



## Welcome

Welcome to the 2023-24 Austin Packers Boys' Basketball season.

We want all our teams from 9<sup>th</sup> grade through Varsity to enjoy success in terms of wins/losses, but regardless of the number of wins, we believe that all will gain in a positive learning experience. We look forward to coaching the young men that will represent our teams and thank you for your involvement within the basketball program.

We feel it is a privilege to make one of our teams and represent that Austin community and school district. We have always prided ourselves in the way that our teams have conducted themselves on and off the court. When involved in our program or supporting it, we expect that we all hold ourselves to the standards of good character (trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship). Win, lose, through good and bad, character counts for all of us.

Each year we ask the players, parents, and coaches to cooperate and make many sacrifices. Our season is a long one with many mental and physical demands. We ask that if you have concerns regarding a player, or the basketball program, that you feel free to contact your individual coach or myself. Little problems can become big problems and addressing a situation after the season is of little benefit to anyone. I take full responsibility for the basketball program.

Jamaal Gibson – Head Varsity Coach – (507) 440-7260 – [jamaal.gibson@austin.k12.mn.us](mailto:jamaal.gibson@austin.k12.mn.us)

Tate Hebrink – JV Coach/Varsity Assistant

Opiew Okey – Varsity Assistant

Steven Lang – “B” Squad Coach

Greg Rochat – “C” Squad Coach

## Player Participation

Our basketball program is competitive based, we are trying to field teams that can compete in the Big 9 Conference. We do have a “cut policy” similar to that used by most Big 9 schools and the reasons include:

1. Ability Level – We must have players that possess skills necessary to help us get better, not only in games, but also in practice. If a player comes out and has no experience in organized basketball, they will struggle and may possibly not make the team.
2. Playing Time – The more players you have the tougher it is to assure playing time. Again, we are competitive based and do not guarantee playing time.
3. Player-Coach Ratio – We want quality instruction and therefore need to keep numbers manageable for practice repetitions.
4. Happiness of Player – We want all our players, no matter what their role on the team, to know that they can make positive contributions to the team. If we have players that cannot handle their personal situation and are becoming negative this is not good for the team and team morale.

Players will be cut within the first 2 practices. The coach or coaches will meet with the players that are cut and let them know why that decision was made.

When making cuts we will look at the following criteria:

- Behavior and Academic Performance
- Skill Level
- Being Coachable
- Past Organized Basketball Experience
- Summer Camp Involvement
- Athletic Potential

## Participation Fee

Years ago our district, like most throughout the state, instituted a usage fee for extra-curricular activities. All athletes must pay this fee regardless of their role on the team. This fee does not guarantee playing time, but rather the opportunity to learn from a team experience. By being a member of a team, regardless of time spent in actual competition, a person can learn many valuable life lessons. Among them are: citizenship, sportsmanship, respect for opponents and others, teamwork, responsibility, commitment to team and school, loyalty, placing team above self, learning to accept criticism, winning and losing with humility and dignity, self-control and being responsible for one's actions.

## Playing Levels

Varsity – The Varsity is trying to be as competitive as possible in tough Big 9 Conference. Playing time is of the coaches' discretion. The goal is to win the Section and go to the State Tournament. We will practice with 12-18 players and will dress that many for games as well. Players at this level must have a skill set that allows us to compete in our league.

Junior Varsity – The top 7-10 non-Senior players that do not play heavy minutes in the Varsity game will play JV. The JV game is the preliminary game to the Varsity. The JV level is competitive and prepares players for Varsity level play. Players are allowed to play three halves of competitive play a night. If JV players are practicing with the Varsity, it is assumed they will dress for the Varsity games.

“B” Squad – The “B” squad is comprised of mostly sophomores, there may be freshmen on the team as well. We will keep 10-15 players on this team. We find this level to be our most difficult in terms of keeping players happy. There is only one level of player here unlike 9<sup>th</sup> grade. We are playing to win and therefore will have players that receive little to no game minutes.

9<sup>th</sup> Grade – The “C” squad consists of two teams, an “A” and a “B” team. We do have a cut policy and will keep around 16-18 players. Cuts will take place during or after our tryouts. Students who do not make the team will have their participation fee refunded. Our cuts will be based on our standards outlined earlier in this handbook. The 9<sup>th</sup> grade coach and coach Jamaal will determine who makes the team.

The players that make the team will be placed on the “A” or “B” team after about a week of practice. The level you start at can change throughout the course of the year as “B” team players can move up and “A” members could move down. The “A” level is competitive, and we are playing to win so playing time is not guaranteed and will vary from game to game. The teams will practice together most of the time. Make sure you follow the practice schedule as most practices will take place in Hastings gym, but there are some days where that is not the case. The “B” games will follow the “A” games. All members of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade team are expected to be present for both games.

Players will learn offensive and defensive systems that will help them prepare for future varsity play. Players are expected to be at every practice, if for some reason you will not be able to attend, you must notify the 9<sup>th</sup> grade coach or Coach Jamaal. Please refer to the Practice Notations page for rules on practices.

## Opportunity

Opportunities for players to get better present themselves in and out of season. During the season each player receives opportunity on a nightly basis through their performance in practice and/or games. There are also numerous open gyms, which run in the off-season, as well as various camps and summer leagues that promote out of season play and skill development. It is the belief of the head coach that great teams and players are shaped in the off-season. In taking advantage of the opportunities that are presented, great team and individual rewards can be met. Opportunity also presents itself to those younger players who show the skill level and maturity to play at a higher level. If there were a player whom the coaching staff believes would benefit from playing at a higher level, that player could be moved up.

## Fastbreak Club

The Fastbreak Club is a boys' basketball booster club. Every sport has their own way of soliciting funds to support their program. The Fastbreak Club is our vehicle for generating financial support. Board members consist of parents and this year Treasure Ransom is serving as our president. The Fastbreak Club runs major fundraisers each season, those fundraisers are vital to us affording our costs year after year. We raise money through our Annual Pancake Breakfast at the Eagles, Pizza Ranch fundraiser, Taco John's Fundraiser, Applebee's Fundraiser, game night hoop shoots, donations, among other things. The Fastbreak Club has helped us raise money for numerous items including, but not limited to: Uniforms, Travel Suits, Warm-ups and shooting shirts, Coach Busses, Summer Camps, Off Season Tournaments, and Gameday Programs.

## Practice Notations

The times for practice vary due to the sharing of facilities with the girls' program and other activities. It is recommended that the schedules be put on the refrigerator at home or some other place where it will be frequently seen. When there is a change in practice time, players will be notified at least one day in advance so that the proper arrangements can be made. If changes to the practice time happen with less than 24 hours' notice available, practice will be optional and not mandatory. The facilities used for practice will majority of the time be Hastings gym, Ove Berven gym, and Packer gym located in the High School. At times we may use Ellis Middle School or IJ Holton Intermediate School gyms.

### Practice Arrival—

1. Practice starting time means on the floor, dressed in proper practice attire and ready to go.
2. Contact your head coach ASAP if you are going to be late
3. The third time you are late for practice unexcused will result in a one game suspension.

### Unexcused Absences –

1. One unexcused absence will result in a verbal warning for 9<sup>th</sup> grade and “B” squad. It will be a 1 game suspension for JV/Varsity
2. Two unexcused absences will result in a one game suspension for 9<sup>th</sup> and “B” squad. It will be a two-game suspension for JV/Varsity
3. A third unexcused absence will result in a suspension from the team at every level.
4. The coaching staff has rarely failed to excuse players for legitimate reasons. Notify your coach in advance.

### Team Rules –

1. No jewelry or hats are to be worn at practice. If it can't be worn during a game, it can't be worn during practice.
2. Cell phones will be turned off in the gyms and locker rooms.
3. If a player is being disruptive or being insubordinate, they will be excused from practice.
4. Players will dress appropriately on game nights and present themselves in a manner which represents our program, school, and community with pride.