

COVENANT LIFE SCHOOL

Parent-Student Athletic Handbook

2011-2012 School Year

The Parent-Student Athletic Handbook provides reference information and answers to questions related to sports at Covenant Life School.

Introduction

The Parent-Student Athletic Handbook defines the goals, structure and policies of the athletic program at Covenant Life School. The Handbook also provides reference information and answers to questions related to sports at Covenant Life School. Participants in CLS athletics will find guidelines for various situations; however, The Handbook is not intended to be exhaustive or to provide specific direction for each circumstance. We rely on participants to communicate with the athletic office if there are any questions or concerns about the contents of the Handbook.

Athletic Program Philosophy Statement

Our mission in the Covenant Life School Athletic Program is to prepare students for the call of God on their lives (2 Timothy 2:20-22) through competitive sports. “Sports suit our minds and our bodies,” says theologian Randy Alcorn. “They’re an expression of our God-designed humanity.” As we have fun and display physical skill in sports, we can show the nature of God (Genesis 1:26; 1 Timothy 4:4-5). Because we educate whole persons— physical and non-physical – and God wants our whole person to be like Him, athletics has been a valued part of the Covenant Life School community. Each part of our lives should please God, including our involvement in interscholastic athletics. Therefore we seek to play sports in a Christian way by bringing God glory (1 Corinthians 10:31) and by seeking the good of others (1 Corinthians 10:23-24) in three specific areas: Character, Competition, and Community.

Character

John Wooden once said, “Sports does not develop character; it reveals character.” We see that athletic competition gives lots of chances to grow in holy living and we seek to make the most of these teaching moments. While we train our players to play with virtue, we also teach them to see their inability to earn God’s acceptance (Romans 3:20) and to place their hope in the gospel (John 3:36). As our players respond to God’s grace, we help them please God by developing self-control, patience, perseverance, and humility in confronting selfishness, impatience, laziness, and pride. Sports also has a way of reflecting everyday life – both the ups and the downs. We use these opportunities to teach values like preparation, courage, dedication, responsibility, teamwork, and having fun. Our coaches guide players to think and play according to Scripture in each place of competition. Because our teams represent Covenant Life Church and ultimately Jesus Christ, we seek to show the power of the gospel in our thoughts, words and deeds to the broader community (Colossians 4:5).

Competition

Sports historian Benjamin Lowe observed that “competition is the whetstone against which the athlete sharpens his abilities in his search for excellence.” Competition gives players the chance to test their physical skills and offers the incentive for their best efforts (Ecclesiastes 4:4; 1 Corinthians 9:25). It also provides a sense of satisfaction from playing well. We see the temptations to pride and worldliness (1 John 2:15-17) that often come with competition, especially in a culture with an exaggerated view of athletes, and we encourage students to put their hope in God instead of the praise of men (John 12:43) or their own achievements and abilities (Psalm 147:10-11; Jeremiah 17:5-8). We also help students build a biblical self-image fixed in the grace of God. While devoted to biblical standards of integrity and fairness, we strive to play with passion, intensity, and skill.

Community

All of the sports in the athletic program are team sports. Therefore, each athlete must lower self for the team (Philippians 2:3-5), work with others to accomplish team goals (James 3:13-18), help one another (John 15:12-13), encourage and honor godly character (1 Corinthians 1:4-6; Ephesians 4:29) and submit to authorities (Hebrews 13:17). We believe God gave sports to us as a gift for our enjoyment (James 1:17; 1 Timothy 6:17), and we build relationships by enjoying together the gift of sports. Whether as a member of a team or as a spectator, our participation in interscholastic competition enriches our school community.

Athletic Program Objectives

Our student-athletes will pursue the following objectives:

- Bring glory to God and seek the good of others
- Display growing godly character
- Think about and play sports with a biblical worldview
- Represent the gospel to our broader community
- Train and condition to meet the demands of the sport
- Practice basic skills and techniques
- Learn knowledge of rules and tactics
- Enjoy with their team God's gift of sports

High School Philosophy of Athletics

The following describes typical high school team structures and distinctions to unify administration, coaches, and players in our efforts to play interscholastic sports in a Christian way.

Junior Varsity

Junior varsity is the prep team for the varsity team. JV players have less experience or lack the necessary ability for varsity, therefore these players play in JV games to gain skills and experience and to prepare for varsity level competition. JV contains two types of players: 1) younger players who desire to play varsity in the future and 2) players who desire to play only at the JV level. JV games have starters and substitutes that can change from game to game, and substitutes play nearly in all games. Most JV players are in their freshman and sophomore years in school though occasionally a player in their junior year may play. JV plays a slightly shorter season than varsity and has up to four events per week. JV games are often played immediately before a varsity game and may or may not travel with the varsity dependent on the size of the varsity team and availability of transportation. In recognition performance, athletes on JV teams are given a JV pin.

Varsity

Varsity is the strongest and principal team that represents Covenant Life School against varsity teams at other schools. Therefore, varsity is the most organized and intense level of competition and requires enough physical strength, tactical knowledge, and technical skill from players to handle strenuous

practices and difficult game situations. Varsity has first-string who are the main players in the game (starters and top substitutes) and second-string who are not the main players in the game. First-string and second-string can change from game to game during the season. Coaches will sometimes call on a second-string player at a point in a game when a first-string player is injured, not performing well, or is disqualified from the game. Playing time at varsity is earned in practices. Nearly all varsity players are in grades 9-12. Varsity has five events per week and usually play two (sometimes three) games per week. Varsity may attend additional tournaments beyond the PVAC. In recognition of their high level of performance, athletes on varsity teams are given varsity letters.

Middle School Philosophy of Athletics

Middle school introduces players to interscholastic athletics. Players in middle school often have little experience in competitive sports and are beginning to learn the game, so players participate to develop fundamental skills and strategies, explore strengths and weaknesses, gain experience in games, and have fun. Players at various levels of athletic ability are welcome, however at times cuts are necessary given staffing, transportation, and the desire to provide experience in games. While building team understanding and unity, middle school emphasizes both participation and competition. Middle school games have starters and substitutes that can change from game to game, and substitutes play in nearly all games but not as much as starters given experience and skill. Teams will play to win games within the context of coaches seeking opportunities to give each player game-time experience. Middle school plays a shorter season than high school teams. Middle school has three events a week with usually two games a week during the season.

Athletic Program Oversight & Organization

We seek to provide high quality coaches experienced in both the coaching and playing of their particular sport so that they understand how to lead effectively while still remaining responsive to the needs of the player. The phone numbers of each coach will be provided to the players each season, and we encourage active communication between players and coaches, as well as with parents and coaches. We do ask that you be considerate of the personal needs and privacy of each coach.

The athletic director oversees the athletic program to make sure it functions in a manner consistent with the philosophy and goals of CLS. The athletic director will coordinate, schedule, and oversee all department activities. He will ensure focus, excellence, and effective implementation of the athletic program philosophy.

There will be three sports seasons--fall, winter and spring. During each season, we will offer sports for both girls and boys. We will seek to select a head coach and an assistant coach for each team to provide a high level of coaching and oversight and to provide coverage in case coaches cannot make particular practices or games. Most coaches work outside of the academic arena and are juggling their schedules in order to serve our children. Therefore, because of this arrangement, practice schedules may need to be somewhat flexible.

Communication between players, parents, and coaches is vital for the success of the athletic program. When concerns or offenses arise, please communicate directly with the individual involved in the situation. If the concern is not settled, please then contact the athletic director about the situation.

League Affiliations

The athletic program is a member of the Potomac Valley Athletic Conference (PVAC). Member schools of the PVAC include: The Barrie School; Covenant Life School; Edmund Burke School; The Field School; Grace Brethren School; The Melvin J. Berman Hebrew School; The Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School; Kendall School; The McLean School; Montrose Christian School; Oakcrest School; Queen Anne School; Saint Anselm's Abbey School; Sandy Spring Friends School; Washington International School; Washington Waldorf School.

Areas of Responsibility for the Student-Athlete

Our student-athletes are responsible to manage and make the following areas of responsibility fruitful:

- Culture & Community of the Team
- Personal Growth & Change
- Relationships with Authority & Teammates
- Academics
- Facilities & Resources

General Responsibilities of the Student-Athlete

Participation in the athletic program is viewed as a privilege. The following general requirements are applicable to all players.

1. Players must meet their obligations at home first. We support and encourage the parents in withholding the privilege of playing sports if that player is not meeting stated responsibilities at home. We would ask that when parents see a potential problem in this area, they alert the coaches as soon as possible so that adjustments to the team can be planned.
2. Any student suspended from school will also be suspended from participation in the athletic program for the amount of time equal to the length of the school suspension. Depending on the nature of the violation, the player may be removed from participation for the entire season or for the entire school year.
3. Removal of a player from a sports team due to discipline may affect eligibility for sports participation in subsequent seasons. Parents should contact the athletic director for approval to participate after being removed.
4. Players on disciplinary probation will be able to participate in the athletic program, unless otherwise restricted.
5. A student expelled or dismissed from school will automatically be removed from participation in the athletic program for at least one sports season and possibly for the entire year, depending on the extent of the expulsion. The student will require the School Board's permission to regain eligibility in the athletic program.
6. Players must meet their obligations in regularly attending church and care group (applicable for students in grades 9-12).
7. Players must meet all administrative requirements in order to qualify to play, including the provision of registration forms in the Athletic Registration Packet along with fees in the required time frames.

8. Students must be in school on the day of a game or practice to participate. If a student will miss all or part of a school day (this does not include brief absences for scheduled appointments), special permission must be requested from the athletic director to participate in athletics that day.
9. Players are expected to fully participate in all scheduled PE activities, unless there is an early dismissal for a contest.
10. If a player receives a detention, the player must serve the detention on the assigned day by the teacher. If there is practice or a game after school that day, the player must first serve the detention before being permitted to participate in athletics. The coach may decide whether further consequences are warranted.
11. All eligible students must meet the following age and school grade requirements to participate in the athletic program:
 - Middle school students must be 11, 12, 13, 14 years old as of 8/31 of the school year of participation and enrolled in grades 6, 7, or 8.
 - High school students must be 14, 15, 16, 17, or 18 as of 8/31 of the school year of participation and enrolled in grades 9, 10, 11, or 12.
12. Any home-schooled student must meet the following requirements to participate in the athletic program:
 - Be enrolled in the Family Schools Program
 - Turn in a curriculum plan to the Family Schools Program
 - Take at least 4 academic classes
 - Be taking no more than 3 college courses in one semester

Academic Responsibilities of the Student-Athlete

These are the minimum academic guidelines that players in **Covenant Life School** must meet in order to remain eligible for athletic participation:

All players must maintain a C average. A weekly academic eligibility standard will be enforced at Covenant Life School for athletic participation. If during the season a student's cumulative grade is an "F" in one course or a "D" in two courses, the athlete will be ineligible to play in any contest the immediate following week and until such time that their grades are brought up. On Monday the school office will run a report for all in-season athletes who have an "F" or 2 "D's" in their assigned courses. The Principal will notify athletes that they have been suspended from playing in athletic contests until the following week when grades are checked again. The Principal will communicate names along with grades to the athletic office and the athletic office will notify the appropriate coaches. The coaches will be encouraged to discuss the issue with the athlete. Players may not sit or travel (including early dismissals) with the team when on suspension. When an athlete is notified of the suspension and the athlete believes that the grade is incorrect, it is the responsibility of the athlete to get to the teacher and talk to them about their grade. At this time, if the teacher is in error, they notify the Principal, who notifies the athletic office and then the office notifies the coach.

These are the minimum academic guidelines that players in the **Family Schools Program** must meet in order to remain eligible for athletic participation:

All players must maintain a C average. At the mid-point and the end of each quarter, parents will evaluate the grades of their players. Any player receiving two D's or one F at the mid-point or at the end of each quarter will be ineligible to practice or play with the team until the problem has been effectively

addressed by the parents. It will be the parents' responsibility to inform the coach when this athletic suspension begins and ends.

Team Responsibilities of the Student-Athlete

1. Players and parents must complete The Registration Packet before attending tryouts for a team. Players must complete the registration process for each season because each team is unique. Players will not be allowed to participate in tryouts until The Registration Packet with payment is completed and returned to the CLS office.
2. Players will be charged an athletic participation fee each season to help offset the expenses of running the program. This fee must be paid at the same time of registration. The athletic program offers a \$20 Early Bird Special which expires two Thursdays before the first day of tryouts.
3. If a player, as a result of injury, must stop participating on an athletic team, the player can ask the athletic office for a refund of a portion of their athletic participation fee. The refund will be in proportion to the number of games left to be played (for example, if 15 of 20 games are still to be played, a 75% refund would be given). Yet if over half of the games have been played and a player stops playing on a sports team for medical reasons, no refund will be given. (Please note that no refund will be given to players who quit the team or are removed from the team for disciplinary reasons.)
4. Players who withdraw from a team within one week after team tryouts are completed or before the first game will receive a partial refund of their participation fee as determined by the athletic director and school administrator. After this, no refunds are given for voluntary withdrawal from a team.
5. Players must conduct themselves in a manner that represents Covenant Life School favorably.
6. Players must maintain a positive attitude and seek to put into practice all suggestions by coaches. Additionally players are expected to exhibit and promote positive attitudes and performance among teammates, coaches, and managers at all times.
7. Players must attend and be on time for all practices and games. A player may be suspended for an unexcused absence. After two unexcused absences, a player may be removed from the team for that season. Players should contact coaches as soon as they become aware that there will be an absence. If the coach cannot be reached, leave a message at the school. If a player is injured or ill, that player must still seek to contact the coach.
8. Practices and games during holidays/vacation times are not mandatory but are encouraged. Planned absences (for example, family vacations) must be brought to the attention of the coach within a reasonable amount of time for the coach to prepare for that absence.
9. Practices begin promptly at the scheduled starting times. Players should not arrive for an event more than 15 minutes early, and should not stay after school for an event unless supervision is provided (Example: If basketball practice begins at 4:00, student-athletes should only stay on campus if parent supervision is provided. Players may request permission from a teacher to stay after school and work on a project, but only under the supervision of a teacher.). Players are not permitted to leave practices/games early without prior approval of a coach.
10. Players must arrange for rides in a timely manner (within 15 minutes) at the conclusion of practices and contests.
11. Players must support and display an attitude of respect towards authority figures, including all coaches, referees, school administrators and parents. Disrespect will not be tolerated and will result in discipline, or removal from the team.
12. Players must report all injuries immediately to head coach and get appropriate medical attention.

13. Players must show respect towards their opponents. While cheering and celebrating are encouraged, doing so in a manner that mocks or shows disrespect towards others may not be tolerated and will result in disciplinary action, or even removal from the team.
14. Cursing will not be tolerated during either practices or games, and will result in suspensions.
15. Players are expected to give maximum effort at all times and work in a disciplined and dedicated manner in practices and games. Consistent lack of effort is deemed unacceptable and will have consequences, even removal from the team.
16. Players are expected to encourage and support one another. While competition for playing time is encouraged, it may never come at the expense of your relationship with one another. What we do, we do as a team.
17. Players must encourage, exhort, and be positive to all players, coaches, and staff when sitting on the bench.
18. Coaches have sole discretion regarding playing time for each player. Each player should get the chance to play significantly during practice. Coaches will have discretion over the players' participation in drills, based on the abilities of the players and the safety of the drills. As a general rule, middle school and junior varsity emphasize game-time participation and skill development. While still playing to win, middle school and JV coaches will seek opportunities to give each player significant game-time throughout the season. Varsity is the principal team which represents CLS against other schools and emphasizes competition. Varsity coaches will seek to give each player some playing time during the course of the entire season, dependent upon effort, closeness of the game, and the necessary skill development to compete (see High School & Middle School Philosophy sections). Coaches will seek to communicate to the team before the season that each player's role on the team is vital for the success of the team success and should communicate as early as possible in the season what each player's role is on the team to set proper expectations during the season.
19. The team may not be able to carry all students who want to participate in a particular sport. To carry too many players *or players who do not possess sufficient ability* can be negative to the team as a whole and to the individual players. At such times there will be tryouts and cuts. The criteria will be explained by the coach and will be in line with the philosophy of the athletic program (see Try-outs and Team Selection Section).
20. When transportation is provided to practice/games by the school, players must return to school on that transportation unless a direct request is approved by the coach for alternative transportation. Parents should seek to pick up their student in a timely manner after practices and games. Players may listen to personal music that promotes biblical values while traveling to and from games. Coaches will speak with players, parents, and the administration if they have concerns about a player's musical choices.
21. If a student chooses to participate in another sport's team while participating on a CLS team, the CLS team will be a priority with respect to any practice or game conflicts. Any absences from scheduled events for the CLS sport's team shall be considered an unexcused absence.
22. Failure to comply with any or all of these guidelines may lead to suspension or dismissal from the team.

Guidelines for Spectators

Spectators – students, faculty, parents, alumni or friends – bear important responsibilities to the school for the atmosphere and conduct of games. Be an exemplary role model to our students and guests by positively supporting our team. Practices are a controlled learning environment for the athletes. The coach may ask visitors to leave if they are a distraction. Please watch games from those areas defined

by each school as spectator areas. Do not call to players, coaches, or officials in an unsportsmanlike manner, go onto the field of play or deface property. Any action which detracts from the ability of the coaches, players, and officials to do their best is not acceptable.

If upper school students (grades 6-12) are dropped off to watch a game, we ask that they arrive no earlier than 15 minutes before the game. Upper school students should not stay after school to wait for a game unless supervision is provided. If students and children come to watch a game, please insist that they stay and watch the event.

The above guidelines ruled are summarized in the following Cougar House Rules:

- CONSIDER visiting coaches, players, and fans as guests
- OVERSEE personal belongings by keeping them with you
- UNDERSTAND that use of the court/field is only for team players
- GLORIFY God by demonstrating good sportsmanship
- ATTEND the game & AVOID roaming the facility
- RESPECT decisions made by the officials
- SUPERVISE children at all times

Medical/Insurance Policy

CLS requires all players to have an annual medical examination by a physician or certified nurse practitioner that covers the entire season. If a student has a medical examination on file from a previous sport, the examination will be applicable as long as twelve months have not elapsed since the evaluation was completed and it covers the entire season. We strongly recommend scheduling examinations during the summer before the Early Bird deadline to benefit from the registration fee discount.

CLS does not provide medical insurance coverage for athletic participation. By providing a signed registration form, families are accepting full responsibility of the cost and liability for any accidents or injuries that may occur. This does not include riding to and from games in any school vehicle.

Equipment & Facilities

Uniforms will be purchased by the athletic program with minor exceptions (e.g. athletic socks and caps) and will remain the property of the athletic program. Players should wear uniforms only during games or by special permission of the coach. Players will turn all pieces of the team uniform to the CLS office within five (5) school days following the end-of-season awards assembly. Please place the complete uniform, jersey, shorts, etc in a plastic bag with the name of the player written on a note inside the bag as well. A replacement fee will be charged for uniforms not returned. Players will not be allowed to participate in the next athletic season until they return their uniform to the school. School equipment must be handled with care. Students will be required to reimburse the school for equipment that is damaged as a result of negligence or carelessness.

We have two specific clothing requirements for modesty of practice clothing:

- Boys and girls should wear shorts with an inseam of at least five inches

- Boys and girls should wear t-shirts that cover the shoulder and upper arm

Awards & Recognition

Team Awards – The coaches will give recognition for outstanding effort, teamwork, leadership, character and specific skills at the end of each season. This will take place at the end-of-season assembly. Other awards and recognition may be given at an informal team party. The players and parents may be asked for a donation to support the dinner. Coaches select one player for each of the following awards:

- **Coaches Award:** This award would go to a player who displays excellent character and sportsmanship consistently through the season. This player also contributes significantly to the team beyond just ability in the sport, specifically team unity, encouragement, servanthood, respect.
- **Most Valuable Player:** This award would go to a player who displays consistent Christ-like character and excellent ability in the sport. This player also contributes greatly to the success of the team, because of ability.
- **Most Improved Player:** This award would go to a valuable member of the team who displayed a significant increase in skill and level of play.

Varsity Letters – The athletic director and coaches will award varsity letters to all varsity athletes at the awards assembly at the end of the school year. Every varsity player has a role to play, however minor, and will receive a letter for the participation on the varsity team. Please note that letters will not be given to varsity players who quit the team or are removed from the team for disciplinary reasons.

Tri-Athlete Award - Recipients of this award have displayed dedication in each sports season and have received three varsity letters during the school year.

Athletic Achievement Award – Recipients of the athletic achievement award have distinguished themselves in a particular sport over multiple seasons. This award recognizes students who have dedicated their time and talents in one particular sport and have received accolades from multiple sources for their performance.

Christlike Male & Female Athlete Award – Recipients of the Christlike Athlete Award must have demonstrated, over a significant amount of time and in various sports seasons, exemplary Christian character and leadership. This award recognizes both outstanding athletic ability and dedication to think about and play sports like Jesus. These student-athletes will have their names engraved on a plaque kept in our trophy case.

Outstanding Male & Female Athlete – Recipients of this award are the outstanding girl and boy athlete at CLS. Eligible students must not only be gifted and godly athletes, they must stay academically eligible and have earned at least six varsity letters in their careers. That means they must have distinguished themselves in multiple sports. These student-athletes will have their names engraved on a plaque kept in our trophy case downstairs.

Covenant Life School Record Book – The athletic director records and publishes annually this booklet at the end-of-year awards ceremony which captures the history of our athletic program. Records include team championships, conference accolades, team rosters, results, and other individual team records.

Interscholastic Sports

Most team sports will be offered for both the Middle School (grades 6-8) and the High School (grades 9-12). Students enrolled in the day school or the Family School's programs are eligible for participation.

- Fall – Cross Country, Soccer, Volleyball
- Winter – Basketball, Wrestling
- Spring – Baseball, Golf, Softball

Scheduling

We seek to develop a competitive program which respects and reinforces each player's spiritual, academic, and family responsibilities.

- Practices for all teams should not exceed two hours. All activities – warm-up, practice, meeting with coaches, team discussions, etc. – should be completed within two hours.
- Teams may be dismissed before the close of the normal school day for away contests and some home contests only upon approval of the athletic director. In the case of an early dismissal, day school players will be dismissed from class 10 minutes prior to game departure time. Effort will be made for student-athletes to be dismissed early from classes no more than one time per week for an athletic contest. Exceptions will be given for tournament play and make up games.
- Players should change into their uniforms in the locker rooms and gather with their team in the South Lobby.
- For games or practices that begin after 4:00pm, players will need to leave the campus and return for warm-ups at a time designated by the coach.

Tryouts & Team Selection

All students in Grades 6-12 who are enrolled in Covenant Life School or the Family Schools Program are eligible to try out for athletic teams and are given equal consideration. Students in grades 6-8 should try out for the middle school teams and students in grades 9-12 should try out for junior varsity or varsity teams (see General Requirements of the Student Athlete #12). Selections will be made on the basis of ability and character. On occasion the athletic director with School Board approval will invite an 8th grader to try out for a high school team if a.) the student-athlete possesses exceptional ability or b.) the high school team needs additional players. The spiritual health and maturity of the 8th grader will be an essential prerequisite in either case.

For practical reasons, such as coaching limitations, transportation logistics, etc., it may be necessary to limit the number of students on the rosters. If cuts are necessary, the following criteria will be used in evaluating each student:

Ability

- Does the student have the basic skills needed to compete at the level required for that specific sport?
- Does the student have athletic gifts and the potential to develop the skills needed?
- *Only under special circumstances would a student-athlete not be cut from the team who does not fulfill the above requirements.*

Attitude

- Does the student seem to represent the Lord and our school well?
- Does the student seem to show proper respect for the coaches?
- Does the student seem to be coachable/teachable?
- Effort and discipline during practice
- Promptness, attendance and reliability

Teamwork

- Does the student seem to exhibit the characteristics of a team player?

Godly character is a vital distinctive of the athletic program. As long as students meet reasonable expectations for attitude and teamwork, the coach will primarily evaluate athletes on the basis of their ability. The coaches will submit final roster decisions to the athletic director for approval. The coach will communicate decisions to each family with specific reasons for players who do not make the team.

Team Captains - Criteria

The athletic program holds high qualification standards for students to participate on our teams. For a student to be named captain, our stand is even higher, because we are looking for the additional qualities and character that make a leader on and off the field or court:

- Leads by example – stands out as godly influence among peers
- Joyful – taking the right things seriously, enjoying God’s goodness and grace
- Others-focused – encouraging and caring for others on the team
- Able to exhort teammates appropriately and humbly
- Responds well to correction – in technique and in character
- Diligent – a hard worker during practice, setting the pace and leading by example
- Disciplined – showing diligence in studies as well as athletics

Obviously it is better to have upper class students as captains. Coaches should submit recommendations for captain(s) to the athletic director for approval.