



OZARKS CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

ATHLETIC HANDBOOK

2024-2025

To the Parents and Student-Athletes:

Welcome to the 2024-2025 athletic season at Ozarks Christian Academy (O.C.A.). You are now part of the Guardian Athletic Program which began in 2015 with 6<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade volleyball, and has since expanded to boys basketball, boys & girls soccer, golf, and track.

Athletics, rightly understood as an integral part of education, compliments our greater mission at OCA. Lessons of commitment, teamwork, tenacity and overcoming adversity are advanced on our courts and fields. It is in the midst of “running to win the prize” that our student-athletes experience great life lessons. These lessons go beyond the defense and offense and into the heart of each one as they develop a love for Christ and service to those around them.

Along the way, our programs also provide wonderful opportunities to strengthen the larger community of Ozarks Christian Academy. Relationships built in the stands provide cohesiveness among our parents as they support their children. Your enthusiastic participation is important as we continue to seek to honor God through our athletic program.

This handbook contains the philosophies, policies and guidelines which govern the OCA Athletic Program, as well as some of the more important rules and regulations required by the school and governing leagues. Although it is intended to be comprehensive in nature, there will inevitably be situations that occur that are not outlined in this handbook. Having a common understanding of the rules and regulations that govern athletics will assist in significantly reducing concerns and unforeseen problems.

We ask that you read this handbook thoroughly with your student-athlete(s). The athletic office must have a current, signed Acknowledgement Form (located at the end of the handbook) on file before a student-athlete can participate. We look forward to another great year in athletics.

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## ATHLETIC PROGRAM

### Conference – MCSAA- Missouri Christian Schools Athletic Association

**PURPOSE:** The OCA Athletic Department exists to help fulfill the mission of the school: The mission of OCA is to glorify God by assisting families in the Christ-centered, biblically directed education of their children through rigorous classical curriculum. The Athletic program will help inform a Christian worldview, that equips students to know, love and practice that which is true, good and beautiful, and challenges them to strive for excellence as they live purposefully and intelligently in the service of God and man.

**PHILOSOPHY:** OCA athletics helps to fulfill the mission of the school by teaching the Christian way of competing and the Christian way of life as expressed through our three core values in athletics:

- *Character* “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” Gal 5:22-23

*“Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” Rom 5:3-4*

*“Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor’s crown unless he competes according to the rules.” II Tim 2:5*

*“Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.” I Cor 16:13*

- *Commitment* “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.” Col 3:23 “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it a slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.” I Cor 9:24-27 “He who gathers crops in the summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son.” Prov 10:5

- **Community** *“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” Prov 27:17*

*“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” Philippians 2:3-4*

*“Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” I John 4:11*

The OCA Athletic Department acknowledges the following order of priorities in our school

1) God 2) Family 3) Academics 4) Athletics

When this order is followed, it gives student-athletes the opportunity to be balanced spiritually, physically, mentally and emotionally.

**GOALS:** Based on our philosophy, our athletic department and team goals are:

- **Excellence** - programs focused on discipleship, that honor God and are well managed and well executed
- **Success** - reaching maximum potential both individually and as a team.

Being a great student and a great athlete is a difficult task, an admirable goal and a worthy accomplishment.

It is our desire that our athletic community – coaches, players and parents – participate in such a way that honors God and conveys a positive witness to those around us. We will be modest in victory and gracious in defeat. Winning on the scoreboard should be one of our goals, but losing can many times present beneficial learning opportunities.

**CORAM DEO** The Latin phrase *Coram Deo* (in the presence of God), conveys the essence of what it means to follow Christ the Lord in the totality of our lives. We are to live “before the face of God, under the authority of God, to the glory of God.” We desire to conform to every aspect of OCA athletics to this all-encompassing principle.

Creation and size of teams is determined by many factors including but not limited to the number of participants interested in a sport, facility availability, safety and coaching resources. Whatever we do, we want to do it well. Decisions will be made on a season-by-season, team-by-team basis if we cannot provide a healthy experience for all parties involved.

## **GENERAL POLICIES**

### **SPORTSMANSHIP**

During home contests, we serve as hosts to the visiting team, its students and spectators. They are our guests, and they should be treated accordingly. At away contests, we are expected to act as invited guests. We will treat the home school's personnel and facilities with care and respect.

As participants and spectators, we want to cheer for our team, not against the opponent, being modest in victory and gracious in defeat. Additionally, we will regard the rules of the game as an agreement, the spirit and letter of which we should not break. Players play the game, coaches coach the game... no official has ever "lost" a game for a team. Much like we do not readily credit an official for a win, we will not blame an official for a loss. Officials will be treated with respect and we will accept absolutely and without quarrel the final decision of any official.

Any member of the OCA community who is a participant or spectator at an event, who uses profanity, engages in inappropriate behaviors such as fighting or similar misconduct will be dismissed from the event and is subject to disciplinary action by the school.

### **SCHEDULING**

The athletic department does its best to schedule games and practices well in advance of the season. Because we cannot control league changes or changes made by an opponent when we travel to their home court/field, changes to schedules will inevitably occur. Additionally, since our coaches are volunteers, there will most likely be a few changes throughout the season due to their work schedules.

### **TRANSPORTATION AND TRAVEL**

**SEVERE/INCLEMENT WEATHER** Any changes to published schedules due to bad weather will be updated on our facebook page, sent through remind app, and on our website as soon as an affirmative decision can be made. If lightning is present during an outdoor event, all parties must be moved indoors. The event can only be resumed if 30 minutes have passed since the last visual evidence of lightning. For outdoor practices, heat and humidity are closely monitored. Where possible, practices will be scheduled in the coolest times of the day. Practices will not be held outside in a heat index of 110 or above.

## **HAZING**

Hazing is defined as subjecting someone to an indignity, fright, abuse or threat and is not tolerated. Violation subjects the person(s) to disciplinary action.

## **REQUISITES FOR PARTICIPATION**

Each OCA student-athlete desiring to participate in OCA athletics must have the following completed and signed documents on file in the athletic office before the first day of participation in any given sport:

- Signed Acknowledgement of Athletic Handbook
- Detailed Medical History
- Signed Code of Conduct
- Contact and Release Form
- Parents Attendance at Athletic Meeting 1 per school year

If all forms have not been turned in before the start of the first game, the student athlete cannot join the team. All of the aforementioned documents can be found in hard copy form in the office.

## **STUDENT-ATHLETES**

### **CODE OF CONDUCT**

Being an OCA athlete is a student's choice and thereby a privilege. Student-athletes shall conduct themselves in a way that brings positive recognition to God, the School, their team, their sport and themselves. An OCA student-athlete reflects the mission and identity of the school, no matter where he/she is. Student-athletes are expected to behave at all times with consideration for others in thoughts, word, and deed and student-athletes must abide by the school's stated rules and any others stipulated by athletic department staff members.

## AGE/GRADE ELIGIBILITY

**Students in grades 8th-12th who meet the academic and other qualifications are eligible for OCA Athletics. We allow students in grades 7th and/or 6th to participate in OCA athletics on a case-by-case basis. The OCA Athletic Director, coaches, and administration will at times allow 6th and 7th graders to participate on an individual sport and individual year basis. These decisions are based on numbers of athletes, uniforms, facilities, other costs and other factors..**

## ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

### **Definitions:**

1. *Eligibility period* – Students need to be academically eligible to play. In order to ensure this happens every 2 weeks, coaches will check with teachers to ensure eligibility requirements have been met.

a. If a student becomes ineligible, after one week (7 days) coaches will go back to the teacher(s) and determine if the student has become eligible. b. During the first 7 days athletes will not be eligible to participate with the team.

This is to give them time to focus on their studies.

2. *Work Ethic* – Students should be working diligently and attentively in the classroom. Examples of this would be: paying attention, asking questions, participating in class, meeting early in the morning for tutoring if necessary.

A 8<sup>th</sup>– 12<sup>th</sup> grade student who maintains a 70% or higher in every class at the end of an eligibility period will be eligible for the following eligibility period. A student may regain eligibility at the end of any eligibility period.

A 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade student can receive permission to play by the athletic committee for the student's work ethic.

A student who misses school due to athletic competition is responsible for keeping up with his or her schoolwork. Any work that is due during a period that the student will miss should be turned in before the class period. Any tests that the student will miss should be taken ahead of time if possible. Otherwise, the student is responsible for working out an arrangement with the teacher ahead of time for making up the test. Under no circumstances should a student fail to talk with a teacher whose class he or she will miss at least a day ahead of time.

## **PARTICIPATION**

Participating in athletics is a privilege and is contingent on the following:

1) *Clearance from Previous Sport* – Student-athletes must be cleared from their prior sport before they can begin competing in a new sport. This includes, but is not limited to, being current on athletic fees, uniform and/or equipment was in good condition and checked in.

2) *In good academic and moral standing* - Student-athletes may not participate in practices or games if they have failed to achieve the minimum academic requirement or are suspended from school.

3) *School Attendance* – see OCA handbook

**Important:** A roster spot on any one team in a previous year does not guarantee the same spot on the same team in the current year. For example, a junior basketball player who earned a varsity spot last year as a sophomore is not guaranteed to make the varsity basketball roster in his junior year.

## **ATHLETIC UNIFORM AND DRESS CODE**

Student-athletes are issued team uniforms and are expected to take great care of the uniforms. If a student-athlete is missing a uniform or uniform-piece the day of a game, another uniform will not be issued, no exceptions. If a uniform is lost and cannot be found, another uniform will be issued out (if available) once the lost uniform has been paid for in full. Damaged uniform pieces will need to be replaced at the expense of the student-athlete.

## **PARENTS**

Without a doubt, parents are the most influential models for young athletes. From a parent's conduct to the priority of sports in the family order of life, parents make the biggest impact on a young person's athletic experience. Not only are parents influential, they are critical to the success of our athletic programs. The athletic department needs parents to come alongside all sports teams to serve in one or more of a variety of volunteer positions throughout the year. Team parents, travel coordinators, drivers, overnight chaperones, statisticians, scoreboard operators, videographers, concessions, admissions, field/gym preparation or close down are just a few of the opportunities that provide much needed help and good community time between parents. Serving the athletic department also sets a good example for our student-athletes. The guidelines that follow provide a foundation for our joint effort to guide your sons and daughters through the challenging yet wonderful experience of high school sports.

## **PRESENCE AT GAMES, PRACTICES OR TRYOUTS**

The coach's classroom is the court or field, usually with undefined walls, making it easy for parents to naturally move close to the action. Parents should be interested, supportive observers from a distance. The coach needs room to be able to instruct and the player to perform without distraction from the stands. Distraction only yields poor results. **Cheer them on, yes! Coach or yell at them, no!**

It is important to student-athletes that, if possible, parents are present at games, both home and away. A parent's attendance tells the child that he/she cares and that they want to share in the joys and frustrations which are a part of competition. It also gives parents an opportunity to develop a bond with their child and other parents, and to observe the progress made throughout the season.

## **PERSPECTIVE – WHY KIDS PLAY THE GAME**

Most young people participate in sports for the following reasons: to have fun, to develop that natural desire to play, to make new friends or be with their friends, to be part of a team, and to compete. "To win" or "to be a champion" is often not at the top of the list. Athletes must hear from parents and coaches that it is the process of competing that counts. Too much emphasis on winning and losing puts the value of sports out of context.

## **COACH AS LEADER**

Each coach is prayerfully and thoughtfully considered, recruited, interviewed and hired and therefore has the authority over our children in each given sport. Parents and student-athletes must trust that coaches try to make the best decisions for the team as well as the individuals that make up the team. Coaches are with the team on a daily basis in practice and in competition, evaluating character and performance, and therefore will make judgment decisions based on what they feel is in the best interest of the team. Playing time, players' positions, and strategy should be left to the discretion of the coach. Parents should help their child understand that being a team member means accepting the coach's decisions even when he or she does not agree with them.

It is also important to remember that neither coaches nor parents are infallible evaluators of talent, nor are either perfect play-callers. A team does not function well with non-coaches trying to coach. Parents should not place a child in a tough spot of having to decide who they are going to listen to, their coach, or their parents. Yielding to authority is a biblical lesson that our children will learn from for years to come.

## **COACHES**

Successful athletic programs start with quality coaches. We believe coaches are one of the most significant components to the athletic program and therefore seek to hire Christian role models who are committed to fulfilling the mission of the school, desire to discipline our student-athletes and serve their families, and who are knowledgeable in their sport. School athletics are an integral part of each student's overall education and development and coaches shall assist each student-athlete toward developing his or her full potential. Safety, mentoring and development of our student-athletes are the most important responsibilities of our coaches.

## **COMMUNICATION – INTERNAL**

Direct communication between the coach and players is very important, and is usually the best way for any questions to be answered or conflicts to be worked through. Inevitably, there will be times when a meeting between a parent and coach is warranted. Please call or e-mail the coach to arrange a convenient time for a phone conversation or meeting. Try to exercise the 24-hour rule – wait 24 hours before placing that call or sending that email. Too often our emotions get the best of us. And remember, before or after practices or games is never an appropriate time to approach a coach. Coaches will be happy to meet with you, but it may be a few days before a convenient time can be arranged.

A meeting with the coach is an opportunity to exchange information and respectfully discuss any concerns or questions that you may have. Hopefully the meeting will promote better understanding and communication, but the meeting should not be viewed as an opportunity to convince the coach that your child should be playing more, playing a different position, or that the coach should be employing a different strategy. After the meeting, just as before the meeting, your support of the team and the coach is expected. If there is a significant issue that you believe requires additional discussion, then the board, coach and parent can meet together to resolve the issue.

## **FINANCIAL EXPECTATIONS**

All Athletic Programs will incur extra cost not accounted for in tuition & curriculum fees. Expenses might include additional equipment, garments or shoes that the student-athlete may want in order to participate, pre or post game meals, end of season awards, and travel. These expenses for the student athletes will be evaluated and set yearly by the OCA School Board.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

Because the behavior of a team can reflect the coach's own manner, attitudes, temperament and approach to athletics, coaches shall conduct themselves in a way, both on and off the court, that brings positive recognition to God, O.C.A., their team, their sport and themselves. Instruction and correction, while demanding and critical, should be positive. Coaches should never embarrass or demean student- athletes. The same high standards of preparation, organization, hard work, self-discipline, sacrifice and Godly behavior that coaches expect of players should be the same that is expected of coaches.

All coaches are expected to know the rules of the game and the rules/policies of the leagues in which we participate.