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ST. THOMAS AQUINAS HS

# ATHLETICS HANDBOOK



2026-2027

# St. Thomas Aquinas High School

## PARENT HANDBOOK ATHLETICS DEPARTMENT

Dear Parents/Guardians and Student Athletes:

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. St. Thomas Aquinas is a full member of the New Jersey Interscholastic Athletics Association and the Greater Middlesex Conference. Our athletic teams compete in the County and State Tournaments in all 26 programs.

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. Participation requires student-athletes and their parents/guardians to accept and to abide by the policies and procedures detailed in this handbook. 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 our school website - Athletics Tab/Arbiter Sports. Any student participating in athletics must be registered through Arbiter Sports prior. 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 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

will 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 Athletic Director.

### **MISSION**

St. Thomas Aquinas High School is to cultivate a desire for life-long learning, nurture the integration of faith and academic inquiry. While instilling 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 Catholic 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 Athletic Department always operates in accordance with the school's mission and displays 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 Gus Modla

Associate Principal Mark Fiore

Vice Principal Robert Turco

Vice Principal Fr. David Keyes

Athletic Director Matthew Silvestri

Director of Student Services Laura Veni

Assistant Athletic Director Shamir Bearfield

Trainer Matt Cumber

School Colors Red & White

Mascot Trojans

Classification Non-Public A/Non Public B

**Fall Season**

Cross Country Boys: Nick Tonzola

Football Shamir Bearfield

Soccer Boys: Jason Chung

Girls: Frank Nunes

Gymnastics Brant Lutska

Volleyball Amber Rauh

Girls Tennis Duncan Merriman-Mendez

Cheerleading Madison Menafro

Dance Sara Wiggins

**Winter Season**

Basketball Boys: Thomas Weiler

Girls: Tim Corrigan

Bowling Ryan Amorelli

Wrestling Vincent Gioffre

Girls Wrestling Alex Bianchianni

Swimming Amanda Miller

Winter Track Myles Hartsfield

Cheerleading Madison Menafro

**Spring Season**

Baseball Tom D'Agostino

Golf Clement Bottone

Girls Lacrosse Jaynoo Symister

Boys Tennis Duncan Merriman-Mendez

Spring Track Myles Hartsfield

Softball Chelsea Mattis

Flag Football Joe Vigilante

## **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 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 competitions 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 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.
- 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.
- 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.

### **EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENT-ATHLETES**

The conduct of the student-athlete is governed by:

- A. Rules and policies of the NJSIAA/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. Any student-athlete using St. Thomas Aquinas facilities must ensure it is kept clean and remove all trash or papers from those areas. Coaches will be held responsible.
  3. Language- No foul language will be accepted from any student-athlete who participates in the St. Thomas Aquinas High School Athletics program.
  4. Student-athletes are discouraged from bringing valuables to practice or games. If they do, then they are responsible for securing these items.
  5. 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/herself, his/her team, or St. Thomas Aquinas High School.
  6. 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.

### **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.

### **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/her 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 Athletic Director.
4. Allow a 24-hour period after all contests before contacting the coach.

### **PARENT MEETINGS**

At the beginning of each season, the coach will hold a team meeting. 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 online registration form to be used can be found on the St. Thomas Aquinas/Arbiter Sports under the athletics tab.
2. A student-athlete needs to have only **one** physical per year.
3. Arbiter sports registration must be submitted prior to the beginning of tryouts.

### **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 before 9:30 AM 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. Follow the safety standards of the NJSIAA and St. Thomas Aquinas High School.
2. Athletics Trainer will be provided for home sporting events and on campus during practice.
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 Athletic Trainer for our teams to aid in sport injuries and prevention. The Athletics Trainer is available in the training room after school and will be present at home events. The Athletic 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.

## **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. 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.
- Sub varsity 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, use school facilities, uniforms, transportation, or equipment during NJISAA sanctioned off seasons for each sport.

## **FUND-RAISING POLICY**

St. Thomas Aquinas High School has empowered the Athletic Director/Head Coaches and Principal to coordinate and to approve all fund-raising efforts of the school. All fundraising must come from the Head Coach and go through the approval process.

## **INAPPROPRIATE LANGUAGE**

Regardless of the circumstances, cursing or other forms of inappropriate language are not acceptable from

coaches or any other school personnel. This language includes comments made as corrections or at other times.

## **CANCELLATION POLICY/INCLEMENT WEATHER**

- The safety of the student-athlete will always be the priority.
- The Athletic Trainer will monitor all weather circumstances and ensure compliance with NJSIAA safety standards.
- 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 will distribute and log what equipment is issued.
- 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.
  - 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 anything outside of school practice or competition:
- 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.
- 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.

### **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 AWARD**

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
- The Athletic Department hosts three signing days a year. Fall, Winter, and Spring.

NCAA: St. Thomas Aquinas has 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](http://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.

Revised: July 2026