



**OAKDALE ACADEMY**  
**ATHLETICS DEPARTMENT HANDBOOK**



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## Philosophy of Athletics at Oakdale Academy

Athletics, at its core, is considered an art form. As an art, a competition is not merely a venue in which virtue is practiced; but, as a painting is an expression of the virtue within the artist, so the competition is a product formed by the virtue within the competitors.

Competitors are to exercise virtue for the purpose of victory while displaying the virtue of sportsmanship. If virtues are wrongly ordered, however (e.g., if sportsmanship is made subordinate to ambition), the result may be a statistical win, but an ‘ugly’ victory.

Athletics, therefore, serve as a forum for the test and exercise of virtue in the world. As an intense competition limited in duration, an athletic contest serves as a test of character, mind, and body, exposing both weaknesses and strengths.

Participating in athletics in a classical Christian school produces a host of benefits – physical fitness, emotional health, mental stamina, leadership, teamwork, strength, and endurance.

Participation and performance in athletics provides the opportunity for student-athletes to exercise their morality in a competitive world where they are to do their best to achieve victory by exercising rightly ordered virtue. This is done where the competitor gives their best with the intent to win while working within given authority (rules, referee, coach, and team), and exercise noble character always.

These goals are to be sought beyond the contest as well as in practices, team meetings, etc. and should be reflected in the need for a disciplined life. Where the cultivation of virtue is upheld in athletics one finds an excellent training ground for potential leaders who will need to navigate a competitive world without sacrificing truth, goodness, and beauty.

Interscholastic competition provides the likely opportunity to introduce student-athletes to both better competition as well as a variety of worldviews (in their competitors), thus providing a test of both athletic skill and character. Competition also allows student-athletes to compete in service to the school with the added benefit of enhancing the school’s reputation in the community.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the Ambrose School



Specifically, at Oakdale Academy, student-athletes and parents should keep the following in mind:

- Athletics are not equal to the cultivation of virtue within the classical classroom, but a servant to it.
- Students are encouraged to participate in athletic events as they will test a student's self-control to train personal and public godly behavior in managing winning and losing.
- Where excluding ("cutting") players is necessitated by either league regulations, limitations of school coaches, or other reasons, coaches will consider players on both athletic ability and dedication to the virtues of Character, Truth, and Wisdom.
- The goal of the student-athlete is a well-fought fight.
- Excellent or 'natural' athletes are encouraged to excel, but to do so with virtue rightly ordered.
- The coaches do not emphasize "win at all costs" but first effort, nobility, and perseverance in the fight.
- Coaches shall exhibit godly character in the execution of their responsibilities.
- The primary goal of the coach is to assist student-athletes in exercising virtue in correct order, which includes the cultivation of character within the athlete, the encouragement of the team, and physical training in preparation for competition to perform in an excellent manner.



## Membership

Oakdale Academy is a member of the Southeast Michigan Athletic Conference (SMAC), which is itself a subdivision of the Michigan Association of Christian Schools (MACS).

Oakdale Academy is **not** a member of the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA).

## Limitations of the Athletic Program

The athletic program of Oakdale Academy is not designed to produce Olympic or professional-caliber athletes. It is designed to allow students to develop their Christian character and individual talents while working more fully as a team and glorifying God.

Our boundaries are driven by finances, facilities, and families. It is our goal to supplement the academic program, not to replace it; to strengthen families, not cripple them; to build community, not fragment it.

## Commitment

Every student-athlete in each season/sport should realize the commitment they are making. Student-athletes are committing to following not only rules of the school, but of their coaches, and to learn to abide with others in community though their team. If your team is your first commitment, it is expected you will honor that commitment when conflict in schedules arise.



## Rules and Regulations

All rules, regulations, etc. of Oakdale Academy remain in force for all extra-curricular activities, including all athletics.

Each coach may have slightly higher standards and rules for their specific team, which will be made in conjunction and approval of the Athletic Director.

Additionally, as part of our Permission to Participate, all student-athletes and families agree to the following:

- All coaches will be addressed and treated with respect.
- Attend every practice on time every time, with the practice gear on, or notify the coaches ahead of time.
  - Unexcused absences from practice will result in loss of starting and/or playing privileges.
- Everything you do, on and off the field of competition will reflect on Oakdale Academy.
- Each person should be treated with respect. This includes opposing players, coaches, fans, game officials, teammates, parents, and chaperones.
- Alcohol, tobacco, and/or drug use is prohibited.
- Plan your time effectively and keep up with your academic responsibilities.
- Accept criticism from the coaching staff. Remember, they are trying to help you.
- Concentrate during practice.
- No horseplay. Games are won and lost in practice.
- Individual achievement must be secondary to the success of the team. A selfish attitude will not be tolerated.

Parents are expected to abide by the following:

- Parents will not interfere with any coaches' decisions pertaining to playing time or game strategy.
- All discussions with coaches regarding playing time or game strategy will be held at least 24 hours after the game at a time that is mutually agreed upon and never in front of the team or other parents.
- Conduct during games should reflect good sportsmanship. Players, coaches, opposing parents, and officials will be always treated with respect.
- We know that being part of a team is demanding, will require sacrifices, adjustments to schedules, and commitment on the part of you and your child, and the coaches. We are working hard to achieve team and individual success which requires effort on all parts.
- In return, we have an opportunity to create a positive experience that could affect our lives forever.



## Academic Eligibility

From the Student Handbook, “Students who participate in athletics must maintain good academic standing. Eligibility status will be reported weekly...to the Athletic Director. If a student is currently receiving one “F” or two grades of “D+” or below at the time of determination, the student will not be eligible to participate in interscholastic sports for that week.”

The Athletic Director and coaches (with Athletic Director approval) may also inform student-athletes they may not be allowed to practice that week to focus on their academic success.

## Athletic Department Leadership

The Athletic Department is led by the Athletic Director, who is responsible for carrying out the philosophy and standards of athletics at Oakdale Academy, recruiting and hiring coaches, training coaches, and the overall management of the department. The Athletic Director is responsible directly to the Headmaster.

## Coaches

Coaches are an important portion of what we do in athletics at Oakdale Academy. They focus not only on the skills of their players, but on the development of character.

We expect our coaches will model Jesus Christ with character qualities, how they live their life, and how they relate to others.

All coaches will adhere to the following policies of Oakdale Academy:

- Statement of Faith
- Mission and Vision
- Code of Christian Conduct
- Policy on Religious Character
- Relationship to the Community
- Religious Employment Criteria
- Policy on Marriage, Family, and Sexuality
- Statement on Life

Additionally, all coaches will conform with the following:

- All policies and statements in our Employee Handbook surrounding conduct, copies of which are available to coaches upon request to the Athletic Director.



- Coaches are not subject to all provisions of the contract regarding other personnel matters.
- Coaches shall carbon copy the Athletic Director ([athleticdirector@oakdaleacademy.com](mailto:athleticdirector@oakdaleacademy.com)) on all communications with parents via email.
- Any communication with students **must** also include their parents.
- Emails from parents should be answered within 24 hours where possible (not including weekends or holidays).
- At no time should a coach engage in verbal or written discussion with parents or students concerning another student's grades, behavior, or family life.
- Coaches should not maintain social media connections with students.