

# Our Lady of Grace Athletic Association Student Athlete and Parent Handbook 2024-25



## INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the Our Lady of Grace Catholic School (OLGCS) Our Lady of Grace Athletic Association (OLGAA) we warmly welcome all new and returning athletes to the 2017-2018 OLGAA sports program. The OLGAA looks forward to another successful year of sporting competitions and athletic development.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide expected guidance on behavior and answer many of the questions you may have about the sports program at the Our Lady of Grace Catholic School (OLGCS). We encourage you to read through this handbook even if you are a returning parent. After reading this handbook you will be better equipped to answer your child's questions and there will be fewer misunderstandings about policies and procedures.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the sports program at OLGCS is the high percentage of student participation. It is also one of the most challenging for those who organize the program. The OLGAA sincerely hopes you will become actively involved in your child's athletics and in OLGCS sports. We invite your suggestions and welcome your efforts to improve the program. Thank you for your participation and cooperation, and feel free to contact members of the Executive Committee or OLGAA Board listed on our Blue Sombrero website should you have ideas or concerns. The OLGAA website may be found by navigating to the OLGCS website and selecting Athletics under the Students dropdown.

This handbook is meant to be a guide for all athletes, parents and coaches. Parents are highly encourage to read the OLGAA Bylaws governing the operation of the sports programs and the OLGAA Constitution which sets forth the guiding principals of the OLGAA. Anything not specifically covered in this handbook may be addressed at the discretion of the OLGAA Executive Committee. The Committee reserves the right to amend this handbook at any time deemed necessary.

***Please note: In the event that the policies and/or guidelines outlined in this handbook conflict with the Archdiocese of Cincinnati Charter on Catholic Youth Athletics, the policies of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati shall take precedence.***

## ARTICLE 1: MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The success of OLGAA sports is a shared responsibility. The OLGAA has responsibilities to you and your athlete, while in turn the parents and the athletes have responsibilities to the program.

### **Section 1: OLGAA Responsibilities to Athletes and Parents/Guardians**

1. **Provide Sports Opportunities for Students** – Based on student interest and parent support, a variety of sports and activities are available. Currently, football, basketball, volleyball, track and cross country are offered to the eligible athletes
2. **Provide Sports Programs at a Reasonable Cost** – Each sport is costly to maintain. Uniforms, equipment, referee fees, league fees, facilities and tournament costs add up quickly, and all of these expenses continue to increase yearly. Generally, the registration fees collected from the athlete on a particular team cover league fees and most of the referee fees for the league games/matches. Admission, concession stand profits, spirit wear sales, and fundraisers such as the Night at The Races and Lenten Fish Fries must make up the difference.
3. **Recruit and Train Competent Coaches** –The Sports Coordinator shall be responsible for recruiting, training and retaining all Head Coaches. The Athletic Director has final authority on the approval of all Head Coaches. Head Coaches may then select Assistant Coaches and Parent Volunteers to assist with games and practices provided they meet with the approval of the Sports Coordinator. The Sports Coordinators and the Executive Committee monitor the performance of all Head Coaches. If a parent has a concern regarding a Head Coach's performance or behavior, he or she should follow the Conflict Resolution Procedures.
4. **Provide Safe Athletic Environment** – All Head Coaches, Assistant Coaches and Parent Volunteers, as defined in the Decree on Child Protection, are required to obtain and maintain VIRTUS training and be registered as a volunteer with OLGCS. Additional training programs, as needed, may also be required of Coaches such as concussion training. Coaches are required to follow the Archdiocesan Code of Conduct.
5. **Provide Safe and Quality Equipment** – Access to sporting venues, uniforms, balls, volleyball nets, etc., are provided by the OLGAA. Concerns related to quality of the equipment or safety of the venue should be voiced to the Sports Coordinator immediately.
6. **Provide Strong Organization** –Sports Coordinators and Head Coaches attend league-mandated meetings, the Facility Coordinator juggles dozens of demands to arrange a workable schedule, and the Executive Committee meets monthly, all in an effort to maintain a well-run program. General meetings of the OLGAA are held monthly after the OLGAA Executive Committee meeting. All parents are invited and encouraged to attend the open OLGAA meeting.
7. **Follow Archdiocesan Guidelines on Youth Athletics** - The OLGAA is mandated to follow the current Youth Athletic Charter as published by the Archdiocese of Cincinnati regarding the Safety and Well-Being of Athletes participating in OLGAA Sports.

## **Section 2: Parents' Responsibilities to Athletes and the Sports Program**

1. **Know the Rules of the Sport** – It is important that you as a parent know the rules by which various sports are organized and governed. Specific grade-level & league rules will be covered at the pre-season parents meeting and are available on the league's website.
2. **Respect the Coaches** – Head Coaches, Assistant Coaches and Parent Volunteers are donating their time and have made a commitment to the development of the players and the program. We have carefully selected and developed our volunteers and value their help. Should you, at some point, disagree with the actions of a Head Coach, Assistant Coach or Parent Volunteers, the OLGAA requires you to follow the Conflict Resolution Procedures as noted below.
3. **Conflict Resolution Procedures:**
  - a) All parents, guardians and guests shall be mindful that sports engender strong emotions but that both you and your Coach want what is best for your athlete. At no time will verbal or physical confrontations be acceptable.
  - b) Do not confront the Head Coach, Assistant Coach, and/or Parent Volunteer immediately before, during or after a practice or game.
  - c) Wait twenty-four (24) hours after the point of your initial disagreement to take any action but do not wait more than seven (7) days after the incident to make contact with the Head Coach.
  - d) Do not confront the Head Coach, Assistant Coach, or Parent Volunteer publicly or as part of a larger group.
  - e) Schedule, in advance, with the Head Coach an appropriate time and place to discuss the issue. The Head Coach will notify the Sport Coordinator of the scheduled meeting. Members of the OLGAA Board may elect to attend the meeting.
  - f) If an acceptable understanding is not reached by the parent or guardian and the Head Coach, the Sports Coordinator may elect to resolve the issue or refer the matter to the Athletic Director and the Executive Committee.
  - g) Any recommendation for disciplinary action or change in coaching will be at the sole discretion of the Executive Committee.
  - h) **Inappropriate actions of an athlete, parent, guardian and/or their guests at a practice or contest may result in the temporary or permanent suspension of your athlete from sports activities and/or the parent, guardian or guest being barred from OLGAA sponsored events until the matter is resolved.**
4. **Let the Coaches Coach:** Practices and games are often chaotic and noisy. There is only room for one voice providing coaching guidance during a sporting event or practice. Please do not provide direction to your athlete while practices and events are underway.
5. **Participate when Requested** – All parents are required to volunteer during the season to help with gym & game operations (concessions workers, scoreboard operation, etc), as well as through various fundraising efforts such as the Lenten Fish Fries. All are encouraged to volunteer and/or participate at the Night at the Races. As noted earlier, the sports program cannot function without raising additional money or without volunteer support. If each family does their part, the program will prosper.
6. **Be a positive Role Model** – Children will imitate the level of respect and self-control their parents and coaches demonstrate at athletic events. The job of officiating is the responsibility of the officials and not the spectators. Questioning a call should be left solely to the Head Coach's discretion.

7. Get to Know the Coaches – Please attend all pre-season meetings, attend a practice or two and be a spectator on the field or in the gym during the season. By observing, you can feel certain that the Head Coach’s philosophy, attitudes and knowledge are suitable and meet your expectations.

Communication between Parents and Coaches – Head Coaches are responsible for communicating their game and practice philosophy/expectations, their approach to player discipline, and the location and time of practices and games. Parents are expected to notify the Head Coach of any schedule conflicts, well in advance when possible. Furthermore, any appropriate concerns should be brought to the attention of the coach especially any issues concerning your child’s physical or emotional well-being. Head Coaches also welcome any advice regarding strategies to help your child improve their performance.

### **Section 3: Athletes’ Responsibility to the Sports Program**

1. Attend Practices and Competitions – Practices are essential to the development of an individual athlete and to the cohesiveness of a team, so every effort must be made to attend all practices. In the event of illness or a conflict, the Head Coach should be contacted before the practice. If a game or competition will be missed, the Head Coach should be given as much notice as possible so that lineup changes and adjustments can be made.
2. Respect the Coaches – Head Coaches, Assistant Coaches and Parent Volunteers are due respect and cooperation from student athletes. If an athlete has questions or concerns, he or she should go to the Head Coach directly and privately. Select an appropriate time and place, and go into the meeting with a positive, problem-solving attitude.
3. Represent Our Lady of Grace Positively – Since the only contact some community members may have with OLGCS or the covenant parishes is through athletics, the athletes and their families bear a heavy responsibility to project a good image. The coach and/or the OLGAA Board will deal with conduct or play that fails to reflect the Christian values and sportsmanship that the OLGCS embodies. Students and families may lose the privilege of representing the OLGCS and participating in OLGAA sponsored events.

## ARTICLE II: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What are the Head Coaches' Responsibilities? – All Head Coaches, Assistant Coaches and Parent Volunteers must undergo a background check, attend and pass initial VIRTUS training, maintain their VIRTUS training, and complete any other mandated training as required by the state of Ohio or the Archdiocese of Cincinnati (i.e. Concussion training). All Coaches and Volunteers are also expected to do the following: be a positive role model, act in a professional manner, make use of the practice time; communicate game times and otherwise prepare players for their games; plus, distribute uniforms and equipment, and collect/account for all of them at the end of the season. Coaches and Volunteers are NOT allowed to transport players to/from the games or practices.
2. How are Practice and Game Times Determined? – Gym and field practice time come at a premium. Meeting the needs and requests of the many concurrent teams is difficult. The Coordinator of Facilities does his/her best to accommodate preferences. Game times are determined by each league and can be scheduled any day of the week, depending on facility availability. Furthermore, the scheduling of games and practices follow the guidelines of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati so as not to conflict with Catholic religious practices.
3. How is Playing Time Distributed? – The Head Coach determines playing time under the guidelines and policies set forth by the OLGAA which must also comply with league and Archdiocesan standards.
4. How Important is Regular Attendance? – The ability of a player to compete in any sport is determined by his or her own skills. Individual skills as well as their application to team play can only be developed through repetition during practice sessions and their use in a game. It is expected that all athletes attend all team practices so as to be an integral part of their team and for their own personal sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. Individual coaches have their own rules concerning missed practices or games. Ask your child's coach to explain his or her guidelines.
5. What is Done to Protect Health and Safety? The OLGAA goes to great lengths to provide an organized and safe opportunity for the students to participate in various sports. As a further precaution, parents must fill out medical release forms. Any medical conditions or concerns should be listed on the forms and should be communicated to the coach by the parent. All coaches and coordinators are required to receive mandated safety training set forth by the state of Ohio and the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.
6. What is the Proper Care of uniforms? While OLGAA attempts to maintain a quality looking uniform for the athletes to wear they come at an incredible expense. To help prolong the life of the uniform please wash with a mild detergent, do not use bleach and LINE DRY ONLY (placing uniforms in the dryer destroys the numbers and letters). Uniforms must be returned in the same condition that they were distributed. Damaged or unreturned uniforms will result in a replacement fee being charged &/or student report card being held until returned/paid.

## ARTICLE III: RULES OF CONDUCT

1. Philosophy – The OLGAA would like to make clear to each student athlete, parent and coach the importance of sportsmanlike competition with Catholic values. We here at the OLGAA, OLGCS and Covenant Parishes, want to reinforce to our student athletes’ values such as good sportsmanship, integrity, ethics, self-discipline, mental alertness and Christian principles. To accomplish this goal, we all must adhere to our rules of conduct. Failure to comply can result in disciplinary action including but not limited to, verbal/written warning(s), probation from the program, suspension from the program, removal from the practice/game facility and/or permanent expulsion from the program. Let us all remember that we are here for the greater good of God and to conduct ourselves accordingly.
2. Student Athletes’ Rules of Conduct – Play by the rules and spirit of the game. Be a true team player. Respect your coach and the officials, they have donated their time to teach you about the game and values it deserves. Respect your opponents. Respect the spectators; they are there for your support. Acknowledge good plays or performances by teammates and opponents alike. Do not use any foul or abusive language. Control your temper since fighting and disrespect can impair the game for everyone. And finally, remember that winning is not everything, learning/improving skills, camaraderie, and having fun is important also.
3. Parents’ Rules of Conduct – Always conduct yourself with good sportsmanship since your child learns best by example. Do not place undue expectation on your child, make sure that your child knows that win or lose, you love them and are not disappointed. Making fun of an athlete for committing a mistake is not acceptable behavior. Respect and applaud the coaches, they have donated their time to teach your child the game. Respect the official's decision. Respect the opposing team, without them there would be no game. Do not use foul or abusive language. Do not harass athletes, coaches, officials, or other spectators. Have fun and enjoy watching your child play.
4. Coaches’ Rules of Conduct – Conduct yourself in a professional manner at all times. Be a positive role model. Teach your athletes to play by and respect the rules. Ensure that all athletes get equal instruction and support. Encourage athletes to have self-confidence, self-discipline, and self-control. Ridiculing an athlete for making a mistake or a poor performance is not acceptable behavior. Adhere to policies set forth by the Archdiocese of Cincinnati Decree on Child Protection.

## ARTICLE IV: CLOSING REMARKS

Playing sports and other organized activities is a critical component to a child's development. It is an additional opportunity to develop themselves further outside the classroom or home. The lessons from sports; winning and losing, striving for personal development and learning to deal with others are key emotional skills needed throughout their lifetime. The lessons we learned as children in sports have carried us through our lives to help us develop into the person we are today.

Providing these athletic opportunities to our own children is an inter-generational responsibility. It begins by parents enrolling their athlete early and often into the various programs that are available to them. Through athletic pursuit, your athlete will find and develop their own strengths and minimize their perceived weaknesses. Parents and coaches must nurture this effort at home, in practices and in competition. **The OLGAA exists solely to provide this opportunity for your athlete.** We hope you will value the efforts made on behalf of your athlete and find some way to give back to our organization. We have many opportunities at every level where you can use your innate skills to contribute.

Thank you again for participating in OLGAA sports. We wish you and your athlete a safe and successful season.

# Our Lady of Grace Athletic Association Student Athlete and Parent Handbook Waiver

*Sign, detach and return this page to the appropriate Sports Coordinator.*

I have read and understand the content of the handbook. I will discuss the handbook with my child, so that they also will know what is expected from him/her. I agree to the terms and conditions for participation.

Sport \_\_\_\_\_

Athletes Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Photo and Video Release Waiver

*Sign, detach and return this page to the appropriate Sports Coordinator.*

Photographs and videos may be taken of you and your athlete by OLGAA members or authorized individuals during practices and events and used for promotional reasons (website, flyers, rosters) or entertainment such as the end of the year team videos only.

I grant to OLGAA the right to take photographs of me and my family in connection with the above-identified program. I authorize OLGAA its assigns and transferees to copyright, use and publish the same in print and/or electronically.

I agree that OLGAA may use such photographs of me with or without my name and for any lawful purpose, including for example such purposes as publicity, illustration, and Web content.

I have read and understand the above:

Parent or Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_