

MATTITUCK-CUTCHOQUE ATHLETICS



Athletic Handbook For Parents, Athletes and Coaches “Tucker Pride”

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Mattituck School District

PHILOSOPHY OF INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS

Interscholastic athletics in the Mattituck-Cutchogue School District is a component of the health and physical education program and therefore is an integral part of the districts total educational program. Athletics should be a broadening experience in which harmony of mind body functions is created through striving for physical and mental excellence. This value building experience should be offered to as many students as possible. A well-coordinated program is vitally important to the morale of the school and our community.

Everyone involved in the delivery of athletics possesses a unique opportunity to teach positive life skills and values. Therefore, this educational experience demands highly qualified coaches. Desire, dedication, and self-discipline need to be developed in order to ensure the commitment and personal sacrifice required by athletics. Making such a commitment helps to nurture integrity, pride, loyalty, and overall character. The final outcome is a better citizen carrying these values throughout their life.

It is the nature of athletic competition to strive for victory. However, the number of victories is only one criterion when determining a season's success. Guiding the team to attain maximum potential is the ultimate goal. To this end the coaching staff must teach student/athletes to prepare their minds and bodies in order to reach maximum potential, and then to be modest in victory and steadfast in defeat.

Modified Program Philosophy

Middle school "modified" programs, in general, offer an introduction to the world of competitive athletics. Sport activities offered are determined by the existence of leagues, student interest, facility availability, financial resources, and the relationship to the high school program. At this point, the focus is on learning basic skills and game rules, fundamentals of team play, social and emotional growth, and healthy competition. The emphasis is to provide an opportunity for children, through physical participation in a positive competitive environment, to learn about their capabilities and appreciate human physical potential. Athletes are introduced to the benefits of physical conditioning, and encouraged to become responsible for maintaining an appropriate fitness level. The "modified" program allows for game rules and requirements of play to be adapted to match the competitive abilities of young, inexperienced, middle school athletes, who have not yet reached emotional, social, physiological, or physical maturity. While we would like to provide an opportunity for every athlete who expresses interest in a program, this is not always possible. While we try to avoid cuts at the middle school level, certain factors exist that must be dealt with by imposing a limitation on the number of students that can be accommodated in specific programs.

If the number of students trying out for a team creates a situation that is difficult to manage, poses a safety problem, or is problematic because of facility consideration, reducing team size may be necessary. Ultimately, the number of teams and size of the squad in any sport will be determined by the availability of:

- 1) Financial resources
- 2) Qualified coaches
- 3) Suitable indoor or outdoor facilities
- 4) A safe environment

In order for the desired development of the adolescent athlete and team to occur, practice sessions are vital. The NYSPHSAA and Section XI have established sport specific practice guidelines, which govern the number of practices that each individual and team must have in order to be eligible for competition. There are also established guidelines, which govern the number of contests allowed, and in certain sports, mandated days of rest between scheduled contests.

Coaches expect athletes to regularly attend up to six (6) practices a week, two hours in duration, in preparation for the six to twelve contests that are scheduled against opponents from other school districts. Occasionally, practices or contests will be scheduled on Saturdays and vacation dates. Opportunities for meaningful contest participation for each team member will exist over the course of a season, providing that the athlete meets program expectations.

Athletes in all programs, regardless of level, are expected to be committed and give a full effort to practice sessions, maintain a positive and cooperative attitude and show a willingness to meet the team's needs with respect to position and role. Every athlete is expected to demonstrate respect for others and promote positive sportsmanship. In addition, the athlete must have enough skill and physical maturity to safely participate in the competitive climate.

Exceptional seventh or eighth grade athletes may be permitted to try out for a high school sport under the State Department of Education program called the Athletic Placement Process.

Junior Varsity Program Philosophy

The junior varsity program is intended for those who display the potential for continued development into productive varsity level players. In junior varsity programs, teams are comprised of mostly ninth and tenth grade athletes. In certain situations, juniors, who may be still viewed as potential contributors at the varsity level, may be allowed to participate on a junior varsity squad. This circumstance however, is more the exception to the rule. Middle school athletes who qualify for participation at higher levels of play, through the Athletic Placement Process, are also eligible for a spot on these rosters as well. Seventh or eighth grade students selected as members of a junior varsity team are also rare exceptions to the rule. At this point in the athlete's development, the level of expectation increases substantially. The high school sport season (three seasons per year) is longer than the middle school sport season (four seasons per year). The practice sessions are longer and more intense, and the skill requirements for participation in contests are greater. The atmosphere is more competitive, and in many cases athletes who were able to meet the demands of play at the modified program will not be able to meet the expectations of participation at the junior varsity level.

Athletes must be prepared for a competitive tryout situation, and should not assume that they will automatically make the team because they were involved in the program at the modified level. Each and every season is treated as a new year, and tryouts are conducted accordingly. Skill, conditioning, work ethic, and reliability are big factors in an athlete's quest to move up. At this level, athletes are expected to have visibly committed themselves to the program and continued self-development. To this end, increased emphasis is placed on physical conditioning, refinement of fundamental skills, elements and strategies of team play, and social and emotional development. Junior varsity programs work towards achieving a balance between continued team and player development and the quest for victory. The outcome of the contest does become a consideration at this level. The realization that practice sessions are important is a premise that is vital to a successful junior varsity program and player. For all team members, meaningful contest participation will exist over the course of a season, providing the athlete meets program expectations. A specified amount of playing time, however, is never guaranteed. Athletes are expected to compete for a position, and earn their position in the starting line-up. The time commitment of a participant involved in a junior varsity program is similar to that at the varsity level. Athletes and parents should be prepared for a six-day-a week commitment for games and practices. ***While practices are not held on certain religious holy days, and rarely on Sundays, the athlete will be expected to make a full commitment to scheduled team practices during vacation periods.*** With the goal of becoming a varsity athlete clearly in sight, a high level of dedication and commitment is expected at the junior varsity level.

Varsity Program Philosophy

Varsity competition is the culminating experience for each sport's program. It is an experience provided for the elite athlete, and is the most demanding and competitive of all programs. Although junior and senior athletes dominate most varsity team rosters, gifted ninth and tenth grade athletes are eligible for varsity level play. Although rare, it is also possible for a middle school student to be included on a varsity roster. Prior participation in the program does not guarantee an athlete a spot on the roster, even if the athlete was a member of the varsity squad the preceding year.

Squad size is limited in many sports at the varsity level, although there are a few sports that will accommodate more numbers in practice and in competitive situations than others. However, even in those sports where cuts are not made in a given year, athletes must still understand that they may be denied an opportunity to participate unless they meet program expectations, especially with respect to start dates, attendance and commitment. Athletes who do not meet program expectations will not be eligible to earn a letter award. The number of participants on most varsity teams is a function of those needed to conduct an effective and meaningful practice, and to play the contest. It is vital that each member understands and accepts their role on the team, as the number of roster positions is relative to the student's acceptance of their individual roles in pursuit of team goals. While contest participation over the course of a season is desirable, a specified amount of playing time at the varsity level is never guaranteed, since the outcome of the contest becomes a prime consideration at this level. A sound attitude and advanced level of skill are prerequisites for varsity play. Athletes will be expected to practice 2 to 3 hours per day up to six days per week, with commitment often extended into vacation periods for all sports

seasons. The dedication and commitment needed to conduct a successful varsity program is to be taken seriously. The expectation is the same for the starting player as it is for the limited role player, as every athlete involved on the team has a role in preparing the team for a demanding competitive schedule. The achievement of individual and team goals requires a full commitment on the part of every athlete on the roster.

A primary goal of a varsity team is to win a league or division title, and/or qualify for postseason play in sectional, regional or state competition. In the individual sports (cross country, tennis, wrestling, golf, and track), opportunities are presented to dedicated team members to represent the district in individual championship competitions at the league, division, county, and state levels. These opportunities are only provided, however, to those individuals who show a complete and on-going commitment to the team.

Athletic Participation Requirements

The requirements for participation are: 1) The student must be a bona fide student fully registered and taking at least 4 subjects plus physical education and participate in physical education to be eligible to practice or play in a contest on given day; 2) A student must be in attendance a minimum of 5 periods of the school day to be eligible to participate in athletic activity on said day and have a legal excuse for periods absent; 3) A student shall be eligible for interscholastic competition in grades 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 until his/her nineteenth birthday. If the age of nineteen is reached on or after July 1, the student may continue to participate during that school year in all sports; 4) A student in grade 7 or 8 who is selected to participate at the varsity or junior varsity level must pass the athletic placement process before being able to complete; 5) Each student must pass an athletic physical designated by the school appointed physician; 6) Prior to the beginning of each season, the student and parent must fill out an updated health history if they are playing more than one sport. 7) Students must maintain solid grades. All athletes failing two or more subjects must comply with the Extracurricular Accountability Policy as outlined in the student handbook.

Information on physicals can be obtained by calling the school nurse at 298-8471 x3271.

Try Outs and Selection of Teams

As an athletic department we try to keep as many students on our Varsity and JV teams as possible. Size of team is determined by safety factors such as how many athletes a coach can adequately supervise. Additionally, team numbers are determined by the amount of athletes who can positively contribute in some way. Unfortunately some teams have to make “selections” or “cuts”. This is a decision that is one of the most difficult decisions a coach must make. When athletes are evaluated during tryout period coaches are asked to utilize as many “objective factors” as possible. These factors differ from sport to sport but examples might be timing students in an endurance run, short sprints, or sport specific skills. Some subjective elements come into play like effort and attitude. Generally speaking if a high school athlete does not make a particular team there are other teams that do not cut: football; lacrosse; wrestling; cross country; track which the students can join. The student athlete can expect feedback from the coach relative to why the selection was made and weaknesses to improve on.

Practice Sessions

Student/Athletes are expected to attend all scheduled practice sessions and games unless excused by the coach. The importance of practice is clearly stated in the Athletic Philosophy. All practice sessions are closed to parents and public unless prior permission has been granted through the Athletic Director and Coach. Any athlete who has two unexcused absences of any kind from practice or game(s) will be referred to a committee for possible dismissal for the season. The committee will consist of the student, parents of the student, coach, athletic director, and administration.

Student/Athletes who miss practices or competition for any reason may have their position or playing time adjusted at Coaches' Discretion. Coaches make every effort to inform parents and student/athletes of the season's schedule as far in advance as possible. **[Note: this language is duplicative of language under Family Vacations].**

School Attendance

Students/Athletes must be in school a minimum of 5 periods on the day of a game or practice. Students who are absent from school may not practice or play on that day unless given prior approval by the principal.

Pre-Season Parent, Coaches, Athletes Meetings

Prior to each season these meetings are held to review general school rules, specific athletic policies, and conduct individual team meetings where the coach, parents and athletes meet and list their goals of each other for the upcoming season. Attendance by parents at these meetings is crucial. It is a great channel for opening lines of communication. Additionally, coaches from sport to sport have varying expectations of their athletes.

Family Vacations

When parents and student/athletes choose to take their family vacations during sport seasons, it must be understood that the time missed by the student/athlete can affect team chemistry and personal conditioning. Student/Athletes who miss practices or competition for any reason may have their position or playing time adjusted. Coaches make every effort to inform parents and student/athletes of the season's schedule as far in advance as possible.

Parental Transportation

All students must be picked up from practice, home contests and upon return of away contests by a prior parent or guardian-approved individual. **All students must ride to and from contests on the team bus.** Parents may ask for permission to transport their child only under extenuating circumstances, i.e. doctor's appointment. In these situations the athlete must get a permission slip and have it signed by the athletic director or school principal. This must be done in advance and is available on the school Website. Carpooling from away games requires written permission. No athlete will be allowed to drive to an athletic event unless the coach gives special permission in concurrence with the athletic director.

Club Teams

It is recognized that many times an athlete may have numerous commitments. Some of these may include participation on outside club teams. It is important that the athlete and their parents understand that as a member of interscholastic team, their primary commitment is to their school team.

Sports Specialization

We encourage our athletes to play sports year around. There are some students who choose to “focus” on one sport in order to increase their chances at athletic scholarships. It has been our experience that a well-rounded athlete is one who can exhibit a variety of athletic skills which multi-sport involvement fosters. Most of our athletes who have gone on athletically to the college ranks have been two or three sport athletes.

Returning To Practice or Play Following Injury

Procedure for Participation in Interscholastic Sports Following Injury or Illness

1. Any student who suffers injury or illness (duration of illness more than 5 days) **must be cleared** for re-entry into the sports program.
2. The student shall be examined and treated for his/her injury or illness by his/her own physician.
3. Upon recovery, the student shall present to the School Nurse, documentation from his/her own physician stating the diagnosis, treatment, prognosis and the date on which the student may return to full participation.
4. The **School Nurse** will then schedule an appointment for the student to be evaluated by the school physician. Student will be seen at the first available date with the M.D.
5. The school physician, after review of the data and consideration of all pertinent factors, will then make a decision as to whether or not the student may return to participation in the sports program.
6. The school physician bears the **final responsibility** for allowing students to participate in the sports programs. The health and safety of the student is the school physician’s primary concern. These regulations are outlined in the N.Y. State Public H.S. Athletic Associations Handbook and must be adhered to in accordance with the N.Y. State Commissioner of Education.

Uniforms

Only school issued uniforms may be worn during athletic contests. Athletes cannot compete if they fail to dress appropriately. All athletes shall dress for each contest. Athletic uniforms shall not be worn for Physical Education class.

1. Students athletes who fail to return their practice/game uniforms and/or any other piece of equipment are ineligible for awards and cannot participate in any other sport until uniform obligation is met.

Awards/Letters

Awards and/or letters will be issued only to those student athletes who complete their season (including post-season playoffs) in good standing. Student athletes who are dropped from the team and those who resign before the last contest are not eligible for awards.

Students athletes who fail to return their practice/game uniforms and/or any other piece of equipment are ineligible for awards and cannot participate in any other sport until uniform obligation is met.

Athletics Code of Conduct

Abstinence from alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs is mandatory. All student athletes, parents, teachers, and administrators and the community at large should endorse and support this Code.

A student athlete's behavior, whether in or out of school as it pertains to the use and/or possession of alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, and/or other drugs during and between seasons will not be tolerated. It is a violation for a student athlete to be in possession of a controlled substance (unless it is specifically prescribed by a doctor for that individual). Therefore, if a student is found guilty of participating in a behavior connected with the illegal use and/or possession of alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, or other drugs, disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with school district policy. In addition to any disciplinary action which might be taken for in-school infractions, the student athlete may be suspended from a sport contest and may lose the privilege to participate in interscholastic sports. These sanctions will be determined by the coach and administration. In order for a student athlete to be sanctioned for this behavior, it must be observed by Mattituck administrators, staff, teachers, or coaches or the police, security, or administrators from other school districts.

While the role of the school does not extend to the regulation of private activities of the athletes' families, we can encourage them to serve as positive role models for their children. Parents and the school must not condone a student athlete's use of alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, and/or other drugs.

In addition, athletes are expected to obey a coach's directions. Disobedience, unwarranted comments, and other subversive behaviors may interfere with the coach's ability to conduct a practice and may distract from the time a coach should spend for the purpose of the team. Athletes are expected to communicate with coaches before or after practice to avoid distracting team practices and team goals.

- Foul language and insulting remarks are not permissible.
- Students will not be permitted to fight or strike teammates and opponents unless in the context of the sport.

Athletes are expected to follow the rules and protocol of their sport and should not consider intentionally violating the rules of the sport that they are playing during practice or competitions. All athletes shall abide by the code of conduct, which will earn them the honor and respect that participation and competition in the interscholastic program affords. Any conduct that results in dishonor to the athlete, the team or the school will not be tolerated. Acts of unacceptable conduct, such as, but not limited to theft, vandalism, disrespect, harassment, hazing, bullying or violations of the law, tarnish the reputation of everyone associated with the program and will not be tolerated. In the event that a student athlete is guilty of unacceptable behavior in school or arrested for a criminal offense outside of school the athlete may be suspended from athletic participation both in practice and contests.

Harassment/Hazing/Bullying

In the Mattituck School District, harassment, hazing or bullying in any form during school, or outside the school day is unacceptable and prohibited. It shall be considered a violation of the student athlete "Code of Conduct" as well as dangerous, compromising an athlete's well-being and counterproductive to a team's positive growth. Any student athlete involved in an act of harassment, bullying or hazing will be disciplined. The extent of the consequences for the behavior will be determined by the severity of the incident as determined by the student's coach and administration.

Bullying – a person is being bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more persons. Bullying includes but is not limited to: physical aggression (pushing into lockers), social aggression (spreading rumors), verbal aggression, intimidation, written aggression (emails, notes), sexual harassment and racial and ethnic harassment.

Hazing – Any humiliating or dangerous activity expected of someone to join a group, regardless of the person's willingness to participate. Hazing includes but is not limited to: being physically or psychologically abused (demeaning by nature), being yelled, cursed or sworn at, intimidation, ridiculed, pranked, deprivation of food, sleep or cleanliness, destroying or vandalizing property, etc. (Punching the new members of the team, carrying water bottles). Mattituck coaches will not permit their athletes to stage any type of "initiation or hazing" at any time.

We respect that there are individual differences in how each of our teammates may react to designated task, activity, or request. Whereas one teammate may find a team activity entertaining, another teammate may find the same activity humiliating. At no time should a teammate be subjected to a behavior, task, or activity that is physically, psychologically, or emotionally abusive. It is the right of each teammate to communicate his or her feelings at any point where he or she feels personally devalued or dehumanized. The goal of the team is that each member of the team be treated with dignity and respect.

Sportsmanship

It is important for athletes to remember that participation is a privilege that is not to be abused by unsportsman-like conduct.

The Mattituck athlete is to demonstrate self-control and respect for teammates, other athletes, officials and spectators at all times.

Mattituck athletes are expected to treat opponents with respect before, during and after competitions. Congratulations, shaking hands and other acts of good sportsmanship are expected from the Mattituck athlete.

The Mattituck athlete must understand the following Sportsmanship Code:

1. Follow the proper ideals of sportsmanship, ethical conduct and fair play.
2. Eliminate all possibilities that tend to destroy the best values of the game.
3. Stress the values derived from playing a game fairly.
4. Show cordial courtesy to visiting teams and officials.
5. Establish positive relations with visiting teams and hosts.
6. Respect the integrity and judgment of game officials.
7. Follow the Section XI, NYSPHSAA and Mattituck High School rules of eligibility.
8. Encourage leadership, use of initiative and good judgment by teammates.
9. Recognize that the purpose of athletics is to promote the physical, moral, social and emotional well-being of the individual player.
10. Remember that an athletic contest is ONLY A GAME, not a matter of life or death for any athlete, coach, school, spectator or community.

Parent/Coach Communication Process

Parenting and coaching may be two of the most rewarding, yet challenging responsibilities that any of us can perform. By understanding each role through effective communication, we can work to forge a relationship that will bring out the best in our students-athletes.

As parents, when your child chooses to participate in Mattituck Athletics, you have a right to understand the expectations that we place upon him/her. This begins with clear communication from the coach(s) during our pre-season parent/coach/athlete meeting and throughout the season.

WHAT YOU SHOULD EXPECT TO HEAR FROM A MATTITUCK COACH

1. His or her philosophy.
2. Locations and times of all practices and contests.
3. Coaches rules specific to the team.
4. Discipline policies/procedures.
5. Other expectations for the individual and team.
6. What can I do to help your child?

WHAT A MATTITUCK COACH SHOULD EXPECT TO HEAR FROM A PARENT

1. Any physical/mental limitations that your child might possess.
2. Strategies to help your child improve as a student and athlete.
3. Specific concerns relative to the coach's philosophy and/or expectations.
4. What can I do to help the team/program?

APPROPRIATE ITEMS TO DISCUSS WITH A COACH

1. Concern's regarding your child's behavior.
2. Ways to help your child improve.
3. The treatment of your child mentally, physically and emotionally.

INAPPROPRIATE ITEMS TO DISCUSS WITH A COACH

1. *Playing time.
2. Team strategy.
3. Play calling, line-up, systems, etc.
4. Other student-athletes.

*Playing time questions/issues should be initiated and addressed by the student athlete to the coach.

WHEN SHOULD A PARENT CONTACT THE COACH?

1. If a parent feels as if he/she has a legitimate concern regarding an issue that is appropriate to discuss with a coach, contact should be made.
2. Please make an appointment so that both parties can prepare their thoughts.
3. **NO CONTACT** should be made before or after a game or contest. The emotional level of both parties may be inappropriate for reaching a desirable outcome. Please follow the 24 hour rule and contact a coach after this period of time.
4. Please find a time when it is convenient for both parties.

METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

1. **Face to Face**- As long as the meeting takes place at a time and location agreed upon by both parties. It should occur at a time other than immediately before or after a game/contest when emotions are highest.
2. **Email**- As long as comments are not personal, insulting, degrading, or confrontational. Coaches have been instructed not to reply to these types of messages.
3. **Phone Call**- Certainly a constructive conversation over the phone can be effective because it can be performed quickly and allows both parties to continue on with busy lives.
4. **Written letter**- Can be as effective as an email, but in most cases is slower.

***Please note that texting a coach is not an appropriate form of communication. The methods outlined above should be used for communication purposes.**

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF THE COACH AND I CANNOT REACH AN OUTCOME THAT IS ACCEPTABLE TO BOTH PARTIES?

1. Contact the Mattituck Director of Athletics, Gregory Wormuth at 631-298-8460 x3235 to set up an appointment.
2. At this meeting, the next appropriate step(s) can be determined.
3. Parents are encouraged to discuss issues and problems with the Athletic Director. However, if a parent has specific complaints regarding a coach, the coach must have the opportunity to be present to meet with for discussion.