

# ROCKFORD CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

## ATHLETICS HANDBOOK



Superintendent..... Thomas J. DeJonge  
Principal .....Ben Buursma  
Athletic Director..... Dave Nieboer

6060 Belding Road, Rockford, MI 49341

# Overview

## **Statement of Foundations**

The purpose of interscholastic athletics at Rockford Christian School is to provide students with opportunities for athletic competition consistent with the mission of the Grand Rapids Christian Schools (GRCS). That is, *to prepare students to be effective servants of Christ in contemporary society.*

It is the responsibility of the RCS principle, athletic director, staff, and coaches to provide the Christian leadership and training necessary for our athletics program to achieve these essential

### **FOUNDATIONS:**

1. Honor Jesus Christ in all things – this is the most important measure of our success.
2. Christian character defines who we are – in and out of school and the athletic arena.
3. God-honoring behavior, good sportsmanship, and adherence to the Athletic Code are required.
4. Good grades and school citizenship lead the way – successful athletes must first be successful students.
5. Selfless attitudes must permeate the team – what is best for the team always comes first.
6. We will seek to win in accordance with the rules – competing at the highest possible level is the goal while showing proper respect for opponents.
7. We are all in this together – student-athletes, coaches, parents, fans and administrators are all on the same page.
8. The commitment to the team is important – it takes no talent to show up on time and work hard.
9. Athletes and coaches must support other athletes and teams in order to build effective teams – we all share Eagle pride.
10. Athletes will work hard and improve in and out of season – the commitment does not end when the season ends.
11. Positive attitudes will influence outcomes – play with passion, encourage those around you, cheer with enthusiasm.

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of middle school athletics at Rockford Christian is to provide students with opportunities for athletic competition, understanding that being a part of an athletic team is a privilege, not a right. We aim to fulfill this purpose in the following practices:

- 1) Providing the opportunity to participate in a variety of sports.
- 2) Developing proper techniques and skills that are needed to play these sports correctly.
- 3) Developing the Christian attitudes, behaviors, and practices that are necessary to be a teammate, classmate, family member, and person that honors God.

## **Sports Offered At RCS**

We participate in Grand Rapids Catholic Elementary Athletic Conference (GRACEAC) for the sports of baseball, basketball, soccer, and volleyball. We also Combine with Grand Rapids Christian School Recreation Program and Grand Rapids Christian Middle School to offer football, sideline cheer, golf, cross country, wrestling, competitive cheer, tennis, lacrosse, and swimming. To see a list of all sports opportunities available at RCS, and more information about GRACEAC, please see Appendix A on page 11.

## **Schedules**

Game schedules are determined by GRACEAC and given to RCS when they choose to do so. This sometimes means that we have a variety of schedule changes at the last minute due to the league making a change out of our control. This is the nature of the league, and for the most part, this works quite well.

Practice schedules are set up by the Athletic Director and take into consideration the practice guidelines (below) and game schedules from GRACEAC.

Based on facility usage changes in the RCS system, all practice and game schedules are subject to change.

## **Coaching Appointments and Evaluations**

Coaching appointments are the responsibility of the Athletic Director. Head coaches will make recommendations regarding assistant coaches with the final decision resting with the Athletic Director. Appointments are for a one year period with evaluation at the conclusion of each season. Evaluation of head coaches will be made by the Athletic Director and assistant coaches will be evaluated by the head coach and Athletic Director cooperatively.

## **Practice Guidelines**

By signing up for a team, you are agreeing to participate in all practices, games, and team activities. Absences from these events could result in reduced playing time, and in some cases, dismissal from the team. In order to best attempt to avoid these situations, a note, email, or phone call explaining the reason for absence must be issued to the coach as soon as you know of the conflict.

### **Practices – 5th-8th Grade**

- 2-3 times a week
- Practice times will vary; practice sessions can run anytime between 3:30PM and 8:00PM
- Parents must pick children up at the practice site

## **Transportation**

RCS is not able to provide transportation to any athletic contests.

## **Playing Up Or Down**

At times we combine grade levels together, in order to form a team so that kids can participate. Sometimes we combine grades and sometimes we combine schools, to form a team. This is done with cooperation and coordination of the Athletic Director(s) and the coaches.

As a general rule, RCS does not support moving students out of their current grade level of competition for competitive purposes. If there is a reason that does not have to do with competitive purposes, this request can be discussed with the Athletic Director and the Principal.

## **Sunday Policy**

Grand Rapids Christian Schools will not sponsor curricular or extra-curricular competitions or allow teams or school-sponsored groups to participate in Sunday competitions or practices. Rockford Christian School's athletic facilities will not be used on Sunday.

## **Inclement Weather**

On days when school is cancelled due to weather, all games and practices will be canceled. We will do our best to reschedule games that are missed. If there is rain, snow, or thunder in the forecast we will do our best to get information out by 2:00 PM that day if possible. You are able to register your phone number or email address with GRACEAC to get instant alerts and cancellations directly from the league. To sign up please go to [GRACEAC.com](http://GRACEAC.com)

## **Sports Specialization**

The question of whether a student athlete should play multiple sports or specialize in one sport is an important one for students and their parents to consider. Some student athletes may have hopes of playing at the collegiate level one day, while others are participating simply for the joy of playing and being part of a team. We do not suggest that there is one right answer for every student or situation.

However, there is a great deal to be gained from participating in multiple sports. Different sports challenge athletes in different ways, and the skills developed through the training methods used in one sport will often help the athlete in another sport. Together, each sport works to build a better overall athlete. The athlete's social, emotional, and mental well-being also benefits from the variety of teammates, coaches, and competitive situations provided by multiple sports.

# Athletes

## Expectations for Student Athletes

Participants will be expected to demonstrate the following:

1. Fundamental skills of the sport and team concepts
2. Christian sportsmanship
3. Understanding of one's role as a contributing member of the team
4. Treating teammates, opponents, and officials with respect and dignity
5. Working with all students of different skill levels to develop their talents
6. A high level of attentiveness, effort, and motivation at practices and games
7. Dignity and integrity as they represent Rockford Christian School

## Rockford Christian School: Athletic Eligibility

All RCS student-athletes fall under the behavior guidelines explained in the student/parent handbook. They must remember that they represent their team, their school, their family, and God. Participation in sports is a **privilege** given to students who have demonstrated social and academic responsibility. Ineligibility is declared when a teacher(s) reports a student's performance is not meeting the acceptable standards for that class or if a student consistently makes poor behavior choices.

**Academic Performance:** The student-athlete's performance on tests and quizzes must be at or above the expected level for the student-athlete. Homework and assignments must be handed in on time and completed at the level that is expected for the student-athlete. To assure that these student-athletes are performing at their best, the following procedure will be used:

- **Step One: Probation** – If a student athlete is performing “below expectation” (students must be receiving a 71% or higher) in all courses. The principal will inform the student that she/he is on probation for the next week. This decision must be made by the teaching team and not just by one teacher. An athletic eligibility sheet must be filled out with specific requirements for the student to be removed from probation. The principal will give this sheet to the student- athlete. The athletic director will contact the parents and the coach of any athlete on probation. If the student has not met the standards of any one of the teachers, the student proceeds to Step Two.
- **Step Two: Ineligibility** – The student athlete will miss one (1) full week of competition and must meet the teachers' standards within that week. The athlete is expected to participate in the practices and attend the game(s) (not in uniform) during this week. If the student has not met the standards, she/he proceeds to Step Three. \*Note of clarification: Ineligibility will run from Thursday morning at 8:30 a.m. (after the Weds. teacher meeting) to the following Weds. night at 10:00 pm. IF the student-athlete is reinstated by getting her/his grade(s) above 71%, the reinstatement will be effective on Thursday at 8:30 a.m.
- **Step Three:** Dismissed from the team – If a student is declared ineligible for a second time in the same season, the athlete will be dismissed from the team for the remainder of the season.

**Social Responsibility:** The student athlete's social choices and behavior is examined inside and outside the classroom. Standards for behavior are based both on the school's procedures/policies and the teachers' respective procedures and policies. If a student receives behavioral discipline in school, the following procedures are followed:

- **Detention:** Depending on the offense, the Principal has the option of withholding practice or game time from the student.
- **In-School Suspension:** This will remove the athlete from the team completely for one week. The athlete may not attend practices or games.
- **Out-of-School Suspension:** This will result in automatic dismissal from the team for the rest of the season. If the student is not in-season during their suspension, they could be subject to penalties in the next season if the Principal and the Athletic Director believe it to be necessary.

**Team Responsibility:** A student athlete who fails to meet the team responsibilities jeopardizes his/her participation in the next sport season.

## **Uniforms and Equipment**

Uniforms and equipment provided by RCS must be returned to the coach at the end of the season. No parent or student will be obligated to purchase extra equipment in order to participate as a member of the team (unless stated prior to the season). Players are held financially responsible for any lost, stolen, or damaged RCS issued uniform or equipment. The athletic department is not responsible for lost, stolen, or personal items. Students are encouraged to purchase a lock to secure their belongings whether at school or visiting another school.

## **Practices**

Members of a team are expected to be at every scheduled practice unless absent from school or previously arranged with the coach. For more detail see page 3 of the handbook "Practice Guidelines."

## **Attendance**

Because academics come before athletics, and because the well-being of all students is of paramount importance, athletes who are ill should not participate in practices or contests.

## **Physical Examinations**

The MHSAA athletic code requires that physicals be given for athletes to participate in interscholastic sports at the high school level but does not require them for middle school sports. Because of this, RCS does not require physical examinations for sports participation. It is still **strongly recommended** that students have physical exams if they plan to join sports teams.

## **Playing Time**

Some GRACEAC sports have guidelines for how much athletes must play during a contest. As a general rule we are in favor of participation over winning. Thus we encourage all our coaches to play athletes as equally as possible so everyone has a chance to develop their skills.

However, in the spirit of our purpose statement on page 2, the middle school athletic program is charged with preparing students and families to make the transition to high school athletics. In high school, playing time is not a requirement of being on a team. Thus playing time might have some inequalities and is at the discretion of the coach.

# Coaches

## Coaching Appointments

Head coaching appointments are the responsibility of the Athletic Director in consultation with the Principal and others of his/her choosing. Appointments are for a one year period with evaluation at the conclusion of each season. Teachers and other school staff personnel have first priority for coaching vacancies.

## Characteristics

1. The coach is a spiritual mentor and a Christian role model for the athletes they coach, helping the students in their Christian walk by helping them to develop and use their God-given gifts.
2. The coach is able to relate to kids, enjoys being around and communicating with middle school students, and is willing to invest in their lives– in and out of the athletic arena.
3. The coach has a passion for and a love of the sport they coach.
4. The coach has the knowledge and ability to teach the technical skills required and the teamwork involved to create an atmosphere to develop the team to play at the highest possible level.
5. The coach conducts him or herself in a professional manner and fosters healthy relationships with athletes, parents and officials. As a highly visible representative of the school and the community, the coach must accept a special role in demonstrating positive and responsible leadership.

## EXPECTATIONS

- **Faith Formation:** Coach is a spiritual mentor. Faith formation can take a variety of shapes, but it is a coach's responsibility to engage the team in weekly faith formation activities and conversations.
- **Athletic Code:** Our staff and coaches are held accountable to ensure that every student athlete understands and abides by the Athletic Code of Rockford Christian School. We consistently and fairly enforce the disciplines of the School's Athletic Code.
- **Parent Communication:** All coaches are required to send weekly communication through email to parents of players on their team regarding practice, game times, and schedule changes
- **Parent Meeting:** Coaches are encouraged to hold an informational meeting for the parents at the beginning of the season to address scheduling, expectations, conduct, discipline, and any other areas of interest that the coach deems necessary.
- **Evaluation:** The Athletic Director, following each season, will do evaluation of the head coaches.
- **Score Reporting:** All coaches must report scores to the Athletic Director

## **Sunday Policy**

Grand Rapids Christian Schools will not sponsor curricular or extra-curricular competitions or allow teams or school-sponsored groups to participate in Sunday competitions or practices. Also, our agreement with RiverRock Church outlines that they have sole use of the building on Sundays. Therefore, Rockford Christian School's athletic facilities will not be used on Sunday.

## **Injuries**

A first aid kit is provided for each athletic team for the purpose of treating minor injuries. Any injury which requires treatment by a professional medical person must be brought to the attention of the parent(s) and/or school personnel. An injury report should be filled out by the coach and filed with the main office within 24 hours.

# Parents

Parents are an important part of the athletic program at Rockford Christian School. The support and encouragement given to coaches and athletes is highly valued. Parents, as well as coaches and athletes, represent the school to the community.

Please remember that athletics are here for kids to have fun. Winning is part of the fun, but studies show that the majority of kids just want to participate. Some schools may take winning more seriously and bend the spirit of the rules in order to win. We will not do that. Please help us support this philosophy of middle school athletics.

## Expectations

1. Be encouraging. Your attitude is contagious.
2. Be positive at games, and encourage the team, the coach, the officials, and the school.
3. Encourage your athlete to speak directly with the coach if there is a problem. Empower your son/daughter to speak up for themselves appropriately.
4. Around the dinner table, please keep your conversations about the coach and other teammates positive.
5. Positively represent our school

\*\*If a parent is in violation of any of the expectations above, they could be removed from observing athletic contests at RCS.

## Communicating With Coach

It is appropriate to contact the coach regarding issues of safety, clarifying details of the schedule or team functions. Parents should expect a weekly email from their coach and are welcome to respond to the coach about the information in those emails.

## Conflict Resolution

There is a policy regarding parent-coach communication developed and adopted by our school board. If there is an issue a parent wants to discuss with a coach, ***please respect a 24-hour time frame before following the adopted policy.*** In resolving conflicts with coaches, the following steps of communication should be followed.

The next step should occur only if the conflict is not resolved. **Please do not skip steps.**

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| <b>Step 1</b> | Player has a meeting with Coach  |
| <b>Step 2</b> | Parent & Player have a meeting with Coach                                  |
| <b>Step 3</b> | Parent & Player have meeting with the Coach & Athletic Director            |
| <b>Step 4</b> | Parent & Player have meeting with the Principal, Coach & Athletic Director |

# Appendix A

## **OUR LEAGUE - GRACEAC**

Rockford Christian Middle School is a member school of the Grand Rapids Area Catholic Elementary Athletic Conference (GRACEAC). As a member school it is the responsibility of the school administration and coaches to adhere to the policies and procedures published annually on the GRACEAC website. ([www.graceac.com](http://www.graceac.com))

## **SPORTS OFFERED (5th-8th grade)**

**FALL:** Boys Soccer, Girls Volleyball, \*\*Boys & Girls Cross Country, \*Football & \*\*Sideline Cheer

**WINTER:** Boys & Girls Basketball, \*\*Competitive Cheer, \*\*Wrestling

**SPRING:** Baseball, Girls Soccer, \*Boys & Girls Lacrosse, \*\*Softball, \*\*Boys & Girls Swimming, \*\*Boys & Girls Tennis, \*\*Boys & Girls Track and Field

\*All information for Football and Lacrosse is through Stacey Boender ([sboender@grcs.org](mailto:sboender@grcs.org)) and [www.grcs.org/YouthSports](http://www.grcs.org/YouthSports)

\*\*Sports Offered in partnership with Grand Rapids Christian Middle School