



Darien Public Schools

Darien Athletic Handbook

Coaching Standards

2026-2027 School Year

"A good coach can change a game.

A great coach can change a life."

- John Wooden

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Athletic Department Contact Information:

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DHS Athletic Trainer: 203-655-3981 x2505

Darien Emergency Medical Services: 911

Darien Police: 203-662-5300

DHS Athletic Office: 203-655-3981 x2263

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](#)

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. 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 re

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.

Inclusive Achievement

- **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 training, modern communication tools, 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.

Blue Wave Coaching Standards

Key Capabilities: Blue Wave Athletics is powered by coaches with the capabilities to unlock determination, heart, growth, and accountability. We do not ask for perfection—perfection creates a fear of making mistakes. Instead, we strive for excellence: bringing passion to every practice, taking pride in continuous improvement, playing with courage, and supporting one another every step of the way.

This standard governs every sport, every program, and every level across our athletic department. Our coaches will focus on four key pillars for all of our athletes across all of our teams:

Pillar 1: Player Development (Unlocking Potential Through Growth)

Our coaches are educators and mentors first. Player development extends beyond starters to build depth, athletic confidence, and lifelong skill mastery across the entire roster.

- **A Passion for Growth:** Maintain sport-specific, skill progression plans that challenge every athlete to elevate their personal best.
- **Positive Athletic Mastery:** Utilize modern, research-backed training methodologies that build functional capability and protect physical health.
- **Learning Through Action:** Create an encouraging environment where mistakes are treated as valuable lessons, empowering players to play bold, confident, and without fear.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** Celebrate the little victories and everyday efforts and improvements alongside the big wins.

Pillar 2: Character & Leadership (Heart & Accountability)

High-stakes competition is a classroom for life. Blue Wave coaches actively cultivate high-integrity leaders who lead with heart and represent our community with pride.

- **Cultivating True Heart:** Inspire student-athletes to play for the love of the game, their team, and their school, developing emotional maturity and pride in their effort.
- **Ownership & Accountability:** Teach athletes to take pride in holding themselves and their teammates to high standards—in the classroom, on the field, and in the community.

- **Uncompromising Sportsmanship:** Model respect for opponents, officials, and spectators at all times, demonstrating that true strength lies in dignity and self-control.

Pillar 3: Competitive Excellence (Prepared with Purpose & Determination)

We play to win, and we compete with pride. Competitive excellence is the natural outcome of thoughtful preparation, determination, and unity under pressure.

- **Purposeful Preparation:** Bring energy, tactical clarity, and organized practice design to every session so athletes feel confident and prepared.
- **Competitive Courage:** Instill the composure and grit needed to rise to big moments, trusting training and supporting each other when the pressure is on.
- **Measuring What Matters:** Evaluate success by our commitment to our values, our team unity, and our growth, celebrating the heart and hustle behind every performance.

Pillar 4: Athlete Safety & Mental Toughness (Empowered & Supported)

Peak performance flourishes in an environment of total safety and trust. Blue Wave coaches actively support the physical, mental, and emotional health of the whole athlete.

- **Uncompromising Safety Protocols:** Strictly adhere to all health and safety guidelines regarding concussion management, heat safety, hydration, and medical return-to-play.
- **Psychological Safety & Open Doors:** Foster a supportive environment where athletes feel comfortable communicating about fatigue, stress, or mental health without fear of losing status.
- **Zero Tolerance for Mistreatment:** Maintain a safe, inclusive environment completely free of hazing, bullying, or emotional degradation—on the field, in locker rooms, or online.

Mandatory CIAC & State Certifications

All Blue Wave head coaches, assistant coaches, and volunteer coaches must be fully certified and compliant with Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) and State Department of Education mandates prior to the first day of practice.

1. Connecticut Coaching Permit

- **Requirement:** All coaches must hold a valid **5-Year Renewable Coaching Permit** or a **Temporary Emergency Coaching Permit** issued by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE).
- **Prerequisites:** Requires completion of the 45-clock-hour Connecticut Coaching Education Program (CCEP) course (or hold a valid CT Educator Certificate).
- **Renewal:** 5-Year permits require 15 clock hours of approved continuing education units (CEUs) every 5 years.

2. First Aid & CPR/AED Certification

- **Requirement:** Must maintain continuous, valid certification in Standard First Aid and CPR/AED.
- **Valid Providers:** Courses must be taken in-person through state-approved providers (e.g., American Red Cross, American Heart Association). *Online-only certifications are strictly prohibited by state law.*
- **Renewal Cycle:** First Aid is valid for 3 years; CPR/AED must be renewed according to card expiration (typically annually or bi-annually).

3. Concussion Management (Module 15 & Annual Review)

- **Initial Training:** Must complete Module 15 (Concussions & Head/Neck Injuries) prior to commencing any coaching assignment.
- **Annual Review:** Must complete the district-mandated annual concussion review prior to the start of each sports season.
- **5-Year Refresher:** Must complete the state-approved Concussion Refresher Course every 5 years for permit reissuance (Module 51 for Football Coaches).

4. Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) Training

- **Requirement:** Annual completion of the state-mandated Sudden Cardiac Arrest awareness module (PA 14-93).
- **Timing:** Must be refreshed annually prior to the first day of team activity.

5. Mandated Reporter Training

- **Requirement:** Complete annual state-mandated training regarding the reporting of suspected Child Abuse and Neglect.

6. Sport-Specific CIAC Rules Clinic

- **Requirement:** Head coaches must complete the annual online CIAC Sport-Specific Rules Clinic prior to the start of each season to remain compliant with tournament rules, out-of-season guidelines, and policy changes.

Supplemental Mandatory DHS Trainings

In addition to state and athletic conference requirements, all Blue Wave coaching staff must complete district-mandated mental health and student welfare training prior to the start of each sports season. These trainings ensure coaches are equipped to support the whole athlete:

1. Mandatory Gatekeeper & Prevention Education

- **Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) Training:** All head, assistant, and volunteer coaches must complete QPR gatekeeper training to effectively identify, support, and refer student-athletes experiencing mental health distress.
- **Preseason Extracurricular Information Sessions:** Mandatory participation in joint preseason meetings with parents and student-athletes covering critical topics such as substance use, mental health resources, and team expectations.
- **Student Leadership & Captains' Meetings:** Active support of ongoing Captains' Meetings, where team captains communicate directly with Administration and the Athletic Director regarding team trends, peer well-being, leadership, etc.
- **Town & Community Partnerships:** Continuous access to supplemental community trainings, including Youth Mental Health First Aid offered in partnership with the Town of Darien.

2. Risk Factors & Symptom Screening (Quick-Reference Guide)

Coaches are expected to proactively monitor student-athletes for early warning signs and situational triggers across both sports and life:

Sport-Specific Triggers

- Poor performance perception

- Team cuts
- Acute or chronic injuries
- Limited playing time
- Overtraining
- Team conflicts
- Bullying
- Challenges with collegiate recruitment

Life Circumstance Triggers

- Academic struggles
- Family conflicts
- Severe sleep deprivation
- Peer pressure
- Financial instability
- Substance use
- Eating disorders

Signs & Symptoms to Recognize

- Significant behavior shifts
- Decline in athletic or academic performance
- Increased absenteeism
- Changes in personal hygiene
- Intense irritability or worsening nervousness
- Social withdrawal

If you notice any of these signs or symptoms, please reach out to Dr. Alycia Dadd, Director of Mental Health and/or Chris Manfredonia, Athletic Director. In case of emergency or after hours concerns, please call #988.

3. Medication Administration & Locked Storage Protocols

- **Connecticut Legal Guidelines:** Strict adherence to Connecticut state legal guidelines regarding student medication.
- **Authorized Personnel:** Only authorized personnel trained in medication administration may handle or oversee student medications.
- **Individual Health Plans (IHPs):** Development and execution of IHPs for student-athletes with specific medical needs in direct coordination with school nurses, coaches, and athletic trainers.
- **Locked Storage & Nurse Coordination:** All as-needed (PRN) medications must be stored securely and locked when required, maintaining active communication with School Nurse Emily and the athletic training staff.

4. Professional Development & Digital Resources

- **DHS Google Classroom Hub:** Centralized access to mandatory digital modules, mental health toolkits, and coaching support materials.
- **Recommended Resource Integration:** Active utilization of evidence-based frameworks including *Gizmo's Pawesome Guide to Mental Health*, *NCAA Mental Health Best Practices*, *211 Connecticut Referral Services*, and CSDE family resources.

5. Transition Care, Privacy & Continuous Improvement

- **Injury, Departure & Transition Support:** Structured support for athletes leaving sports due to injury, status shifts, or graduation through provider transition assistance and continued resource access.
- **Strict Confidentiality & Non-Stigmatizing Care:** Absolute commitment to athlete privacy, maintaining strict ethical boundaries while fostering an open, non-judgmental environment.
- **Annual Program Review:** Annual evaluation of the mental health plan's effectiveness through feedback from athletes, parents, and coaching staff to continuously refine district protocols.

Coaches Conduct Rules: Blue Wave Coaching Standards of Integrity

Blue Wave coaches are held to the highest standards of professional conduct, ethical leadership, and sportsmanship. These non-negotiable rules apply to all sports, levels, and interscholastic programs across our athletic department as stated by the CIAC:.

1. Sportsmanship & Role Modeling

- **Modeling Character:** Coaches serve as primary role models and must demonstrate dignity, integrity, and self-control at all times.
- **Civility & Respect:** Profane, abusive, or demeaning language toward student-athletes, officials, opponents, or spectators is strictly prohibited.
- **Respect for Game Officials:** Coaches must accept the judgment and decisions of game officials without public displays of dissent or hostility.

2. Disqualification & Ejection Protocols

- **Automatic Suspension:** Any coach ejected or disqualified from an interscholastic contest for unsportsmanlike conduct, fighting, or taunting is automatically ineligible to coach the team's next contest at that level.
- **Intervening Level Prohibition:** The coach is barred from participating in any other scheduled contests at different levels (e.g., JV or Freshman) that occur prior to the next contest at the level where the ejection occurred.
- **Immediate Administrative Reporting:** Coaches must report any ejection or disqualification to the Athletic Director within 24 hours of the incident.

3. Athlete Safety, Welfare & Non-Retaliation

- **Active Supervision:** Coaches accept primary responsibility for player safety and behavior across all team environments, including practice facilities, locker rooms, and team transit.
- **Strict Anti-Retaliation Policy:** Student-athletes who report concerns or exercise personal rights must not face punitive measures or loss of playing time.
- **Zero Abuse Tolerance:** Physical abuse, emotional degradation, or hazing in any form is strictly forbidden.

4. Out-of-Season Contact & Dual Participation

- **Out-of-Season Contact Limits:** Coaches may not organize, supervise, or conduct practices or games with potential or returning team members outside the designated CIAC sport season.
- **Camp & Clinic Rules:** Participation in out-of-season camps, clinics, or recreational leagues must strictly follow CIAC roster limits and approval protocols.
- **Equipment & Fundraising Restraints:** School uniforms, gear, and fundraising channels may not be used for non-school out-of-season contests or private events.

5. Compliance & Mandatory Reporting

- **Policy Adherence:** Coaches are required to abide by all CIAC rules, sport-specific tournament regulations, and Board of Education policies in both letter and spirit.
- **Substance & Health Mandates:** Coaches must actively enforce CIAC drug and performance-enhancing substance policies, as well as state-mandated concussion and sudden cardiac arrest protocols.

Conflict of Interest Disclosure:

Dual-Coaching Transparency & Conflict of Interest Policy

Blue Wave Athletics is committed to fair, transparent, and objective evaluation for all student-athletes. To protect team integrity and eliminate any actual or perceived conflict of interest, high school coaches who also coach or hold employment with private club/travel organizations must strictly adhere to the following standards:

1. Complete Selection Objectivity

- **Zero Club Influence:** High school roster selections, starting positions, playing time, captaincy, and postseason awards will be determined **solely** on student-athlete merit, effort, and performance during high school practices and contests.
- **Non-Participation Protection:** A student-athlete's decision to play or not play on a coach's private club team—or any private club team—will have **zero bearing** on their standing, evaluation, or opportunities on the Blue Wave team.
- **Prohibition of "Pay-to-Play" Dynamics:** Coaches are strictly prohibited from creating or implying any "pay-to-play" expectation or offering high school roster advantages to athletes who participate in private club programs.

2. Strict Operational Boundaries

- **No Solicitation or Recruitment:** High school coaches may not use their high school coaching role, team meetings, school facilities, or official district communication channels to recruit, solicit, or pressure student-athletes to join private club teams.
- **Separation of Resources:** High school equipment, uniforms, gear, and district facilities may never be utilized for private club training or contests without formal, pre-approved rental agreements through the district.
- **Out-of-Season Adherence:** Coaches must strictly comply with all CIAC rules regarding out-of-season contact and roster limits for non-school programs.

3. Mandatory Annual Disclosure & Administrative Oversight

- **Required Disclosure:** Prior to the start of each sports season, any coach employed by or affiliated with a private club/travel sports organization must submit a formal **Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form** to the Athletic Director.
- **Continuous Updates:** Coaches are required to update their disclosure form immediately if their private club employment or coaching status changes during the school year.
- **Enforcement & Consequences:** Compliance with this policy is enforced by the Athletic Director and overseen by District Administration. Any documented violation of this policy—including retaliatory playing time practices or unauthorized recruitment—will result in immediate administrative review, up to and including suspension or termination of coaching duties.

Introducing The Blue Wave Coaching Covenant: A Commitment to the Whole Athlete

As a coach at Darien High School, I recognize that my influence extends far beyond the field, court, track or rink. I am a steward of the **Vision of the Graduate** and a vital support system for our students.

By signing this Covenant, I commit to the following standards of excellence:

I. Human-First Leadership & Mental Health Support

- **The Athlete over the Player:** I will prioritize the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of my students above any win-loss record. I recognize that a student's identity is multifaceted and will support their academic and extracurricular pursuits.
- **Psychological Safety:** I will foster an environment where athletes feel safe to take risks, fail, and grow. I will lead through inspiration and mentorship rather than fear or intimidation.
- **Building Mental Strength:** I commit to being a proactive resource for students facing burnout, anxiety, or personal struggle. I will stay alert to the signs of distress and ensure students are connected to the proper support systems without stigma or judgment.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** I commit to celebrating progress and/or success, not just the big wins and victories.

II. Strategic Communication & Transparency

- **The "No Surprises" Rule:** I will maintain open and honest lines of communication with athletes and their families regarding roles, expectations, and program philosophies.
- **Conflict Resolution:** I will model professional conflict resolution, addressing concerns with composure and respect, and encouraging my athletes to do the same.
- **Clarity of Purpose:** I will ensure every member of the team understands their value to the program, regardless of their position on the depth chart.
- **A Culture of Feedback:** I will solicit and encourage feedback from players, captains and coaching staff, allowing for new ideas and tactics to be considered and implemented.

III. Integrity in Action

- **Modeling the Graduate:** I am the "Vision of the Graduate" in action. I will exhibit the highest standards of sportsmanship, emotional regulation, and ethical behavior, especially in moments of high-stakes adversity.
- **Holistic Development:** I will actively encourage my athletes to be well-rounded individuals. I will support their participation in other sports and activities, respecting the importance of rest, recovery, and varied development.
- **Continuous Growth:** I welcome feedback through the DHS 360-degree evaluation process (including athlete and peer feedback) as a tool for my own professional evolution and leadership.

The Pledge: I understand that coaching at Darien High School is a privilege that carries a profound responsibility. I pledge to build a program that my athletes will look back on with pride—not just for the games we won, but for the resilience and character we built together.

Coach Name (Printed): _____

Coach Signature: _____ Date: _____

Athletic Director Signature: _____

Student-Athlete Standards, Athlete Code of Conduct Enforcement & Supervision Protocols

As a Blue Wave Coach, you are responsible for maintaining a safe, disciplined, and compliant athletic environment. Participation in DHS Athletics is a privilege, and you are mandated to enforce district rules, monitor eligibility, and maintain strict supervision standards at all times for all players, specifically;

Phase 1: Pre-Season Eligibility & Clearance Checklist

Before any student-athlete steps onto the field, court, pool, or track, you must verify that all state (CIAC) and district administrative requirements are 100% complete:

- ☐ **13-Month Annual Sports Physical:** Verify that every athlete has an official physical on file that is current within 13 months.
 - *Strict Mandate:* Zero exceptions. If a physical expires mid-season, the athlete is immediately sidelined until an updated form is cleared by the school nurse.
- ☐ **DHS Emergency Permission Form:** Collect and hold a signed, nurse-approved two-page parent permission form for every athlete prior to day one of tryouts/practices.
- ☐ **Blue-List Verification:** Check the district "blue-list" prior to roster finalization. Athletes with unresolved financial or administrative obligations are prohibited from being rostered or participating.
- ☐ **Extracurricular Workshop Completion:** Ensure student-athletes and their parents/guardians have attended the mandatory district educational workshop addressing substance abuse risks, mental health, and safe school climate.
- ☐ **Handbook Sign-Off:** Confirm student and parent sign-off in Aspen acknowledging acceptance of the Code of **Conduct rules**.

Phase 2: Daily Athlete Supervision Checklist

You must demonstrate continuous vigilance across all facilities and travel. Active oversight prevents safety issues and reduces liability:

- ☐ **Facility Security & Key Control:** Keep all unsupervised areas locked at all times. Never give keys to student-athletes under any circumstances.

- [] **Continuous Monitoring:** Maintain direct supervision in all athletic spaces—locker rooms, training rooms, weight rooms, hallways, gyms, fields, pools, and parking lots—before, during, and after every practice or contest.
- [] **Transit Oversight:** Monitor athlete movement between facilities (e.g., locker room to field) and oversee team entering/exiting opponent facilities during away events.
- [] **Structured Practice Design:** Organize every practice session from start to finish with proactive supervision and safety in mind to eliminate reckless behavior.

Phase 3: Code of Conduct Enforcement & Infraction Matrix

Student-athletes represent DHS and must model the *Vision of the Graduate* standards (Communication, Creativity, Curiosity, Empathy, Independence, and Integrity). Any behavior violating Board Policies on substance use (THC, alcohol, tobacco/vaping), bullying (Policy 5175), hazing (Policy 5240), non-discrimination (Policy 5710), or major disruptions results in an Extracurricular Violation ("Strike").

Coach Directive: All suspected violations must be reported immediately to Athletic Director Chris Manfredonia. Conduct violations trigger a "strike" regardless of whether the student is currently in-season.

Offense Level	Athletic Penalty	Required Counseling & Re-entry Protocol
First Offense	14-Calendar-Day Suspension from all team activities (including practices and rehearsals).	Mandatory meeting with a school counselor prior to team re-entry.
Second Offense (Same Season)	Suspended for the remainder of the season.	Administrative review and guidance.

Second Offense <i>(Different Season)</i>	28-Calendar-Day Suspension from all team activities (including practices).	Mandatory weekly counseling meetings during the 28-day suspension.
Third Offense	Suspended from ALL athletic and extracurricular participation for the remainder of the school year.	Full administrative determination.

- ☐ **CIAC Performance-Enhancing Drug (PED) Rule:** Any athlete determined to have used anabolic steroids or PEDs (in or out of season) is declared ineligible for 180 school days commencing on the date of the CIAC Board of Control determination.
- ☐ **Additional Consequences:** Extracurricular violations may also result in longer suspensions, immediate removal from captain positions, and loss of team award eligibility as determined by the Athletic Director and Administration.

Phase 4: Team Operations & Coaching Expectations Checklist

- ☐ **Mandatory Attendance Standards:** Enforce regular attendance at all meetings, practices, and contests (including scheduled vacation periods). Practice rules must be clearly explained before the season starts.
- ☐ **Zero Physical Discipline:** Physical activity may NEVER be used as a disciplinary consequence.
- ☐ **Academic Priority:** Academics take precedence over athletics. Allow student-athletes to seek extra help from teachers without penalty or loss of playing time, even if it results in late arrival to practice.
- ☐ **Professional Conduct & Parent Boundaries:** Model appropriate language and behavior at all times. Direct any parental concerns regarding playing time or team decisions to the High School Athletic Department.

Blue Wave Team Logistics: The Head Coach Operational Playbook

Behind every great season is a seamless game plan. Blue Wave Team Logistics is your operational guide for managing team dynamics, ensuring every student-athlete experiences a clear, fair, and organized path to the playing field. From tryout communications to navigating the balance between high school athletics and outside club sports, this section details your administrative responsibilities and team management standards.

Tryouts, Cuts, and Roster Decisions

To field our most competitive teams while maintaining athletic department transparency, you are required to execute a fair, objective selection process:

- **28-Day Advance Communication Mandate:** You must publish all tryout schedules, registration links, and evaluation requirements at least 28 days prior to the start of the season.
- **Open Competition Standard:** Pre-season evaluations are a clean slate. All students—including returning varsity players and seniors—compete equally for playing time and roster spots. You are mandated to select the best players to field our most competitive lineups based on performance, effort, attitude, and attendance.
- **Squad Limits & Advance Cut Warnings:** Squad size limits may be established based on safety (space and coach-to-player ratios), time limitations (reasonable practice and game opportunities), and budget constraints (transportation and equipment costs). If your program will be making cuts, you must clearly communicate this to all athletes before tryouts begin.
- **Pre-Tryout Criteria Briefing:** You will explain your specific selection criteria and evaluation format to all candidates prior to day one of tryouts so athletes know exactly what is expected.
- **Notification Protocols & Cut Feedback:**
 - All final team rosters must be emailed using blind copy (BCC) immediately following the evaluation period.
 - You must notify all athletes of their roster status within 2 school days of tryouts concluding.
 - Notifications may be conducted in person through private, individual 1-on-1 conversations to deliver direct, constructive feedback.
 - Any athlete who is cut must be offered a 1-on-1 feedback session or given the option to receive evaluation feedback via email.
- **Roster Mobility:** Head coaches reserve the authority to move players up or double-dress athletes across levels (Varsity, JV, Froshmore, Freshman) throughout the season to support player growth and team depth.

Club vs School & CIAC Dual-Participation Rules

At Darien High School, school pride and team unity come first. We believe in a level playing field for every single student who represents 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; you must value and evaluate them equally.
- **Earning Their Spot:** You are strictly required to evaluate talent and field the most competitive teams based solely on what players demonstrate during high school tryouts and practices. You may utilize skill assessments from the previous high school season and games/contests during evaluations.
- **Outside club standings, rankings, or affiliations have zero influence on your roster selections or playing time decisions.**
- **Enforcing the CIAC In-Season Rule:** Once a student-athlete makes a Blue Wave roster, their primary athletic commitment belongs to their 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 regulations; verify any exceptions with the Athletic Director prior to participation).*
- **Objective Evaluation Criteria:** You are strictly required to evaluate talent based on what players demonstrate during high school tryouts and practices. You may reference skill assessments from the previous DHS season during evaluations.
- **Enforcing the CIAC In-Season Rule:** Once a student-athlete is placed on a Blue Wave roster, their primary commitment is to their high school team. In accordance with CIAC bylaws, athletes are not permitted to practice or compete with an outside club team in the same sport during the high school season. *(Note: Verify any limited exceptions for swimming, tennis, and gymnastics with Athletic Director Chris Manfredonia prior to participation).*
- **Out-of-Season Showcases:** Out-of-season showcases are strongly discouraged if they conflict with an athlete's active in-season high school program. While you may grant permission for an off-season showcase in another sport, the athlete's commitment to their active in-season high school team always takes precedence.

Communication Standards & Digital Guardrails

Open, professional communication builds strong programs. You are expected to adhere strictly to district-approved communication channels:

- **Strict Ban on Electronic Messaging:** There is a zero-tolerance policy for electronic communication (texting, direct messaging, non-district apps) between coaches and individual student-athletes only approved district channels can be used.
- **Approved Team Channels:** All communication must be routed strictly through FamilyID, Google Classroom, or ParentSquare.
- **Parent Communications:** Important team logistics, schedule changes, and program initiatives must be communicated to parents separately to keep families informed using approved district communications tools.
- **Directory Information:** Head coaches must ensure their contact information and pre-season meeting details are kept up to date in the athletic department directory..
- **Connecting via the Directory:** Head coach contact information and pre-season meeting details must be kept updated and accessible through the Athletic Department directory.
- **Encouraging Self-Advocacy:** You should actively encourage student-athletes to advocate for themselves by coming to you directly to discuss their performance, evaluations, and personal goal-setting.

Pre-Season Parent Meetings

Pre-season meetings are your single best opportunity as a head coach to set clear expectations, build trust with families, 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 solving conflicts.
- **Open Dialogue:** Conclude with a dedicated Q&A session and any necessary handouts so every family leaves informed and prepared.

Scheduling, Transportation, Weather & Uniforms

Managing team logistics requires clear advance planning, strict adherence to athletic department policies, and compliance with district safety standards. Head coaches must manage schedules, transportation, and equipment throughout the three distinct phases of the seasonal lifecycle:

Pre-Season Setup & Planning

- **Preliminary Schedule Review:**
 - The Athletic Office generates initial contest schedules.
 - Head coaches must review drafts immediately and submit all requested changes or additions (including scrimmages) to the Athletic Office as soon as possible.
 - Coaches may never contact opposing Athletic Directors to alter schedule dates, times, or venues without prior written approval from the DHS Athletic Director.
- **Practice Space Allocation:**
 - Facility and practice schedules will be finalized during the seasonal coaches' pre-season meeting. Special accommodations will be arranged for inclement weather days.
 - Sunday Practice Policy: Sunday practices are strongly discouraged and must never begin before 12:00 PM (noon).
 - Weekend & Holiday Facility Requests: If an indoor facility must be opened for practice or contests on weekends or when DHS is not in session, the head coach must notify the Athletic Director as far in advance as possible.
- **Special Transportation Requests:**
 - Standard bus transportation is arranged by the Athletic Office.
 - If a team requests a charter/coach bus for an away contest, the program must cover the cost difference between a standard school bus and the charter bus using the team's Student Activity Account. Requests must be submitted well in advance.

In-Season Travel, Schedules & Weather Protocols

- **Schedule Adjustments & Postponements:**
 - Last-minute changes to officials or transportation cannot be accommodated.
 - In the event of a postponed contest, the Athletic Office will automatically reschedule the event on the next available open date.
- **Weather & Emergency Cancellations:**
 - Whenever Darien Public Schools cancels school due to weather or an emergency, all athletic contests and practices are automatically cancelled.
- **Bus Supervision & Student Expectations:**

- A coach must ride the bus (for teams with multiple buses, a coach must be in each bus) with their team to and from all away contests unless an exception is approved in advance by the Athletic Director.
- Coaches must inspect the bus before departure and after return for cleanliness and damage.
- Enforce the following bus rules with all student-athletes:
 - Obey all instructions from the bus driver immediately.
 - Remain seated, act respectfully, and refrain from throwing any objects out windows.
 - Remove all personal gear, uniforms, trash, and equipment immediately upon returning to DHS.
- **Student Transportation Policy & Permission Forms:**
 - All student-athletes are required to ride school-provided transportation to and from athletic contests.
 - **Transporting Own Child:** A parent/guardian requesting to transport their own child to or from a contest must submit a written request to the coach in advance.
 - **Transporting Other Students:** Parents planning to drive another student-athlete must complete and submit an official Field Trip Permission Form with all required documentation to the Athletic Department prior to the event.

Post-Season Equipment, Uniforms & Blue List Audits

- **Student Uniform Care & Accountability:**
 - School-issued uniforms and protective equipment are loaned to athletes and must be worn only for authorized team events.
 - Student-athletes are financially responsible for replacing lost or stolen items. Protective gear and uniforms undergo formal district cleaning and reconditioning at the end of each season.
- **End-of-Season Gear Collection:**
 - Head coaches must collect all issued uniforms and equipment immediately following the final contest.
- **Enforcing the DHS "Blue List":**
 - Any student-athlete who fails to return school-issued uniforms or equipment will be placed on the DHS Blue List.
 - Athletes on the Blue List are blocked from receiving uniforms or participating in subsequent sports seasons until all obligations are satisfied.
- **Cyclical Uniform Ordering & Budget Allocation:**
 - Uniform replacements are managed on an equitable, cyclical schedule across all athletic programs.
 - Due to budget constraints, not all uniform replacement requests can be fulfilled in a single fiscal year.
- **Alternate Jersey Approval Guidelines:**

- Teams wishing to purchase "alternate jerseys" to supplement Board of Education-issued uniforms must obtain prior approval from the Athletic Director.
- Alternate jerseys must be funded through the team's Student Activity Account. Because team accounts fund these items, student-athletes may keep their alternate jerseys at the conclusion of their DHS athletic career.

Collegiate Recruitment:

If you have an athlete interested in playing at the collegiate level, as a coach, your role is to help them better understand the landscape and provide support, but the process should be driven by the athlete themselves. 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, an athlete's main recruiting partner may fall outside of DHS:

- **Your Club Coach (Primary Recruiting Contact for Most Sports):** In most high school sports, the club or travel team coach serves as the 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):** Athletes should always keep their 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 More You Know: 5 Universal Pillars of Recruiting

1. **Academics Come First:** NCAA rules require specific core classes to play in college. If an athlete plans to play at the D1 or D2 level, they must register with the **NCAA Eligibility Center**. Maintaining 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 best plays within the first 30 seconds. Film should be updated 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. **Showcasing Character:** Remind athletes that college scouts evaluate how they act on the bench, how they respond to mistakes, and how they 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 Leadership Playbook: Captain Standards & Operations

As a Blue Wave Head Coach, you are responsible for facilitating an objective, transparent, and compliant captain selection process. Captaincy is both a reward for past dedication and a responsibility to lead. You are mandated to execute the following operational steps throughout the seasonal lifecycle:

Phase 1: Pre-Vote Setup & Eligibility Verification

- Establishing Captain Limits: Prior to the team vote, you must determine and announce the exact number of Varsity captains for the upcoming season (minimum of 2, maximum of 4).
- Enforcing Eligibility Standards: You must verify that all eligible rising senior candidates meet the mandatory baseline requirements:
 - Must have played on the Varsity team
 - Must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or above.
 - Must have no prohibitive behavioral infractions (suspensions, academic integrity violations, or drug/alcohol policy violations).
- Managing Infraction Exceptions: If a candidate incurred a prohibitive infraction during their Freshman or Sophomore year, you will participate alongside the Athletic Director and Assistant Principal in an *Earned Privilege Restoration* review to determine if eligibility may be restored following completed restorative service. Infractions during Junior or Senior year result in permanent, non-negotiable ineligibility.

Phase 2: Executing the Vote ("Numbers Are Numbers!")

- Timing & Voting Protocol: Voting must take place at least one season prior to your competitive season (allowing graduating seniors to vote). You will distribute an alphabetical ballot containing all eligible rising seniors to all Varsity team members and Varsity head coaching staff.
- Objective Tally & Announcement: All completed ballots must be submitted directly to the Athletic Director for official tallying. The student vote strictly determines the outcome—coaches do not alter, override, or manipulate vote totals. The Athletic Director will officially announce final captain selections within one week of the season's end.

Phase 3: In-Season Captain Oversight & Sub-Varsity Selections

- Captains' Council Mandate: You must ensure your elected Varsity captains attend all mandatory seasonal Captains' Council workshops focusing on leadership development, sportsmanship, communication, and conflict resolution.
- Community Service Oversight: You will partner directly with your captains to organize and execute 1–2 team community service projects during their tenure.
- Sub-Varsity Captain Selections: Unlike Varsity, Junior Varsity and Freshman captains are selected directly by sub-varsity coaching staffs. You will direct your sub-varsity coaches to evaluate candidates based on daily work ethic, coachability, positive attitude, and school spirit.

Phase 4: CIAC Off-Season Compliance & Practice Restrictions

- Zero Sanction of "Captain's Practices": You are strictly prohibited from organizing, encouraging, supporting, or sanctioning "Captain's Practices" or any off-season workouts.
- Adherence to CIAC Limitations: You must enforce all CIAC seasonal contact rules. Player-organized workouts may never be deemed mandatory, nor can participation in off-season activities influence future team selections. All off-season questions must be escalated to Athletic Director Chris Manfredonia.

Appendix:

FCIAC- PROTEST OR GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Darien High School belongs to the Fairfield County Interscholastic Athletic Conference (FCIAC). The FCIAC was established in 1961 and consists of 17 schools throughout Fairfield County, including, Brien McMahon Senators, Bridgeport Central Hilltoppers, Danbury Hatters, Darien Blue Wave Fairfield Ludlowe Falcons, Fairfield Warde Mustangs, Greenwich Cardinals, New Canaan Rams, Norwalk Bears, Ridgefield Tigers, St Joseph Cadets, Stamford Knights, Staples Wreckers, Trinity Catholic Crusaders, Trumbull Eagles, Westhill Vikings, Wilton Warriors.

FCIAC Protest for Grievance Procedures

All members of the FCIAC have the right to protest or grievance procedures. To protest all must adhere to the following format (Steps 1, 2 and 3 must be completed before the end of the fifth day after the contest)

1. Protesting Coach
 - a. Coach must indicate at time of infraction that the game is under protest and entered in the scorebook.
 - b. Submit (in writing) to his athletic director within 24 hours reason for protest. Report to include: teams involved, location, officials names and addresses, rules that were violated (refer to specific rule, section, articles) and outcome of contest.
2. Athletic Director
 - a. Review protest with coach
 - b. Evaluate validity of protest
 - c. Submit written protest of coach to the school principal if deemed valid
3. Principal
 - a. Review protest with coach & athletic director
 - b. Confer with principal of school that protest is lodged against
 - c. Both principals and athletic directors attempt to resolve problem

- d. If protest is resolved:
 - i. If there is no change, the status quo exists
 - ii. If there is a change, the results must be forwarded to the Board of Directors for appropriate action. The Board will render the official decision.
 - e. If the protest is not resolved:
 - i. Submit all information to FCIAC president, including dates and results of conference between the two schools
- 4. Establish Protest Committee
 - a. FCIAC President, upon review of protest, will appoint a protest committee to include:
 - i. Member of Board of Directors as chairman
 - ii. Sports chairman or other committee member
 - iii. A member at large
- 5. Protest Committee
 - a. On direction by president as to time and place, this committee will meet to resolve or decide the protest
 - b. The chairman or the special committee shall give due notice of the time and place the hearing to all schools concerned
 - c. A school against which a charge or protest has been filed shall have the privilege of presenting its case to the special committee
 - d. Committee will submit in writing their findings to the league president
- 6. President
 - a. Submit in writing the outcome to protesting school principal

CIAC- DISQUALIFICATION RULE

Darien HS is a member of the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC). The CIAC controls the boys and girls athletics in the state of Connecticut. The CIAC regulates and determines eligibility supervises tournament play and sets game limitation and practice dates. The CIAC is the only association which governs interscholastic athletic programs for secondary schools in Connecticut

The CIAC establishes guidelines and tone for acceptable and appropriate behavior at all CIAC contests. Given this charge, it is CIAC's responsibility to be pro-active and responsive to the growing issues of sportsmanship and violence in sports. A strong and consistent statement reflecting zero tolerance for violence in sports must become standard operating procedure for all schools. This is to be considered a minimum standard. The CIAC Disqualification/Ejection Rule is in effect for all CIAC contests including league playoffs that engage officials who have been assigned by Board commissioners from CIAC registered officials organizations, or directly by the school or by the CIAC. There is NO appeal procedure that a school may use relative to disqualifications. Disqualifications are a judgment call by an official and as such are not appealable. Until the official(s) leaves the site the game official(s) is in charge and may take any action deemed to be appropriate, even to the extent of reversing an earlier decision to eject a player or coach. Both schools (coaches on site) must be made fully aware of all final decisions on game disqualifications. **Once the game official(s) leaves the site of the contest all decisions on game disqualifications are final.** The following policies for disqualification by an officials shall apply in all sports:

1. Any student athlete who physically assaults an official, coach or opposing player or spectator will be immediately dismissed from the team for the remainder of the season.
2. When an athlete is ejected from a contest for unsportsmanlike behavior or fighting, including taunting, the athlete or coach is ineligible to participate in the next contest at the same level of play (even if the next contest does not occur until league or CIAC tournament play or next year). If one or more different level contests are scheduled prior to the next contest at the

same level of play, the athlete or coach shall be ineligible to participate in the next (but no more than one) contest at each level of play. **The ejected player cannot be in attendance at the game(s) for which they are serving their suspension and may not participate in any pre-game warm-up activity at the site of the game.**

3. A coach who is ejected from a contest is ineligible to coach for the next 2 contests.
4. Upon the second disqualification, if that violation is for initiating a fight or retaliating in a fight (as determined by the game official) that student athlete will be dismissed from the team for the remainder of the season (Otherwise #2 remains applicable)
5. The school's first incident of non-compliance, for reasons other than defiance of the disqualification rules, will result in a forfeiture and a \$250 fine; a school's second incident of non-compliance will prohibit the school from entry in the next CIAC tournament for that sport, or from the remainder of the current tournament if the disqualification occurs during a CIAC tournament or during the last regular season contest/day of competition. However, when a school willfully defies CIAC disqualification rules and regulations the school and/or coach will be subject to further action by the CIAC Board of Control.
6. Any CIAC team that accumulates five (5) or more disqualifications for flagrant misconduct, unsportsmanlike conduct, including taunting, retaliating in a fight, or physically assaulting an official, coach opposing player or spectator during the course of one season will be barred from CIAC post-season competition. The number of disqualifications must be completed on all tournament forms. Disqualifications from the team under #1 constitutes on disqualification in team totals.
7. Disqualifications from the last contest of one season carry over to the next season in that sport for undergraduates and coaches, or the next season of participation in any sport for seniors.
8. If the playing rules for a sport specify an additional penalty, the additional penalty will apply. The CIAC disqualification rule applies to all disqualifications with the exception of reaching the limit of personal fouls in

basketball and lacrosse; reaching the limit of technical violations in wrestling; or being disqualified by the rules in ice hockey and lacrosse, which does not require a next game disqualification.

9. Any misconduct or disqualification of a coach will count towards the team's total number of disqualifications.
10. Each game official will notify their assignor for that game who will notify the CIAC office via the on-line disqualification notification system. The athletic director or principal of the school having the disqualified player/coach must notify their next opponent.

CIAC RULE FOR COACHES AND ATHLETES PARTICIPATING IN OUT OF SEASON NON-HIGH SCHOOL CONTESTS

Individual and Team Sports

- a. Member schools may permit student athletes to participate in non-school contests as individuals or as members of a non-school team.
- b. Member schools may not permit their coaches to coach or instruct their member school athletes in the sport which they coach, unless permissible under recently revised summer guidelines, which can be found on pg. 83 of CIAC Handbook [here](#).
- c. Member schools may not organize or permit coaches to organize, supervise or operate athletic practices or interscholastic athletic contests for their athletes. Coaches cannot run fund raisers or collect money for any out-of-season practices, events, leagues or other activities.
- d. Member schools may permit their coaches of individual sports to coach any of their athletes who have qualified for a national level competition that is sanctioned by the CIAC and National Federation. This would be limited to one competition. Schools may provide equipment and facilities. Schools may also provide insurance coverage and financial assistance for the competition.
- e. Member schools may allow the use of equipment that is deemed necessary for safety reasons.

However, the equipment may not identify the name or logo of the school.

Member schools may not provide school-owned uniforms, worn by the student in non-school contests, or insurance coverage to students or coaches