

PORTAL MIDDLE HIGH SCHOOL

ATHLETIC HANDBOOK

2026-2027



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Note from the Athletic Director:

Dear Coaches, Student-Athletes, and Parents,

Thank you for your interest in participating in and supporting the interscholastic athletic programs at Portal Middle High School. This handbook outlines our guidelines, policies, and expectations for student-athletes. Please take the time to read it carefully.

Together, we can ensure a safe, respectful, and rewarding athletic experience while striving to be Respectful, Responsible, and Resilient in all we do.

Go Panthers!

Justin M. Chester / Athletic Director

Statement of Philosophy & Purpose

Portal Middle High School is committed to offering a diverse, inclusive, and successful athletic program open to all students. Athletics are a vital component of the overall school experience and contribute to the physical, emotional, and personal development of each student-athlete.

Our program encourages:

- Positive self-esteem
- Good citizenship
- School spirit and pride
- A strong sense of community and teamwork

This handbook serves as a reference guide for students, parents, and staff. It outlines policies, clarifies procedures, and promotes consistent, effective implementation across all sports.

Objectives of Participation:

Portal Middle High School's athletic program offers students opportunities for:

- Physical, mental, and emotional growth
- Skill development in chosen sports
- Leadership under structured guidance
- Team unity among peers, staff, and the community
- Achievement of individual and team goals

Core Values:

Respectful

- Teammates, Coaches, Facilities, and Community
- “You never know who is watching.”

Responsible

- Commitment: Be present at practices and meetings
- Maintain academic eligibility

Resilient

- Trust your coaches
- Focus on improvement
- Overcome adversity

Goals for Student-Athletes:

The primary goal is personal growth through athletic participation. Emphasis is placed on:

- Teamwork
- Dedication
- Commitment
- Respect for authority
- Self-discipline and effort

Code of Ethics:

For Spectators

- Respect property, authority, and officials
- Address inappropriate behavior
- Applaud good play, regardless of the team
- Show compassion for injuries
- Support coaching decisions and strategies

For Student-Athletes

- Prioritize academics
- Know and follow team/handbook policies
- Treat others respectfully

- Maintain composure and serve as a role model
- Represent PMHS honorably
- Return all issued equipment and uniforms

For Coaches

- Teach sportsmanship, skills, and values
- Prioritize student welfare over winning
- Uphold ethical standards
- Enforce school and GHSA rules, including substance use policies

For Parents

- Encourage and support your child
- Maintain positivity, win or lose
- Avoid unsportsmanlike conduct
- Address concerns privately with coaches

Role of the Athletic Director:

The Athletic Director oversees all PMHS athletic programs:

- Administrative: Ensure eligibility, manage physicals
- Game Day Operations: Facility oversight, scheduling
- Coach Support: Hiring, preseason planning
- Community Engagement: Support Booster Club, fundraising

Role of the Head Coach:

Head Coaches are responsible for:

- Program Leadership: Staff management, GHSA compliance
- Communication: With athletes, families, and administrators
- Operations: Practice planning, game logistics, athlete development

Academic & Age Eligibility:

High School (Grades 9–12)

- Pass 3 of 4 classes from the prior semester
- Carnegie Units:
 - 10th Grade: 5 units
 - 11th Grade: 11 units

- 12th Grade: 17 units
- Must not turn 19 before April 30 of the school year

Middle School

- Pass 4 of 6 classes
- Not eligible if turning 16 before May 1

Required Forms:

All student-athletes must submit:

- DragonFly account with all green checks
- Physical Examination Form
- Permission Form for Participation
- Insurance Information
- Concussion Awareness Form
- Handbook Acknowledgement Form

Discipline Policy:

All student-athletes must follow Bulloch County Board of Education rules. Each coach may issue team-specific guidelines and consequences for violations. Infractions may result in:

- Loss of playing time
- Suspension or dismissal from the team
- Decisions made by Head Coach and Athletic Director

ISS/OSS: Students serving suspension may not participate in practices or games unless approved by school administration.

Mandatory Reporting:

All coaches are mandated reporters and must report suspected child abuse or neglect within 24 hours to a school administrator or counselor.

Attendance Policy:

Students must attend at least half of the school day to participate in athletic activities that day, unless approved in advance by administration.

- Unexcused absences on game day = no participation
- Unexcused practices may affect team status and playing time
- Excused absences may affect participation for safety and fairness

Practice Policies:**In-Season**

- Students are students first, athletes second
- Sunday practices are discouraged and must be optional
- Missing Sunday practice cannot affect game participation

Off-Season

- Off-season practices cannot be mandatory
- Participation may not be a requirement for tryouts
- GHSA's "1 to 4" rule applies—see www.ghsa.net

Quitting a Sport:

Athletes are expected to complete their seasons. If a student chooses to quit:

- A meeting with the coach, AD, and parent is recommended
- The student may not participate in another sport until the current season ends
- Final decisions will be made by the Athletic Director and involved coaches
- A two-week grace period from the first practice allows withdrawal without penalty

Multi-Sport & Extracurricular Conflicts:

PMHS encourages participation in multiple activities. In case of conflicts:

- A Declared Priority Contract will determine which activity takes precedence (see appendices)
- Decisions are based on the best interest of the school, team, and student
- Coaches and the Athletic Director will work together to schedule accordingly

Sportsmanship Policy:

PMHS expects the highest level of sportsmanship from everyone:

- Treat opponents, officials, and spectators respectfully
- Avoid profanity, taunting, or confrontations

- GHSA Penalties:
 - 1 ejection = 1-game suspension
 - 2 ejections = 1-year suspension
 - Assaulting an official = 1-year disqualification

Lettering Policy:

Varsity letters are awarded at the discretion of the Head Coach and Athletic Director. Requirements include:

- Completion of varsity season in good standing
- Significant contribution to the team
- Commitment and sportsmanship

Letter Jackets:

Eligible student-athletes (after sophomore year and 2 varsity seasons) may purchase a letter jacket.

- Jackets are purchased by the student
- Patches/bars may be provided by the team
- State honors receive special patches
- Jackets may be ordered during fall or spring fittings with the official Neff Representative

Honors & Awards:

Each student-athlete who completes their season in good standing may receive:

- Scholar-Athlete Award (honor roll during the season)
- Certificate of Participation (JV or middle school)
- Varsity Letter (varsity only)

Individual/team awards are at the coach's discretion. To be eligible:

- Maintain good conduct
- Respect others and follow team rules
- Return all equipment
- Be academically eligible and drug-free

Athletic Award Ceremonies:

Three recognition ceremonies are held annually:

- Fall Sports: January (Football, Softball, XC, and Flag Football)
- Winter Sports: March (Basketball, Cheer)
- Spring Sports: May (Soccer, Baseball, Golf, Track)

All student-athletes and families are encouraged to attend. Teams may also hold individual banquets.

Gender Equity:

Portal Middle High School complies with Title IX and is committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all student-athletes. Concerns should be directed to the Athletic Director, Principal, or Head Coach.

Interscholastic Sports:

At Portal Middle High School, student-athletes participate in competitive interscholastic sports. While participation is encouraged, all student-athletes and parents should understand that success is achieved by balancing competitiveness with sportsmanship and team values.

Coaching Responsibilities:

- Coaches are professionals who make decisions based on what is best for the team and overall program success.
- Playing time and positions are determined by the coaching staff.

Communication Expectations:

The Athletic Director and Head Coaches operate under an open-door policy for parents and student-athletes. To maintain a productive and respectful environment:

- All meetings must be scheduled in advance.
- Do not approach coaches before or after games or practices. These are emotionally charged times and not conducive to resolution.

Topics Appropriate for Discussion

- Ways to help your child improve
- Concerns regarding your child's behavior

Topics Not Appropriate for Discussion

- Team strategy
- Play calling
- Playing time
- Other student-athletes

Accident & Injury Reporting:

During Practice or Competition

- Student-athletes must report any injury immediately to the coach.
- This ensures timely medical response and allows parents to be informed.

Parent Notification

- If a parent is aware of an injury not reported by the student, they should notify the coach as soon as possible.

Athletic Training Room Policies:

PMHS employs a full-time certified athletic trainer to support the health and recovery of our athletes.

Hours of Operation

- School Days: Begins at 2:00 PM and remains until the end of the final practice or home game.
- Non-School Days (Weekends, Holidays): Present during games and some scrimmages.

Access & Priority

- Access is limited to athletes requiring care.
- Practice Days: First-come, first-served basis.
- Game Days: Priority given to those with bus or game-time constraints.

Injury Response Protocol

- The athletic trainer has primary authority over injury care.
- Away Contests:
 - Host school medical staff will manage injuries.

- If no medical staff are present, coaches will assume responsibility and call for emergency services if needed.
- Return to Play:
 - Clearance must be given by the athletic trainer.
 - A doctor's note may be required in some cases.

Transportation Policy:

Students involved in all extracurricular activities in the Bulloch County School system will be provided transportation to and from all away games/meets/matches. There will be instances where a student-athlete will be required to drive to a different location for practice. In these cases, a release for this travel must be on file with the Head Coach of that sport as well as the Athletic Director's office.

 [Transportation Release Form.pdf](#)

A student-athlete may NOT transport another student-athlete unless he or she is a member of the same immediate family.

Bulloch County students will not be released to any individual to ride private transportation following contests except the student-athlete's parent(s) or legal guardian, and a release must be signed by the parent/guardian after the contest; no pre-approvals for being released to someone other than a parent/guardian will be allowed.

Bulloch County Policy on Private Vehicles:

- No student, while participating in a school designated activity, shall be transported in an employee's privately owned vehicle or a vehicle that is not owned by Bulloch County Schools.
- Exceptions to the above policy are as follows:
 - Chartered Buses - company must provide certificate of insurance
 - Children riding with their parents
 - Children riding with other adult(s) in a privately owned vehicle
 - These children must have a signed release form from their parent/guardian that releases Bulloch County Schools from any and all liability resulting in harm to said child while in a privately owned vehicle.

NCAA Clearinghouse:

Students interested in participating in college athletics must register with the NCAA Clearinghouse.

Support Available

- The PMHS Guidance Office:
 - Provides informational materials.
 - Assists with the registration process.

Online Resource

- Visit: www.ncaaclearinghouse.net

Fundraising:

Athlete Responsibility

- Student-athletes may be expected to participate in fundraising activities such as:
 - Meal Plates/ T-Shirts /Car washes
 - Other community-based fundraising events

Approval Required

- All fundraising efforts and requests to local businesses must receive prior approval from the Superintendent. This is done through Etrieve. The athletic director can assist with this upon request.

Booster Club:

The Booster Club plays a vital role in supporting Portal Middle High School athletics.

Purpose

- Provides resources for:
 - Letterman Jackets
 - Special Projects
 - Financial Support based on the fund drive given back to all sports.

Participation

- Parents, businesses, and community members are strongly encouraged to join and support the Booster Club.
- Their involvement enhances the overall experience and opportunities available to student-athletes.

Social Media Accounts for Teams/Programs - NEW FOR FY27

Option 1

In order to maximize reach to all audiences and to ensure compliance with updates to the Americans with Disabilities Act, coaches are encouraged to provide each school's social media manager with information to post to the school's official social media accounts. No individual team pages representing school social media should be created or maintained.

Coaches are welcome to create their own personal social media accounts in which they communicate with interested parties, but the name of the page should not represent itself as a school/team page. Boosters are welcome to create their own personal social media accounts in which they communicate with interested parties, but the name of the page should not represent itself as a school/team page.

Option 2

- **Official Communication:** To ensure compliance with updates to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and to maximize audience reach, all team-related social media content must be posted through the school's official social media accounts. Coaches are required to submit content to the school's social media manager for this purpose.
- **Prohibited Accounts:** The creation or maintenance of individual team pages representing school social media is strictly prohibited.
- **Personal Accounts:** Coaches and boosters may maintain personal social media accounts for communicating with interested parties. The name of any personal page, however, must not represent itself as an official school or team page.



PMHS Multi-Sport Participation Declared Priority Contact

It is the intention of the athlete named below to participate in two sports during the same season. In order for this to occur, the following stipulations must be met in accordance with Portal Middle-High School policy.

1. The process must be initiated through a meeting scheduled with the Athletic Director.
2. The athlete must declare which sport is primary and which is secondary for participation purposes.
3. Approval may be denied because of academic concerns at any time during the athletic season. The athlete then will participate in the primary sport only.
4. Practice and Game/Meet requirements must be established prior to the athletic season. Contests take precedence over practice, and the primary sport contests take precedence over secondary sport contests. This should be detailed in writing below after a conference between the Athletic Director and the Coaches involved.
5. The athlete may also have the option to focus only on the primary sport while it is in season and begin the secondary sport when the primary season has ended.

Name of Student-Athlete: _____ Date: _____

Primary Sport: _____ Secondary Sport: _____

Practice and Game/Meet Requirements (attach calendar):

Additional Stipulations:

Athlete only wants to focus on one sport at a time as indicated in step 5. _____

Student-Athlete Signature	Date	Parent/Guardian Signature	Date
Primary Head Coach Signature	Date	Secondary Head Coach Signature	Date
Athletic Director Signature	Date	Principal Signature	Date

1. BY-LAW 2.67 – “Practice Policy for Heat and Humidity

Schools must follow the statewide policy for conducting practices and voluntary conditioning workouts in all sports during times of extremely high heat and/or humidity that will be signed by each head coach at the beginning of each season and distributed to all players and their parents or guardians. The policy shall follow modified guidelines of the American College of Sports Medicine in regard to:

1. The scheduling of practices at various heat/humidity levels;
 2. The ratio of workout time to time allotted for rest and hydration at various heat/humidity levels, and
 3. The heat/humidity level that will result in practice being terminated.
- PMHS uses scientifically approved instrument to measure heat and humidity. The Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) reading must be utilized at each practice to ensure that the written policy is being

WBGT READING	ACTIVITY GUIDELINES & REST BREAK GUIDELINES
UNDER 82.0	Normal activities --Provide at least three separate rest breaks each hour of minimum duration of 3 minutes each during workout
82.0 -86.9	Use discretion for intense or prolonged exercise; watch at-risk players carefully; Provide at least three separate rest breaks each hour of a minimum of four minutes duration each.
87.0 – 89.9	Maximum practice time is two hours. For Football: players restricted to helmet, shoulder pads, and shorts during practice. All protective equipment must be removed for conditioning activities. For all sports: Provide at least four separate rest breaks each hour of a minimum of four minutes each
90.0--92.0	Maximum length of practice is one hour, no protective equipment may be worn during practice and there may be no conditioning activities. There must be 20 minutes of rest breaks provided during the hour of practice.
OVER 92	No outdoor workouts; Cancel exercise; delay practices until a cooler WBGT reading occurs

followed properly.

GUIDELINES FOR HYDRATION AND REST BREAKS

1. Rest time should involve both unlimited hydration intake (water or electrolyte drinks) and rest without any activity involved.
2. For football, helmets should be removed during rest time.
3. The site of the rest time should be a “cooling zone” and not in direct sunlight.
4. When the WBGT reading is over 86.
 - a. ice towels and spray bottles filled with ice water should be available at the “cooling zone” to aid the cooling process.
 - b. Cold immersion tubs must be available for practices for the benefit of any player showing early signs of heat illness.

DEFINITIONS

1. **PRACTICE:** the period that a participant engages in a coach-supervised, school-approved sport or conditioning-related activity. Practices are timed from the time the players report to the field until they leave.
2. **WALK THROUGH:** This period shall last no more than one hour, is not considered to be a part of the practice time regulation, and may not involve conditioning or weight-room activities. Players may not wear protective equipment.

PENALTIES: Schools violating the heat policy shall be fined a minimum of \$500.00 and a maximum of \$1,000.00.

STUDENT/PARENT CONCUSSION AWARENESS FORM

SCHOOL: Portal Middle High School

DANGERS OF CONCUSSION

Concussions at all levels of sports have received a great deal of attention and a state law has been passed to address this issue. Adolescent athletes are particularly vulnerable to the effects of concussion. Once considered little more than a minor “ding” to the head, it is now understood that a concussion has the potential to result in death, or changes in brain function (either short-term or long-term). A concussion is a brain injury that results in a temporary disruption of normal brain function. A concussion occurs when the brain is violently rocked back and forth or twisted inside the skull as a result of a blow to the head or body. Continued participation in any sport following a concussion can lead to worsening concussion symptoms, as well as increased risk for further injury to the brain, and even death.

Player and parental education in this area is crucial – that is the reason for this document. Refer to it regularly. This form must be signed by a parent or guardian of each student who wishes to participate in GHSA athletics. One copy needs to be returned to the school, and one retained at home.

COMMON SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CONCUSSION

- Headache, dizziness, poor balance, moves clumsily, reduced energy level/tiredness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Blurred vision, sensitivity to light and sounds
- Fogginess of memory, difficulty concentrating, slowed thought processes, confused about surroundings or game assignments
- Unexplained changes in behavior and personality
- Loss of consciousness (NOTE: This does not occur in all concussion episodes.)

BY-LAW 2.68: GHSA CONCUSSION POLICY: In accordance with Georgia law and national playing rules published by the National Federation of State High School Associations, any athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion shall be immediately removed from the practice or contest and shall not return to play until an appropriate health care professional has determined that no concussion has occurred. (NOTE: An appropriate health care professional may include licensed physician (MD/DO) or another licensed individual under the supervision of a licensed physician, such as a nurse practitioner, physician assistant, or certified athletic trainer who has received training in concussion evaluation and management.

a) No athlete is allowed to return to a game or a practice on the same day that a concussion (a) has been diagnosed, OR (b) cannot be ruled out.

b) Any athlete diagnosed with a concussion shall be cleared medically by an appropriate health care professional prior to resuming participation in any future practice or contest. The formulation of a gradual return to play protocol shall be a part of the medical clearance.

c) It is mandatory that every coach in each GHSA sport participate in a free, online course on concussion management prepared by the NFHS and available at www.nfhslearn.com at least every two years – beginning with the 2013-2014 school year.

d) Each school will be responsible for monitoring the participation of its coaches in the concussion management course, and shall keep a record of those who participate.

Athletic Code of Conduct & Reminders:

Daily Attendance:

To participate in any scheduled game or practice, student-athletes must be present in school for at least 3 ½ hours on that day. Absence from school or skipping classes will result in ineligibility for participation.

Students in “Good Standing”:

All athletes must maintain “good standing” for athletic participation, which includes:

- Adhering to school rules regarding behavior and attendance
- Showing respectful behavior towards all members of the school community

Students are considered not in good standing if they experience a suspension, ISS/OSS, or skip school/classes during the season. Those not in good standing may be denied participation in interscholastic sports or extracurricular activities.

Academic Duty:

Students should effectively manage their time to ensure they dedicate sufficient effort to their studies, reflecting their true abilities in grades.

Taunting:

Taunting by team members or spectators is strictly prohibited and may result in suspension or dismissal from the team and/or event.

Honesty and Integrity:

Honesty is mandatory. Theft and dishonesty will not be tolerated and may lead to immediate dismissal from the team. Possession of another person's property will result in a one-year ban from participating in any PMHS athletic team, contingent upon a hearing with PMHS Administration and the Athletic Director after the suspension.

Representation:

Student-athletes represent the school at all times during practices, contests, and events. Proper conduct is expected while traveling, and inappropriate behavior or profanity is discouraged.

Respecting the Spirit of the Game:

Officials are present to ensure fair and safe competition. Student-athletes must show respect to officials and refrain from using illegal tactics to gain advantages.

Respect for the Coaching Staff:

Coaches have the athletes' best interests in mind. Students should follow the specific rules set forth by their coaches.

Respect for School Buildings and Grounds:

Any damage to school property will lead to immediate suspension from the team, with the length determined by the Athletic Director and Coach. Cleats must not be worn inside the building or on the gym floor at any time.

**Final Message to All Student-Athletes, Spectators, and Parents:
Support Portal Middle High School Athletics by:**

- Attending sporting events
- Providing positive support to teams and coaches
- Encouraging all players, regardless of their role
- Assisting other spectators and parents in maintaining sportsmanlike conduct
- Showing respect for coaches and officials
- Enjoying the Portal Middle High School athletic experience

GO PANTHERS!!

Acknowledgment Form 2026 - 2027**Date of Distribution:** _____**Student–Athlete’s Name:** _____**QR Code for PMHS Athletic Handbook:** -----Also available at: [Portal Middle High School Athletics](#)

I acknowledge that I have reviewed the Portal Middle High School Athletic Handbook and understand the policies and procedures outlined in it. I agree to support and adhere to these policies and procedures. Failure to comply may result in my dismissal from the athletic program.

If you would like a printed copy of the 2026-2027 Athletic Handbook, please indicate your preference by circling one of the options below:

- Yes, please provide me a hard copy.
- No, I have reviewed the handbook online.

Student–Athlete’s Signature: _____ **Date:** ____**Parental Signature:** _____ **Date:** ____**Parental Comments:**

Important: This completed form must be returned to the PMHS Main Office within one week of receipt.

The PMHS Office staff will retain a copy of this form for each participating student-athlete for the duration of the school year.