initial eligible requirement to participate in athletics within the Grace Community School Athletic Department (Jr. High or High School), a student-athlete must:

- ✓ Be regularly enrolled in a full school day. Approved off-campus studies and work programs will be considered as a full school day.
- ✓ Have achieved an academically acceptable status for participation.
- ✓ Completed all initial eligibility forms including: physical forms, Grace Acknowledgment of Rules, TAPPS Acknowledgement of Rules, Grace Athletics Code of Conduct, Steroid Awareness, Heat Policy Awareness, and Concussion Policy.
- ✓ In addition to the states initial eligibility standards, a student-athlete should give respectful attention to classroom activities and show respect to all students and faculty members at all times. Failure to do so may result in a student-athlete being rules ineligible by the campus principal and/or director of athletics.

Academic Eligibility

Our heart behind each step of this policy is two-fold. We desire to identify those students who are struggling academically (so they can receive extra help to avoid being placed on academic probation), and to provide extra study time to those students who are placed on academic probation (so they have the best opportunity possible to avoid failing a course at the end of the semester).

1. All high school students' course grades will be checked every sixth week during the academic year in order to identify those course grades that are close to a 70%. These students and their parents will be communicated with so an action plan can be developed in order to help the student avoid being placed on academic probation at the 9-week point.
2. A student who is failing two or more courses at the published 9-week points will be placed on academic probation. In order to provide the student the opportunity to give his or her full attention to their studies, a student placed on academic probation is ineligible to participate in co-curricular competition or performances including, but not limited to athletics, cheerleading, fine arts, student government, and school clubs for a period of two-weeks. Ineligibility will begin the next school day after the 9-week point; likewise, the student's eligibility will not be reinstated until the next school day after the 2-week period ends.
3. If, at the end of this two-week period the student is no longer failing two or more classes, then he or she will be eligible to participate once again in co-curricular competition or performances. Students who come off academic probation may immediately lose their eligibility again if administration determines their grades are beginning to drop significantly. If the student is again failing two or more courses, then he or she will remain ineligible to participate in co-curricular competition or performances for an additional two-week period.
4. While a student who fails two or more classes at the end of the first semester will be placed on academic probation and ineligible to participate in co-curricular competition or performances during the first two weeks of the second semester, a student who fails two or more classes at the end of the second semester will not be placed on academic probation at the beginning of the next school year.

Behavioral Expectations

In accordance with the Grace Community School Athletic Department Code of Conduct, all student-athletes, coaches and spectators must conduct themselves in a manner that brings honor to our Lord Jesus Christ. Further, it is the responsibility of all members of the community to uphold this level of expectation for fellow, student-athletes, coaches, spectators and guests. Participation in athletics at Grace Community School, including competitors, coaches, spectators and guests, is a privilege. The privilege of participation may be revoked if a student-athlete, coach, spectator or guest fails to comply with these guidelines and expectations.

- ✓ Any student-athlete who is ejected from an athletic event may be suspended for the following athletic contest or a period of time no less than 1 week, whichever is the shorter amount of time.
- ✓ Any student-athlete ejected from an athletic event will be responsible for paying the mandatory fine established by TAPPS before returning to the team.
- ✓ Any student-athlete ejected from multiple athlete events may be deemed ineligible for the remainder of that particular season. Future athletic eligibility will be determined by the campus Principal and Director of Athletics.
- ✓ Any community member ejected from an athletic contest may be suspended from attending Grace Community School athletic events for a time period to be determined by the Director of Athletics and Head of School.

Drug Testing Policy

- ✓ Grace Community School has adopted a drug testing program in which all students-athletes are subject to being tested at any given time throughout the year.

Hazing

- ✓ Hazing, defined as physical or emotional abuse as a form of initiation, will not be tolerated within the athletic department. The athletic department will have a zero-tolerance policy for hazing. Student-athletes found to participate in any form of hazing will be suspended from participation in Grace Athletics for a time period to be determined by the campus principal and Director of Athletics.

Equipment

- ✓ Student-athletes are financially responsible for all equipment issued to them.
- ✓ Student-athletes will be held responsible for any equipment abuse other than normal wear and tear.

Speed and Strength Class

- ✓ The purpose of the speed and strength class is to develop student-athletes physically, mentally, and spiritually. The “Grace Way” will be our universal strength and speed class designed to develop student-athletes to compete at their highest athletic potential.

Facility Usage Policy

- ✓ Any usage of athletic facilities must be approved by the Director of Athletics.
- ✓ Student-athletes must be accompanied by an approved faculty supervisor in order to use Grace Community School athletic facilities.
- ✓ Non-Grace Community School groups or individuals are subject to a facility usage fee as well as an administrator fee for facility usage.

Quitting Policy

Commitment is an extremely important ingredient for an athlete and team. The commitment to your team and to the standards in which our school aspires to is very important whether the student-athlete is in or out of season. Commitment is especially important for a Christian student-athlete. A student-athlete who quits a team or is removed from a team has broken the trust that has been established between coach, player and team. Quitting or behaving in such a way that a student-athlete is removed from a team fractures the delicate fabric of the entire athletic department.

Any student who quits a team must wait until a week after the end of that team's season to begin any off-season program or in-season program with another team. Exceptions can be made for exceptional circumstances, such as:

*Students will not be subject to the quitting policy within the first two weeks of the season or if a team has not played its first game.

*In rare cases, all coaches involved may decide to allow a player to move on to another team, but this is very uncommon and should be initiated by the coaches, rather than the player.

*Other exceptional circumstances could arise but should not be expected.

Cougar Victory Program

Student-athletes who participate in athletics at Grace Community School are part of an honored tradition. Grace student-athletes are ambassadors for Christ and representatives of our school to the larger community. These traditions and values call for a commitment and a desire to be on mission at all times. The Cougar Victory Program is intended to help restore and redeem a student-athlete who, through poor choices in behavior, attitude, or lack of commitment, has separated himself/herself from the team.

A student-athlete who is removed from a team due to disciplinary action must complete the following program in order to regain eligibility in that sport or subsequent sports. The Victory Program must be initiated by the student-athlete and cannot begin without the approval of the Athletic Director. Any individual components of the Victory Program will be designed and monitored by the Athletic Director.

All Individual Victory Programs must all include the following three (3) components:

- ✓ Physical – there must be a physical consequence for the action of the student-athlete.
- ✓ Emotional – the student-athlete must publically apologize to his/her team and coaches for their actions.
- ✓ Spiritual – the student-athlete must participate in spiritual reconciliation program with the director of athletics.

Practice and Game Attendance

- ✓ All members of a team must attend all practice sessions and games. Failure to attend may result in suspension from the team.
- ✓ Student-athletes must travel to and from athletic contest with the team, on school provided transportation, unless specifically instructed by the head coach to travel using personal transportation.
- ✓ Any student-athlete who leaves an athletic event without the permission of the head coach will be subject to suspension from the team.

Team Selection & Playing Time

- ✓ The head coach of each sport will determine the players on the team. The selection of teams will include, but is not limited to, skill level, knowledge of sport, attitude, and experience in the sport.
- ✓ Jr. High and High School sub-varsity team members will receive adequate playing time based upon performance and meeting of team specific expectations.
- ✓ Members of varsity teams are not guaranteed playing time.
- ✓ It is the responsibility of the student-athlete to initiate communication concerning his/her role on the team.
- ✓ Coaches **WILL NOT** discuss playing time with parents.

Club/Select Teams

- ✓ Grace Athletics will take precedent over club or league competitions and practice sessions. Student-athletes will not be excused from Grace Community School athletic practices or games in order to attend game or practice sessions for club or league teams. It is the responsibility of the student-athletes to communicate his/her participation on club or league teams prior to team cuts are made so that any potential conflicts may be worked out. Failure to communicate before cuts are made may result in the removal of a student-athlete from the team.

Lettering and Awards

The athletic department will determine those student-athletes who meet all requirements for earning a letterman's jacket in the fall and spring of each year, based on coaches' recommendations. An email will be sent to that student-athlete who meet the requirements so that the family can make arrangements to order appropriate patches for the letterman's jacket. The Grace Community School athletic department will cover the cost of the letterman's jacket for those who qualify. Additional charges for patches will be covered by the student-athlete and his/her family.

Sunday & Wednesday Practice Policy

- ✓ Grace Community School teams are prohibited from travel for athletic purposes on Sunday, per TAPPS regulations.
- ✓ There will be no athletic events (games or practice) on Sunday.
- ✓ All athletic teams will conclude practice sessions at or before 6:00pm on Wednesday afternoons.
- ✓ There will be no athletic games on Wednesday except for rare exceptions.

Athletic Banquets and Recognitions

- ✓ At the conclusion of each athletic season, teams will hold individual athletic celebrations. The purpose of these events will be to celebrate the accomplishments of the preceding season.
- ✓ All individual team awards will be given during the individual team celebrations.
- ✓ College signings and recognitions will be done as appropriate during the year.
- ✓ TAPPS awards (all-district, all-state, academic all-state) award winner will be recognized at the end of the year celebration for each sport, as well as in publications and emails throughout the season.

Grace Athletic Department End of the Year Awards Recognition:

- ✓ **Cougar Award** – This award will be given to the two (2) upper class athletes (1 male/1 female) who have been nominated by faculty and coaches based on the following criteria:

- 1 Participation in multiple sports
- 2 Recognition of Athletic Achievement
- 3 Exhibited Leadership
- 4 Academic Achievement
- 5 Community Service
- 6 Christian Character Qualities
- 7 Work Ethic and Commitment

- ✓ **Scholar Athlete of the Year** - This award will be given to the two (2) upper class athletes (1 male/1 female) who have achieve superior academic performance and nominated by coaches based on the following criteria from the GPA Distribution scale:

GPA Distribution scale

GPA	Points	GPA	Points
100	70	95	60
99.5	69	94.5	59
99	68	94	58
98.5	67	93.5	57
98	66	93	56
97.5	65	92.5	55
97	64	92	54
96.5	63	91.5	53
96	62	91	52
95.5	61	90.5	51
		90	50

Additional Athletic Points:

2-sport athlete	20 points
3-sport athlete	25 points
4+sport athlete	30 points

- ✓ **Athlete of the Year** - This award will be given to the two (2) upper class athletes (1 male/1 female) who have been nominated by faculty and coaches based on the following criteria:

- 1 Participation in multiple sports
- 2 Recognition of Athletic Achievement
- 3 Exhibited Leadership
- 4 Work Ethic and Commitment

- ✓ **Cougar Scholar Athlete Recognition** – Student-athletes will be recognized for academic accomplishment based on GPA Distribution Scale:

MVP Scholar Athlete	90-100 points
1 st Team Cougar Scholar Athlete	80-89 points
2 nd Team Cougar Scholar Athlete	70-79 points

General Information for Parents

Pre-Season Team Meeting

- ✓ All parents are required to attend pre-season parent meetings.
- ✓ At the pre-season meeting parents will be introduced to coaches, be given specific information for the upcoming season, and reminded of our shared commitment to the Grace Athletics Code of Conduct.

Volunteer Requirement

- ✓ All parents will be required to volunteer for a minimum of 1 athletic home events
- ✓ Parents will be assigned volunteer event prior to the start of the athletic season
- ✓ Failure to volunteer may result in a mandatory fine.

Required Forms

- ✓ Prior to the start of the season all parents and student-athletes must complete the following forms:
 - TAPPS Acknowledgement of Rules Form
 - Pre-Physical Medical History Form
 - TAPPS Heat Policy Acknowledgement
 - TAPPS Concussion Policy Acknowledgement
 - TAPPS Steroid Awareness Education Acknowledgement Form

Athletic Fees

- ✓ Athletic fees must be paid 1 week prior to the first district game for high school athletes. Jr. High athletic fees should be paid within one week of team selection or 24 hours prior to first game contest.
- ✓ Cheer, Drill Team, and Spirit Squad Fees must be paid in a time period set by these activity sponsors.

Sport	H.S. Fee	J.H. Fee
Football	\$200	\$200
	\$500 1 st Year	\$500 1 st Year
Golf	\$150	\$150
Tennis	\$150	\$150
Swimming	\$150	\$150
All Other Sports	\$150	\$100

