

ATHLETICS

INTRODUCTION

This section has been written to enhance communication between parents, coaches, and school administrators. Please familiarize yourselves with the rules and regulations that govern participation in our program. If you have any questions, please direct them to Jack Leary, Director of Athletics at 742-3206, x3265. Parents are asked to demonstrate their support by attending as many athletic events as possible. Freshman and junior varsity players really appreciate seeing their parents at their games. Complete schedules are available at the start of every season. By design, athletic participation is loaded with successes and failures, setbacks and triumphs. Parents can make a big difference in how these situations are handled. Parents who encourage their son or daughter to go to their coaches for clarification, understanding and counsel are contributing to their child's normal growth, development, and maturity.

TO THE ATHLETES

The St. Thomas High School Athletic Department is very pleased you have chosen to become a member of one of our athletic teams. Interscholastic athletics provide many opportunities for you to grow and develop as a young adult. We hope the friendships you make, the challenges you face, and the excitement you generate will make this season a memorable experience.

As an athlete, your actions on and off the field reflect on the entire athletic program. Your behavior helps to shape the perceptions of those who make decisions that will impact the future of STA Athletics. The School Administration, and the school community, cherish the values associated with competitive athletics and support our program accordingly. We expect our athletes to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the department's philosophy. "Saints" Athletic Teams take tremendous pride in their preparation and performance. Our athletes work long and hard, compete intensely, and treat opposing teams with respect. They have represented our school and community with style and class. We are counting on you to continue this successful tradition. We encourage you to set high goals and commit yourself to their attainment. The rewards will not come quickly or easily, but when you do succeed, the sense of accomplishment will be well worth the effort.

Interscholastic Athletics can be a fun, rewarding, and memorable part of the high school experience. While academics offer the primary source for formal education, athletics can contribute to the total value of that education in many different ways. Building upon the concepts of teamwork, fair play, sportsmanship, and self-esteem, athletics can help to provide a well-rounded educational experience. Athletic participation is a privilege and not a right. To those who strive to succeed in the classroom comes the privilege to compete outside of it. The interscholastic (high school) sport experience is much different than the recreational sport experience. Whereas recreational sport philosophy stresses equal participation by all, at the interscholastic level playing time is earned and not guaranteed. Student-athletes earn playing time through good work ethics in practice, skill development, sportsmanship, and overall team attitude. Likewise, not all who try out for a given team will endure through the final selection process to make the team roster. Coaches are responsible for the selection of team rosters and for the determination of

playing time for those on the team. Activities held in the off season, whether it be for weight training and conditioning, team camps, summer/fall leagues, specialized training, or any other type of out of season participation, can in no way affect an athlete's ability to try out for or participate (playing time) on an in season team. Participation in any out of season activity is strictly voluntary on the part of the athlete. Coaches may not mandate nor pass judgment based upon out of season participation. A parent reserves the right to send his/her child to any out of season source for the purpose of conditioning, training, or specialized instruction. Participation in St. Thomas based out of season opportunities are simply that: Opportunities!

ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT PHILOSOPHY:

The Athletic Department at St. Thomas Aquinas High School views interscholastic athletics as an opportunity for student participation in an organized, competitive environment. While the ultimate goal of athletic competition is to know victory, the achievement of objectives such as fair play, sportsmanship, skill acquisition, and work ethic cannot be overlooked. Winning traditions are founded upon the concepts of pride, respect, dedication, character and loyalty. Coaches, athletes, and parents alike must strive to ensure that the athletic teams at St. Thomas represent themselves in a manner that is conducive to both competitive spirit and good sportsmanship.

ST. THOMAS STUDENTS ARE ST. THOMAS ATHLETES:

St. Thomas prides itself on being a community. In the spirit of that community, St. Thomas requires that all student athletes may only participate in interscholastic sports for their school, St. Thomas Aquinas. Effective for students in the Class of 2011 and thereafter, St. Thomas students may not play interscholastic sports for any school other than St. Thomas if the sport is available at St. Thomas.

ATHLETIC “CHAIN OF COMMAND”



If there are any questions or concerns regarding any aspect of the Player–Coach Relationship, the athlete should first contact the appropriate coach. If there is no resolution at this level, he/she should then move onward to the next level in the “Chain of Command” hierarchy, until resolution is achieved. (*The “Chain of Command” is a step by step process bringing together the primary individuals for discussion purposes. Each level is in place in order to assist in the process of conflict resolution.*) Parents are also asked to respect this “Chain of Command” model regarding problem resolution.

TO THE PARENTS

Being a parent can be rewarding and challenging. The rewards and responsibilities of

parenting are often complicated by being a parent of a student-athlete. Hopefully this handbook assists your understanding of the St. Thomas Aquinas athletics mission, the benefits of the STA athletic program objectives, offerings, policies, procedures and guidelines, and insight into some of the responsibilities of being a student-athlete and a parent of a student-athlete. Please take the time to review the information in this handbook with your child. In the end, you and your child will have to sign stating that you have read, understand, and agree to abide by the policies contained in this handbook.

SECTION A: RELATIONSHIPS

PLAYER-COACH RELATIONSHIP:

All too often during athletic events, situations arise where many adults become too involved in the game in progress, professing to know more than the coaches or even the officials in charge. While this expertise may heighten a person's appreciation for a particular sport, it in no way changes the status of the individual as a parent-spectator. You should be there only to observe and enjoy the athletic performance. The player-coach relationship is perhaps the most critical of all relationships in athletics. Parents can have a very profound effect upon this important and delicate balance. While you as a parent may not agree with all decisions that a coach may make, how and when you express your feelings can have a decided effect upon your child. If you express a negative opinion in front of your child, you need to remember that he or she may carry your convictions to the next practice or game. This in turn can lead to a player-coach confrontation. You as a parent have great influence upon this delicate relationship. Please allow the coaches to do the job for which they were hired. Coaches are expected to be leaders to their players and role models for their players. They are expected to teach and guide the players who play for them. They are not there to be friends or buddies. Coaches must demand respect from their players and give respect to their players in return. **Concepts such as integrity, character, and sportsmanship provide the foundation upon which our coaching philosophy is based.**

PARENT-COACH RELATIONSHIP:

As a parent you obviously want what is best for your child. Allowing the coach to guide and instruct the team is crucial. Again, you are asked to please allow the coach to do his/her job. Should you have any questions or concerns, do not approach the coach immediately after a game. At this time, coaches have other responsibilities and it may be a very emotional moment. Call and make an appointment for a later time and approach this meeting in a calm and logical manner. For many coaches, one of the post-game responsibilities is to meet with his/her players. Athletes should not be expected to stop and talk to parents and friends immediately after a game is over. These team meetings are essential to the learning process and are important in efforts to build team unity and understanding.

PARENT-PLAYER RELATIONSHIP:

Sometimes parents may try to re-live their own athletic memories through the real life athletic efforts of their children. Being positive and supportive is very important, but adding pressure and unrealistic expectations may be extremely harmful. Allow your child

to enjoy and to grow and to take responsibility for his/her athletic experiences. Encourage your child to give 100% effort and to become a team player, not an individual statistic seeker. In the end, it is the child's perception of the game that really matters, not that of the parents.

PARENT/PLAYER-GAME OFFICIALS RELATIONSHIP:

It is often the case that if a game is seemingly leaning toward one side over the other, irate fans will infer an unfair advantage given by the officials. The home school does not select the officials. A sport commissioner assigns all officials and neither team has a say in which officials are assigned to a given game or event. Game officials agree to and follow a code of conduct and ethics. They really do not have a vested interest in which team emerges victorious. It is very essential to understand that officials are an integral part of the game. While you may not agree with all of their calls, please do not harass and taunt game officials. Parents should be good role models for their children. Remember that officials are in charge of the game and have complete authority to have unruly spectators removed. Many times a given team may see the same officials on several occasions throughout the course of a season. Coaches, Athletic Directors and School Administrators work hard to establish good working relationships with game officials. This relationship can be easily damaged or destroyed by spectator interference.

SECTION B: RESPONSIBILITIES

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ATHLETE:

Athletes are expected to adhere to the following guidelines:

1. The team's goals and success should always come before individual interests.
2. Athletes need to be in attendance at all scheduled practices and games, including weekends and holiday breaks.
3. Athletes must be receptive to coaching styles.
4. Team members are responsible for all issued uniforms and equipment.
5. Athletes are responsible for the security of all personal items. Use assigned lockers.
6. As a team member an athlete must abide by established team rules.
7. All injuries must be reported to the coach and to the Athletic Trainer.
8. Strive for academic success in order to assure athletic eligibility.
9. Take pride in being a student-athlete at St. Thomas.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COACH:

Coaches are responsible for all of the following:

1. Running fair tryouts and using an effective evaluation process.
2. Determining the style of play, including offensive and defensive philosophy.
3. Teaching, instructing, and overseeing all practice sessions.
4. Determining starting lineups and making decisions regarding playing time.
5. Selecting position players.
6. Establishing and enforcing team and school rules.
7. Coordinating communication with players and parents with regards to games and practices.
8. Provide appropriate supervision at all times (before, during, and after all games and practices).

9. Presenting themselves as appropriate role models.
10. Be willing and available to discuss player-coach or parent-coach issues.
11. Be consistent, fair, and respectful of individual differences.
12. Develop team and individual objectives and goals.
13. Foster a healthy atmosphere for athletic competition.
14. Lead by example.

It is important to remember that participation on an athletic team is a privilege and not a right. Being part of and maintaining one's membership on a given team means accepting all the responsibilities of an athlete. Unlike recreational or intramural teams, equal or guaranteed playing time is not assured. Coaches will make the necessary decisions and utilize those players best suited to the conditions or demands of the particular contest on any given day.

POST PRACTICE – GAME RESPONSIBILITIES:

Athletes should not be loitering on school property after practices or games. In an effort to avoid potential risk of injury, property damage, or theft, the following responsibilities have been established.

For the Coach:

1. Call in game results.
2. Secure all equipment, locker rooms, and appropriate facilities.
3. Supervise locker rooms, lobbies and hallways until all athletes have vacated.

For the Athlete:

1. Arrange in advance for transportation after practices or games.
2. Leave school property within one half hour after the end of practices/games.
3. Do not leave personal property unattended or unsecured.

SECTION C: SPORTSMANSHIP

SPORTSMANSHIP PROCEDURES: THE SCHOOL'S ROLE:

It is the expectation of St. Thomas Aquinas High School, and more specifically the Athletic Department, that everyone in the school community will conform to and demonstrate good sportsmanship and fair play during all athletic contests. This concept is presented to the staff and to the athletes throughout the school year.

The Athletic Department at St. Thomas Aquinas High School views the need for good sportsmanship as a very important issue. We will continue in our efforts to assure that every student-athlete understands that need as well.

SPORTSMANSHIP: THE PARENT'S ROLE:

Since the concept of athletics should be educational in nature, it is important that all parents demonstrate good sportsmanship and serve as role models for our students and athletes.

“Sportsmanship is an overt display of respect for the rules of sport and for all others – players, coaches, officials, and fans”. (National Federation News, March 1995, p.10)

Sportsmanship also involves a commitment to fair play, ethical behavior, and integrity. This means that:

1. Vulgar or inappropriate language from fans is not tolerated nor permitted.
2. Taunting or trash talking with opponents or with their fans is not tolerated.
3. Spectators may not leave the bleachers or step onto the court or field of play during a game or contest.
4. Fans should be supportive and positive. Cheering should be done for our team, not against our opponent.
5. Fans should not interfere with the opponent's cheerleaders preventing them from leading their cheers.
6. Fans should let the officials officiate. Remember it is a game.

At St. Thomas sportsmanship is an expectation, so please:

Let the Players play.

Let the Coaches coach.

Let the Officials officiate.

Let the Spectators be positive.

SECTION D: IMPORTANT PARTICIPATION INFORMATION

RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION:

The very nature of athletic competition provides for potential risk and injury to occur. Even with protective equipment, proper supervision, and sound instruction, injuries still do happen. In extremely rare cases, even death could result. All athletes and parents need to be aware of the potential hazards that exist within the athletic arena. We in the St. Thomas Athletic Department will always do whatever we can to ensure that our athletes have a safe and healthy athletic experience.

PRE-TRYOUT ELIGIBILITY CHECKLIST:

Athletes and their parents have certain responsibilities to uphold even before tryouts begin. All of the following requirements must be satisfied before any student will be allowed to tryout, practice, or participate on an athletic team at St. Thomas.

- ◆ **Physical Examination Form:** This form must be completed, signed by the parents/guardians and the physician and submitted to the Athletic Trainer's Office to be kept on file. Athletes' must have a "current year" physical exam form on file in order to be cleared and eligible for athletic participation. It is suggested that physical exams be scheduled over the summer months so the entire school year will be cleared for athletic participation. (**downloadable form**)
- ◆ **Emergency/Athletic Information Form:** This form must be signed by both the athlete and his/her parents/ guardians as evidence of reading and understanding the information contained in the Parent/Student Handbook, and must be returned to school before the start of athletic practices in August.

SPORT TRYOUTS:

1. All athletes should be given a fair and equitable tryout evaluation.
2. Coaches should utilize an evaluation tool in order to keep track of strengths and weaknesses of those trying out for their sport.
3. Efforts evaluated over the tryout period are the most important factors used to determine team selection. **Out of season workouts, camps, or other sport participation are not considered as criteria for selecting team rosters.**
4. Not everyone who tries out for a team will make it through to the final selection process. **Coaches are responsible for selecting final team rosters and determining playing time during the season.**

EXPECTATIONS OF ROSTERED PLAYERS:

All athletes, who after tryouts, are selected as final rostered players must agree to the following:

1. As a rostered student athlete you are expected to serve as role models for others. Efforts in the classroom are just as important as efforts on the field. Respect and responsibility go hand in hand. You lead by example when it comes to sportsmanship.
2. As a rostered student athlete you agree to comply with all school and team rules.
3. As a rostered student athlete you agree to maintain academic and disciplinary eligibility throughout the season.

PRACTICE SESSIONS AND GAMES:

Practice sessions may be closed to spectators at the discretion of the coaches. These sessions are the equivalent of a teacher's classroom and there is real instruction taking place. Interference and interruptions to an athlete's concentration and focus in practice cannot be allowed any more than a disruption would be tolerated in an academic classroom. Coaching should not be compromised.

PRACTICE SESSIONS:

1. May last up to, but not more than, two and one half hours. (after tryouts)
2. May start and end at different times due to the schedule of coaches and/or the availability of our facilities.
3. Will not be held when school is dismissed early or closed due to inclement weather.
4. May be held in the evening, on weekends, and over holiday break periods.
5. Require mandatory attendance. Lateness will not be tolerated. Under no circumstances may practices be held on Sunday's before 1:00 pm.
6. Are secondary to academic or school disciplinary requirements. However, athletes may not be penalized for missed practice time in order to gain academic help or to make up missed tests or quizzes.

ELIGIBILITY; ACADEMIC OR DISCIPLINARY:

The student athletes at St. Thomas Aquinas High School are here for their education first and foremost. Athletic participation is a privilege and granted only to those who are deserving of this opportunity. Problems with grades and or behavior are justifiable reasons for Academic or Disciplinary Ineligibility. Athletes are expected to:

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1. Meet all academic criteria for eligibility as stated in the Student Handbook.
2. Remain in good disciplinary standing.
3. Attend school on time in order to be eligible to practice or play on a daily basis.

Please refer to the Parent/Student Handbook for specific interpretations of all Academic and Disciplinary Eligibility procedures and regulations.

COLLEGE VISITATION:

Students are responsible for any missed academic work during these visits. Coaches may not penalize an athlete for missing practice time due to a college visit and students are eligible on the day of a college visit. See the school attendance policy and the section on Eligibility for extra-curricular activities.

LOCKER ROOM CONDUCT

1. All changing for practices and games/matches must be done in a locker room and not in a school bathroom.
2. No one except assigned coaches and players are allowed in the locker room.
3. No one is allowed in the locker room or the coach's room without a coach present.
4. Rough housing or throwing towels or other objects is not allowed in the locker room.
5. The use of cell phones in locker room areas is strictly prohibited.
6. No glass containers are allowed in the locker room.
7. At no time should shoes with cleats be worn inside the building. Serious injury can occur from slipping on cement or tiled surfaces, and damage is done to the building.
8. Do not leave personal items unattended or unsecured in locker rooms or hallways. Take personal items to practice with you, if necessary.

UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT

Students have an obligation and responsibility for all equipment issued to them. Each student is responsible for the proper care and retention of their equipment from the date of issue to the date of return. Equipment should be stored in a locked locker at all times when not in use. Experience has shown that most losses are due to lockers left open or unlocked. St. Thomas Aquinas High School cannot be responsible for personal belongings or issued equipment of student athletes. If a student loses school equipment or fails to return same, they are responsible to meet the current replacement cost of the equipment. Payment is required at the time of the loss, prior to the next season of athletic involvement, or graduation, whichever comes first. No student will be allowed to try out for another sport until all outstanding equipment has been returned or paid for.

If an athlete leaves the team during the season due to injury, academics, discipline or quitting, it is his/her responsibility to return all school equipment immediately to either the coach or the Athletic Director.

BUILDING AND FACILITY ACCESS

At the conclusion of each school day, student athletes should bring all items they will need the next day into the athletic locker room area. Students will not be allowed access to the main school building after practice, games, or on non school days. No student will

be allowed access to any athletic facility without proper supervision by a school staff member. Students may not use the gymnasium unless there is a coach, teacher, or staff member present.

CHANGING TEAMS:

In fairness to coaches and team members, an athlete can leave one team and join another but only after the following conditions have been satisfied.

1. Any player cut from a team during tryouts may immediately tryout for another team if that team has not already completed its scheduled tryouts.
2. Any player quitting a team must have the original coach's approval to try out for another team. All uniform and equipment obligations must be met before approval can be given.
3. Any player dismissed from a team must have the original coach's and the Athletic Director's approval before joining another team.

N.H.I.A.A. Athletes participating on any "school" team may not miss a team practice or game to participate on any non-school team regardless of sport.

TRANSPORTATION:

Athletes must travel as a team to athletic events, on the bus provided. Proper behavior is expected of all athletes when on bus trips. Once a game is over athletes are expected to return to school as a team on the bus provided. The only exception to this rule is if a parent wishes to take his/her own child home with them. Arrangements must be made in advance if a parent will be transporting someone else's child. Notice must be received, by the coach, in writing from the other parents at least 24 hours prior to the event. Athletes may drive to a game with written parental permission only. Permission letters must be received, by the coach, at least 24 hours in advance of the event. For games held on non-school days athletes may drive themselves to games when transportation is not provided. This will only happen for events that are held close to STA.

OFF SITE PRACTICES AND GAMES:

In some sports such as ice hockey, swimming, golf, and tennis, off campus facilities are used. Transportation is an issue that must be organized and planned. St. Thomas does not have the budget to provide daily transportation for these activities so parental assistance or individuals driving may be necessary. Again, parental permission is essential regarding any transportation issues outside of normal team bus transport.

SECTION E: ATHLETIC POLICIES

DRUGS, ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO:

Students who make a commitment to sports do so with the knowledge that the commitment brings extra responsibilities, obligations, and effort beyond that expected of all St. Thomas students. Medical research substantiates the fact that the use of steroids, tobacco, alcohol and any type of mood modifying substances produces harmful effects on the body. Further, the use of such substances alters the individual's ability to make reasonable choices and to live up to the commitments that have been made.

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The student/athlete may not use tobacco in any form nor **possess, use, transmit, be in the presence of, or be in the possession of paraphernalia for the use of, or be under the influence of any alcohol, unlawful drug, or narcotic at any time, on or off school premises.** Any athlete who violates this policy will be suspended from sports participation for a period equal to 25% of the total events/matches/games of the current, or upcoming, season or four weeks of the season as determined by the Director of Athletics in consultation with other Administrators. During the period of suspension the student may not have any contact (other than a meeting with the coach) with the team at meetings, practices, scrimmages, games, or activities. The student will be allowed to practice with the team beginning seven days prior to the first scheduled game/event in which he/she is allowed to participate for conditioning/training purposes. The suspension from one activity may mean suspension from succeeding activity seasons depending on the severity of the incident(s), and/or the time in the season that the offense occurs. Any second violation of this policy will result in the student being removed for any sport in season and may result in suspension of the student from all sports and extra curricular activities for a period of one year, twelve months, from the date of the offense.

Prior to returning to participation the suspended student may be required to attend a substance abuse program sponsored or approved by St. Thomas and to submit proof of such attendance to the Director of Athletics and the Dean of Students. After a student is allowed to return to a team the coach will make all decisions regarding participation including role, playing time, uniform number, position, etc.

The student and the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) will be notified of the suspension and the time that the student is allowed to return to participation. An arrest or court conviction is not necessary before a student may be suspended for violation of this policy. Consequences under this policy may be in addition to other consequences imposed by the school, the organization, and/or the community.

THEFT:

Stealing will not be tolerated under any circumstances, whether it is from teammates, opponents, or others. Any athlete involved in a theft will be immediately dismissed from his/her team and normal disciplinary procedures will be imposed. This is a zero tolerance policy.

HAZING PROCEDURES:

The process of hazing, forced or coerced commitment of an unpleasant or undesired action, by members of a team or the coaching staff, is strictly forbidden. **Hazing activities will carry a punishment to include, possible dismissal from a team by those involved, and any other stated disciplinary procedures established by the school and/or state law.**

(N.H.I.A.A.) New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association

All applicable league rules, policies and regulations can be accessed by going to the following website: www.nhiala.org.