

St. Mary's Catholic School

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ATHLETIC HANDBOOK

2023-2024



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Cognia

Louisiana State Department of Education

PURPOSE

The St. Mary's Catholic School Athletic Handbook is a reference guide for coaches, concerning the regulations and policies that are to govern interscholastic athletics at St. Mary's.

Interscholastic athletics is voluntary as no student is obligated to participate. Competition is a privilege and accompanying this privilege is the responsibility to conform to standards established for the varsity, junior high and elementary athletic programs.

MISSION

The mission of the St. Mary's Catholic School Athletic Department is to utilize those lessons learned through athletics that uphold the mission of the school, which is to provide a religious foundation based on the traditions and teachings of the Catholic Church, creating an atmosphere for academic excellence and providing an opportunity for all students to reach their full potential spiritually, academically, and physically.

Coaches are to remember to:

- Uphold the teachings of Christ
- Be an example of responsibility and foster responsibility in students
- Display and live with integrity as an example to students
- Develop trusting relationships
- Create teams that are cohesive
- Generate enthusiasm
- Demand and give respect

The St. Mary's Athletic Department is committed to:

- ✓ Preparation of student athletes for competition and life
- ✓ Pursuit of athletic excellence
- ✓ Discipleship of coaches, athletes, and parents
- ✓ Outreach to opposition and fans

PERSONAL CONDUCT

The coaches of St. Mary's are a visible part of the community and are obligated to be examples of good character. This character translates to behavior on and off the field. The coaching staff should make every effort to refrain from using:

- Profanity, or vulgar language especially in the presence of students.
- Tobacco in any form on campus and especially in the presence of students
- Refrain from gossip
- Maintain confidentiality of students and internal St. Mary's issues

COACHING RESPONSIBILITIES

- Cooperate with the school's Athletic Director in the establishment, organization, and operation of an effective athletic program.
- Complete and maintain all requirements of VIRTUS training.
- Follow all St. Mary's rules and regulations for the expenditure of funds.
- Encourage all student athletes' participation in all fund-raising activities.
- Assist in the schedule development for all athletic contests.
- Develop a system for equipment distribution and collection, and complete the annual inventory of the athletic season.
- Coaches must supervise the team before, during and after each practice and game.
- Conduct themselves at all times in a way to exemplify leadership, good sportsmanship, and Christian values.
- Represent the mission of the school at all times.
- Collect and maintain necessary documentation necessary for LHSAA eligibility.
- Knowledgeable of all rules and regulations pertaining to LHSAA.
- Cooperate with all staff and administration in the execution of any and all directives with a spirit of cooperation and helpfulness.
- Attend all school sporting events as possible.
- Any other duties as requested by the supervisor.

KEYS

Keys provided to employees and coaches are considered property of St. Mary's.

- All keys are the responsibility of the coach and must not ever be loaned to anyone, especially students.
- When keys are to be returned, the coach/employee is responsible for personally returning them to the office.

LOUISIANA HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

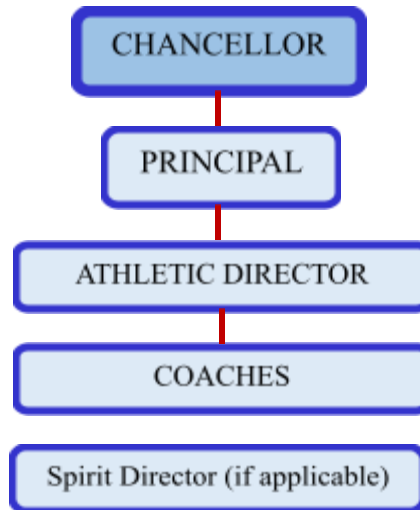
St. Mary's Catholic School is a member in good standing of the Louisiana High School Athletic Association (LHSAA), a non-profit organization. As a member of LHSAA, St. Mary's agrees to conform to the rules and regulations of the Association, and pay membership dues according to the classification as adopted by the membership.

In matters pertaining to the athletic affairs of the school, the Principal is responsible to the Association. The membership school principal is officially recognized by the LHSAA as the individual who is registered with the Association.

The athletic director as well as all coaches are to be registered with LHSAA and are to meet all requirements as specified. (See LHSAA official handbook).

ORGANIZATION CHART

Coaches are to follow the protocol established for communication purposes:



EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS

Rules and regulations are designed for the general good of our athletic teams and student-athletes. However, the distribution and implementation of a set of rules and standards is only a start. Coaches are with your children only a few hours per day and depend heavily upon your support to ensure that your children do not violate these important rules. Administrators, coaches, and parents working together can make a significant impact on these young people and help to counter the peer pressure that they all face. By working cooperatively in this area we can be proactive and eliminate many potential problems. As educators and coaches, we are concerned about your children. We are committed to doing our part and using our influence to help your children reach their full potential. Together we can provide the necessary guidance, leadership, support, and encouragement that are so important during their adolescent years.

THE ROLE OF THE PARENT

Communication!

Communication Tree

1. Student-athlete to coach
2. Parent to coach
3. Parent to Director of Athletic Programs

The Student-Athlete and Coach

If an athlete has any issue about their experience on an athletic team they must first approach the coach to discuss the issue. The athletic experience at SMS provides the opportunity for young people to develop communication skills with adults and those in positions of authority. In this case the student-athlete and coach must develop a mutual respect and understanding that allows them to discuss issues openly and honestly while striving to gain a better understanding of the issues.

The Parent and Coach

Appropriate concerns to discuss with coaches:

1. The treatment of your child, mentally and physically
2. Ways to help your child improve
3. Concerns about your child's behavior

Issues not appropriate for parents to discuss with coaches:

1. Playing time
2. Team strategy
3. Play calling
4. Other student-athletes

***There are situations that require a meeting between the coach and the parent. This is to be encouraged. It is important that both parties have a clear understanding of each other's position. When these conferences are necessary the following procedures should be followed to help promote a resolution to the issue:

1. Call to set up an appointment with the coach
2. The Athletic Director's email address: ayork@smstigers.org
3. Do not attempt to confront a coach before or after a contest or practice. These can be an emotional time for both the parent and coach. Meetings of this nature do not promote resolution. Parents who refuse to adhere to this can be banned from future contests.

ELIGIBILITY FOR STUDENTS

In order to participate in athletics, all students must have attained and maintained a 2.0 cumulative GPA. Any student that earns two F letter grades for a subject area, during a grading period, will be removed from their sport until the following grading term and until the student does not have two failing subject grades. Coaches will be notified by the Director of Student Services of students that fall below this required average. The student will be prohibited from participating in athletics until the next grading period. A recalculation of the student's grades will then be conducted.

Coaches have the right to hold a student-athlete from participation if the student is not upholding SMS academic standards in the classroom.

Students must be registered and in good standing with SMS before participating in any extracurricular activities. Registration fees must be paid and tuition payments must be current.

PARTICIPATION and SCHOOL FEES

Athletic fees are essential for the day-to-day operation of the Athletic Department. Every effort is made to keep these fees minimal. Each sport requires a fee specific to the needs of that sport. The fee amount is determined yearly by the Head Coach and Athletic Director. Some sports may require additional charges as deemed necessary by the coach and AD. Parents will be supplied with information regarding additional charges prior to the season beginning. Once the student-athlete has been placed on a roster, his/her family is responsible for paying the fees. Fees must be paid in a timely manner and/or a plan must be in place in order to pay off the player's fees. Failure to pay the player's fees may result in dismissal from his/her sport.

Students who owe tuition, lunch money, and /or any school fees will be required to pay those fees before being allowed to play or practice. If this is a hardship, payment arrangements should be made through the school registrar, Mrs. Debbie Norman: dnorman@smstigers.org

Any and all monies for any sport are to be deposited through the Cashier of the school.

ATHLETIC TRAINING

Any student may participate as an athletic trainer with approval of the Athletic Director. Official student athletic trainers must have successfully participated in the LHSAA sponsored athletic trainer camp.

TRANSPORTATION

All varsity, junior varsity and junior high sports teams are expected to ride with the team to and from contests when transportation is provided by the school. The mode of transportation will be by a St. Mary's owned bus, van, or a chartered bus. Some sports may require parents to transport student athletes to and from events. In such a case, the parent that is in charge of providing transportation must carry a valid driver's license, carry appropriate insurance, have attended Virtus training, and have filled out required paperwork for the school. Students may be released to their parents after an away contest only after a written request is submitted and approved by the Head Coach. **At no time are students allowed to ride with a student driver.** Exceptions to this rule would be considered extraordinary and would require written consent of the parents.

Coaches are responsible to stay with all student-athletes after all events until all students have been picked up. This includes daily practice, and home and away games.

HAZING POLICY

Hazing in any form will not be tolerated, nor is consistent with any spiritual, educational, or athletic goal at St. Mary's.

Hazing is defined as *any activity expected of someone joining a student organization that humiliates, degrades, or risks emotional and/or physical harm, regardless of the person's willingness to participate.*

Any activity that intimidates or threatens the student by ostracizing or subjecting a student to extreme mental stress, embarrassment, shame, or humiliation that adversely affects the mental health or dignity of the student or discourages the student from remaining in school is considered "hazing".

Any activity that causes or requires the student to perform a task that involves violation of state or federal laws and/or of St. Mary's school policies or regulations is considered hazing.

Hazing in any form will not be tolerated and will result in disciplinary actions.

Furthermore, any coach that allows any actions considered hazing, or fails to report any behavior considered hazing will also be subjected to disciplinary actions.

LOCKER ROOM POLICY

Great care is to be taken to be respectful of all facilities, equipment and resources provided to students and coaches for use. Any misconduct or destruction of property, facilities, or equipment will result in disciplinary action.

In order to promote a safe and respectful environment:

- **A coach, or coaches, must be present in the locker room at all times while any students occupy it.**
- All locker rooms and facilities are to remain locked while unoccupied, even during practice times.
- Coaches are to ensure that all equipment is properly stored and locked after each practice or event.

CONSEQUENCES FOR NOT FINISHING A SPORT

Athletes who do not finish the athletic season (quits, asked to leave by coach, parent pulls athlete from team, academically ineligible to finish out the season, etc) may not begin the next sport within a school year until the sport he or she has left has completed play. This includes any and all playoff games. This rule also applies to all levels of play including middle school and varsity. The athlete may not condition, practice, or play with the next sport.

Exceptions may be made, if both head coaches of each sport agree to allow the student to begin the next sport season.

SCHEDULES

A school calendar for the ensuing academic year is provided in August to all coaches prior to the start of school. **Specific days marked “No Sports Schedule” are to be strictly honored.** The only exception may be state tournaments or playoffs that are beyond the coach’s control.

All schedules are submitted using the template provided to each coach. The sport’s schedule is not official until approved and signed by the Athletic Director AND Principal. These schedules will be used to update the official school calendar.

When inclement weather cancels games the Athletic Director must be notified immediately. When rescheduling games due to weather the Athletic Director must be notified and must approve the new schedules.

PRACTICE

A student will be permitted to participate in a conditioning, tryout, game, or practice of an extracurricular activity only if he/she has been in attendance at least 50% of the academic school day. A valid doctor’s excuse will be accepted for an extracurricular activity if a student has missed over 50% of the academic school day. Exceptions must be approved by the Principal or Athletic Director. The only exceptions to this rule are validated and documented situations that are beyond the student’s control. In order to participate in practice or competition, any absence must be approved by the Principal or Athletic Director. **School absences will be handled by the administration, while coaches will handle excusing extra-curricular activities.**

Each coach will strictly follow the rules for their sport's practice as stipulated by LHSAA. **No practice (mandatory or voluntary) will be scheduled for any time on any Sunday without the consent and approval of the Pastor and the Principal.**

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ATHLETES

It is a privilege and honor to represent one's school and community while participating on a St. Mary's School athletic team. It is the athlete's responsibility to conform to the rules and regulations necessary to participate successfully and to follow the "Code of Conduct" set forth by the school. A firm and fair policy of enforcement is needed to uphold the regulations and standards of the athletic department. The community, school administrators, and the coaching staff feel strongly that the high standards of conduct and citizenship are essential in maintaining a sound program of athletics.

CODE

1. Athletes shall conform to the SMS discipline policy, including all academic and attendance requirements.
2. Athletes shall conform to the behavioral norms of the school and act in a responsible manner with regard to the rules and regulations established in the SMS Handbook. Consequences will be exercised when needed.
3. Athletes shall conform to the behavioral norms of society in general and to the specific laws established by local, state, and federal government.
4. Athletes shall attend and not be tardy for all practices and competitions held both during regular school sessions and during school holidays. Exceptions shall be subject to the approval of the head coach.
5. Athletes shall, at all times, conduct themselves in a manner exhibiting sound moral character and exemplify good sportsmanship.
6. Athletes shall be held responsible and accountable for all equipment associated with the functioning of the team, i.e. uniforms, equipment, etc.
7. Athletes shall always conduct themselves with an attitude that is positively stated, exhibits pride and is representative of the SMS community in general.
8. Athletes shall abstain from using drugs, alcohol and tobacco, which are deemed harmful to one's health, athletic performance and general well-being.

TEAM EXPECTATIONS / DISCIPLINE POLICY

Players are expected to attend all practices, games, off-season workouts, and fundraisers on time and through completion. Players are expected to take pride in their team by helping set up, break down, and maintain the facilities at SMS.

Excused absences must be approved through the coach (extenuating circumstances may be dealt with individually by administration/coach). Attendance for any sport practice is vital for athletics to be successful. Missing team practices and/or games not only hurt the individual who missed, but damages the team as well. Parents are asked to keep this in mind when scheduling any appointments or disciplining their child. **School Spirit Groups will follow SMS Discipline Guidelines.**

Disciplinary actions of team members will be administered by the Head Coach.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to establish a clear and concise set of guidelines for student-athletes to follow to help them make the best possible judgments and safeguard their personal privacy as well as protect the integrity of Tiger Athletics and St. Mary School. Remember, playing and competing for St. Mary's is a privilege. The student-athletes, coaches, and staff represent St. Mary's School both on and off the field, and are seen as role models on campus and in the community. As leaders, we all have a responsibility to represent our teams, our schools, and ourselves in a responsible and positive manner.

Third parties including media, faculty, future employers, and college recruiters can easily access social media profiles and view all personal information. This includes pictures, videos, comments posts, and links. It is important to understand that once something is posted online, it never disappears. Inappropriate material found by third parties affects the perception of St. Mary's student-athletes, the Tiger family, and the school as a whole. It can also be detrimental to the future of our Tiger family and the student-athletes future employment options.

With those ideas in mind, the policy requires that student-athletes:

- **Protect and enhance** the value of the Tiger Athletics; avoid making derogatory comments about athletics, students, faculty, or employees and protect confidential information.
- **Be aware** that readers and followers on social media sites include media, current and future student-athletes, students, faculty, administrators, alumni, parents, coaches and community members, as well as current/past/future employers. It is essential that student-athletes portray St. Mary's School in a positive manner at all times.
- **Think before** you post and anticipate how all the third parties that may react to it.

Examples of inappropriate posts:

- a. Posting photos, videos, comments, posts or tweets showing the personal use of alcohol and/or tobacco products. (no holding cups, cans, shot glasses, etc.)
- b. Posting photos, videos and comments that are sexual in nature. This includes links to web sites of a pornographic nature and other inappropriate material.
- c. Posting pictures, videos, comments, posts and tweets that relate to drugs or drug paraphernalia.
- d. ANY inappropriate offensive language in comments, videos and other postings. This includes threats or violence and derogatory comments against race, gender, team affiliate or any other organizations.
- e. Posting negative commentary regarding the performance of SMS athletic teams or relating to the actions of an individual student-athlete, as well as any negative postings about team information.

For your own protection:

1. Set your security and privacy settings so only friends can view profiles, posts and other information.
2. Do not post your email, home address, local address, telephone number or other personal information that could lead to unwanted attention, stalking, identity theft etc.
3. Be aware of who you add as a friend on social media services.

ACCIDENTS

If student athletes are involved in an accident, or receive an injury at practice, or during a competition, the coach is to complete an accident report immediately. Coaches are to remind parents of the school's secondary insurance that is available through the submission of forms provided by the school office.

OVERNIGHT STAYS FOR ATHLETIC CONTESTS

If student athletes are to spend the night in order to compete in an athletic contest, coaches must follow the St. Mary's school policy for overnight stays. All luggage **MUST** be searched before a student is allowed to board the bus. All liquids must be inspected and luggage must be searched for any illegal or inappropriate substances.

EXTRA CURRICULAR CONFLICTS

If student athletes are involved in more than one sport, or any school organization, it is the responsibility of the coaches and sponsors to schedule events so that students do not have to "choose" between the events. If the coaches and sponsors cannot reach a compromise the decision will become the responsibility of the Athletic Director or the Principal.

GAME DAY PROCEDURES

Coaches are to consider carefully the purchase of additional clothing, other than uniforms, each year as student athletes are to wear their school uniform to school on game days. Exceptions to this rule are approved only by the principal prior to the individual sporting season.

Each coach should provide their student-athletes the expectations for home and away game days. ***Any written documents provided to students/parents are to be approved by the Athletic Director.***

ATHLETE EARLY DISMISSAL

When scheduling athletic events, particularly in the spring, all contests are to be scheduled as late as possible to allow students the opportunity to complete the academic day. Instructional time lost to sporting events can create issues for students and instructors.

Each coach must submit a complete roster to the office at the beginning of each sport season. The approved schedule template lists the times that students are to be released for each contest.

PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Coaches should attempt to schedule one weekend Mass together each season.

All students will pray before and after games. At the discretion of the coach or sponsor, the prayer may be student-led, coach-led, or clergy-led.

EXPENDITURES

St. Mary's has defined purchasing procedures for any and all sporting equipment, uniforms, etc. **Approval for all purchases must be attained prior to placing any order. The Principal is the purchasing agent for the school.** Procedures to follow include:

- Acquire an estimate of the total cost of items including shipping and tax.
- Request a Purchase Order from the Finance Officer with assurance that funds are available.
- Complete the Purchase Order and submit it to the Athletic Director, who will check available funds. **No order will be made if there are insufficient funds in the account.**
- Once approved by the Athletic Director, the PO will be given to the Principal. After final approval, an order may be placed.
- All items are to be shipped to the school address.
- Once an item is received it is processed for use.
- **All clothing artwork must be approved by the Principal.**

Expense of Officials

After officials are assigned and documentation is received from the Assignment Secretary for a contest, the Finance Officer will create checks and sign-off sheets for officials to sign when receiving checks. **Each coach is responsible for presenting checks to officials and for having the sign-in sheet returned to the Finance Officer.** Any and all monies for any sport are to be deposited through the Cashier of the school.

TEAM PICTURES/ADVERTISING/PUBLICATIONS/MEDIA

Any and all composite pictures, scheduled publications, and advertising of any team or sport, associated with St. Mary's, must receive prior approval from the Athletic Director and Principal. **When speaking to the media be mindful that you represent St. Mary's and its mission.**

EQUIPMENT ISSUE

Each coach is responsible for maintaining the inventory of all uniforms and equipment of their sport. Issuing and collection of uniforms and equipment is the responsibility of each sport's coach.

AWARDS AND LETTERS

Athletic "letters" or awards can be earned in all varsity sports sanctioned by St. Mary's and LHSAA when appropriate criteria are met. Letters are presented at the discretion of the coach and the Athletic Director.

1. A student-athlete must participate in a sport for two years to qualify for a Letter.
2. Criteria for lettering must be determined by each coach for each sport.
3. Letters are to be presented on the basis of Varsity participation.
4. A letter is to be presented when the student athlete has demonstrated the qualities that are deemed desirable for athletic participants.

5. An athlete shall only be allowed to purchase a letter jacket when he/she has earned a varsity letter.
6. Letter jackets are to only be purchased through the Athletic Department.
7. Only students in grades 9 – 12 may purchase letter jackets.

FUNDRAISING

All fundraising requests are to be approved by the Athletic Director and Principal. A *Request for Fundraiser* form must be completed and submitted with significant time preceding event. All events, after approval, must be placed on the school calendar to avoid conflicts. All monies raised by any sport through fundraising will be deposited and credited to the sport. Similarly, any donations made to a specified sport will remain with the sport.

OFF-SEASON CLINICS

Coaches of St. Mary's who wish to have a clinic or camp during the summer or off-season are welcome to utilize the school facilities. **In order to receive the approval for such a camp the coach is to complete and submit a *Facility Use Form*, which provides the office with all pertinent information.** Additionally, if the clinic or camp is held during the summer, and may include students that are not enrolled at St. Mary's, proof of liability coverage for the event must be attached to the Facility Use Form.

ALL SPORTS AWARDS CEREMONY

Each sport will hold its own awards ceremony(s) during the year. The coaches and student athletes of that sport are expected to attend.

At the ceremony the head coach will make presentations to their athletes that have excelled and are deserving of special recognition.

Each head coach is responsible for scheduling their ceremony and securing plaques, trophies, etc. for their players.

St. Mary's Catholic School reserves the right to amend this Handbook. Notice of amendments will be sent to parents through email communication.