Darien Athletic Standards Handbook

2026-2027 School Year

"Excellence is the gradual result of always striving to do better"

- ***Pat Riley***

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The Blue Wave Way
Athletics Vision + Mission

Our Vision:

To be the premier public high school athletic program in the state, unlocking competitive excellence and the joy of sports fueled by coaches committed to the health, character, and complete well-being of the whole student-athlete.

Our Mission:

We believe that athletic excellence is built on a foundation of having fun through healthy competition. Our Coaches build character in young athletes by developing fundamental life-skills including sportsmanship, leadership, teamwork, discipline, mental toughness and hard work. Blue Wave Athletics is fiercely committed to fostering growth in every student-athlete—ensuring their development as individuals and leaders is as important as the scoreboard. We strive to harness both the triumphs and challenges of competition to inspire maturity on and off the field. By embedding continuous training, feedback and strategic guidance into our coaching culture, we actively reinforce the program to raise the bar, set the gold standard for athletic achievement, development, and lifelong resilience.

Our Shared Values: Alignment on our values are crucial as they provide a universal compass that aligns coaches, athletes, and staff toward a unified culture. This consistency establishes trust, builds team cohesion, and empowers athletes to take accountability for their own success on and off the field.

Growth Beyond the Scoreboard

- **The Blueprint:** We believe the scoreboard is a trailing indicator of character. As part of our Vision of the Graduate (VOG) commitment, we develop the human behind the player—prioritizing leadership, sportsmanship and teamwork alongside competitive excellence to equip every student-athlete for success far beyond the final whistle.

Competing with Composure

- **The Blueprint:** We cultivate an environment of deep mental strength, where playing with heart and confidence replaces the fear of failure. We define toughness as the ability to adapt, recover, and lead through high-stakes adversity. We win and lose with grace and our heads are always held high.

Inclusive Achievement or Team-First Culture

- **The Blueprint*:*** We believe a true champion's mindset belongs to every student-athlete who wears the blue and white. We believe in a team-first environment and celebrate the unique contributions of every roster spot, fostering a healthy, inclusive community where collective accountability drives our momentum.

Guided & Empowered Leadership

- **The Blueprint:** Excellence requires continuous evolution. We treat our coaches as primary stewards of our culture, providing them with the advanced training, modern communication tools, real-time feedback and mental health literacy required to lead today's student-athletes with empathy and clarity.

Collective Accountability + Sportsmanship

- **The Blueprint:** Every ripple in the Wave matters. From our star performers to the depth of our roster, we establish clear success criteria and transparent standards. We protect our community's reputation through mutual respect, integrity in action, and an uncompromised standard of sportsmanship.

Athletic Department Contact Information:

Chris Manfredonia, Athletic Director: cmanfredonia@darienps.org, 203-655-3981 ext. 2263
Paddy Colligan, Assistant Athletic Director: pcolligan@darienps.org, 203-655-3981 ext. 2390

2026-2027 Blue Wave Season Start Dates:

Get ready to make your mark! Exact tryout and mandatory practice start dates for Fall, Winter, and Spring sports will be posted below as soon as they are finalized by the athletic department.

- Fall Sports Start Dates
- Winter Sports Start Dates
- Spring Sports Start Dates

Blue Wave Athlete Standards:

Being a Blue Wave athlete is both an honor and a privilege. When you put on the Darien uniform, you represent our entire community and will be held accountable to Darien Athletic standards, including a positive attitude, dedication to the team and humility on and off the field. With that honor also comes responsibility and accountability to the Wave rolling forward!

1. Wave Expectations: Character & Conduct

We play to win, but win or lose, we play with class. Blue Wave athletes are role models who lead by example:

- **Positive Public Actions:** We display positive behavior at all times, respecting officials, opponents, and fans.
- **Teachable Moments:** We embrace the challenges of competition to build mental resilience and emotional control.
- **Keeping it Clean:** To stay in the game, athletes must fully adhere to the DHS Student Behavior Policies. Safe school climates means there is zero tolerance for substance use, vaping, hazing, or bullying. Stay focused, choose to be substance free and protect the team!

2. Eligibility & Requirements: Ready to Play

Before your team can step onto the field, court, or rink, make sure your game plan is set in the classroom and with the school nurse:

- **Academic Power:** You must be passing at least four major subjects to stay academically eligible. Remember, your first priority is always your schoolwork!
- **Daily Attendance:** To practice or play, you must be in school by 10:00 a.m. and cannot be absent for two or more class periods that day.
- **Health & Registration:** Every athlete needs an annual physical exam/health assessment on file with the school nurse (valid for 13 months). All physicals should be submitted to the DHS nurse's Office. Parents and athletes must also complete the online registration via Family ID and sign off on all CIAC awareness forms. Student Health Form
- **CIAC Rules + Regulations:** CIAC Eligibility Rules

3. Equipment & Uniforms: Wearing the Blue with Pride

Your uniform is a symbol of Darien tradition. Treat it with the respect it deserves:

- **Loan Basis:** All school-issued uniforms and protective gear are on loan for the season. Take great care of them and follow the washing instructions.
- **The "Blue List":** Make sure to return all gear at the conclusion of your season. Unreturned equipment lands you on the DHS "Blue List," which holds up your uniforms for the next sports season and/or receiving a cap and gown as a senior.

4. Collegiate Recruitment:

If you are interested in playing at the collegiate level, please initiate a conversation with your coach to better understand the landscape. Competing in interscholastic athletics at the collegiate level is an extraordinary achievement. Statistically, across all high school sports, approximately 7% of high school athletes go on to play a varsity sport in college at any level. Specifically, for Division 1, that rate drops to less than 2% of all high school athletes.

Because college opportunities are exceptionally rare, getting recruited requires strategy, proactivity, academic excellence, and early preparation. And, as many sports also have a club circuit, your main recruiting partner may fall outside of your DHS coach:

- **Your Club Coach (Primary Recruiting Contact for Most Sports):** In most high school sports, your club or travel team coach serves as your primary recruiting contact. Because college scouts heavily evaluate athletes at multi-team regional and national showcase tournaments during the club season, use your club coach's network and showcase schedules to build initial college exposure.
- **Your High School Coach (Primary Character & Advocacy Contact):** You must always keep your High School Head Coach informed! College recruiters routinely contact high school coaches to vet an athlete's daily character, leadership, coachability, and academic discipline. In certain sports (like Football), your high school coach serves as your main recruiting contact.
- **The Key Rule:** Always share your target list of schools with both coaches so everyone is pulling in the same direction!

The More You Know: 5 Universal Pillars of Recruiting

1. **Academics Come First:** NCAA rules require specific core classes to play in college. If you plan to play at the D1 or D2 level, you must register with the **NCAA Eligibility Center**. Maintain strong grades and test scores—without academic eligibility, coaches cannot recruit you regardless of athletic talent.
2. **Grades, Divisions and Fit:** College sports offer various competitive and academic environments:
    - **Division 1 (D1):** Major athletic programs offering full/partial athletic scholarships.
    - **Division 2 (D2):** Highly competitive programs offering athletic and academic aid packages.
    - **Division 3 (D3):** Focuses on academic excellence. While D3 schools do not offer *athletic* scholarships, they offer generous academic and need-based financial packages.
    - **NAIA & Junior Colleges (JUCO):** Fantastic competitive options to build skills and continue playing.
3. **Film and Stats:** A 3-to-5 minute highlight video will be a necessary tool to showcase your best plays within the first 30 seconds. Update your film and stats every season, and email video links directly to college coaching staff.
4. **The Rules of Contact:** NCAA coaches have strict contact restrictions (for many sports, coaches cannot call or text until September 1 of your Junior year). However, student-athletes are permitted to contact college coaches at any time. Service academies may have different rules of contact and should be researched individually for clarification.
5. **Showcase Your Character:** College scouts evaluate how you act on the bench, how you respond to mistakes, and how you treat teammates and officials. Being "coachable" and demonstrating high integrity on and off the field is non-negotiable.

For more information:

Please go online to the NCAA for the most up-to-date information – www.ncaa.org and go to Eligibility Center or the NAIA web site – www.naia.org . The NCAA Eligibility Center is also a great resource if you have questions – Toll free number – (877) 262-1492

For complete details on recruitment violations and limits, please review the College Bound Student-Athlete Guide published by the NCAA.

Blue Wave Standards for Coaches:

Our coaches are more than tactical strategists—they are educators, mentors, and the driving force behind the Blue Wave team. Leading by example, Darien coaches partner closely with players to navigate obstacles, build life skills, and prioritize wellness.

1. Conduct: Leading with Integrity

Blue Wave coaches set the standard for sportsmanship, character, and professional excellence:

- **The Teachable Moment:** Win or lose, coaches use the competitive athletic experience to teach real-world resilience. They stress dedication, hard work, and emotional control daily.
- **Fair Evaluations:** Coaches select rosters and starting lineups based entirely on merit, drive, and performance demonstrated during school tryouts, practices and performance from prior school years on DHS Teams—completely independent of outside club status.
- **Zero Tolerance for Hazing/Bullying:** Coaches enforce strict, safe environments and have zero tolerance for hazing, unking or bullying behaviors.

2. Communication Guidelines: Transparent & Constructive

Great teams are built on open dialogue. Our coaches cultivate clear communication pathways across the entire community:

- **Pre-Season Alignment:** Head coaches kick off every season by hosting mandatory pre-season meetings for parents and athletes to explain selection criteria, tryout formats, and team expectations.
- **Student Advocacy:** Coaches maintain an open-door policy, encouraging student-athletes to advocate for themselves by initiating direct conversations regarding performance, role definitions, and developmental goals.
- **Collaboration:** Coaches actively collaborate with the Athletic Director, athletic trainers, and building administration to share vital information regarding participant eligibility and student welfare.
- **Communication methods:** Coaches can communicate with players, the full team or position players (e.g. offense/defense) through DPS approved platforms (i.e., DPS email, Google Classroom, Parent Square or SportsYou). Text messaging is not an approved method of communication between coaches and students.

3. Training & Athlete Support: Championing Mental Strength

At Darien, mental health is recognized as a critical component for overall athlete well-being, as well as for peak athletic and academic performance. Our coaching staff is comprehensively equipped to support the whole athlete:

- **Mandatory Mental Health Training:** To ensure early detection and support, all coaches undergo mandatory Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) suicide prevention training. Coaching staff are also actively encouraged to pursue advanced training, such as Youth Mental Health First Aid.
- **Proactive Monitoring:** Coaches keep a close watch on both sport-specific triggers (injuries, perceived poor performance, or shifts in playing time) and general life stressors (academic struggles or sleep deprivation) that impact a player's well-being.
- **The Support Network Team:** Coaches work hand-in-hand with Darien's dedicated Mental Health Services Team—including school administrators, Athletic Director, school nurses, and Director of Mental Health —to facilitate rapid, non-stigmatizing student care and crisis intervention.
- **Medication Protocols:** Coaches coordinate strictly with school nurses and athletic trainers regarding an athlete's specialized medical needs. Any PRN (as-needed) medications managed trackside or on road trips must be safely locked up when required.

4. Evaluation & Continuous Feedback

True growth is a continuous cycle of planning, preparing, performing, and evaluating.

- **Regular Feedback Loops:** Coaches provide continuous, constructive feedback during practices and scrimmages to help athletes cope with competitive pressure and test their daily growth.
- **Leadership Consultation:** Head coaches are welcome to attend ongoing Captains' Council during the regular season alongside building administration and the Athletic Director. This unique forum allows coaches to gain valuable feedback regarding current team trends and consult on player dynamics.
- **End-of-Season Reviews:** At the conclusion of each season, the Athletic Director will field a short survey to gather feedback from athletes, parents, and support staff to evaluate the program's overall effectiveness, update safety protocols, and continuously evolve the Darien athletic experience.

Blue Wave Team Logistics:

Behind every great season is a seamless game plan. Blue Wave Team Logistics is your go-to playbook for how our teams operate, ensuring every student-athlete has a clear, fair, and organized path to the playing field. From understanding how rosters are selected to navigating the balance between high school pride and outside club sports, this section keeps our communication transparent and our operations running smoothly.

1. Tryouts, Cuts, and Roster Decisions

Every season brings a fresh opportunity to ride the Wave! Darien High School is committed to providing athletic opportunities at all levels of ability and interest. To field our most competitive teams, we use a fair and clear selection process:

- **Advance Notice:** Tryout information/registration will be communicated on the school website at least 28 days in advance of the season.
- **The Competitive Edge:** Pre-season practices and scrimmages are a blank slate where all students, including seniors, compete equally for playing time and roster spots. Coaches select the best players to field their most competitive lineups.
- **Squad Size Limits:** To offer a safe and highly competitive program, it is sometimes necessary to limit team sizes. Roster decisions are based on safety (space and coach-to-player ratios), time limitations (reasonable practice and game opportunities), and budget constraints (transportation and equipment costs). Coaches will clearly communicate before tryouts if they will be making cuts.
- **Clear Expectations:** Your coaches will explain the specific selection criteria and tryout format before evaluations begin so you know exactly what to focus on. Coaches will also clearly communicate before tryouts if they will be making cuts on district approved communication platforms.
- **Roster Announcements:** All coaches will email players on blind copy with the team roster immediately following tryouts. Any players who do not make the team will be encouraged to request a 1-1 feedback session.
    - Students will be notified if they made the team or not within 2 school days of the tryout period ending.
    - Coaches will make time available for 1-1 feedback sessions within one week of roster announcements to discuss cuts or placements. These meetings will be scheduled upon request at mutually agreed upon time.
    - Coaches reserve the right to move players up or allow them to double-dress (V, JV, Freshman) during the course of the season

2. Club vs. School Teams

At Darien High School, school pride and team unity come first. We believe in a level playing field for every single student who wants to represent the Blue Wave:

- **Club Status Doesn't Matter:** All players have the same opportunity to make a team whether they play on an elite outside club team or only play for DHS.
- **Earning Your Spot:** Coaches are strictly required to evaluate talent and field the most competitive teams based *solely* on what players demonstrate during school tryouts and practices. Coaches may use skill assessment from the previous high school season when making evaluations. Outside club standings, rankings, or affiliations have zero influence on roster selections or playing time.
- **The In-Season Rule:** Once you make a Blue Wave roster, your commitment is to your high school team. In accordance with CIAC rules, athletes are not permitted to practice, or compete with an outside club team in the same sport during the high school season. (Note: Limited exceptions apply to swimming, tennis, and gymnastics per CIAC rules. It is best to check with the Athletic Director before participating).
    - Out-of-season showcases are also discouraged *if* it means missing a commitment for your in-season team. However, permission may be granted by your coach for your off-season sport, but your commitment belongs to your active in-season high school team.

3. Coaches Contact & Communication Guidelines

Open, respectful communication is how we build championship chemistry. Coaches will communicate openly with players using district approved communications formats. Coaches will communicate important information and details with parents separately to keep them informed on important dates, initiatives and team needs.

- **Connect with Your Coach:** Your coaches are your primary resource for schedules, player development, and team expectations. Head coach contact information and pre-season meeting details can be accessed directly through the athletic department directory.
- **Teachable Dialogue:** We encourage student-athletes to advocate for themselves and speak directly with coaches regarding their performance, evaluation, and goal-setting.

4. Managing through Concerns: Conflict-Resolution

- If an issue or concern raises, it is recommended that the conversation begin with the athlete + coach, following the escalation plan below:

    - **STEP 1: Student-Athlete & Coach**
        - Direct 1-on-1 Discussion: The student-athlete meets directly with the coach to discuss their performance, role, or concern.
    - **STEP 2: Student-Athlete & Parent + Coach**
        - Scheduled Meeting: If unresolved, the parent joins the student-athlete for a pre-arranged, professional discussion with the coach.
    - **STEP 3: Student-Athlete, Parent, Coach + Athletic Director**
        - Administrative Review: If unresolved, the issue is escalated to Athletic Director Chris Manfredonia to facilitate a resolution.
    - **STEP 4: Student-Athlete, Parent, Coach & AD + Principal**
        - Final Determination: If necessary, the matter moves to the High School Principal for final administrative decision.

5. Guidelines for Parent-Coach Discussions

Important Policy: Parents may NOT approach a coach before, during, or immediately after an athletic contest. Conversations must be scheduled (at least 24 hours after a contest) in advance for a professional, candid environment.

- **Appropriate Topics for Discussion:**
    - Dramatic changes in your child's behavior
    - Specific health or medical concerns regarding your child
    - Disciplinary actions resulting in missed practice or playing time
    - Strategies to assist your child's skill development and growth
- **Off-Limits Topics (Inappropriate for Discussion):**
    - Playing time or performance of other student-athletes
    - Team strategy, play calling, or coaching decisions

6. Pre-Season Meetings for Athletes & Parents

Pre-season meetings are designed to set clear expectations, build trust, and establish a positive, supportive team culture before the season begins. All head coaches are required to conduct a mandatory pre-season meeting with parents and student-athletes prior to or immediately following team selection. The Head Coach must submit the scheduled meeting date, time, and location to the Athletic Office prior to the session. Content to be discussed includes:

- **Culture & Integrity:** Establish program rules, student-athlete expectations, parent sportsmanship guidelines, and strict enforcement of DHS Hazing and Behavior policies.
- **State & College Compliance:** Walk families through CIAC eligibility bylaws, attendance expectations, and NCAA Eligibility Center requirements for collegiate athletics.
- **Clear Operations:** Provide complete practice/game schedules, tryout/cut criteria, athletic award requirements, and the official district protocol for resolving conflicts.
- **Open Dialogue:** Conclude with a dedicated Q&A session and provide comprehensive handouts (if necessary) so every family leaves informed and prepared.

Student-Athlete Support & Well-Being:

Being a part of the Blue Wave means having an elite support system behind you. From physical conditioning and injury recovery to mental wellness and game-day logistics, Darien High School provides our student-athletes with top-tier resources to keep them safe, healthy, and ready to compete at their highest level.

1. Injury & Mental Health Support: Your 360° Safety Net

We treat your physical safety and your mental well-being with equal importance. Whether you are facing a physical setback or a tough mental day, you never have to go it alone:

- **The Comeback Form:** If you sustain a physical injury requiring a doctor's care, your safety comes first. Before you can jump back into tryouts, practices, or games, a physician-signed "Return to Activity" document must be filed with the school nurse. Process and timelines will vary regarding head injuries.
- **Urgent Crisis Resources:** If you or a teammate are experiencing an urgent mental health crisis, immediate help is always available. You can call or text the **988 Lifeline**, connect with **211 Crisis Intervention**, or reach out directly to our on-campus School Counselors and TeenTalk specialists.
- **Ask for Help:** All players are encouraged to ask for help for themselves or a teammate if needed. No player is alone and asking for help is considered a sign of strength. All coaches are required to attend supplemental training to help them manage/handle sensitive situations.

2. The Athletic Training Room: Elite Training + Support

- **Hours & Access:** The room is open to all active student-athletes every school day from **2:00 to 4:30 p.m.** (subject to trainer availability during home game and practice coverage).
- **Trainer Availability:** Staffed by DHS certified athletic trainers, our trainers offer rapid injury assessment, protective taping, whirlpool treatments, and professional follow-up care to get you safely back in the game.

3. Physical Education for Athletes:

- **Class Attendance is Mandatory:** Being a member of a sports team does not exempt you from your graduation requirements. You are fully required to attend your regularly scheduled Physical Education and Health classes.

4. Athletic Insurance: Understanding Your Coverage

It is important to understand how our sports medical plan works:

- **An Excess Benefit Plan:** Darien High School's interscholastic sports insurance operates as a secondary, or "excess," policy. This means any medical claims must **first be submitted to your family's personal primary insurance provider**.
- **Filing a Claim:** Once your primary insurance has processed the bills, the school's plan will review the remaining balance to help cover standard and customary costs. *Note: Parents must submit this claim manually; the school does not file it automatically.*
- **Report Injuries Immediately:** To qualify for coverage, any athletic injury must be reported immediately to coaches, trainers, and school nurse so an accident report can be logged. Medical attention must be sought within 90 days of the injury.

5. Emergency Procedures: Ready for Anything

When an emergency strikes on the field or on the road, our action plan kicks into gear immediately:

- **DHS Home Games & Practices:** If a serious injury happens on campus and requires emergency transport, you will be taken to the closest hospital.
- **Away Game Protocols:** If an emergency occurs during an away contest, you will be transported immediately to the nearest hospital facility.
- **Parental Connection:** In any emergency situation, the athletic staff which includes coaches, athletic trainer or athletic administration, will make every effort to contact the parent/guardian immediately and ensure a responsible adult accompanies the athlete to the hospital.

6. Participation Fees: Supporting the Wave

We want every student to have the opportunity to play, and the school district proudly funds the vast majority of our athletic programs:

- **Standard Funding:** All sports at DHS receive funding from the Board of Education.
- **Rental Facility Fees:** Because certain sports utilize unique community facilities, athletes in **Boys & Girls Ice Hockey, Skiing, and Squash** can expect a seasonal fee to offset the cost of rink, mountain, or court rentals. This fee is calculated fairly using a set formula: *(The BOE covers 30% of the costs, families cover 70%).*
- **Participation Fees:** Many teams have a recommended, but not mandatory, participation fee to cover additional team costs that will be outlined by the head

coach and Captain's Parents and are considered nice to have. Parents should refer to the Captain's Parent Handbook for handling of Student Activity Accounts.

- **Sailing Fleet Fund:** Our Sailing team also incurs a participation fee. This specific fee goes directly into a dedicated reserve fund to ensure the team can purchase a fresh fleet of boats every 7 to 8 years.
- **Scholarship:** Students who qualify for free and reduced lunch, or are experiencing financial hardship, may have their fee waived or reduced. A formal request should be submitted to your child's counselor.

Blue Wave Leadership Playbook: Captains Standards, Process & Councils

1. Varsity Captain Standards: Wearing the "C" with Pride

Being chosen as a Blue Wave captain is an elite honor. It is a dual milestone: **Being a team captain is BOTH a reward and a responsibility.** It celebrates your past dedication while charging you to lead our program into the future.

To wear the captain's "C," athletes must have played on the Varsity team and must actively embody our five Core Leadership Standards:

- **Unstoppable Attitude & Team Spirit:** Bringing high energy, unwavering positivity, and relentless encouragement to every practice, game, and team function.
- **Commitment & Elite Work Ethic:** Setting the pace by being the hardest worker, showing up first, and pushing through obstacles.
- **Constructive Communication:** Serving as a clear, trusted bridge between the coaching staff and the roster, delivering and receiving feedback with maturity and respect.
- **Mentorship for the Future:** Setting a positive example for underclassmen and youth athletes in the Darien community, showing them what it truly means to play the Blue Wave way.
- **Community Impact:** True leaders give back. Captains are encouraged to lead team efforts—in close partnership with their coaches—to organize and execute 1–2 community service projects during their tenure.

2. The Captains' Council & Monthly Training

To ensure our leaders are fully equipped to navigate the seasonal journey, all Varsity Captains are required to participate in mandatory, in season **Captains' Council** meetings. These high-impact sessions feature guest speakers and specialized workshops designed to build elite leadership traits:

- **Leadership & Character Development:** Deep dives into modeling top-tier sportsmanship, setting cultural standards, and taking personal responsibility.
- **Advanced Communication Skills:** Tactical training on how to effectively communicate with coaches, teammates, and contest officials, alongside practical tips for public speaking and running efficient player-led meetings.
- **Conflict Resolution & Mentoring:** Proactive techniques to manage internal team disagreements, handle high-stress competitive situations, and mentor younger athletes effectively.

- **Team Culture & Cohesion:** Developing actionable strategies to create a positive, unified, and fully inclusive team environment where every player feels valued.

3. Selection & Voting Procedure: "Numbers are Numbers!"

We believe in a clear, transparent, and swift selection process that respects the insights of the athletes who are members of the team.

Timing of the Vote: Voting will take place following the conclusion of the season and no later than one season before captains will serve. Every effort will be made to conduct voting at the conclusion of the season to allow graduating seniors to cast their ballots, providing a priceless and deeply valuable lens into what leadership traits the team actually needs to succeed.

- **The Ballot:** Roster sizes dictate our leadership. Each team will carry a minimum of two and a maximum of four captains, with the final number predetermined and announced by the head coach prior to the vote. In rare cases, 5 captains will be selected in the event of a tie. All Varsity team members and the Head Varsity Coach will receive an alphabetical ballot to check off their selections.
- **Swift Announcements:** The Athletic Director will tally the votes, and final captain selections will be officially announced shortly thereafter. Numbers are numbers, and a quick turnaround keeps everyone focused on pulling together for the next season!

4. Eligibility, Accountability, & The Infraction Pathway

Captains are held to the absolute highest academic, behavioral, and community benchmarks. Being a captain is a privilege, and leadership positions can be revoked at any time by school administration if standards are not met.

Behavioral Standards & Infractions

- **Prohibitive Infractions:** Any standard category infraction—including in or out-of-school suspensions, major academic integrity violations, or violations of the drug, alcohol, and tobacco policies—prohibits a student from applying for a captaincy.
- **The Freshmen/Sophomore "Remediation" Pathway:** We believe in accountability, but we also believe in growth, learning, and resilience. If a prohibitive infraction occurred during an athlete's **Freshman or Sophomore year**, it can be remediated through a formal appeal pathway:

1. **The Earned Privilege Restoration:** The athlete must enter a formal discussion with the Athletic Director, Head Coach, and their Assistant Principal to outline a rigorous plan of restorative service and community leadership.
2. **Successful Reinstatement:** Once the agreed-upon service is successfully completed, the panel will reconvene to review the student's growth. If approved, the student's eligibility to apply for captaincy will be fully restored.
3. *Note: Any suspension or major infraction occurring during Junior or Senior year is non-negotiable and results in immediate, permanent ineligibility.*

5. JV and Freshman Captains

Leadership starts on day one! Some Junior Varsity and Freshman teams assign captains at the start of the season. These athletes are selected by the coaching staff based on targeted foundational criteria:

- **The Baseline:** Selection is driven by a player's daily work ethic, coachability, positive attitude, school spirit, and natural team-first mentality. These roles are fantastic testing grounds for future Varsity leadership!

6. Captain's Practice Policy: Clarifying the Rules

To keep our programs in perfect alignment with state athletic bylaws, it is vital to understand the restrictions around off-season training:

- **DHS Does Not Sanction:** Darien High School does not in any way sanction, encourage, support, or condone "Captain's Practices" in any sport.
- **CIAC Seasonal Limitations:** Darien High School strictly adheres to all CIAC seasonal limitations regarding when sports teams can formally practice, condition, or play. No player-organized workouts may be deemed mandatory or tie into team selection. Any questions regarding off-season limitations must be directed to Athletic Director Chris Manfredonia.

7. Captain’s Parents:

As a Captains' Parent, you serve as an important operational anchor for your team—handling

background logistics so our head coaches can focus on developing athletes, executing game plans, and continuing the Blue Wave tradition of excellence.

What You Do:

- **Keep Communication Flowing:** Maintain accurate team rosters and relay critical coach updates regarding practice shifts, game times, bus departures, and SuperFan themes directly to families.
- **Fuel Team Spirit & Hospitality:** Organize team pasta dinners, game-day events, Senior Games and the end-of-season banquet to celebrate athlete dedication.
- **Mobilize Volunteers & Support:** Recruit parents as needed for special events, fundraisers and games as needed.

The Blue Wave Standard:

- **Support the Bench:** Follow the head coach's leadership and allow coaches to coach and players to play.
- **Model Sportsmanship:** Bring positive, loud energy to the stands while treating officials, opponents, and visiting fans with complete respect.
- **Unite the Community:** Welcome new families to the DHS athletic family, fostering an inclusive environment across every grade level.

For more information and process details, please review the Captains' Parents FAQ

Blue Wave Conduct & Safety Guidelines

Being a part of the Blue Wave means competing at the highest level while holding ourselves to an even higher standard of character, safety, and respect. True champions protect their teammates, respect their opponents, and honor the game. This section outlines the non-negotiable legal and behavioral standards required to keep our culture safe, inclusive, and elite.

1. Our Code of Honor: Standards of Behavior

Participation in Darien athletics is a major honor and a privilege, not a right. Every single time you put on the blue and white, you represent our entire community and are expected to live out the DPS Vision of the Graduate: **Communication, Creativity, Curiosity, Empathy, Independence, and Integrity**.

The Extracurricular Workshop

- **Getting Cleared:** Every student-athlete and a parent/guardian must attend a mandatory district extracurricular workshop. Multiple dates will be provided to ensure all students and parents are able to attend.
- **The Goal:** This interactive session is built to foster open family dialogue and arm our Wave community with tools to address substance risks, mental health, and cultivating a culture of belonging.

Accountable Choices: The Strike System

Your commitment to excellence is 24/7, 365 days a year. Misconduct in school or at school-sponsored events triggers automatic athletic violations:

- **Prohibited Items:** Zero tolerance for the use, possession, or distribution of alcohol, THC/marijuana oil, tobacco, or nicotine products (including vapes and e-cigarettes).
- **A 365-Day Rule:** If you violate these choices, it counts as a "strike" against your participation eligibility, even if you are not currently in-season when the incident happens.
- **The Consequences:** Violations result in mandatory suspensions from all team activities (including practices and rehearsals) and require counselor check-ins before re-entry.
    - **1st Offense:** A 14-calendar-day suspension from the team.
    - **2nd Offense:** A 28-calendar-day suspension (if in a different season) or removal for the rest of the season (if within the same season).
    - **3rd Offense:** Complete suspension from all athletic and extracurricular participation for the remainder of the school year.

2. Protecting the Wave: Anti-Hazing Policy

True team chemistry is built on trust and mentorship, never on humiliation. **Darien High School does not condone hazing in any form**.

- **Defining Hazing:** Hazing is generally defined as forcing, intimidating, or coercing a student (often as a form of team initiation) to perform ridiculous, unwanted, inappropriate, or humiliating tasks. *The CIAC defines hazing as any activity that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers a person's physical or emotional health for the purpose of initiation, membership, or affiliation with any organization, regardless of the person's willingness to participate.*
- **Speak Up:** Every athlete has the right to feel safe on their team. Any action resembling hazing must be reported instantly to the Principal or Athletic Director.

3. Respect For All: Sex Discrimination & Sexual Harassment

Every player, coach, and manager deserves an environment completely free from discrimination and harassment. The Darien Board of Education enforces strict guidelines to ensure mutual respect:

- **Sex Discrimination:** This occurs when anyone is denied participation in, or the benefits of, an educational or athletic program based on their sex.
- **Sexual Harassment:** This includes unwelcome advances, touching, verbal comments of a sexual nature, obscene jokes, or implying that submission to sexual overtures will impact an athlete's progress or standing on a team.
- **Taking Action:** If you are a victim of or witness discrimination or harassment, report it immediately to the Principal or the Superintendent. A copy will be sent straight to the Title IX Coordinator, Mrs. Marjorie Cion.

4. Title IX: A Level Playing Field

We believe in absolute equity across our athletic programs. In accordance with Title IX regulations and CIAC bylaws:

- **Historic Opportunities:** School districts may establish separate teams for boys and girls based on competitive skills or contact sports. However, all athletes must be given equal opportunity to try out for teams.
- **Inclusive Boundaries:** Under CIAC regulations, girls are fully permitted to participate on any boys' team, including contact sports like football. To maintain historically fair opportunities for female athletes, boys are prohibited from playing on girls'-designated teams.

5. Wave Pride: Sportsmanship & Spectator Behavior

The energy in our stadiums is unmatched, but "Blue Wave Pride" means keeping it positive, loud, and classy.

The Competitor's Promise

Darien athletes fight to win within the rules. On the field, you must respect the judgment of officials, treat opponents with courtesy, and resist the temptation to taunt, "showboat," or find fault with others. If an athlete is ejected from a contest for unsportsmanlike behavior, they face an automatic minimum one-game suspension per CIAC rules.

The Spectator's Playbook

Attending a Blue Wave game is a privilege, not a license to verbally assault coaches, players, or officials.

- **The Golden Rule:** Cheer *for* our teams, never *against* our opponents. Show restraint, enjoy great plays from both sides, and let the coaches coach.
- **"No Names, No Numbers":** DHS proudly participates in the FCIAC league-wide **"No Names, No Numbers"** initiative. Spectators may not single out opposing players by shouting their names or numbers. This student-led policy directly supports and protects the mental health of all high school athletes.
- **Enforcement:** Fans who do not demonstrate positive sportsmanship will be swiftly removed from the facility by supervisors or local police, facing a total ban from all future games for the remainder of the season.

FCIAC Quick-Reference Code of Conduct

Wave Athletes Will...	Wave Spectators Will...

Play hard to win within the rules.	Remember attending is a privilege, not a right.
Respect the decisions of contest officials.	Support without recrimination, win or lose.
Taunt-free zone: Treat opponents with class.	Refuse to coach from the sidelines.
Know that doing your best makes you a winner.	Follow the "No Names, No Numbers" mandate.

Blue Wave Registration, Physicals & Health Requirements:

Before you can lace up your cleats, strap on your helmet, or dive into the pool, you have to get officially cleared to play. Think of this section as your administrative pre-season conditioning. Follow these steps to ensure you are 100% eligible on day one of tryouts!

1. Online Registration: Lock in via Family ID

DHS Athletics utilizes an entirely digital registration system to keep our rosters organized and safe:

- **The Launchpad:** Parents must register their student-athletes online through the **Family ID platform** before the start of every sports season.
- **Digital Sign-Off:** During this online process, both parents and student-athletes must electronically sign off on all mandatory State and CIAC athletic agreements.

2. Mandatory Yearly Physicals: The 13-Month Rule

Your physical health is our top priority. In accordance with Connecticut State Law, CIAC rules, and the Darien Board of Education, every single athlete must have an annual physical examination on file:

- **The Validity Window:** Your physical examination and Health Assessment must be current **within 13 months** of the exact start date of tryouts, practices, or competitive play. Expiration reminders are automatically generated by Family ID approximately 1 month prior to expiration, to alert families that a new physical is required.
- **The Mid-Season Expiration Warning:** This is a strict threshold. If your physical exam turns 13 months old *during* the middle of your sports season, you will be instantly sidelined. You will not be allowed to step back onto the field or ice until a brand-new, updated health assessment is officially on file with the school nurse.
- **No Notes Allowed:** Just a heads-up: informal parent notes or "promises to see the doctor soon" will **not** be accepted by coaches or the school nurse in lieu of the official form. No form, no play—no exceptions.
- **The Right Paperwork:** Your doctor must document the exam on the standard **State of Connecticut Department of Education Health Assessment Record (HAR-3)**. You can grab a copy year-round on the DHS athletic webpage, DHS health services webpage, or at the school health office.

3. Mandatory CIAC & Safety Documents

To protect your physical and mental well-being on the frontline of competition, the state requires focused awareness sign-offs. Through the Family ID portal, both parents and athletes must review and sign the following mandated documentation:

- **Concussion Awareness Form:** Understanding head injury symptoms and recovery safety protocols.
- **Sudden Cardiac Arrest Form:** Vital safety indicators for heart health in young competitors.
- **Heat Awareness Form:** Protocols for staying safe and hydrated during intense, high-temperature conditioning.
- **Mental Health Plan:** Acknowledging the district's comprehensive support system built to lift up your mental well-being.

📋 The Clearance Checklist: Are You Ready to Play?

Use this quick checklist before the first day of the season to make sure you're good to go:

- [ ] Registered online via Family ID.
- [ ] State of CT Health Assessment Form (HAR-3) signed by your doctor and submitted to the school nurse.
- [ ] Double-checked that the physical date will remain under 13 months old for the *entire* season.
- [ ] Signed off on all four mandatory CIAC safety forms (Concussion, Cardiac, Heat, Mental Health).