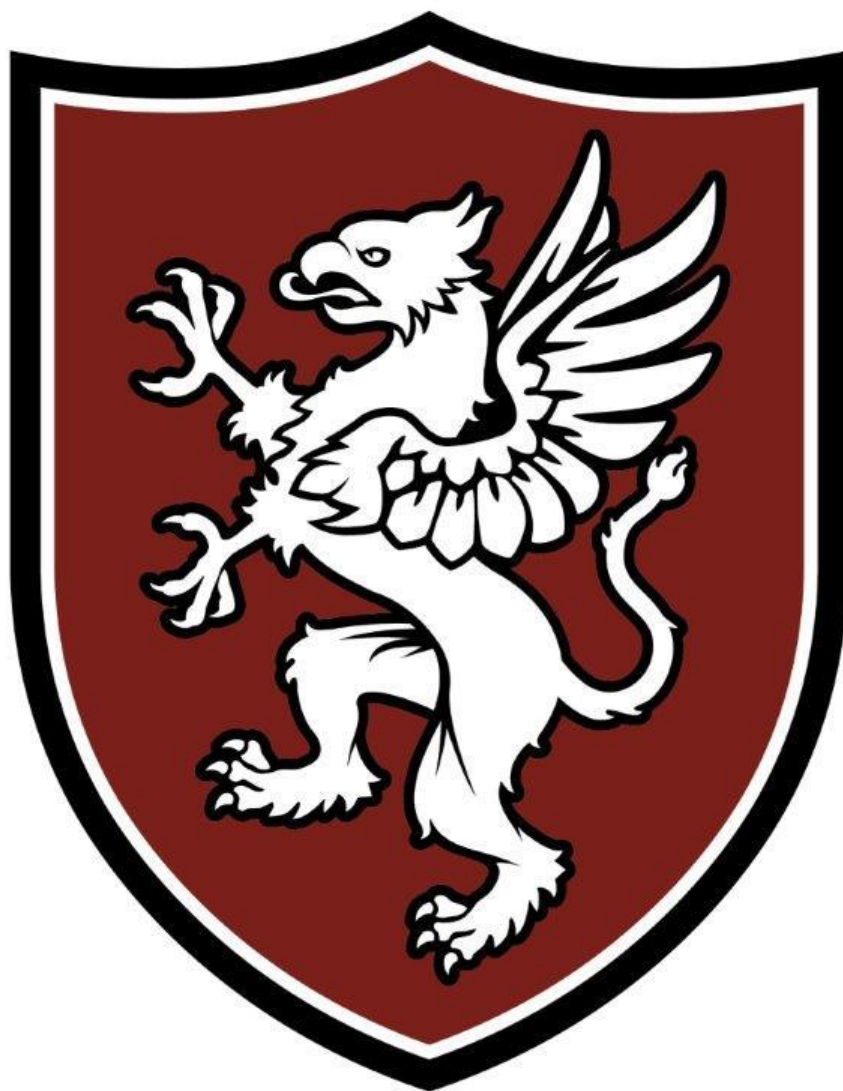


# GREAT HEARTS NORTHERN OAKS

## Athletic Department Handbook



## Why We Exist

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In keeping with the broader mission of Great Hearts Texas, GHNO Athletics exists to cultivate the hearts and minds of student athletes through the beauty of competition. Each sports program will strive to build a community of young men and women committed to moral, intellectual, and physical excellence. First and foremost, by participating in athletics, each student will be afforded the opportunity to grow in prudence, justice, temperance, courage, charity, and ultimately rejoice in the goodness of being through play.

The school is committed to ordering athletics within the mission of the academy and preventing the emergence of a separate “jock” culture. At Great Hearts, athletics does not exist as an island of its own, but as an extension of the Academy as a noble enterprise that assists the Academy’s mission of promoting the fulfillment of the person.

While the school takes pride in fielding successful teams, it does not condone winning at all costs. The school discourages any and all pressures that might lead to neglecting good sportsmanship and good health. At all times, the athletic program must be conducted in such a way that it is an educational activity. School success, unity, and pride are greatly enhanced by proper student participation in school-sponsored activities.

As significant as athletics are, they do not overshadow the importance of academics. The GHNO athletic philosophy is founded upon the belief that education comes before athletics, that the primary reason for students to attend GHNO is to participate in an exceptional educational experience, and that athletics should never take priority over academics.

## Athletic Program Objectives

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- The athlete learns the value of teamwork, self-discipline, strong work ethic and sacrifice. Contribution to the team is more important than personal goals or individual achievement.
- The athlete learns how to be a competitor while developing self-control, honesty and a spirit of cooperation
- The athlete learns to be a good winner as well as a gracious loser in defeat. A true athlete is one who is humble in victory as well as takes pride in defeat.
- The athlete learns to appreciate the skills and abilities of his/her opponent.
- The athlete learns an appreciation of playing by given rules.
- The athlete learns the value of physical fitness that leads to a sound body, healthy mind, and lifelong healthy habits.
- The athlete learns to cope with the competitive nature of athletics in a positive manner.

## Handbook Purpose

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The Great Hearts Athletics Handbook provides students, families, coaches, and administrators with the policies, guidelines, and expectations for the schools’ athletics programs. All students and families must read through the entire Handbook prior to participation in a sport. While the handbook does not give an exhaustive treatment of school policies and expectations, it does provide a framework in which each sports program must operate. Any issues falling outside the bounds of the Handbook will be dealt with by the coaching staff, athletic director, and school administration as needed.

## Eligibility

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### *Student Behavioral Expectations*

Participation in athletics is a privilege and not a right. Students must meet school behavior standards to be eligible for athletics. Additionally, all athletes shall abide by a code of ethics that will earn them the honor and respect that participation and competition in the interscholastic program affords. Acts of unacceptable conduct tarnish the reputation of everyone associated with the athletic program. Any conduct—to include inappropriate use of social media—that results in dishonor to the athlete, team, or school will not be tolerated and can result in being suspended or permanently removed from the team as well as being denied the privilege of future athletic participation.

We expect our students to achieve the ideal of the lady-scholar-athlete and the gentleman-scholar-athlete, and we emphasize those identities in that particular order. Our student athletes are held to the highest standards of behavioral excellence at all times.

We expect that our athletes aspire to obtain and act on the cardinal virtues:

- Prudence
- Justice
- Fortitude
- Temperance

We expect our coaching staff and athletes to uphold these virtues through regular practice.

Any student who is serving a suspension may not either practice or participate in a content while the suspension is being served. So, for example, if a student is suspended all-day Tuesday, they cannot participate in athletics Tuesday evening. If, for example, a student is suspended from 1pm Tuesday until 1pm Wednesday, the students cannot participate in athletics Tuesday night but may participate in athletics Wednesday night. Additionally, detentions may also be taken into consideration by a coach in determining a student's ability to participate in a practice or competition.

### *Academic Eligibility Requirements*

Eligibility checks will be conducted at the six-week mark after the start of school and after each quarterly grading period. Should an athlete be earning less than 70% in any class when these checks are conducted, he or she will be declared ineligible for a three-week probationary period. An athlete may regain eligibility when he or she maintains a 70% or higher in every class at the end of the probationary period.

Academically ineligible student-athletes are encouraged to participate in practice sessions and attend team meetings, but **may not participate in contests, sit on the bench, or travel to away games with the team** until eligibility is regained. Ineligible student-athletes may not miss classroom instructional time in order to travel to away athletic contests.

A student-athlete in danger of becoming academically ineligible should consult with his or her instructor(s) in order to determine action necessary to retain eligibility.

### *League Eligibility*

In order to participate in school athletics, athletes must meet school eligibility requirements as well as the eligibility requirements of the league in which the sport is played. These eligibility issues are handled through the registration process. For UIL Varsity participation especially, new high school students must ensure previous athletic participation forms have been completed and approved. Questions regarding eligibility status should be directed to the athletic director for clarification.

## Dress, Uniform and Equipment Requirements

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### *General Requirements*

An athlete is expected to comply with all hair and grooming standard as established in the school handbook. Moreover, an athlete is expected to comply with established standards when wearing the school uniform worn to class. When not required to be in a school uniform, an athlete shall dress presentably at all times, such as on trips and banquets (the dress code at all sports banquets is “dressy casual”). Coaches may also have team specific dress codes for game days or away games. Athletes must follow sport-specific jewelry and uniform rules. All shirts worn for athletic practices and field day should be modest, loose fitting, in good repair (e.g., no holes, torn sleeves, etc...), should be worn either tucked in or well over the waist of the pants/shorts if not tucked in. No midriffs may be shown. T-shirts are preferred—no camisoles or sports bras may be worn as outer garments. Sleeveless shirts may be worn if modest. No clothing should represent popular culture images (e.g., band shirts, movies, etc...). These requirements apply to summer camps and training.

### *Team Uniform Wear Policy*

Only uniforms issued by the school will be worn for contests and all school-issued uniforms are to be used for athletic contests only. (Note: some teams might require athletes to purchase shorts or pants.) These items are not to be worn in P.E. class, in school, in the community, at home, or even at practice. The only exception is if an entire team wears their school-issued apparel for a special occasion approved by the coach. Also, athletes should not allow other individuals to wear their uniforms. A student-athlete will not be allowed to play in a future season until all school-issued uniforms, warm-ups, equipment, etc. have been returned. Lost or damaged items may result in a fine and/or cost of replacement fee.

### *Use of Team Uniforms and Equipment*

All school equipment and uniforms are loaned out each season and should be treated with the utmost care. Irresponsible use may result in the student athlete repaying the cost of the item to the athletic department. Likewise, facilities should be treated with great care, whether they are rented, belong to another school, or are on campus, and an effort should be made to leave the facility as clean or cleaner than it was before use.

### *Equipment Responsibilities*

All athletes are responsible for the proper care and security of equipment issued to them. School furnished equipment is to be worn only for team competitions and team practices. All equipment not returned in a timely manner and in good condition at the end of the season will be subject to a financial penalty.

## Team Attendance

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Being part of a team requires commitment and, in order for a team to be successful, all members must be present and working towards the same goal. While 100% attendance at all team events is the goal to strive to achieve, it is understandable that absences will occur.

### *Unexcused and Excused Absences*

When a student joins a school team, the expectation is for that team to be that student's primary extracurricular commitment for the duration of the season. The baseline of "100% commitment" includes being on time for and staying for the duration of all official team activities as designated by the coach. There are generally five acceptable forms of "excused absences" from team events: 1) required tutoring, 2) school event conflicts that are mandatory for credit or college admission, 3) personal illness or medical appointment, 4) significant family event (i.e., wedding, funeral, etc...), and 5) when there was a last-minute change to the time or day of the team event. In each case, excused or unexcused, the correct procedure is to notify the coach directly as soon as the conflict becomes apparent. The penalty for an unexcused absence varies team-to-team, but generally becomes more consequential as the level of competition increases from middle school to Varsity.

### *School Attendance Requirements*

Student-athletes must attend a minimum of one-half of their classes during the school day to participate in competition that day. In the case of extenuating circumstances, school administration may grant relief from this requirement.

### *Dual Participation in Different GHNO Sports*

In certain cases, students will be allowed to participate in multiple school sports in one season or make the roster for an upcoming season while the previous season is wrapping up. When considering this, the student should contact the Athletic Director first, then meet with both head coaches to discuss and approve the practice/contest schedule for the athlete. The basic arrangement should be as follows: students will make as many practices for both teams as possible but will not be required to participate in more than one practice per day. Ball sports (such as volleyball and soccer) rely more on live in-person practice with teammates than more classical sports (such as cross country and track & field), therefore practice time should be weighted toward the ball sport. A contest for one team trumps a practice for another team, but if both teams have a contest on the same day, the decision should **not** be case-by-case, but rather by A) which commitment was entered into first, i.e. if basketball season overlaps soccer season, the student should play out their commitment to basketball before prioritizing soccer, or B) by designating a "primary" and "secondary" sport at the beginning of a season, e.g., committing to a cross country meet over a volleyball match (or the opposite) if the contest schedules were to conflict.

### *Absence and Club Sports Policies*

Student athlete should not miss a school practice or competition due to commitments to a club program. It is expected that Great Hearts student athletes prioritize school practices and competitions above involvement in programs outside of the school.

### *Dropping from a Team*

Students who do not finish a season damage their team and affect their potential future participation. On occasion, however, an athlete may find it necessary to drop a sport for a good reason. If this is the case the following procedure must be followed: 1) Consult with the head coach, 2) Consult with the Athletic Director, and 3) If the final decision is to stop participating, check-in all equipment immediately. Refunds will be determined case by case.

## **Registration Requirements**

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### *Required Forms*

Every year, parents and students must complete various forms to properly register a student for athletics. These forms are completed/submitted on-line, a link to which can be found on the GHNO Athletic webpage. The most important forms are the medical forms which consist of both a medical history and a physical examination that is signed by a qualified medical professional. The medical forms must be completed annually. The ideal time to get a physical is May, as this ensures the athlete will be covered for summer camps and the entire school year. In order to be eligible to try out for a Great Hearts athletic team, student-athletes must complete the online registration and have a completed physical examination form on file. Coaches will be notified by the athletic department when student-athletes have turned in a completed physical examination form and have completed the online registration process and are cleared for participation.

### *Participation Fees*

All sports require a fee to help pay for the various costs associated with athletics to include facility rentals, uniforms, equipment, transportation, league fees, coaching stipends and tournaments. The High School Athletic Fee is \$350, and the Middle School Athletic Fee is \$275. To support athletes who play multiple sports, subsequent sports will receive a \$25 dollar discount per season. In order to receive this discount, you must pay through Configio with the same account so please make it a point to remember your account ID and password.

The fee for any sport must be paid prior to the first official day of tryouts or practice. This fee is fully refundable if the student does not make a sports roster. However, should a student withdraw from a sport after cuts, if any, are announced, there will be no refund barring unique circumstances.

### *Student Cost Waiver*

Great Hearts does not want to exclude any student from participation due to financial hardship. Eligibility for waived or reduced athletic fees is initially determined according to the same standards as those found in the Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) application. However, if there are any financial difficulties that remain—regardless of whether the FRL application was approved—please reach out to the athletic department. Simply put, athletics are an important part of a student's development and we do not want registration fees to be a barrier to participation.

## Parent Behavioral Expectations

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As parents are the first teachers, we expect to model the behavior we want from our students and thus our parents should hold themselves to a high standard at all athletic events. At the very minimum, parents must remain respectful of officials, coaches, athletes, and other parents.

### *Parental Role in Program*

Parents play a crucial role in the development of student athletes at Great Hearts. At the beginning of an athletics season it takes time for athletes to trust their coaches and to follow them in the good but challenging direction the coaches are trying to lead them. When complete trust is gained between players and coaches, athletes are able to play to their full potential, with great confidence, passion and pride in themselves, their teammates and their school. Parents have tremendous power to expedite the process of building the athlete's trust in the program by showing support. Many parents have backgrounds in the sports being played and may in fact have a wealth of wisdom to offer. If parents have questions or comments about the way the game is being taught by the coaches, they should feel free to share these questions or comments with the head coach while protecting the unified voice of the program and the trust of the athletes in their coaches by not sharing these comments or questions in front of the student athletes.

Parents are asked to defer from coaching players from the stands during practices and games so that the athletes can concentrate on following the instruction of the coach as the voice of the program. During practices and games, it is also important that athletes stay with the team and do not go to the stands until after the game or practice is complete.

### *Coach-Parent Relationship*

Parents can expect clear and consistent communication from the coach regarding team events throughout the season. More importantly, parents can expect coaches to help create a positive community where families are coming together throughout the season. To achieve this, it is important for coaches and parents to have an open dialogue and good relationship. Parents should always feel free to raise concerns to the coach as to the treatment of their child, ways to help their child improve, or their child's behavior.

### *Participation in School Sports: A Commitment and a Privilege*

In addition to helping the athlete arrive to practices and games on time, parents can support their athletes in seeing that their participation in a school sport is understood as both a commitment and a privilege. This sometimes appears paradoxical to athletes, and parents and coaches must help in clarifying these two aspects of athletics. Parents are asked to help their athlete be true to that commitment by not taking away participation in a school sport as a punishment if the athlete has already begun that sport. Taking away the athlete's participation in a game or practice can send a conflicting message about that athlete's commitment. Athletes should not feel that they have a right to participate on their school team regardless of effort or attitude. Arriving to each practice and game on time is only the first step in what the athlete must give in to merit playing time and representing the school in athletic competitions. Parents can help their athlete see that full effort and a great attitude are key to the sport being a fulfilling experience.

## Letter Jacket Recognition and Requirements

Earning a Varsity letter is a major accomplishment in the world of high school athletics. It is evidence that you have excelled not only on the playing field, court, or track, but also in the classroom. While students must meet the general requirements stated below to earn a Varsity letter, the varsity letter is a recognition award determined by the head coach in conjunction with the Athletic Administration. Those who earn a letter are awarded with a varsity letter (first season only) or a sports specific athletic pin (all subsequent varsity seasons) or special recognition award (fourth year of a varsity sport) at the awards ceremony for each sport that is held at the end of each season.

*General Requirements for varsity awards in all sports.*

- Be a regular member of a varsity team.
- Consistently behave in a manner that has brought honor to the athlete, team, and school.
- Attend all practices, games, meets, or matches unless excused by the coach, parent, or doctor.
- Remain in good athletic and academic standing throughout the entirety of the varsity season.

Injured players may receive a letter award if in the opinion of the head coach he/she would have participated enough if they had not been injured, and also served the team in some capacity while injured.

Team managers can earn a Varsity letter upon completion of their second season serving in that capacity. Additionally, they must also meet the general requirements as stated above.

When an athlete qualifies for a patch or pin, they will be added to the approved list on file with the school's letterman jacket supplier. At that point, athletes will be permitted to order any of the patches or pins they have qualified for up to that point.

## Philosophy of Winning and Participation

*Rosters and Tryouts*

It is the goal of GHNO Athletics to provide as many quality athletic opportunities as possible within our resource constraints (coaches, gym space, funding, etc...). When interest in a sport exceeds roster constraints, tryouts will be necessary. In these cases, tryout information will be published publicly, and multiple coaches will be present during the evaluation process. Final authority for all team rosters lies with the Athletic Director, regardless of whether tryouts were held.

*Roster Size and Playing Time*

The key consideration in determining the size of each team is whether each athlete on that team will receive meaningful coaching and practice time. We want every athlete who makes a team to have a meaningful experience where they have both an opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge of a particular sport and an opportunity to be part of a team that supports each other, grows together, shares in the highs and lows of a given season and has fun. Roster size is not based on ensuring athletes receive "equal" playing



time nor is the roster size based on ensuring that every athlete receives “some” playing time. Generally speaking, playing time is not guaranteed for any athlete and every athlete should be prepared to not play very much during a given season. (See below for grade/team specific focus).

Playing time is a reward earned through effort during practice, commitment to team goals, maintaining a positive attitude, and demonstrating sound ability and skill. While every parent wants to see their child play in a game, what is often overlooked is that for every 1 hour of “game” time there are 4-5 hours of practice time where their child is receiving instruction, enjoying time with their teammates and playing the sport they love. As with other aspects of life, being a meaningful part of a team does not necessarily mean being the person who is “out front” or “on stage.” However, that does not mean that those individuals are not making significant contributions to the overall success of that team as well as experiencing personal growth. Being part of a team, no matter what the role, is a wonderful life lesson that all of our athletes can learn and take with them through their life.

### *Middle School*

Participation in middle school athletics is an introduction to interscholastic sports. Skill development, sportsmanship, and team philosophy are important goals at this level. Coaches will do their best to create playing time for all eligible team members during each regular season contest, but not equally. During any end of season tournament, there is no guarantee of playing time.

### *9<sup>th</sup> Grade and Junior Varsity*

When conditions allow, GHNO will create transition teams between the middle school and varsity competition. While 9<sup>th</sup> Grade is limited to Freshmen students, a JV team can include any high school student. Moreover, athletes could be moved up or down a level depending upon specific team needs and individual performance. The level of intensity at practice as well as in contests will be increased over middle school teams, thus, the commitment and dedication to the team and sport also must increase. The athlete will be given the opportunity to earn playing time through the demonstration of increased skills at practice and dedication to the team. Coaches will attempt to give each eligible team member playing time but playing time will not be equal for each player, and situations will arise when the coach cannot play everyone.

### *Varsity*

Varsity level athletic teams are the focal point of the GHNO athletic program. To be a part of a varsity team is an honor in itself that must be earned. At this level there is no guarantee of playing time in any contest. The nature of the competition will determine who will be on the field, court, track or course.

## Resolving Athletic Issues

If an athlete or parent has a concern to discuss with a coach, the athlete is encouraged to solve his or her own problems first with the coach. Helping young men and women develop interpersonal skills and learn how to deal with situations, teammates and superiors is an important part of a team. If the athlete is unable to resolve the problem, then the parent can

reach out to the coach. Finally, if this contact does not resolve the problem, please reach out to the Athletic Department to discuss the situation.

Two important considerations to please keep in mind:

- 1) As a general rule, neither the coach nor the Athletic Department will discuss an athlete's playing time with a parent. While parents are obviously able to raise this concern, it will most likely be met with a simple "thank you for raising this concern" or "please have your child talk to me if they have questions."
- 2) Do not attempt to confront a coach immediately before or after a contest. These can be emotional times for both the parent and the coach, so a minimum of 24 hours is required to have passed after a contest before a parent can speak with a coach about it.

## Acknowledgement

When a student-athlete tryouts for and/or accepts a position on a team in the GHNO Athletic Department, specifically by signing the team registration document, the athlete and his/her family agrees to abide by the policies and processes laid out in this Athletic Handbook. GHNO Administration is responsible for the interpretation of this document and holds the authority to enforce it in a manner that is deemed best for the long-term success of the athletic department and school as a whole. Prior to formalizing a position on a team, coaches and athletes should bring any questions regarding this Handbook to the attention of the Athletic Director.