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ST. THOMAS AQUINAS HS

ATHLETICS HANDBOOK



2025-2026

St. Thomas Aquinas High School

PARENT HANDBOOK ATHLETICS DEPARTMENT

Dear Parents/Guardians and Student Athletes:

The information in this handbook is most important. Please take the time to read this document carefully. St. Thomas Aquinas High School takes a great deal of pride in the athletic opportunities that are provided for its students. Under the umbrella of the New Jersey Interscholastic Athletics Association and the Greater Middlesex Conference, our athletic teams compete for County and State Championships in baseball, basketball, bowling, cross country, football, golf, gymnastics, lacrosse, spring track, swimming, volleyball, cheerleading and winter track along with an extensive intramural program.

Participation in the St. Thomas Aquinas Athletics Program is a privilege-not a right. Upon making the decision to participate in athletics, student athletes and parents/guardians must be prepared to make commitments. In addition, participation requires student-athletes and their parents/guardians to accept and to abide by the policies and procedures detailed in this handbook and as required by St. Thomas Aquinas High School in its rules and codes for all students, as well as those rules of the GMC and the NJSIAA.

One of the most important documents for the St. Thomas Aquinas student-athletes, the Physical Examination form which you can find on-line under Athletics/Handbook and Forms, must be completed and returned to the St. Thomas Aquinas High School Nurse's Office before any student-athlete will be permitted to participate in any aspect of the athletic program. NJSIAA and our insurance requirements dictate that student-athletes and parents/guardians complete this form and that there are no exceptions to this policy.

St. Thomas Aquinas High School Athletics Department

The purpose of this manual is to maintain the efficient operation of the Athletics Department by communicating clearly with the many individuals who guide and support its programs. By outlining standard policies and procedures in writing, the department seeks to better coordinate and unify the efforts of all its teams and coaches.

Athletics are an integral part of the educational program at St. Thomas Aquinas High School. Our athletic program is designed to allow each student-athlete the opportunity to learn the values of teamwork,

respect, and self- discipline through sports.

Students who choose to participate in sports are expected to support and to abide by the regulations in this handbook as well as rules and policies outlined in the St. Thomas Aquinas High School Student Handbook.

While striving to promote their own teams and activities, all members of the Athletics Department should cooperate with one another to present a unified spirit to student-athletes and the entire community. This spirit sets a strong example, which our young men and young women will then follow. Each sport, each student-athlete, and each coach deserve the mutual support and respect of the entire staff and administration.

Questions about this manual or about other Athletics Department policies should follow the following chain of command that is from student-athlete to head coach, to the Athletics Director, and, if necessary, to the Principal.

MISSION

St. Thomas Aquinas High School is to cultivate a desire for life-long learning, nurture the integration of faith and academic inquiry, and instill values of integrity and compassion in the tradition of the Metuchen Diocese

PHILOSOPHY

The student is the focal point of St. Thomas Aquinas High School.

VALUES

Three core values guide our commitment to this belief:

Scholarship

We believe that through education, each student can become an effective thinking, experiencing and sensitive person. St. Thomas Aquinas High School will provide educational opportunities to prepare the student for lifelong learning and continued intellectual, spiritual, and physical growth.

Discipline

We believe that through firm, consistent, and caring guidance, each student can develop the mental maturity and moral character to adopt patterns of behavior that are consistent with Christian values and traditions. St. Thomas Aquinas High School will provide a nurturing and supportive environment with appropriate limits conducive to the development and maintenance of self-discipline and responsible behavior.

Responsibility

We believe that through promoting the concept of responsibility, each student can develop the confidence to think critically, make deliberate decisions and be accountable. St. Thomas Aquinas High School will provide opportunities for each student to utilize those talents and abilities necessary for the improvement of self and the world in which we live.

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETICS DEPARTMENT **STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

The Athletics Department of St. Thomas Aquinas High School will strive to provide a variety of experiences for its students that enable each participant to learn lessons in sportsmanship, teamwork, competition, leadership, cooperation, self-discipline, goal setting, fair play, and Christian identity. Athletics play an important role in helping the individual to develop a healthy self-concept as well as a healthy body. Athletics competition is an important part of our school spirit and helps all students-participants and spectators to develop pride in their school.

The Athletics Department must always operate in accordance with the school's mission and display objectives and policies that support the ongoing educational process of St. Thomas Aquinas High School.

Coaches at St. Thomas Aquinas High School will be tasked to:

- Form students of Faith
- Form students of Character
- Coach student-athletes and teams to compete at the highest level

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETICS DEPARTMENT

President	Kevin Sacco
Principal	Mark Fiore
Associate Principal	Mark Fiore
Vice Principal	Robert Turco
Athletics Director	Matthew Silvestri
Trainer	Matthew Cumber
School Colors	Red & White
Mascot	Trojans
Classification	Non-Public

Fall Season

Cross Country	Boys/ Girls: Nick Tonzola
Football	Shamir Bearfield
Soccer	Boys: Jason Chung Girls: Frank Nunes
Gymnastics	Brent Lutska
Volleyball	TBD
Girls Tennis	Duncan Merriman-Mendez
Cheerleading	Madison Menafro

Winter Season

Basketball	Boys: Tom Weiler Girls: Tim Corrigan
Bowling	Rich Maddock
Swimming	Amanda Miller
Winter Track	TBD
Cheerleading	Madison Menafro
Wrestling	Boys:Luis Filipe Girls: Robert Murphy

Spring Season

Baseball	Tom D'Agostino
Golf	Clement Bottone
Lacrosse	Girls: Jahnn0 Symister
Boys Tennis	Duncan Merriman-Mendez
Spring Track	John Mareska
Softball	Missy Collazo

SPORTSMANSHIP

The NJSIAA requires officials to enforce sportsmanship rules. High school athletics must emphasize positive values. All parties should work hard to create a sense of teamwork, responsibility, and perspective. Officials expect good behavior and will quickly penalize misconduct. We encourage and appreciate the help of all spectators in achieving these aims. Let every competition reflect mutual respect among all in attendance.

St. Thomas Aquinas High School affirms and supports the sportsmanship expectations of the NJSIAA. We believe that sports can be a means for student-athletes to learn lessons in Christian identity, sportsmanship, competition, leadership, cooperation, self-discipline, goal setting, and fair play. Athletics competition can help students, participants, and spectators to develop pride in their school.

We expect all our student-athletes:

- To be a responsible and contributing member of the team and school.
- To make selfless efforts in working with others to reach a common goal.
- To play and live by the rules of the sport.
- To show appreciation and respect for others, whether they are teammates, opponents, officials, coaches, or spectators.
- To serve as a positive example by accepting both victory and defeat with pride and compassion.

We expect our coaches to serve as a positive example of fair play, sportsmanship, and respect towards their own players, opposing players, coaches, and game officials.

We expect our fans and students to keep all cheers positive; to avoid efforts to distract the opposing team's efforts; to refrain from exulting in defeat; to respect the players and fans of the opposing team before, during, and after the game; and to refrain from negative social communications with all teammates and opponents.

We expect parents/guardians and other fans to model good sportsmanship, to refrain from any negative personal and social communications, to refrain from the possession and use of alcohol at high school contests.

EXPECTATIONS OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS HIGH SCHOOL COACHES

St. Thomas Aquinas High School coaches are educators and leaders of the young men and young women they coach. Parents/guardians and student-athletes can expect that St. Thomas Aquinas High School coaches will:

- Place the well-being of their student-athletes ahead of the desire to win. "Athletes first, winning second."
- Exemplify high standards of moral character at all times.
- Provide appropriate and reasonable supervision of student-athletes.
- Recognize the inherent individual worth of each student-athlete.
- Use **appropriate** language when communicating with student-athletes.
- Encourage and assist student-athletes in the process of setting and achieving goals.
- Strive to develop the qualities of leadership and initiative in student-athletes.
- Establish and enforce training rules that reflect the positive values of abstaining from the use of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco including chewing.
- Effectively communicate the program philosophy and goals to student-athletes, parents/guardians, and the school community.
- Provide a safe environment for practice and participation.
- Teach and abide by the rules of the game.
- Seek excellence in coaching through collegial collaboration and professional development.
- Promote personal fitness and sound nutrition to student-athletes in words and actions.
- Respect the integrity and judgment of game officials.
- Encourage and promote a healthy respect for the entire athletic program.
- Utilize appropriate coaching techniques when instructing student-athletes.

Avoiding the Appearance of Impropriety

1. Do not stay alone in a room with a student unless there is a window permitting others to view the interior of the room or the door is open.
2. Do not allow students to become overly friendly or familiar with you.
3. Do not engage in private correspondence with students.
4. Do not visit students in their homes unless their parents are present.
5. Do not invite students to your home.
6. Do not transport students in your vehicle without the written permission of their parents and the consent of your supervisor.
7. Do not take the role of surrogate parent with a student.
8. Do not criticize a student's parents to the student or other students.
9. Do not give students your home phone number without the permission and knowledge of your supervisor.
10. Do not communicate with students from your home email address.
11. Do not hire students to work in your home without the express knowledge and consent of your supervisor.

EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENT-ATHLETES

The conduct of the student-athlete is governed by:

- A. Rules and policies of the NJSIAA and the GMC
 - B. Rules and policies of St. Thomas Aquinas High School
 - C. Training rules established by the coaching staff of each program
 - D. Rules of good sportsmanship
 - E. Specific rules as listed below by the Athletics Department
1. Every student-athlete is to respect each other and not participate in any activities that could be considered to be hazing.
 2. Jewelry is prohibited during any athletic game.
 3. Any student-athlete using the Football Field or the Gymnasium must ensure it is kept clean and remove all trash or papers from those areas. Coaches will be held responsible.
 4. Language- No foul language will be accepted from any student-athlete who participates in the St. Thomas Aquinas High School Athletics program.
 5. Student-athletes are discouraged from bringing valuables to practice or games. If they do, then they are responsible for securing these items.
 6. The Athletics Administration reserves the right to withdraw any student-athlete from the Athletics Program if he fails to fulfill his obligations and responsibilities to St. Thomas Aquinas High School, the Athletics Department or to his team, whose conduct is judged to reflect discredit upon himself, his team, or St. Thomas Aquinas High School.
 7. Coaches have the right to go beyond the school rules and add their own rules to their specific program with the prior approval of the Athletics Director and or Principal.

EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Parents/guardians are expected to keep athletic competition in perspective to the successful growth of each of our students.

1. Do not force your child to participate in sports.
2. Inform the coach and athletic trainer of any physical disability or ailment that may affect the safety of your child or others.
3. Learn the rules of the game and the NJSIAA policies.
4. Be a positive role model and encourage sportsmanship by showing respect and courtesy. Demonstrate positive support for all players, coaches, officials, and spectators.
5. Do not engage in any kind of unsportsmanlike conduct with officials, coaches, players, or other parents//guardians.
6. Teach your child to play by the rules and to resolve conflicts without resorting to hostility or violence.
7. Teach your child to treat other players, coaches, officials, and spectators with respect.
8. Attendance is a crucial element to any team. If a parent/guardian feels the need to excuse their student-athlete from practice, then it is the athlete's responsibility to communicate with the coach.
9. Never ridicule or yell at players, other parents/guardians, coaches, or officials.
10. One of the best lessons that can be learned in sports is an understanding and respect for authority. Speaking negatively to your student about his coach undermines that authority and makes it more difficult for your student to be responsible for his or her own actions and to maintain respect for his coach. Respect the coaches, officials, and other parents/guardians.

You should expect your son or daughter to face realities such as:

- Your son or daughter may not make the team. You cannot make the team for him or her.
- Your son or daughter may make a team but may see very little playing time in games.
- Your son or daughter may see playing time but may not be the star.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

While we strive for every student-athlete and family to have a positive experience in athletics, there may be a time when a student-athlete or parents/guardians may have concerns during the season. In this situation, the following protocol should be followed:

1. The student-athlete should take his concerns to his head coach.
2. If the student-athlete does not reach a satisfactory conclusion, then the parents/guardians and the student-athlete should request a meeting with the head coach.
3. If the concern remains after this meeting, then the parents/guardians may request to meet with the Athletics Director.
4. Allow a 24-hour “cool off” period after all contests before contacting the coach.
5. No impromptu meeting, or discussions after practices or games are allowed.

PARENT MEETINGS

At the beginning of each season, the coach will hold a team meeting. This meeting will cover freshman, junior varsity, and varsity teams. Many important topics will be discussed at this meeting that will help to define the season. Attendance at these meetings is mandatory for at least one parent/guardian.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

St. Thomas Aquinas High School is a member of the NJSIAA. As a member, we follow all the policies and guidelines set forth by the NJSIAA.

PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

1. Physical examinations are required of all student-athletes before they can participate in any tryouts, practices, or games. All incoming freshmen are required to have a current physical on file with the nurse. The physical form to be used can be found on the St. Thomas Aquinas website under [Athletics/Handbook and Forms](#). The following forms must be completed and returned to the school nurse:
 - a. Athletics form Signature Sheet
 - b. Athletics Physical Form
 - c. Concussion Fact Sheet and Consent Form
 - d. Health History
 - e. Sudden Cardiac Death Pamphlet Sign-Off
 - f. Opioid Sample Sign-Off
2. A student-athlete needs to have only **one** physical per year.

3. Physicals must be submitted to the nurse's office for the sport in which they are trying out for prior to the beginning of tryouts. These physicals will be maintained in the nurse's office.

ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY

The Athletics Department will adhere to the policy which is detailed in the St. Thomas Aquinas Student/Parent Handbook.

ATTENDANCE

Any student who is absent from school or if they have not been present in school for four hours may not participate in or attend any sports, social, or school event on the same day.

RISK

As with all physical activity, there is an inherent risk of injury when participating in athletics. The parents/guardians must sign a waiver, that is part of the physical examination form, which provides consent to allow the student to receive medical treatment that may be deemed advisable by the high school.

INJURIES

1. Adopt the safety standards of the NJSIAA and St. Thomas Aquinas High School.
2. An Athletics Trainer will be provided for home sporting events and for some away events.
3. If a student-athlete sustains an injury during tryouts, practice, or a game, then he or she must report it to the head coach immediately and must be sent to see the Athletics Trainer.

ATHLETICS TRAINER

St. Thomas Aquinas High School provides a certified Athletics Trainer for our teams to aid in sport injuries. The Athletics Trainer is available in the training room right after school and will be present at home events. The Athletics Trainer is responsible for documenting any injuries and forwarding that information to the Athletics Department and nurse's office for submission for insurance claims.

MEDICAL INSURANCE

1. All student-athletes of St. Thomas Aquinas High School are protected by secondary insurance coverage for any injury sustained during a school-related activity.
2. For the insurance to take effect, the student-athlete must report the injury to the Athletics Trainer within 15 days of its occurrence. The Athletics Trainer will evaluate the injury and notify the Athletics Department of the injury. The nurse's office will file a claim with the St. Thomas Aquinas Insurance carrier
3. St. Thomas Aquinas insurance carrier will mail the necessary paperwork directly to the family. All further contact will be between the family and the St. Thomas Aquinas insurance carrier.
4. St. Thomas Aquinas insurance carrier policy is secondary to all other family plans.
5. St. Thomas Aquinas insurance carrier provides supplemental insurance only. The family must file a claim with their primary insurance carrier first.

PLAYING TIME

Our athletic program strives for excellence in everything that we do. To compete to our best ability is most important. Playing time is at the discretion of the coach, and it is **not guaranteed**. Playing time will be based on performance in practice and performance in games. Our teams will strive to compete at the highest levels

PHILOSOPHY

In accordance with our philosophy of athletics and our desire to see as many students as possible participate in the athletic program while at St. Thomas Aquinas, we encourage coaches to keep as many student athletes as they can without compromising the integrity of their sport. Obviously, time, space, facilities, equipment, available coaches, personal preference, and other factors will place limitations on the most effective squad size for any sport. However, when developing policy in this regard, St. Thomas Aquinas strives to maximize the opportunities for students without diluting the quality of the program

Team Selection Policies

- **Responsibility**
 - Choosing the members of athletic teams is the sole responsibility of the coaches of those teams.
 - Junior Varsity and freshman team coaches shall take into consideration the policies as established by the Head Coach in that program when selecting final team rosters.
 - Prior to the beginning of the tryout procedure, the coach shall provide the following information to all candidates for the team.
 - Length of the tryout period
 - Criteria used to select the team
 - Number of team members to be selected
 - Practice commitment required if the student-athlete is selected for the team
 - Game commitments required if the student-athlete is selected for the team
 - How team selection will be announced

OFF - LIMITS PERIOD

Students may not receive coaching or training from school personnel, and use school facilities, uniforms, transportation, or equipment shall not be used in any NJSIAA-sanctioned sport in a season of another sport until the final state game.

FUND-RAISING POLICY

St. Thomas Aquinas High School has empowered the Athletics Director and Principal to coordinate and to approve all fund-raising efforts of the school.

INAPPROPRIATE LANGUAGE

Regardless of the circumstances, cursing or other forms of inappropriate language (name-calling, physical threats, sexual jokes, etc.) are not acceptable from coaches or any other school personnel. This language includes comments made as corrections or at other times. Sarcasm toward students should also be avoided as negative and counterproductive.

CANCELLATION POLICY/INCLEMENT WEATHER

- The safety of the student-athlete will always be the priority.
- If the heat index reaches 100 degrees, then all activity must be halted immediately. Coaches of outdoor sports must take a heat index reading regularly and chart the measurements.
- The Athletics Office has issued lightning detectors to the Athletics Trainer. The following guidelines will apply:
 - If lightning is 0-6 miles or 6-12 miles away, immediately take cover.
 - If lightning is 12-24 or 24-40 miles away, closely monitor to see if it moves closer.
- If severe weather situations arise during a game on our campus, then the PA announcer will announce where patrons should go for cover.
- If school is cancelled, the coaches and/or Athletics Department will relay the appropriate information regarding athletics as soon as a decision is made.

ATHLETICS EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

Issuing of Athletics Equipment

Each Head Coach is directly responsible for the **maintenance** and control of all equipment used in his or her program.

- Each Head Coach should employ some form of control system for the smooth assignment and return of equipment each season.
- Coaches should carefully consider the selection of all student managers and thoroughly explain their duties. These individuals are the key to good equipment control and maintenance.
- The head coach, although he may delegate the issuing of equipment to assistant coaches and managers, is ultimately responsible for the issuing of athletic equipment to all team personnel. The

- coach issuing the equipment must have the training to ensure properly fitting equipment.
- Players are to be instructed in the proper use, care (washing) and maintenance of their equipment at the time of issue. This instruction is particularly important for safety equipment.
 - All student-athletes receiving equipment will be responsible for the equipment issued. If the equipment is lost or has had abnormal usage, then the student-athlete will be charged accordingly.
 - Periodically, coaches shall inspect equipment and facilities during the season.
 - Helmets, bats, nets, etc. may break or deteriorate and become unsafe during the year.
Deactivate unsafe or defective equipment.
 - Facility hazards should be reported to the Athletics Director immediately.
 - The Athletics Director may periodically check on the handling of equipment.

Use of Athletics Equipment and Facilities

It is important to emphasize to all student-athletes their responsibilities as squad members to take good care of school equipment and facilities and to report any abuses to their coach or the Athletics Director.

- Athletics Department-issued equipment is to be worn only during practice sessions and interscholastic contests or by permission from the coaches. At no time are student-athletes to wear school-issued equipment or uniforms for:
 - a. Gym classes
 - b. Work on the job
 - c. Social activities
 - d. School wear
 - e. Out-of-season training or competitions
- Uniform tops or game jerseys may be worn on certain game days only at the direction of the Principal. Normally, the wearing of school athletic items will be reserved for special occasions.
- Warm-up outfits that are especially designed for contest wear may be worn at the actual contests. These outfits are never to be worn as school jackets or outerwear.
- Athletics equipment will not be loaned to outside groups.
- Never allow student-athletes to use St. Thomas Aquinas High School facilities without written permission from the Athletics Director and the proper supervision of coaches.
- After each practice, make sure that all practice areas and locker areas are clean and free of
- debris and trash.
- Students-athletes are **not** permitted to wear cleats or dress shoes on the gymnasium floor.

Collection and Storage of Athletics Equipment

Coaches are responsible for collecting all equipment that is dispensed during the school year.

If any equipment is lost or has abnormal usage, then the student-athlete shall be charged replacement costs. The coach shall inform the student-athlete that he or she will not receive any athletic awards or report card until all financial obligations are met.

SPORTS AWARDS

Letter Award: Each sport has its own criteria for earning a varsity letter and may have an end-of-the-year event to distribute awards. A student-athlete may earn one varsity letter in each sport and then he or she will receive a pin.

State Championships: When a team wins a state championship, members of that team may have the opportunity to purchase state championship rings.

Collegiate signing: The following guidelines need to be followed for a signing ceremony at St. Thomas Aquinas.

- The student has signed or will sign a national letter of intent that reflects a commitment to
- participate in athletics at the collegiate level on an athletic scholarship
- Parents/guardians should notify the Athletics Office at least three weeks in advance of the desired date for the ceremony
- Coaches from the college/university should be notified in case they wish to attend once the parents/guardians have contacted the Athletics Office; the Athletics Director will contact the student's primary coach to discuss the date. Internal announcements will be made so as many students and teammates as possible may attend. Once the date is finalized, the Athletics Office will generate a press release.

NCAA: St. Thomas Aquinas is fortunate to have many student-athletes go on to play sports in college. Student-athletes who hope to earn athletic scholarships and plan to attend an NCAA institution must be processed through the NCAA Clearinghouse. These students will need to register with the NCAA. The Counseling Department has all the information needed to complete the process.

NCAA

www.ncaa.org

877-262-1492

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS HIGH SCHOOL ALCOHOL AND OTHER ILLEGAL DRUGS POLICY

The Athletics Department will adhere to the policy which is detailed in the St. Thomas Aquinas Student/Parent Handbook.

As a parent/guardian what should you expect from St. Thomas Aquinas High School Athletics?

1. You should expect St. Thomas Aquinas High School to offer a wide variety of athletics and sports. In fact, St. Thomas Aquinas High School offers freshman-only teams in several sports, which is not a common practice at all high schools.
2. You should expect St. Thomas Aquinas High School to offer athletic facilities and equipment that are modern, safe, secure, and supportive of your son/daughter.
3. You should expect St. Thomas Aquinas High School coaches to work towards the objectives mentioned above: Faith formation, Character formation, and Competition at the Highest Levels.
4. You should expect your student to face realities such as:
 - a. The competition from other student-athletes will be higher
 - b. His/her playing time will be earned in practice and based on performance on the court, or on the field
 - c. The pace of workouts, practices, and games will be faster than previous experience.
 - d. A feeling of being overwhelmed with schoolwork and team responsibilities one day, contrasted by a feeling of joy and satisfaction after the coach has praised him/her at practice the next day

As your students' school, what does St. Thomas Aquinas High School expect from you as a parent/guardian?

1. St. Thomas Aquinas High School expects you to approach high school athletics with "emotional balance." You must be able to handle these realities, while at the same time, helping your student to cope with each of these situations:
 - a. Your student may not make the team. You cannot make the team for them.
 - b. Your student may make the team but may see little playing time in competitions.
 - c. Your student may see playing time but may not be one of the "stars."
2. St. Thomas Aquinas High School expects you to practice positive sportsmanship before, during, and after events.
3. St. Thomas Aquinas High School expects you to know, understand, and accept these roles:
 - a. Players play

- b. Coaches coach
 - c. Officials officiate
 - d. Parents/guardians sit in the stands and support their student and St. Thomas Aquinas High School.
4. St. Thomas Aquinas High School expects you to help us and to help our coaches as we help your students in Faith and Character formation and in Competition at the Highest Levels.

Go Trojans!

Revised: September 2021