



Handbook for Parents of Athletes

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. Please feel free to call with comments concerning this handbook. Hopefully, you will find it useful. You might want to take some time and share this information with your son or daughter. Have a great season!

GO LAKERS!

Rita Branscum
Russell County Athletic Director

Russell County Athletics Mission Statement

The Russell County Schools support the philosophy that a quality interscholastic athletic program is vital to the positive social, physical, and educational development of students. The interscholastic program enhances and supports the academic mission of the school system. We are committed to promoting the proper ideals of sportsmanship, ethical conduct, and fair play at all athletic contests. We support high standards of good citizenship and propriety, along with regard for the rights of others.

Being a member of the interscholastic program is a privilege to be earned and maintained throughout the season. Each time participants step into a school or onto the practice field and anytime they participate in a game they are expected to represent themselves, family, team and school in a responsible sportsmanlike manner.

It is our responsibility to provide challenging opportunities for our student-athletes to compete successfully at the county, region, and state levels.

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

The Player-Coach Relationship:

Unfortunately, through televised games and the more recent proliferation of cable TV, many adults feel that they understand or perhaps know more than many coaches. Everyone becomes an expert. While this newfound 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 relationship 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.

The Parent-Coach Relationship:

In our 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. A good rule to remember is to let 24 hours pass before you request a meeting. That gives you enough time to collect your thoughts. A parent may rightfully discuss his child's attitude, work ethic, behavior, eligibility, efforts to improve, and how a coach treats his child, physically and verbally.

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 Relationship:

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 fundamental reason for playing.

When you do speak with your child after a contest don't dwell on his or her play, how many points they scored or if they started. Instead, first ask how the team did. Did your son or daughter play hard, give 100% and have a good experience.

Relationship with Officials:

There is an age-old refrain often used by irate fans, "How much are you paying the officials?" The home school does not get the officials. The assigning secretary of the particular sport assigns all officials and neither team has control of which officials are assigned.

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 the game. A contest cannot be played without them.

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 officials 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.

At Russell County Athletics:

In addition to embracing and committing to the Russell County Athletics philosophy, at Russell County Athletics, we will also encourage and promote:

- The concept of the broadest-based participation possible by offering all of the teams that we can and extending the opportunity to participate to as many students as possible.
- The premise that all teams are considered vital for our student-athletes and each is a valued part of our athletic program. No one sport is considered more important than any other.
- The approach that all teams are treated as fairly as possible.

Athletic Chain of Command

Russell County Athletics has a chain of command that is in effect. If there are any questions or concerns involving some aspect of our athletic program the athlete should first contact the appropriate coach. If there were no resolution, he or she would then go to the head coach, etc.

- Player talks to his/her position coach
- Player talks to the head coach
- Parent may talk to the head coach
- Parent may contact the athletic director

A parent who contacts a school administrator who has not followed this procedure is referred to the policy and then sent back to the coach. Remember the chain of command is...

- Player
- Assistant/JV Coaches
- Head Coach
- Athletic Director
- Principal

Expressing Concerns

When expressing an occasional concern with a coach, please refer to and use the following guidelines:

1. Never approach a coach immediately after a contest. This is not the proper time or place for a discussion concerning your child or the team.
2. Call the following day and make an appointment, which is convenient for both you and the athletic director and coach to meet. Prior to this meeting please inform us of what issues you want to discuss. We exclude the matters of playing time and strategies.
3. Raise your concerns in a calm and civil manner. Yelling, being rude or using foul language is totally unacceptable.
4. Once you have stated your question or concern, listen to the explanation. Often a parent may be blinded by emotion and this overrides logic and reason. Listening receptively may really help your to understand any explanation, which is given.

5. Remember you are there concerning your child. Your child can /will be included in this meeting. You should not discuss another student-athlete's ability with the coach.
6. Letters or e-mails must have a return address with a name or a subject line on the envelope. Without such identification, the contents will be disposed of or deleted. We do not deal with nor give credence to anonymous letters.

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.

Responsibilities of an Athlete

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

1. The team's goals, welfare and success must come before any individual.
2. An athlete needs to consistently attend practice sessions. This also includes weekend and holiday periods.
3. Players must be receptive to coaching.
4. Team members are responsible for all issued uniforms and equipment.
5. 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 also the coaching staff and the school.
6. If injured, an athlete must report all injuries to the coach.

Requirements of Athletic Participation

The following forms must be signed and in the athletic director's office before any athlete may try out for a team:

1. A completed physical on the KHSAA form. The form is not valid unless it is filled out completely and signed by the parent/guardian and athlete.
2. A drug testing permission form signed by both the athlete and parent/guardian
3. Proof of insurance. A copy of the student-athlete's type of insurance must be presented.

4. The forms in this handbook signed by the athlete and parent and returned to the athletic director's office.

Grade Eligibility

All student athletes must have a 2.0 for the current semester and not be failing two (2) classes. Grades will be checked on Mondays of each week. If a student is ineligible the following will take place:

- First Offense – the student athlete can practice but cannot play any games during that particular week of ineligibility. If no academic progress has been made then the 2nd offense will take effect.
- Second Offense – the student athlete cannot practice or play any games during that particular week of ineligibility.
- Third Offense – the student athlete will be dismissed from the team for the remainder of the season.

After school tutoring will be used at the coach's discretion.

A written agreement signed by both the student athlete and their parents/guardians acknowledging this policy will be kept on file in the athletic department.

Drug Testing Policy – See attached policy

Hazing

In athletic settings, some may view hazing as a harmless rite of initiation or an important activity for team bonding. However, it is actually a form of harassment and represents a Russell County Schools Disciplinary Code offense. A more complete explanation of harassment can be found in the Russell County Schools Student Handbook.

Hazing, therefore, cannot and will not be condoned or permitted in the athletic program at Russell County. This means on the fields or courts, in the locker rooms, on the bus, or at any other activity in which athletes represent Russell County.

Varsity Letters and Athletic Jackets

The student athlete must be a sophomore and have earned a varsity letter to be eligible for an athletic jacket. The student athlete must be presently a participating member of an athletic team at Russell County High School and must complete a full season in good standing with all school policies and the policies of the individual sport and coach. Any senior who has been a member of the team at least two seasons and does not meet the criteria for that sport, is eligible at the coaches' discretion.

Football

To earn a varsity letter, a student athlete must play in 16 quarters, dress for varsity games and complete the season in good standing. The only exception would be a football related injury keeping him from completing the season.

Girls and Boys Basketball

Players must dress for 75% of the varsity games that year and dress in the District Tournament. Any senior who has been a member of the team at least two seasons and does not meet the above criteria, is eligible at the coaches discretion.

Baseball and Softball

Players must play in 25% of regular season games, dress for the district tournament, or be a senior and been a team member for two years.

Girls and Boys Golf

Players must play in the Regional Tournament or have participated in at least 50% of their regular season matches/tournaments.

Girls and Boys Track/Cross Country

Players must participate in a minimum of 50% of competitive meets and/or the Regional Meet competition.

Girls and Boys Soccer

Players must play in 25% of the varsity games and dress for the District Tournament.

Volleyball

Players must participate in 25% of the matches and dress for the District Tournament.

Swimming

Swimmers must compete in 50% of competitive meets and/or the Regional Meet competition.

Girls and Boys Tennis

Players must compete in 50% of their competitive matches and/ or the Regional Match competition.

Cheerleading

Cheerleader must be a participant for two full years, and compete in the Regional Competition.

Manager (all sports)

Team managers who have been in a particular sport for two years in good standing and recommended by their coach may letter. The coach may recommend after one year at his/her discretion.

Senior Participation Plaques

A senior participation plaque will be awarded to each senior student athlete at their respective sport's athletic banquet. This plaque will list the years of participation in their respective sports. The student athlete must complete each year and be in good standing with all school and coaches policies.

Risks of Athletic Participation

In spite of protective equipment, and the supervision and sound instruction by our coaches, there are some risks associated when someone participates in athletics. Injuries in some of our activities can and do occur. In extremely rare cases, death could also result. All athletes and parents need to be aware and understand this possibility. At Russell County, we will do all that we can to ensure a safe and healthy environment for our athletes.

Athletic Department Travel Policy

All team members must travel as a group to and from all athletic contests. The head coach and local school principal must approve any other exceptions to this mode of travel, in advance.

The following procedures should be followed if an athlete must have alternate travel from a contest:

1. A form seeking permission to transport the athlete home after a contest must be obtained from the school and be filled out 48 hours prior to the date of the contest and be received by the coach and approved by the principal or his designee. No e-mail notes allowed.

2. The form should specifically explain the reason for not traveling home with the team. This explanation may be needed in order for the principal to make an informed decision consistent with previous requests.
3. Prior to leaving the contest, the coach must actually speak with the parent to confirm that he/she, and not another student or friend, is driving.

Practice Sessions and Games

Practice sessions are normally closed to all spectators and there is 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. Education in any setting cannot be compromised.

Spectators at games, however, are very much encouraged. Positive and nurturing support of teams and athletes can be very helpful to performance in athletic contests.

Athletes Changing Teams

Whether by being cut, by quitting or by being dismissed, an athlete's membership on a team can be altered. While we want to promote participation, we also want to safeguard fairness and an ethical approach with regard to all coaches and teams. Any player cut or that quits a squad during tryouts is free to immediately try out or join another team. However if a player quits during that sports season he or she may not try out for another team until that season has ended.

Sports Booster Clubs

Sport booster clubs exist to support individual teams and the entire athletic program. Each booster club should have three primary goals: to raise funds to assist the athletic programs, to increase school spirit and to encourage and promote good sportsmanship.

Booster clubs are not a vehicle to remove coaches, to advance vested interests or to alter Athletic Department policy. They are service and support organizations, which work in harmony with the Russell County Board of Education and its athletic program.

All booster clubs must stay in compliance with state and local board guidelines. The close coordination of booster clubs and the athletic department is a must. The following guidelines have been set for all Russell County Booster Clubs:

1. The head coach or a designate shall be present at each booster club meeting.
2. Reasonable notification of meetings will be given.
3. All fundraisers must be submitted for Russell County Board of Education approval.
4. An updated list of all members will be kept.
5. Officers will be elected with the appropriate minutes kept. These will be submitted to the Athletic Director after each meeting.
6. Two signatures will be required on checks. **A coach cannot sign booster checks.**
7. A copy of each month's bank statement and copy of checks written will be turned in each month.
8. Needs will be prioritized and a budget will be presented to the athletic director on June 30 of each year.
9. On June 30 of each year, a full accounting of monies raised and expended will be presented to the athletic director.
10. Boosters will sign an agreement with the Russell County Board of Education. All parents are encouraged to join these worthwhile organizations and to become active members.





I/We hereby acknowledge that I/we have read the Russell County Athletics Handbook for Parents of Athletes and agree do adhere to the policies listed therein and the individual team rules set forth by the student-athlete's coach.

Student-Athlete's Name (Please Print)

Parent's Printed Name and Signature

Date

Parent's Printed Name and Signature

Date