



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.¹

¹ 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.