

# ***HIGHLAND***

**Independent School District**

**Handbook**

**For**

**Parents of Athletes**

## **Handbook for Parents of Athletes at *HIGHLAND ISD***

Being a parent is often challenging. This effort and responsibility is frequently complicated by being a parent of an athlete. This handbook, with its guidelines and suggestions, will give you some insights into this responsibility.

There are many relationships which are involved in being the parent of an athlete.

### **The Player-Coach Relationship:**

Unfortunately, through televised games and the recent proliferation of cable TV, many adults feel that they understand or perhaps know more than many coaches. Everyone becomes an expert. While this new found expertise may heighten your appreciation of a sport as a parent, however, you are not the coach.

The player-coach relationship is perhaps the most critical one in athletics! Unfortunately a parent can have a pronounced effect on this very important and delicate relationship. While you may not agree with all decisions of a coach, how and when you express your feelings can have a decided effect upon your child.

If you express a negative opinion in front of your child, you need to remember that he or she will return to practice the next day and may carry with him or her your convictions. Your son or daughter will then have to interact with this coach. You, as the parent, can greatly affect this delicate relationship.

Receiving technical or strategic instruction at home may interfere and conflict with the instructional process at practice sessions and games. This may ultimately impede your son or daughter's progress and affect their playing time or whether they win a starting position.

As much as a parent or parents can negatively influence this relationship, the opposite is also true! Parents can help an athlete deal with events which transpire during the course of a practice, game, season, and career. Not every experience in the athletic world can be successful or positive . . . **BUT**, most CAN be turned into a learning experience to make better citizens of our students. In this area, parents are invaluable, as they will see the athlete once he/she leaves the field, gym, locker room, etc. Rather than -feed|| a negative experience or situation, help turn it into a "bump-in-the-road" an obstacle to be overcome.

### **The Parent-Coach Relationship:**

In your role as a parent, you obviously love and are concerned about your child's welfare. You want the best for him or her. But an athlete can have only one coach. Allowing the coach to instruct and guide the team is crucial in many respects.

Should you have any questions or concerns, do *not* approach the coach immediately at the conclusion of a contest. At this time, coaches have other responsibilities and it may be an emotional time. Call and make an appointment for a later time and approach this meeting in a calm, courteous and logical manner.

One of the responsibilities which a coach has at the conclusion of a contest is to have a brief meeting with his/her players. Athletes should not pause to talk to parents or friends immediately after games. These brief meetings are essential to the learning process involved in athletics.

### **The Parent-Player:**

Some parents may try to live through their child's athletic efforts. Being positive and supportive is important, but adding pressure and unrealistic expectations can be extremely harmful. Allow your son or daughter to enjoy and grow from this valuable experience. In numerous national studies, it has been determined that most athletes participate for enjoyment or fun. Excessive pressure or expectations can alter this most fundamental reason for playing.

When you do speak with you child after a contest OR practice, don't dwell on his or her play; how many points they scored; if they started; what position so-and-so was playing; etc. . . .Instead, first ask how the team did or how practice went today? Did your son or daughter play hard, give 100%, and have a good experience? General dialogue which does not place so much emphasis on winning and losing, starring roles, starting vs substituting, etc.

### **Relationship with Officials:**

There is an age-old refrain often used by irate fans, "How much are you paying the officials?" **The home team does not get the officials.** All officials are selected for particular games by the assignor of the particular sport, and neither team has control of which officials are present.

Officials agree to and follow a code of ethics. They really do not care or have a vested interest in which team emerges as the victor. It is also important to understand that they are a very necessary part of a game. A contest cannot be played without them. There is an ever-growing shortage of officials in almost every sport! This is due in part to criticism by fans and coaches alike.

So while you may not agree with all of their calls (WHO DOES?), please do not harass and taunt them. It is also important to remember that they are in charge of the contest and have complete authority to have unruly spectators removed. In many sports, a team will see the same official several times during a season. Coaches, athletic administrators and schools often work hard to establish a rapport and good working relationship which can easily be damaged by spectators.

### **Spectator-Cheerleader:**

Cheerleaders try to infuse spirit into the fans/spectators and to lead them in selected cheers. Taking this responsibility into your own hands is not appropriate. Following the cheerleaders' directions, therefore, is absolutely necessary at all athletic contests.

The emotion and atmosphere at athletic contests can be very exciting and the cheerleaders need to be allowed to direct and control this aspect. Over the years here at HIGHLAND, we have developed a very "enthusiastic & involved" fan base. This has created a special feeling of excitement and belonging for both fans and players alike. As long as these activities in support of our teams are done in concert with and with consideration for our cheerleaders, no one could pick a more enjoyable atmosphere in which to play or watch an athletic contest.

With regards to the "visitors" spectator area, respect should and must be shown to the feelings of the fans of our opponents. This is of PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE!!!

**Athletic Chain of Command:**

At HIGHLAND ISD, the following chain of command is in effect. . .

- School Board
- Superintendent
- Principal
- Athletic Director
- Head Coach
- Assistant/JV Coaches
- Players

If there are any questions or concerns, the athlete should be the first his or her appropriate coach. The ability to approach his or her coach is an important component of the lessons learned through athletics. If at this point there is no resolution, he or she would then go to the next level, etc. This is EXTREMELY important in order to establish an efficient line of communication.

**Sportsmanship:**

Since athletics should be educational in nature, it is important that all parents demonstrate good sportsmanship and serve as role models for our athletes and students. Sportsmanship is an overt display of respect for the rules of sport and for all others - players, coaches, officials, and fans. It also involves a commitment to fair play, ethical behavior, and integrity. This means.

. . . . .

- There can be no vulgar or inappropriate language from our fans or spectators.
- Taunting or trash talking of our opponents and their cheerleaders cannot be tolerated.
- Spectators cannot leave the bleachers and/or enter onto the court or field during a contest or until an "appropriate" time thereafter.
- Fans should be supportive and positive. Cheering should be done for our team and not against our opponents.
- We should not impede or interfere with our opponent's cheerleaders from leading their cheers.

- In some specific sports, such as basketball, we should not yell while an opponent takes a foul shot.

### **Responsibilities of an Athlete:**

Most coaches would expect an athlete to adhere to the following general guidelines:

- The team's goals, welfare and success must come before any individual.
- An athlete needs to consistently attend practice sessions. This also includes weekend and holiday periods.
- Players must be receptive to coaching.
- Team members are responsible for all issued uniforms & equipment.
- As a member of a team, an athlete must agree to and follow the team rules.
- Athletes need to remember that they are ambassadors and represent not only themselves, but the entire team/program, the coaching staff, the school, the community, and their family as well.
- If injured, an athlete must report all injuries to the coaching staff. This should be done immediately following the injury!

These general guidelines are in addition to any rules that are put in place by the head coach of each sport, all rules set forth by the University Interscholastic League, as well as the Highland ISD Code of Student Conduct.

### **Responsibilities of a Coach:**

At **HIGHLAND**, a coach has the responsibility for the following:

- The selection of the squad.
- The determination of the style of play, including offensive and defensive philosophy.
- The teaching and instruction at practice sessions.
- The determination of who starts and how long an athlete plays in a contest.
- The decision of who plays in what position.
- The establishing of team rules, in concert with the general philosophy of the entire athletic program.
- The enforcement of rules in the context of the sport they coach.
- The selection of team captains.
- Communication with athletes and parents with respect to when practice sessions will be held, and when they will start/end.

### **Participation on an Athletic Team:**

It is important to understand that participation on an athletic team for **HIGHLAND ISD** is a **PRIVILEGE**, and **NOT A RIGHT!** Being on and maintaining one's

membership on the team means accepting all the responsibilities of an athlete. However, unlike recreation or intramural teams, equal or guaranteed playing time does **NOT** exist. In an effort to win or achieve team success, a coach will use players best-suited to the conditions or demands of the contest at that time.

It **IS** the philosophy of the athletic program here at **HIGHLAND ISD** to make every effort to play everyone in every game on sub-varsity level games. This is a major challenge for coaches, both logistically and philosophically. Certain sports make substitutions easier than others, as do the score/flow of games. Players, coaches, and fans alike are focused on -winning, and can very easily lose sight of the instructional nature and value of middle school/junior varsity contests. So although there are no "guarantees" on starting/playing time, our coaches are working toward rewarding ALL participants who have practiced regularly, worked hard, and met all obligations expected of them with playing time on game day.

It should again be emphasized that this is a difficult and challenging task in many situations. Hopefully through planning and patience, this philosophy will achieve better morale for the entire team and keep numbers high.

#### **The Purpose of a JV Team:**

JUNIOR VARSITY teams exist to provide those athletes unable to participate on the varsity squad an opportunity to develop skills and gain knowledge/experience. While the athlete's age, size, or skill level may be the limiting factor in not playing with the varsity team, participation on a JV team may enhance the athletes potential to make the varsity squad in the future.

A caution, however, must also be given. Being a member of a JV team does not guarantee that an athlete will automatically move up the following year to the varsity squad. The athletes best-suited for varsity competition will make that squad each year.

Striving to win is important in athletics; however, compiling a great record or winning a championship is not the primary objective of a JV team. The development of athletes should be the ultimate purpose of a JV squad, while at the same time acknowledging the value of winning, learning, and enjoying being a member of a team.

At **HIGHLAND ISD**, we see, and want our athletes to see themselves as an integral part of each of our programs here - this includes both JV and junior high levels. The young men and women in these programs are the future of our varsity squads, and it is imperative that they have a positive and educational experience.

#### **Practice Sessions and Games:**

Practice sessions are normally "OPEN" to spectators, as are all games. Spectators providing positive and nurturing support of teams and athletes can be very helpful to performance.

However, it is the prerogative of each individual coach to conduct "closed" practices. There is a very sound reason for this: these sessions are the equivalent of a teacher's classroom and there is real, quality instruction

taking place. Interruptions and interference to an athlete's concentration and focus in practice cannot be allowed any more than a disruption would be tolerated in an academic setting.

#### Practice Sessions:

- May last 2 hours on school days (coaches should notify in advance of longer sessions on non-school days, as well as shorter workouts when appropriate).
- May start and end at different times due to the schedule of the coach or of our facilities.
- Will NOT be held when school is dismissed early due to inclement weather.
- Will NOT be held when school is not in session due to inclement weather.
- May be held on Saturdays and over holiday periods. Our coaches are encouraged to be sensitive to family planning, particularly around holidays.

#### **Risks of Athletic Participation:**

In spite of protective equipment, and the supervision and sound instruction by our coaches, there are always risks associated when anyone participates in athletics. Injuries in some of our activities can and do occur. In extremely rare cases, paralysis and even death could also result. All athletes and parents need to be aware of and understand this possibility. At **HIGHLAND ISD**, we will do all that we can to ensure a safe and healthy environment for our athletes. **THESE RISKS UNDERLINE THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY FOR PLAYERS, PARENTS, AND COACHES TO BE ON THE SAME PAGE - FROM PRE-SEASON MEETINGS THROUGH THE POST SEASON; AND EVEN OUT-OF-SEASON TRAINING!!!**

#### **Sports Booster Club:**

**HIGHLAND ISD** Sports Booster Club is, and has been for many years, one of the best you can find ANYWHERE! It exists to support all teams and the entire athletic program. Individual teams do not have booster or parent clubs which may result in competition for support and resources. Our booster club has three primary goals:

1. To raise funds to assist the athletic programs
2. To increase school and community spirit
3. To encourage good sportsmanship and athletic participation

The Booster Club is NOT a vehicle to remove coaches; advance vested interests; or to alter Athletic Department policy. It is a service and support organization which works in harmony with **HIGHLAND ISD** and its athletic program.

The athletic director serves as a liaison between the club and the school. He/she also serves as an adviser to the club. All requests for purchases should come through the A.D., who determines their priority. Consideration of requests is given to the budget, strategic plans, and an overriding belief that any purchase should help the total athletic program and not a single team. Individual coaches or teams should NOT directly approach the booster club with requests, but may be encouraged to assist with explaining requests involving their program.

All parents, community members, school staff, etc. are encouraged to join this very worthwhile organization, and to become an ACTIVE member. You do NOT need to have a student or athlete attending presently to be a member!

**Travel Policy:**

All team members must travel as a group to and from all athletic contests. It is important that teams ride together prior to and following athletic contests, whether the team wins or loses. It is an important component of team bonding in athletics. A team member may be released to the custody of a parent/guardian at the conclusion of an away contest, provided approval has been received in advance from the coach of said sport.

A note from the parent/guardian seeking permission to transport the athlete after a contest should be received by the head coach. The parental note should specifically explain the reason for not traveling home with the team. Prior to leaving the contest, the parent should speak directly with the head coach of said sport to confirm that him/her, and not another student or friend, is driving. In addition, this will guard against miscommunication, and someone being left at an away site.

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**ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM**

I have read and understand the Handbook for Parents of Athletes at **HIGHLAND ISD**. I am willing to do my part in upholding these expectations not only for my child, but for myself/family members and for the good of the entire **HIGHLAND ISD ATHLETIC PROGRAM**.

Parent Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

Athlete Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Athlete Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: