



Southern Maryland Christian Academy
Athletic Handbook
A Guide for Athletes and Parents

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A. Introduction

This handbook has been prepared to provide a guideline for the policies, procedures, and regulations governing the interscholastic athletic program at Southern Maryland Christian Academy. Metro Independent School Athletic League (MISAL) and Maryland Public Secondary School Athletic Association (MPSSAA) policies and procedures are included in separate publications. Principals, the athletic director and coaches are reminded that SMCA regulations are in some cases more restrictive than MISAL or MPSSAA regulations. It is important to remember that some situations may require interpretation. Please contact SMCA's Athletic Director when questions arise.

II. Philosophy

Athletics at SMCA are an integral part of the entire school structure. SMCA's athletic program should never be thought of as separate from, above, or beneath the normal operation of our school. The athletic programs should comply with and reinforce the school's overall vision and mission statements. Our student athletes, support staff and coaches work together to create a positive environment designed to foster good sportsmanship and the development of godly character. SMCA's highest goal is to bring everything, whether academics or athletics, under the lordship of Jesus Christ by encouraging the emotional, physical, and spiritual growth and development of all participants through their athletic experiences.

SMCA's athletic program offers middle and high school students the chance to participate in a variety of highly competitive interscholastic sports. Done properly, sports can be a positive learning experience. The athletes learn to improve their physical fitness as they refine their skills. Membership on an SMCA team is a privilege and the athlete will learn their responsibilities to each other, the coach, their parents and friends, their school, and their opponents. Important life lessons will be taught through team sports at SMCA. Placing other's goals ahead of personal ones, learning how to personally contribute to team, and learning how to control emotions and actions in a Christ-like manner are all attributes cultivated from participating in team sports at our school. While being highly competitive, the athlete will be taught how to remain courteous, thoughtful, kind and generous to display good sportsmanship. The athlete will learn the benefits of self-discipline and hard work to realize a positive outcome in the sports arena. SMCA athletics teaches team members how to both win and lose with grace and dignity.

Developing Christian values in our youth and coaches is a high priority at SMCA. SMCA athletics will help participants develop many worthwhile traits such as: developing self-respect, self-discipline, character, leadership skills, and decision-making skills. We believe that it is an honor and privilege to represent Southern Maryland Christian Academy as an athlete and with this privilege goes the responsibility to behave within the rules of the SMCA Athletic Policies.

SMCA's Student Handbook is the fundamental policy that sets the expectations for all athletes (SMCA students and homeschool participants) to abide by while representing SMCA athletics. If the handbooks differ in any way, SMCA's Student Handbook is the final say.

Mission and Vision

Mission

The mission of Southern Maryland Christian Academy is to create a nurturing environment that inspires personal academic excellence and the development of a lifelong commitment to the Lordship of Christ.

Vision

Southern Maryland Christian Academy's vision is to be a school of dedicated Christians in a family environment sparking excitement about Jesus Christ and motivating students to grow spiritually, academically, physically and socially.

III. Nondiscrimination Policy

The Southern Maryland Christian Academy admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, athletics or other school-administered programs.

General Information

I. Schedules and Directions to Sports Facilities

All SMCA athletic schedules are accessible on the school website, www.somdchristianacademy.com; click on "Athletics", then on "Athletic Calendar". Directions to game fields may also be found on the Athletic Calendar.

II. Eligibility

A. Age

For a High School student to be eligible to participate in sports activities in grades 9-12, he/she must not have reached his/her 19th birthday before August 31st immediately preceding the school year. If participating in Middle School, he/she must not have reached 15th birthday before August 31st immediately preceding the school year.

B. Grades

For a student to be eligible to participate in sports activities, the student must maintain a cumulative average of C- or better in all subjects with a grade of F in no more than one subject. These averages will be checked at progress report and report card issuance. There will be no averaging of grades between intervals for students to be able to play in athletic competitions (games, meets, match, event). Practice attendance will not be affected by grades.

C. Forms

The following forms must be completed and/or acknowledged prior to the athlete participating in any conditioning session, practice, tryout, or game. Please refer to ArbiterSports.com for these forms and documents.

1. An updated (yearly) Athletic Physical must be completed and signed by the parent and the athlete's physician.
 - a. An athlete who has been withheld from practice or competition by a health care professional may not participate in a contest or practice until permission to resume the activity is received in writing from a doctor.
2. A Parental Permission/Consent must be completed, dated and signed by at least one parent or legal guardian in order for the athlete to begin participating and travelling with the team. This is completed through Arbiter Sports registration for each sport being played.
3. An Acknowledgement of Rules Statement must be signed and dated by the student athlete. All applicable rules may be found in this Athletic Handbook and SMCA Student Handbook. This is completed through Arbiter Sports registration for each sport being played.

D. Concussion, Sudden Cardiac Arrest and Heat Acclimatization information (see section XIV)

E. Participation and uniform fees – each sport will have participation, transportation, and uniform fees that must be paid at the beginning of each season. Fees are for high school varsity and middle school sports. Fees must be paid prior to issuance of uniforms (which means before first contest). School owned uniforms are to be worn for games **only**; they are to be cared for properly, cleaned according to instructions, and returned at the end of the season. If a uniform is lost or not returned, damaged or severely stained, or not repairable, then the athlete will be charged for replacement.

F. Attendance – the student athlete must be in attendance at least 3.5 hours of the day (until team's dismissal time) in order to participate that day (game or practice). Also, the student athlete should be in attendance the entire day following a contest in order to participate in the next contest. Exceptions **may** be granted for the following:

1. An absence that has been prearranged with the Dean of Student Affairs and the Athletic Director.
2. A family or personal emergency, or other unforeseen circumstance as determined by the Dean of Student Affairs and the Athletic Director.

G. A student athlete in suspension (in school or out of school) will not be permitted to participate or travel with his/her team during the period of the suspension.

H. The athlete must be free from misconduct that might cause ineligibility (see Student Handbook).

****Parents**, while SMCA supports you with whatever discipline that you find necessary at home, please do not withhold the athlete from practices and/or games if they are academically and otherwise eligible per SMCA's Athletic Handbook. Essentially this punishes the entire team instead of just the individual athlete.

III. Participation Commitment

Athletes that have made a commitment to a team and have fulfilled all eligibility requirements (A – I above) are expected to fulfill their commitment to all practices and contests throughout the sport season. Athletes are not able to miss practices for work, clubs, or other extracurricular activities without the prior permission from the coach. Attendance at practice sessions, contests, and required team functions is mandatory. The coach and/or the Athletic Director will provide practice schedules for planning purposes.

In the event that two legitimate school events coincide (i.e. play production and game), the parents of the athlete/performer involved will communicate with all parties (coach, drama director etc.) to decide which event(s) will be attended. Please alert the coach as soon as possible for planning purposes.

Unexcused absences will be dealt with as follows:

First and second absence for the athlete may result in discipline to be determined by the coach.

Third and fourth absence for the athlete may result in a one game suspension for each.

Fifth absence for the athlete may result in his/her removal from the team, forfeiting any team recognition or awards. Such a dismissal will be handled in a manner similar to the athlete quitting a sport.

Quitting a team should not be a common occurrence; it is harmful to both the individual and the team. Any athlete who quits during the season without cause will be ineligible to participate in the next season. Prior to participation in the next season he/she would be eligible, there will be a conference with the athlete, parents, head coach, and Athletic Director to make sure the athlete understands the obligation to fulfill his/her commitment to the team.

IV. Missing Classes For Athletics

Any team member that misses a class because a team is dismissed early is responsible for all work missed. The athlete should get all assignments and take all tests prior to missing class.

When it is necessary for a class to be missed for any school-approved activities, the following procedures apply:

- A. Students will be marked present in the homeroom while participating in approved school related activities.
- B. The teacher's attendance list should reflect the student as having an excused absence for class periods missed.
- C. The student bears sole responsibility for getting assignments in advance and making up any work that is missed. This may include making up quizzes, tests, getting homework and class work assignments, getting notes, etc. All tests and quizzes must be taken in advance (or made up in the following class period with advanced teacher permission.)

V. Communication Practices

A. General Communication Practice – all formal communication must be through official SMCA email addresses.

- 1. Email your coach/assistant coach using their official SMCAEMAIL address.
- 2. Texting a coach may be allowed if the athlete's parent is included in the text or if the text includes the entire team in a group text. One on one texting, except in emergency situations, should not take place.

B. Communication Regarding Conflict/Concern Resolution - SMCA's goals and objectives regarding the athletic program, eligibility rules, and expectation of our athletes is of utmost importance. Should you have a concern during the athletic season, use the following procedure:

- 1. An athlete should speak to his/her coach directly.
- 2. The parent may contact the coach if more information is needed. Please wait 24 hours after the contest before making this contact to allow emotions to settle.
- 3. The athlete and/or parent may contact the Athletic Director if the issue is not settled by steps 1 or 2.
- 4. The athlete and/or parent may contact via written communication to the SMCA Director if the issue is not settled by step 3.
- 5. The athlete and/or parent may contact the School Board via written communication if the issue is not settled by step 4.

VI. Spectator's Role and Parent Coaching

Anyone attending SMCA games, whether home or away, will be expected to keep the school's exemplary standard for sportsmanship. SMCA's coaches are appointed to direct all athletic competitions. There will not be any sideline agent, friend, family or parent coaching permitted. One who does not follow this rule may be asked to leave the competition as it is confusing to the athlete. The coach(es) must be trusted to make

appropriate decisions for their team. A mutual respect, trust, and encouragement among parents, players and coaches will result in a high-quality athletic program at SMCA. It is expected that all spectators, athletes and coaches will bring honor to God at all times.

VII. Transportation

SMCA will provide necessary transportation to and from all away games for **team members only**. An SMCA coach or employee will be present in each school vehicle. All members of an athletic team must travel to and from all practices, games and contests on SMCA vans and/or buses.

The following exceptions may apply:

1. If an athlete must drive himself/herself to an away game or off campus practice. This will only be allowed on occasion, with prior permission from the Athletic Director and coach, and with written permission from a parent/legal guardian. No athlete may ride with another student athlete to or from any athletic event.
 2. A parent or other family member (grandparent, sibling etc.) wishes to take their child home from an event; the parent/legal guardian must personally make **prior** written arrangements with the coach. The parent or guardian must sign out the athlete on the Travel Log form provided by the coach.
- A. Parents are expected to provide transportation for their student immediately following practices and games. Any student that is not picked up on time may be suspended or dismissed from the team or charged an emergency drop-in fee for Extended Care.
 - B. Athletes are expected to respect all SMCA vans and buses. No eating or drinking is permitted in SMCA vehicles. All trash must be collected and disposed in a trash can at the end of the ride.
 - C. The vehicle radio must play Christian music only.
 - D. Students are not allowed to drive any SMCA vehicles.
 - E. Females should ride in a separate vehicle from males and vice versa. In some cases, it may become necessary to transport both males and females in one vehicle. If this occurs, females must not sit next to males (unless they are relatives) and vice versa. On a bus, females and males will sit on opposite sides of the aisle.
 - F. Athletes are expected to conduct themselves in an orderly manner at all times. These expectations include:
 1. Conversations in normal tones. No yelling.
 2. No standing while vehicle is in motion. Remain in your seat.
 3. Keep hands inside windows.
 4. Conversation and singing music that is God-honoring and without foul or offensive language and inappropriate innuendos.
 5. Be courteous and obey the coach and driver at all times.
 6. No horseplay.
 7. Changing of clothes in the vehicle is not permitted.
 8. Personal radios must be used with earphones.

9. No throwing any object (trash etc.) from the bus or within the bus.
10. Emergency windows and doors are to be used only in case of emergencies.

VIII. Uniforms

SMCA will issue all uniforms for each sport. Uniforms are to be worn for contests only; they are not to be worn for practices or in Physical Education classes. They may on occasion be worn in school to promote school spirit. There may be other items that will need to be purchased by the parent (cleats, goalie gloves, shin guards, etc.). School-owned uniforms must be gently worn, properly cared for, washed and returned at the end of the season. They will be inspected by the Athletic Director, and a fee may be assessed if a returned uniform is in disrepair or lost. Awards, honors, recognition and report cards may be withheld until uniforms and/or fees are given to the Athletic Director.

For complete grooming standards, please refer to the SMCA Student Handbook, which can be found on the school's website www.somdchristianacademy.com.

All athletes and coaches represent SMCA on and off campus at all times. In the absence of school issued practice uniforms, properly fitted, full t-shirts and bottoms must be worn by both females and males during practices, meets, competitions and games. Tank tops, cut off shirts or mesh/see-through shirts will not be permitted. No clothing or head covering will be permitted with offensive language, inappropriate logos, or drug and alcohol innuendos.

In order to promote school spirit, Varsity teams may decide to wear dress clothes on game days. If this decision is made by the coach, all members of that team must participate. In terms of clothing, this means for guys dress slacks, dress shirts (tucked in), ties, and dress shoes (no athletic shoes or boots); sweaters, sport jackets, or suits would also be acceptable but not necessarily mandatory. For girls, this would mean dresses, skirts with blouses, or dress slacks with blouses, and dress shoes. These requirements will be in place from the time athletes arrive on campus until they depart or change for their game.

IX. Wednesday Church Nights

Wednesday night at Fellowship Church is church night. There are adult, teen and children groups meeting. Generally, practices will not exist on Wednesdays, except for varsity teams, and those sessions will end by 5:00 pm, or not begin until after 7:30 pm so as to not conflict with church activities. Occasionally, an event or game may be scheduled on a Wednesday night due to league conflicts or inclement weather. These types of events will be kept at a minimum.

X. Pep Rally, Family Fun Night and Homecoming Banquet

Each year, our athletes are given special recognition at various events.

It is expected for all high school fall sports participants and coaches to attend the Homecoming Banquet. This is a semi-formal event. All events place our athletes in the spotlight for their hard work. Attendance includes home school athletes who participate in SMCA sports.

XI. Playing Time Distribution

Middle School: Middle school athletics are, by nature, developmental. All eligible athletes will be given the opportunity to play in every game. Distribution of minutes played is entirely up to the coach.

Varsity and Junior Varsity: Athletics at this level is competitive. Therefore, playing time is not guaranteed to all athletes at every game. Coaches will attempt to give all eligible athletes an opportunity to play and improve throughout the season, but he/she must have the freedom to make decisions to create team success.

XII. Cell Phone and Social Media Use

- A. Social phone calls and texting between coaches and athletes is not permitted. For the protection of the coach, limit communication via phone, email, or text for athletic purposes (group motivational messages for example), and emergency purposes only.
- B. Social media used to promote positive communication about SMCA athletics and athletes is permitted. Athletes are not be permitted to use social media in a negative way (comments directed toward an individual, team or school that is interpreted as unsportsmanlike, threatening or hurtful to said individual, team, or school). Such negative actions may have disciplinary consequences.

XIII. Awards and Special Recognition

At the conclusion of each season, there will be an awards event held to honor the athletes that have participated. All athletes (home school athletes and student athletes) are expected to attend, and will receive recognition for their effort and commitment.

At the discretion of the Athletic Director, additional special awards (trophies etc.) may be given when teams or individuals show exemplary effort and/or faithfulness. Special awards given for outstanding achievements during the season may be awarded.

Most Improved Player – this is for the athlete who took everything that was taught and to the best of his/her ability applied it to his/her game, daily striving to be the best player possible.

Christian Character Award – for the athlete who exemplifies the best Christian attitude toward his own performance, toward officials, toward teammates, and toward opponents; the player who consistently puts others ahead of him/herself, and has a servants heart.

Mustang Award – similar to the most valuable player, this award goes farther; it is the player the team could least afford to do without in terms of ability, effort, coach-ability, example, and all-around play within the team concept.

Team managers and statisticians may also be recognized if they have faithfully done all the tasks required of them by the coach.

At the discretion of the Athletic Director, additional special awards may be given when sports teams or individual athletes show exemplary effort at league, county or state levels.

XIV. Medical Events and Injuries Information

A. General Information

All student athletes who experience a medical event or injury should report the incident to their coach immediately. The parent or legal guardian should be notified by the athlete, if possible, and the coach when necessary.

1. Athletes should train and condition off-season and pre-season to prevent injuries. Athletes are encouraged to attend pre-season sports camps prior to the beginning of the season.

2. Athletes shall communicate all medical issues and symptoms as they arise to their coach. Parents will be made aware that a medical event or injury has occurred.

3. Athletes shall obey their coach's safety directions regarding weather conditions. * Taking shelter indoors during electrical storms

* Drinking adequate fluids pre-practice, during and after practices and games (see Heat Acclimatization Guidelines below) to prevent dehydration)

4. All injuries can be given first aid.

a. Follow R.I.C.E: Rest the injured body part; Apply Ice; Place Compression wrap for swollen areas (under medical provider care); Elevate the injured body part above the level of the heart.

B. Concussions www.cdc.gov/Concussion

It is SMCA's policy that athletes who sustain a head injury (concussion), regardless of how minor, must be removed from playing for an assessment of the injury. If the athlete has been determined to have a possible concussion, he/she will not be permitted to return to play. *A physician's note documenting the diagnosis, specific limitations and date that the athlete may return to play will be required upon return.*

A concussion is a brain injury which 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. An athlete does not have to lose consciousness ("knocked-out") to suffer a concussion.

*Download the free app: *Concussion Recognition & Response (PAR) – Coach & Parent Version*. Parents and coaches may use this valuable, 5 minute app to determine the likelihood that an athlete has sustained a concussion, whether he or she is able to return to the field, and/or if medical attention is needed.

* Follow the “Heads Up – Concussion in Youth Sports” fact sheet for coaches, parents and athletes.

C. Sudden Cardiac Arrest <http://www.mpssaa.org/membership-services/sudden-cardiac-arrest/>

Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is the #1 cause of death for student athletes. SCA occurs when the heart stops beating, suddenly, and unexpectedly. When this happens, blood stops flowing to the brain and other vital organs. SCA doesn't just happen to adults; it takes the lives of students too. SCA is NOT a heart attack.

Warning Signs of SCA

- SCA strikes immediately.
- SCA should be suspected in any athlete who has collapsed and is unresponsive.
- No response to tapping on shoulders
- Does nothing when asked if he/she is OK
- No pulse

Emergency Response to SCA

- Act immediately; time is most critical to increase survival rates.
- Recognize SCA.
- Call 911 immediately and activate EMS.
- Administer CPR.
- Use Automatic External Defibrillator (AED). (SMCA's is in Chapel)

Risk of Inaction:

Ignoring such symptoms and continuing to play could be catastrophic and result in sudden cardiac death. Taking these warning symptoms seriously and seeking timely appropriate medical care can prevent serious and possibly fatal consequences. Athletes are strongly encouraged to report all symptoms that he/she is experiencing that are abnormal.

D. Heat Acclimatization Guidelines <http://www.mpssaa.org/membership-services/health-and-safety/heat-and-hydration/>

The following are guidelines that outline safe methods of practice to use during preseason try-outs and practice periods to help build heat tolerance for student athletes. These will also minimize the athlete's risk for a heat-related illness by building their ability to exercise safely and effectively during warm to hot conditions.

Follow to prevent heat illness:

1. Ensure fresh and unlimited **water** is available during all practices and games.
2. Drink before, during, and after practice and games.
3. Appropriate fluid includes: water (best choice) and sports drinks. Inappropriate fluid includes: fruit juice and energy drinks
4. Athletes may monitor their hydration level by the color and volume of urine.
Small amounts of dark urine indicates the need to drink more, while a “regular”

amount of light colored urine is normal and indicates the athlete is well hydrated.

Before: *Drink 16 ounces of fluid 2 hours before physical activity *Drink another 8-16 oz. 15 minutes before physical activity	During *Drink 4-8 ounces of fluid every 15-20 minutes (some athletes who sweat considerably can safely tolerate up to 48 ounces per hour)
After Drink 16-20 ounces of fluid for every pound lost during physical activity to achieve normal hydration status before the next practice or game.	

XV. Conduct Policy

Student Athletes and Parents

2 Timothy 2:5 “And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.”

Athletes

Representing SMCA as an athlete is a privilege and an honor. Athletes are regarded on campus and off campus as an example of what our school is about. Exemplary behavior and Christian living is a commitment for our athletes. Therefore, the following rules will apply to all those participating in athletic preparation and competition at Southern Maryland Christian Academy. When pertaining to a sport, the season includes pre-season practices and try-outs with the completion being the last game.

Athletics is a highly visible part of the school. It is therefore vital that the athletes represent the Lord and SMCA in a distinctive way. Athletes are expected to conduct themselves properly, including but not limited to the following:

- The use of alcohol, tobacco, or any other harmful drug is strictly forbidden.
- Verbal abuse of officials, opponents, fans, or coaches will not be tolerated.
- Athletes are expected to respect SMCA faculty, staff, students, property, and parents.

If an athlete's actions violate this code, the following procedures will take place:

- The use of alcohol, tobacco, or drugs shall immediately terminate the athlete's privilege to participate for the remainder of that season, and possibly beyond. Returning to participation may only happen after a conference with the Director, Athletic Director, Academic Dean, and Dean of Student Affairs.

-- The coach shall govern verbal violations and disrespect of property by individuals. If action continues, the Athletic Director reserves the right to remove the player(s) for an indefinite

period of time.

-- Athletes will abide by school codes and regulations. If an athlete is consistently disregarding school regulations, he/she may be dismissed from participation.

Parents

Parents are expected to partner with school staff and coaches to speak and act as representatives of the Lord and SMCA. Expectations of fans are the same as those for players, coaches, and officials as they respond to the events of the contest.

Parents are expected to support not only their children but also the team, the coach, and SMCA. Parents should not be verbally arrogant or abusive to any person at a contest.

Parents are expected to deal with their concerns with the person most directly involved before taking their concerns to those not involved (proper chain of command).

Parents are expected to help their children learn dependability, promptness, and accountability by being aware of the practice and game schedule as well as other responsibilities.

XVI. Hazing and Bullying

SMCA does not promote or accept hazing, bullying or student intimidation. Athletes, coaches or any other appointed person affiliated to SMCA who is participating in or encouraging inappropriate conduct will be disciplined. Such discipline for the athlete is listed in the Student Handbook and Athletic Handbook and will be administered at the Administration and Athletic Director's discretion. Discipline for the student may include, but is not limited to, detention, in or out of school suspension, or expulsion from SMCA. If an athlete is subject to hazing or bullying, he/she is encouraged to report such incidents to their coach, Athletic Director or any SMCA employee immediately. The victim may complete the SMCA Bullying Form found on Facts and in the main office.

XVII. Sexual Harassment

SMCA affirms its commitment to Biblical mandates of sexual behavior. Affectionate behavior, even though consensual, which is inconsistent with the Word of God and SMCA standards, will not be tolerated. Further, sexual harassment violates federal law and is prohibited.

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment. God created sexual relations to occur within the bond of marriage and any perversion of God's plan will be interpreted as sexual harassment and will not be tolerated.

XVIII. Racial Harassment

SMCA believes that interpersonal relationships are to reflect the Biblical principle that all people are made in God's image and are equal in value. Therefore, racial harassment (which includes, but is not limited to, racial/ethnic slurs and otherwise intimidating communication) or promotion of racist attitudes will not be tolerated.