

Horizon Christian Academy Athletics

The school where athletics is more than a sport, but a platform to build Christian men and women who will impact the world for Jesus Christ!



Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving (Colossians 3:23-24).

Athletes & Parents

PURPOSE OF THE HANDBOOK

In order to achieve excellence in our athletic program, policies and regulations have been established. In this handbook, the Athletic Department has defined these policies and the principles upon which they are based as a reference and resource for those involved in HCA athletics. All of you who contribute time, dedication, commitment, enthusiasm, and support to the athletic program, know that you are greatly appreciated and those of us involved in the athletic department thank you.

HCA offers a range of athletic opportunities. The athletic program encompasses middle school, junior varsity, and varsity teams. Ideally, middle school teams include grades 6 through 8, junior varsity includes grades 9 through 10 and varsity teams include grades 9 – 12. *Sixth grade students are eligible to play on the JV squad when the need arises.

HCA is a member of the Independent Christian Schools of GA and AL Athletic Association (ICSGA) and North Atlanta Metro League (NAML).

MISSION STATEMENT OF ATHLETICS

The mission of the HCA Athletics is to use athletic competition to train young people how to more faithfully reflect their Creator by instilling within each athlete Christ-like character within the context of community.

PHILOSOPHY OF CHRISTIAN ATHLETICS

Competitive sports play a substantial role in our culture today, and we in Christian education must know and understand their redemptive value. To compete means, “To strive in opposition.” By definition it requires a desire and an effort to win, without which there would be no competition. Therefore, the HCA athlete unapologetically has the intent to win. While this must be the competitor’s intent, the Christian athlete must have a higher purpose in competing.

Athletics have been called a microcosm of life, and as such they become an invaluable window to the soul. Playing games is physical, emotional, and spiritual – all at once – and consequently provides experiences that mirror life itself with its struggles, battles, disciplines, rewards, successes, failures, disappointments, and challenges. Seeing athletics in this light brings out its purpose and value, perhaps more so for the Christian than for anyone else. Scripture frequently makes allusions to life experiences, like that of athletes or soldiers, in order to teach us how to live. It calls us to follow Christ our Leader in His certain triumph over the prince of this world: the one who continually challenges us to exalt ourselves instead of Christ.

Ultimately, then, everyone competes athletically for one of two reasons: to exalt God or to exalt themselves. In choosing the former, HCA has purposed to reflect our Creator. The HCA competitor strives to win while striving to assimilate and express *His* qualities, most broadly His excellence and joy, and more particularly the attributes seen in Christ: humility, courage, determination, endurance, love, etc. To pursue athletics in this way is to make it a veritable practice field and testing ground for the growth and establishment of God’s character in us and in our children.

The Team Goal

God has called us to be His children. Therefore, we are able to enjoy Him and through the power of the Holy Spirit be shaped into the image of Jesus. Athletic competition is a sanctifying tool by which sport can be used as a teaching arena for character growth. Enjoying God's gift to us through sport is a tremendous privilege and to be able to learn about oneself through such an arena is wonderful.

Spiritual Goals

- **Athletes should model a respect for authority** – Players need to respect coaches, the opposing team, and officials.
- **Promote the TEAM concept** – Learning to put aside individual desires and goals for the good of the team is a selfless character trait that should be developed.
- **Develop Christ-like character qualities** – The true character of an individual will come to the surface during the heat of competition. These experiences provide valuable lessons to be learned and adjustments to be made.

Middle School Athletic Philosophy

The middle school athletic program attempts to meet the needs of the unique and fast changing emotional, physical and mental stages of the 11 to 13 year old. The primary goals of the middle school coach should be:

1. **Participation.** Our desire is to involve as many of our students as possible into the sports program. More players are carried on the middle school team than at any other level. Limitations will be confined to the availability of uniforms and the ability to adequately instruct and conduct practice in the time allotted.
2. **Positive Attitudes.** The goal is to teach Christian character, sportsmanship, team effort and enthusiasm. In the big picture of life, these will be more important than mastering physical skills.
3. **Involvement.** Taking into consideration the self esteem of the middle school athlete and the importance of playing time during this phase of development, every effort will be made to involve the athlete in as much playing time as possible. Less talented players will be utilized early in the game as well as when there is a decisive lead or an inevitable loss.
4. **Practice Times.** At this level, athletes have energy to burn; however coaches need to allow for the adjustment to new academic requirements and time needed in the evening to respond to the demands of middle school homework. The intensity and duration of the practice must be less than that of the varsity or junior varsity programs. "Days off" will be built into the practice schedule.

Note: *Seventh & eighth grade athletes are eligible for play at the junior varsity or varsity levels. The "playing up" of an eighth grade athlete is a decision that will be made after meeting with the athletic director and coaches involved, as well as the parent and athlete. The athletic director will make the final decision. Athletes who play up are not eligible to letter until they enter high school.*

Junior Varsity Coaching Philosophy

In addition to the central and primary goal of developing Christ like character, attitude and behavior in each athlete, the junior varsity program seeks to develop individual skills and team play. Practice time is longer than middle school practices because the athletes can sustain their attention longer and are physically stronger.

The more a player is given the opportunity to participate in the athletic contest, the more valuable experience he will gain. The development of both the individual and the team are especially important. Development through competition is the priority. When comparing the total program of a sport, the number of players selected to the junior varsity team should be less than the middle school team but at least equal to the varsity team.

Varsity Coaching Philosophy

In addition to the primary goal of developing Christ like character, attitude and behavior in each athlete, the varsity program seeks to refine the players' athletic skills. The further purposes of the varsity program will be to mold the best possible team for the purpose of competition and to teach the importance of understanding and performing the roles given to each member for the good of the entire team and the glory of God.

At this level, team performance and team goals are more important than at the previous levels. Each member is expected to contribute to the development of the team and the team learns that to be strong, each member and his contribution is vital. Although each individual is equally important, his contribution and role is different from others on the team. At this level HCA believes in fielding the best team possible, which means the best will play the most.

ATHLETIC AWARDS AND LETTERING

Do you know that in a race all runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 1 Corinthians 9:24

Horizon Christian Academy Athletic Department sets high standards for athletic achievements. We realize that not everyone competing on a team will achieve those standards, but everyone should strive to obtain them. Work ethic should not falter through defeat. Fight the good fight as you press toward the mark.

Not all athletes who are a part of a team will letter. Certain criteria must be met in order to receive an HCA letter.

Criteria for Lettering

Athletes must be enrolled in grades 9-12.

- Volleyball - participated in 50% of all games (not matches)
- Soccer - participated in 50% of total halves
- Baseball - participated in an average of 3 innings per game

- Basketball - participated in an average of 2 quarters per game
- Cheerleading - actively participates in required games and competitions
- Football - Securing a position on the team, along with attending all practices and meetings, and participating in an equivalent of 4 quarters.
- Cross-Country - participated in 50% of all meets
- Golf - participated in 50% of all matches
- Tennis - participated in 50% of all matches & attends all scheduled practices
- Managers - faithfully completing all tasks assigned, and attending all required practices and games

** The Athletic Director will make the final approval for all lettering student athletes in the case of unusual circumstances.*

Varsity athletes

A varsity athlete who letters for the first time in a varsity sport will receive the HCA letter with the appropriate sport pin and letter certificate. Lettering in subsequent years will result in the athlete receiving letter certificate, sport pins, and/or service bars. Only one HCA letter is awarded an athlete regardless of the number of sports or years he/she letters. Once a letter is earned each additional letter will receive a chevron.

If an athlete has the unique distinction of lettering all four years in the same varsity sport, they will receive a four-year letter award plaque for their accomplishments.

Special Recognition Awards

Each varsity sport can recognize their outstanding athletes with a maximum of five special awards. One of which must be the Christian Character award. Teams with 9 or less will recognize their outstanding athletes with a maximum of 4 special awards. One of which must be the Christian Character Award.

Junior varsity and middle school teams will recognize their outstanding athletes with three special awards, one being Christian character, and the other two selected from the categories listed below.

- **Most Outstanding** – This player represents character and exceptional ability both offensively and defensively. This athlete is the total package mentally, spiritually and in athletic ability.
- **Most Valuable Award** – Every team has that one player who, due to their innate ability, stands out during the course of the season. It is that one player that makes other players around play harder and can be counted on to deliver in pressure situations. This award can be split into MVP Offense/MVP Defense. For sports where offense and defense is not applicable, the head coach will hand out this award according to his or her discretion.
- **Coach's Award** – Given to the player who identifies what every coach longs for in each player. While not necessarily the best player on the floor, this athlete is characterized by hard work, a respect for authority, leadership ability and team spirit. This player also models Christ in his behavior on and off the field.
- **Most Improved Award** – This award is given to the athlete who, through hard work and perseverance, raised their level of play during the course of the season.
- **Christian Character Award** – This award is given to the athlete who exemplifies a strong spiritual walk and the fleshing out of their faith.

The athletic department also recognizes **varsity athletes** who, in their sacrifice of time, energy and love for the Lord, excel far beyond their team accomplishments.

- **Three Sports Award** – It is certainly fulfilling for an athlete to have received a letter in a varsity sport, but to achieve that mark of excellence in three consecutive seasons is an accomplishment few athletes can achieve.
- **Four Year Letter Award** – The Lord has truly blessed these athletes who, few in number, have persevered for four years in same sport, having the gifted ability to continually letter while progressing through their stages of skill development.
- **Scholar Athlete Award** – Presented to a female and male junior or senior athlete who has achieved the highest grade point average while lettering in two or more varsity sports.
- **Christian Character Award** – This award is given to the athlete who exemplifies a strong spiritual walk and the fleshing out of their faith.

The Warrior Award

The *Warrior Award* is HCA's most prestigious athletic award which is given to one male and female athlete who excels in the areas of spiritual maturity, leadership, sportsmanship, athleticism, and exemplifies the mission of HCA Athletics. This prestigious award will be given at the end of the year HCA award ceremony.

All Sports Awards Program

The athletic department honors the accomplishments of the athletes with an awards program.

Game day attire is the expected attire for all programs.

Please note that *all* athletes are required to attend their respective programs. If the athlete receives recognition in both programs, they must attend both. Excused absences are permissible provided the excuse is in writing, signed by the parent and presented to the coach or athletic director approximately one week before the program. Any athlete who fails to attend will forfeit their certificates and or awards, unless their excuse is on file prior to the program.

BOOSTER CLUB

Horizon Christian Academy has a Booster Club to assist with the needs of HCA sports. The following guidelines govern the Booster Club.

- A. Funds are generally raised through yearly fees, donations, gates, concessions, spirit wear, and various fundraisers.
- B. Booster Club membership and participation is recommended for all families and individuals.
- C. Parents are **required** to work the gate or concession stand 2 times during the season for each sport a student is listed on the roster, or donate an additional \$50 per student to the Booster Club.
- D. Students **must** participate in the fundraiser(s) for his/her team and Booster Club

CONTESTS

School Attendance and Class Work

Athletes are required to be in attendance for three full class periods on the day of their game or contest.

Athletes must meet the stated attendance requirements for practice unless they have an excused absence.

Athletes are responsible for all work missed and homework assignments issued. Their responsibility is to see their teacher and have all work ready to turn in at their next scheduled class meeting.

Athletes who are frequently late to their first class the day following a game or contest will jeopardize his or her privilege to be a member of their team.

Physical Education Classes on Game Days

Athletes are required to dress out and participate on game days.

Cancellation of Practice or Contests

If there is a cancellation of a game or practice due to weather conditions, the athletic office will make a general announcement to all athletes.

***Parent Notification:* Parents of athletes will be notified of cancellations or rescheduling ASAP. Unless in extreme circumstances, practices will not be cancelled the “day of.”**

Rescheduling of Contests

Parents will be notified when contests have been rescheduled.

Dismissal from School for Athletic Contests

The athletic director will determine what time each team will depart for an away contest.

Game Day Attire

Game attire for home and away games for girls is khaki pants and a white short-sleeve, a 3/4 sleeve, or a long-sleeve oxford HCA logo shirt. Boys must wear khaki pants, a short-sleeve or long-sleeve HCA logo oxford shirt and a tie which must be purchased through HCA.

FINANCIAL

Booster Club

Participation in the Booster Club is recommended for every family of an HCA athlete. This participation, along with the payment of the sports fee is critical to the continued success of HCA athletics.

Sports Fee

In order for the athletic program to be fully funded each sport will exercise a fee. If this fee presents a hardship for a family, please speak with the athletic director. The sports fee *partially* covers:

1. Coach Stipends
2. Expense of officials

3. Entry fees
4. Transportation
5. Equipment
6. Uniforms
7. Field rental

Dues Dates

Payment must be received no later than at the issuing of the uniforms. Unless payment arrangements have been made with the Athletic Director, failure to pay will forfeit the issuing of the uniform.

**All checks payable to HCA - Memo: Name of the sport and athlete's name.*

GENERAL ATHLETIC POLICIES

Conduct of an Athlete

Student athletes are to be positive role models for peers and younger students. Our athletes represent HCA to the community and must have a positive testimony at all times. Conduct guidelines are as follows:

- A. No use of drugs, alcohol, or tobacco at any time (365 days a year).
- B. Any improper or questionable language will not be permitted. Improper language includes profanity, boasting, and disrespect to officials, other players, or coaches. Language should be conducive to "building up" rather than "tearing down." An athlete's performance and sportsmanship should be above reproach.
 - A violation of guidelines A or B may result in game suspension or expulsion from the team and/or school.
- C. In general, athletes are to be familiar with the rules of the school as well as the dress code policy and adhere to them with a spirit of cooperation and personal responsibility.

General Eligibility

Any student is eligible:

1. Who is a regular student taking four or more units in grades 9-12. Students must pass five units to be eligible for the following semester. Passing only four units will not allow the student to be eligible the following semester.
2. The eight semester rule begins in ninth grade. This means the student must complete eligibility within eight consecutive semesters from the date of entrance into the ninth grade. Under the eight semester rule, students are eligible to participate in all athletic events. Eighth graders who participate on a varsity level shall meet the eligibility requirements of the ICSGA. Eligibility in the eighth grade will be for one year only. Eighth grade repeaters who take more than half of their academic subjects on the ninth grade level are considered to be ninth graders for eligibility purposes.
3. All new or returning students must be in school at least thirty calendar days prior to the State Play-Offs in the activity in which the student might compete to be eligible.
4. The desire of the HCA athletic department is to correct academic failures prior to the end of the semester. Therefore, any athlete may be pulled from competition if they have two or more failing grades and will remain inactive until that grade reaches a passing status. Students will

only be pulled from competition after consultation between the parents, upper school principal and the athletic director.

Additional policies regarding eligibility are as follows:

- During periods of ineligibility an athlete may not ride the team bus, participate in the contest, sit on the bench or appear in uniform for any contest in which the team is participating.
- An athlete who has been dropped from the team because of grades will forfeit his/her letter and/or awards and will not be recognized with his/her team at the awards program.
- An athlete has four consecutive years to complete his/her eligibility from the time he/she enters the 9th grade.
- An athlete, who has attained his/her 19th birthday prior to May 1, proceeding the school year of participation will become ineligible for further competition.
- An eighth-grade athlete is eligible to play on a varsity sport without forfeiting the four-year eligibility rule providing he/she meets all other requirements for eligibility.

College Eligibility

Any athlete who is seriously considering participation at the college level should file with the NCAA Clearinghouse in May of his/her junior year. Forms will be available in the Athletic Director's Office. Any cost associated with this filing is incurred by the athlete.

Scholarships

No scholarships are given solely for athletic purposes at HCA.

Physicals

All students must have a valid sports physical form on file before they can try out for any sport. The completed and physician signed sports physical form then must be submitted to the AD assistant at the front desk. Students without a sports physical on file will not be eligible to try out for any sport. Sport physical forms can be accessed on the school's website. Physical forms must be signed by both the doctor and parent in order for them to be considered valid.

Insurance

The school's insurance is a secondary insurance policy. The policy provides for excess coverage for any "out of pocket expenses" incurred after family or employer group insurance has paid their maximum.

Sportsmanship

Both the athlete and the fans represent HCA to our community and should always conduct themselves in a commendable manner.

Sportsmanship guidelines are as follows:

- A. Athletes are not to cheat or play unfairly in any way.
- B. Both athletes and fans should accept the decisions of officials and coaches without dispute.
- C. Both athletes and fans should recognize and show appreciation of fine play and good sportsmanship on the part of the opponent.
- D. Any spectator or athlete who continually demonstrates poor sportsmanship may be excused from the athletic program and/or the particular event.

MANAGERS

Managers for each team will be selected by the respective head coach. Managers will be gender specific to the sport. Eligibility requirements are the same as athletes.

PARENTS

Preseason Parent/Athlete Team Meeting

One parent from every athlete's family must attend a mandatory parent/athlete team meeting prior to the start of the season.

Team meeting information will include:

- General athletic policies, game schedule, practice calendar, specific team policies, dismissal times for games, game day attire for the season, directions to away games, roster with phone numbers

Team Pictures

Team pictures will be taken as early into the season as possible for purchase, posting on the web site, and for yearbook publication.

PRACTICE

Practice on Wednesday/ Sunday

Due to the necessity of game-planning with a full squad, Wednesday practice will be conducted at the coaches' discretion but must be concluded by 5:30 PM.

Sunday practice may be permitted in extenuating circumstances.

Team Attendance

An athlete makes a commitment to the team when he/she joins the team and is responsible to fulfill this commitment by being at all required team practices and contest. The athlete must communicate with the coach as early as possible when an absence is anticipated or a problem arises.

Some things such as illness (absence from school), doctor's appointment, or a death in the family will be considered an excused absence. Family vacations, church functions, trips, outings may possibly be excused with prior notification to the coach.

The following are further guidelines in establishing team absent policies:

- Prior notification to a coach concerning an anticipated absence *does not* automatically guarantee that the absence will be considered excused.
- An *unexcused* absence from a *practice* may result in the athlete sitting out the next contest. A second offense may result being dismissed from the team or placed on probation status.
- An *unexcused* absence from a *contest* will result in the athlete sitting out the next contest. An *unexcused absence* from a contest could also result in the athlete's dismissal from the team.

- Arriving late to practice may result in the athlete not starting the next contest or having reduced playing time.
- Conflicts in school-scheduled events will be resolved between the school sponsor and coach.
- Concerning family vacations: The school, coach and parent should work together to resolve any conflicts. If there are scheduled contests during school days or on Saturdays, the athletes are expected to attend. If the contests are scheduled over a vacation period, the athletes are expected to attend if they are in town.
- Rescheduled practices and contests inevitably may result in family/team scheduling conflicts. These absences should **not** be treated the same as for regularly scheduled events.

Quitting a Team

"When the going gets tough, the tough get going." The Lord Jesus Christ should be our role model in applying the above quote to our understanding of the importance of not quitting. The apostle Paul is also a good example of how one should never give up until it's over. (*II Tim. 4:7-8*) The athlete should count the cost and then if competing, compete with all their heart striving for the prize. (*I Cor. 9:24-27; Phil. 3:14*)

Quitting is detrimental to the individual as well as the team. Serious consideration should be given and the inclusive opinions of parents, coach and athlete should always take place before a final decision.

Quitting a team following the first game may result in the forfeiture of participation in the next season's sport.

TRAVEL

Transportation To/From Games

Rules:

1. Food and/or drinks are allowed on the school vehicles.
2. Upon arriving back at school, the vehicles must be cleaned and all trash picked up. Close all windows. Coaches must do the inspection, not the manager.
3. DVD's and choice of music should reflect HCA's mission.
4. Only authorized personnel are allowed on the bus. Typically, fans, relatives or friends of players, are not allowed. Parents of players may ride with the coach's permission provided space is available.

**Indicates that this rule applies to any vehicle providing transportation to/from a contest for athletes.*

Music

All music played during the locker room, warm-ups, pep rallies, routines and all other events must be approved by the athletic director.

UNIFORMS/EQUIPMENT

Uniforms **MUST BE AIR DRIED** and not placed in a dryer. Under no circumstances can uniforms be swapped between players. Uniforms will be assigned and turned in to the athletic department during the scheduled times which will be set by HCA Athletics.