

GRACE CHRISTIAN ACADEMY



**ATHLETIC HANDBOOK
2019-2020**

Revised 1/22/2020



ATHLETIC HANDBOOK

2019-2020

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Athletic Department Contact Information

Team Information

For any and all team information and issues, the first point of contact is the Head Coach of the individual team. If the Head Coach cannot be reached, please contact the applicable division athletic director.

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GCA Mission Statement:

Grace Christian Academy exists to LEAD students to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, to BUILD them up to their full potential in Him, and to EQUIP them to serve Him.

GCA Motto:

GIVE CHRIST ALL

Athletic Department Mission Statement:

The Athletic Department at Grace Christian Academy seeks to teach every student-athlete the discipline required to build Christian character, develop a sense of community, and to foster excellence in education, teamwork, and leadership.

GOAL:

To utilize athletic participation and competition to prepare Grace Christian Academy student-athletes to be successful at whatever comes next.

PLAN:

- **Enable Christian leaders who glorify God in all they do**
- **Develop a commitment to good sportsmanship and respect for others**
- **Encourage the pursuit of athletic excellence**
- **Foster character qualities of honesty, effort, and discipline**
- **Define and identify opportunities for servant leadership**
- **Demand perseverance in the face of adversity**
- **Model humility in victory and grace in defeat**
- **Maximize proficiency in God-given talents**
- **Recognize that the well-being of individuals takes precedence over athletic achievement**
- **Provide opportunities for developing student self-advocacy in and out of competition**
- **Partner with all GCA community members to provide a healthy atmosphere in which student-athletes can apply principles learned in competitive sports to enhance their relationship with God and their quality of life.**

Lower School/Elementary Athletics:

In a few sports, GCA athletics reaches all the way to our Elementary School students. These programs put a premium on participation and improvement as coaches endeavor to cultivate a love for the sport with the intent of having the Elementary students continue participation at the Middle and High School levels.

Middle School/Early Middle Athletics:

At the Middle School level, which includes our Early Middle division, the goal is to lay an athletic foundation with quality skill and team-concept development. The philosophy at this level is for all athletes to participate equally in practice and earn appropriate playing time on game day to facilitate further development. The focus is striving for excellence in practice and games, and effort and intent are significantly more important than the final score. Several Middle School sports have open (no cut) rosters, but, in other sports, larger rosters mean less playing time for each participant, so rosters are limited, and cuts are necessary to provide beneficial playing opportunities for team members. In leagues that allow it, and if sufficient participation will support it, Grace will sanction both a MS Varsity and MS JV team. Roster selection and participation are at full discretion of the coaching staff, and talent level is only one of several determining factors.

High School Athletics:

At the high school level, the goal is to continue the skill and team-concept development begun at the Middle School level, with the intent of applying that acquired foundation to field competitive programs of excellence. Grace teams are encouraged to play to win but to do so in a manner which reflects the Core Values of Grace Christian Academy. In many cases, roster size is defined by the TSSAA, but, generally, varsity teams will be comprised of participants that do, or will, give our teams the best opportunity for competitive success during the entirety of their Grace athletic career. Likewise, the bulk of participation time will go to those athletes that give their team the best chance to win. High School team selection and participation is at the sole discretion of the coaching staff and talent level is only one of several determining factors.

Grace Youth Sports:

Not to be confused with GCA Athletics, the GYS program is currently administered by Grace Baptist Church and provides additional participation opportunities outside the GCA framework. GYS may serve age groups through non-school leagues or may provide a cooperative athletic opportunity in sports where there may not be enough GCA students to complete a full roster of players.

Athlete/Parent Concerns:

While we strive for every athlete and family to have a positive experience while participating in athletics at Grace, inevitably, there will be a time when an athlete or parent may have concerns during the course of the season. In this situation, the following protocol should be followed:

1. Wait at least 24 hours
2. The athlete needs to take his/her concern to the coach. (We are teaching our young athletes to be responsible and confident. Articulating his/her concern to the coach is an important lesson of self-advocacy for the athlete to learn.)
3. If the athlete and coach do not reach a satisfactory understanding, the athlete should bring his/her concern to the Athletic Director who will make every effort to foster understanding and resolve the issue between the coach and athlete. The student-athlete may bring a teammate or parent to this meeting, but the procedure will be for the student-athlete to voice their concern.
4. If an understanding (not necessarily an agreement) has still not been reached, the parents and the athlete should request a meeting with the coach and Athletic Director. This meeting will be held at a mutually agreed time in the Athletic Director's office.
5. If further intervention is required, applicable school administration will be engaged at the next and final level of discussion.

Every athlete is welcome and encouraged to come to the athletic office and share his/her concerns at any time. He/She will be directed to follow the appropriate steps in the chain of command, but the door is always open for the student-athlete to come and talk to the Athletic Director. Often, the Athletic Director can help both the athlete and coach understand both sides of the issue after this meeting, alone.

In meeting with the Athletic Director, please understand that student-athlete participation will generally not be a topic open for discussion.

Organizational Affiliation:

Grace Christian Academy is a member of the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association (TSSAA). As a member in good standing, we recognize and adhere to its guidelines and we submit to its authority in all athletics at the High School and Middle School levels. The TSSAA rules and regulations are outlined in its members' handbook, a copy of which is kept on file by the GCA Athletic Director, and available online at <https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=http://tssaa.org/wp-content/uploads/handbook.pdf>

Additional affiliations exist for sports not currently sanctioned by the TSSAA and for Middle School sports competing in local conferences and leagues.

Programs Offered:

Interscholastic offerings at GCA are the following:

Fall Sports

High School

Football
Cheerleading
Girls Volleyball
Girls Soccer
Boys and Girls Golf
Boys and Girls Cross Country

Middle School

Girls Volleyball
Girls Soccer
Softball
Boys and Girls Tennis
Cheerleading

Elementary

Coed Cross Country
Coed Tennis

Winter Sports

High School

Boys and Girls Basketball
Boys and Girls Swimming and Diving
Wrestling
Cheerleading

Middle School

Boys and Girls Basketball
Boys and Girls Swimming and Diving
Wrestling
Cheerleading

Spring Sports

High School

Baseball
Softball
Boys Soccer
Boys and Girls Track and Field
Boys and Girls Tennis

Middle School

Baseball
Coed Soccer
Boys and Girls Track and Field
Coed Golf

Elementary

Coed Track and Field

INSURANCE

Family or individual primary insurance is the default insurance coverage for all athletic-related injuries at Grace Christian Academy. GCA offers a secondary insurance policy that will supplement your current coverage. This policy only takes effect when a student sustains an injury while participating in a GCA sanctioned athletic activity and outside medical services are needed.

1. Within 14 days of injury, a parent of the injured athlete must contact the GCA athletic trainer to complete an accident/injury report. The student-athlete's primary insurance card must be presented along with the GCA accident report form.
2. To file a claim, the family must request a secondary insurance claim form from the GCA Business Office, then file that form with the insurance provider.
3. After All treatments/medical services pertaining to that specific injury are completed and all payments are made from the primary insurance company, the claim is reviewed by the secondary insurance provider who will close the claim per company policy.

INJURIES:

All injuries should be reported to the Athletic Trainer AND the student-athlete's coach within 24-Hours of occurrence. In addition, any student-athlete who visits the doctor for any reason, must provide the GCA Athletic Trainer with a medical release prior to returning to active participation. Any injury requiring a doctor's care also requires a doctor's release to return.

ELIGIBILITY

1. As a member of the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association, GCA follows the eligibility rules as outlined in the TSSAA handbook. Copies of this handbook are kept in the offices of the Athletic Director and the Upper School Principal. Since TSSAA eligibility rules are extensive, please feel free to contact the GCA Athletic Director with questions prior to accepting an unclear interpretation or contacting the TSSAA office. These eligibility rules cover a range of subjects including, but not limited to, age, academics, transfers, outside participation, etc. TSSAA rules are available on the TSSAA website at <https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=http://tssaa.org/wp-content/uploads/handbook.pdf>
2. Grace Christian Academy adheres to all TSSAA policies regarding the transfer of students during or between school years from one school to another. If you have participated in high school athletics at a previous school within the past year and are transferring to Grace without a bona fide change of address at least 20 miles from your previous home, please contact our athletic director to discuss your eligibility.
3. In addition to TSSAA academic eligibility policies, GCA also employs its own policies regarding attendance on game/practice days, GCA Academic Watch, and GCA Academic Probation. Detailed description of these policies can be found in the online GCA Handbook at: https://www.gcarams.org/uploaded/documents/handbook/GCA_Handbook_2019-2020.pdf
4. Once try-outs have been completed and the team has been established, team members are committed for the entire season. If you resign or are dismissed from a team during a season, you may not go to another sport in that season. You may also not go to another sport in the next season until your current sport has concluded. This includes playoffs. Tryouts will be allowed (both coaches will agree on a timeframe) for the next sport season, but you may not begin practices and games until the previous season has ended, barring exceptional circumstances. You are expected to be on time, prepared (with necessary equipment), and focused throughout every practice or game.

General Policies:

- 1. The makeup of each individual team is at the discretion of the Head Coach/Coaching Staff. In TSSAA Division II, high school teams may include 8th graders deemed capable of participation with 12th graders. Middle School teams typically include 5th thru 8th graders, but specific league rules may limit participation on MS JV and Varsity rosters. Exceptions must be communicated to and approved by the Athletic Director after consultation with the Head Coach and school administrative personnel.**
- 2. Tryouts are held in conjunction with TSSAA starting dates found on the TSSAA website and announced via usual team and school communication avenues. Some sports may opt for an extended evaluation period throughout the summer prior to an official tryout during the sport season, and the TSSAA allows for Cheerleading tryouts to occur in the previous school year. Any interested, enrolled, GCA student who meets TSSAA and GCA eligibility requirements may try out. Coaches determine which players will make up a team, and accommodations can be made for students enrolling at GCA after an official tryout date. Coaches will collaborate to accommodate one or two days of tryouts for students in overlapping seasons.**
- 3. After a team roster has been defined, the coach will call a parent meeting to define logistical matters, expectations and requirements of the athletes and parents in regard to the season at hand. Parents will be given an opportunity to ask questions of the coach and Athletic Director.**
- 4. Determination of playing time is at the discretion of the team's coach(es). However, there are some general goals for which our programs strive.**
 - At the High School level, playing time is not guaranteed. Each program strives for excellence in practice and games, and the coach is expected to utilize his/her roster in a way that, in his/her opinion and experience, gives the team the best opportunity for a successful outcome during the TSSAA championship season.**
 - At the Middle School level, instruction and active participation are the primary goals. The intent is for every athlete to participate in every contest; however, some teams, as noted earlier, do not have open rosters, and it's impossible to guarantee that all players will enjoy identical playing time.**
 - Elementary School teams will strive to provide equal participation and instruction time to all team members. Each student-athlete's skill level will determine the intensity of instruction provided by the coach.**
- 5. All athletes are expected to be present and on time to all practices and expected to stay at practice until dismissed by the coach. Student-athletes must inform their coach in advance when absences are anticipated, and determination of whether the absence is excused will be at the coach's discretion. Wednesday, Sunday, and holiday athletic activity will be restricted.**

Transportation:

- 1. GCA will make every effort to provide transportation to practices held off campus and back to school at the practice's conclusion. The preferred method of pick up is for parents to meet their student at the practice site at the end of team activities. If parents are not present at the scheduled end of practice time, coaches will transport the students back to campus for pick up. In the event that transportation to practice cannot be secured, the coach and parents will be given as much notice as possible, and parents may be asked for assistance. Athletes are expected to remain for the entire practice session and to be picked up immediately upon its conclusion. If it is logistically more efficient, students may be allowed to drive their personal vehicle to the practice site with prior written permission from a parent. Likewise, prior written permission must be submitted for a student to ride with another student to and/or from the practice site. Permission should be submitted to the coach who will keep it on file for the remainder of the season.**
- 2. Grace Christian Academy, in conjunction with the Grace Baptist Church fleet management team and school transportation policies, will make every effort to provide transportation to and from all away games played by GCA student-athletes. That is the preferred method of team travel. However, when games are played later in the evenings within a reasonable proximity to the Grace enrollment community, the Head Coach may have the team meet at the game site. Athletes will be allowed to ride home from a game site with their parents after the parent has communicated directly with the coach. Students may only drive themselves to away competitions taking place in the geographic region bordered by I-40 to the south, I-640 to the east, Hwy 162/62 (Pellissippi Pkwy) to the west, and Clinton Hwy/Oak Ridge Turnpike to the north, and only with the permission of their coach. Any deviation from this policy must include expressed permission of the Athletic Director after consultation with the applicable division Principal. Students riding with another student must also provide written permission from a parent or guardian.**
- 3. GCA will provide transportation to and from games played outside the immediate Knoxville area. Coaches may upgrade the method of transportation via use of fund-raising money or family contribution of the difference in the cost of standard school transportation. Student-athletes are required to ride with the team to these contests, accompanied by members of the coaching staff. Exceptions must be authorized by the team coach and Athletic Director, in writing, prior to the scheduled departure. Athletes will be allowed to ride home from the game site with their parents after the parent has communicated directly with the coach. The cost of overnight, in-season trips must be borne by the team's fund-raising account or family contributions. The coach will gain approval from families for trips of this nature prior to the season, at the post-tryout parent meeting, or before.**

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES:

- 1. An Athletic Participation Fee of \$300 (\$200 for Middle School students) is required to participate in the first sport of each student's academic year to help offset all GCA athletic expenses (equipment, officials, entry fees, etc). Fees for all subsequent sports within the academic year will be reduced by 50%. Fees will be billed through the student's FACTS account as an incidental billing, using the roster provided by the coach, and paid directly to the school. Upon billing or receipt of the Athletic Fee, each family will receive two All Sports Passes per student-athlete to all home, regular season, GCA High School and Middle School athletic events. Families of winter and spring sport student-athletes may pay in advance, by check, in the athletic department to obtain their passes in time for sports occurring in a season prior to theirs. Refunds will not be issued once All Sports Passes are presented. GCA and GBC staff discounts apply.**
- 2. The TSSAA and Grace Christian Academy require that each athlete submit a few forms for safety and eligibility purposes. To streamline the process, GCA has partnered with PlanethS and ArbiterAthlete to provide an electronic method of submitting these forms. The physical examination form must be submitted before a student-athlete may participate in tryouts, practices or games. This physical may be obtained any time after April 15 of the spring preceding the academic year in which the student plans to participate in athletics and is valid for that entire school year. Annually (typically in early June), local physicians will perform these examinations on campus at GCA at a lower cost than most insurance copays. All required forms and instructions can be found on the GCA Athletics webpage <https://www.gcarams.org/athletics/athletic-forms-links>.**
- 3. Throughout the year, many paid and volunteer community members work diligently to stage Grace Athletic Events. In as equitable manner as possible, teams will be asked to help stage events for other GCA sports in an effort to further extend the GCA core value of Family across sport-specific lines. Many of the logistics of staging events can be handled by our student-athletes who can utilize this experience to build their college application and/or job resume' as well as accumulate necessary Service Hours for graduation.**
- 4. While participating in sports at GCA, there are certain equipment items, including most uniforms, which the school will supply. These items are the property of the school and must be returned at the end of the season or a charge will be made to the family on their school account to facilitate replacement of the items. The minimum charge will be \$100 per item but could be greater in the case of a higher replacement cost.**
- 5. Throughout their careers, our student-athletes earn the right to be recognized as letter-winners in their sport. Generally, completing a full season with a varsity team will secure that designation. GCA acknowledges that achievement with a single framed "G" letter, awarded on the student-athlete's Senior Night with the applicable pins attached for each year of varsity participation in that sport. Letter jackets and decoration may be purchased at the Sports Locker (inside Embroidery-To-Go) at 314 Merchants Dr.**

WE ARE GRACE

At Grace Christian Academy, the way you conduct yourself during practice, at a competitive event, and after a competition is as important as winning or losing. Judgment calls - by coaches, teammates, and officials - are made in good faith and should be respected. Spectators should support both of the teams by refraining from derogatory or demeaning comments. If a coach, administrator, or student-athlete is fined by the TSSAA for unsportsmanlike conduct, that individual will be billed for the amount of the fine. Positive values like respect, self-control, and kindness do not undermine Grace's focus on excellence or fostering a competitive intensity second to none. We appreciate your commitment as athletes, administrators, parents, coaches and students in exemplifying these values at every athletic event.

Student-athletes are expected to be dressed appropriately (shirts must be worn at all times). Proper language must be used in practice and games, and in the locker room. It is important that athletes represent Grace Christian Academy on and off the field, including, but not limited to, posting on various forms of social media, and in the variety of music played in and around our athletic facilities. Discipline will be administered to athletes not abiding by these rules.