



**Smith Mountain Lake  
Christian Academy**

*Athletics Handbook*

*This Handbook is not intended to be exhaustive in its content. In some instances, the spirit of the law is expressed in contrast to the absolute letter of the law. Circumstances could require modifications during the school year. Parents will be notified of any changes and/or updates.*

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## Letter to Osprey Nation

I am proud to be the Athletic Director at Smith Mountain Lake Christian Academy (SMLCA). It is a true honor to be part of your student's education, athletic, and spiritual growth as they make their way towards graduating as an Osprey. My goal is to continue building our athletic programs to not only develop champions on the court or field, but in the classroom and in their personal journey with Jesus Christ.

I believe for a student-athlete to be successful, they must excel in three areas; mental, physical, and spiritual. Our athletic programs should help student-athletes grow in these areas and help them reach their God-given potential.

This year our athletic department has seen the largest amount of participation in school history with more than half of our middle and high school students participating in at least one sport. The SMLCA Athletics Program has continued to grow each year, adding new sports and increasing our level of competition toward bringing championships to Osprey Nation!

Thank you for allowing your student to be part of what we are doing in SMLCA Athletics, and for the many sacrifices a parent of a student-athlete makes throughout the course of a school year. If you should ever need anything, please do not hesitate to reach out. I am more than willing to meet and discuss how SMLCA Athletics can better serve you and your family.

Thank you and Go Ospreys!!!

*Mike Greathouse*

## 1. VACA Conference

- Smith Mountain Lake Christian Academy (SMLCA) participates in athletics as a member of the *Virginia Association of Christian Athletics (VACA)*. This conference serves as an opportunity for our athletic programs to compete at the varsity, junior varsity, and middle school level against schools of like-minded approaches. The participating schools within the VACA cover a large landscape of Virginia, allowing our athletes to play teams from multiple areas of the state.
- As a member school, SMLCA is required to follow all VACA rules and guidelines to remain in good standing for post-season eligibility. If there are any questions about a VACA-related issue, please email the Athletic Director at [mgreathouse@smlca.org](mailto:mgreathouse@smlca.org).

### **VACA Eligibility**

- In the VACA Constitution, there are specific rules regarding the eligibility status of individual players. Below is an excerpt from the VACA Constitution on the specifics of individual eligibility. (Article VIII; Section I – Individual Eligibility)

### **Varsity**

- a student-athlete must be at least **13 years of age by September 30** of the school year in which he/she intends to compete. A student-athlete may not have reached age 19 by September 30 of the school year in which he/she intends to complete.

### **Junior Varsity**

- a student-athlete must be at least in the **7th grade or be 12 years of age by September 30** of the school year in which he/she intends to compete. A student-athlete may not be in the 11th grade, nor have reached age 17 by September 30 of the school year in which he/she intends to complete.

### **Middle School**

- a student-athlete must be at least in the **5th grade or be 10 years old by September 30** of the school year in which he/she intends to compete. A student-athlete may not be in ninth grade nor have reached age 15 by September 30 of the school year in which he/she intends to complete.

## 2. Participation in SMLCA Athletics

- Each student at SMLCA is encouraged to participate in athletics to represent their school for the glory of God. Every student has an equal opportunity to participate in these sports and activities given they meet the requirements for participation and possess the ability to perform in the sport (when try-outs are applicable).

## Sports Offerings

- SMLCA student-athletes are provided with opportunities to compete in athletics in each of the following three seasons; fall, winter, and spring. In each of these seasons, at least one male and female sport is offered. Male student-athletes may participate in male sports, while female student-athletes may participate in female sports. The only exceptions are co-ed teams which currently includes golf, tennis, cross-country, and archery.
  - Male sports consist of cross country, men's soccer, men's basketball, tennis, golf, archery, and baseball.
  - Female sports consist of cross country, volleyball, women's basketball, women's soccer, tennis, golf, and archery.

## VHSL Physicals

- Each SMLCA student-athlete is required to submit a VHSL Physical Form that has been completed and signed by a healthcare provider.
- VHSL Physical Forms are valid for an entire school year through June 30<sup>th</sup> and must be renewed each school year.
- Student-athletes are considered **ineligible** until their VHSL Physical Form has been submitted to the Athletic Director.

## Team Fees

- Each student-athlete that participates in a school-sponsored athletic program or activity is required to pay an athletic fee prior to the first game for each sport played.
- Student-athletes are considered **ineligible** until their athletic fee has been paid to the Athletic Director.
- Athletic fees (full time SMLCA students) for each sport are as follows:
  - Archery: \$25
  - Baseball: \$75 \*
  - Basketball: \$100 \*
  - Cross-Country: \$25
  - Golf: \$40
  - Football: \$200
  - Tennis: \$25
  - Soccer: \$75 \*
  - Volleyball: \$75 \*
  - Fishing - TBD

\* *If you are competing in Baseball, Basketball, Soccer, or Volleyball, and choose to compete in a second one of these sports, the fee for the second sport will be reduced by \$25.*

\* *Family rate will not exceed \$375 when multiple kids are participating in sports throughout the year.*

## **Team Rosters**

- Program development and the amount of student interest in specific athletic programs may determine roster size limitations for each team at every level. SMLCA coaches will limit team size through a try-out process prior to the start of each season. General roster guidelines are provided below, but are **subject to change** as deemed appropriate by the Athletic Director.

### **SMLCA Maximum Roster Size Guideline**

- Archery – N/A
- Baseball – 21
- Basketball – 12
- Soccer – 20
- Golf – N/A
- Cross-Country – N/A
- Tennis – N/A
- Volleyball – 12

## **3. Try-Out Policy**

- As a policy, SMLCA coaches will briefly meet with each individual player that has tried out and conduct an evaluation of their try-out. At the conclusion of the evaluation, the coach will inform the student of whether or not they have been selected to join the team. Any issues related to the try-out process should be directed to the Athletic Director, not individual coaches.
- Athletes are evaluated based on their ability to perform, character, and overall coachability. Grade level, years of experience, and age are secondary measures for player evaluations.
- Questions or concerns over try-out outcomes should be held until the 24 hour rule has been observed. Following the 24 hour mark, communication should be handled face-to-face or over the phone with the Coaches first, and then the Athletic Director. SMLCA strongly discourages the use of Facebook or any social media platform as a means to communicate any grievances with the Athletic Director and Program, Individual School Representatives, or the School as a whole.

## **4. Uniform Policy**

- Uniforms are a key part of SMLCA athletics as they allow our student-athletes to properly represent our school and honor God. Many student-athletes have specific

numbers they desire. The Athletic Department will strive to meet these wishes as best possible, while also following the below guidelines.



### **Order of Uniform Distribution**

1. Returning players desiring to keep their previous year number.
2. Returning players desiring to choose a new number.
3. New players in grade level order.
4. A situation may arise where a student-athlete needs a uniform size that SMLCA does not have an abundance of. When this occurs, the coach and/or Athletic Director will determine which players will receive specific uniforms.

### **Uniform Policy**

- Coaches and the Athletic Director will be directly responsible for the complete handling of uniforms. Athletes will receive their uniforms before each game or event and will be required to return them back to their coach at the conclusion of each game or event. The care and stewardship of practice jerseys will be the responsibility of the athlete.
- Game days allow for our student-athletes to dress up for school. The point of this privilege is to show a level of modesty, professionalism, and team-mindedness to our community and, in the case of away games, to our opponents. As representatives of our Christian school, adherence to SMLCA's dress policy is very important. Dress code violations may result in reduced playing time or the loss of this privilege.

### **5. Practice Policy**

- Practice is a critical element of sports preparation and performance; therefore, it is expected that all student-athletes will regularly attend practices. If a student-athlete must miss a practice, he/she must contact the coach in advance of practice time. A practice missed by a student-athlete without a valid reason will result in limited playing time for the following game. Additionally, student-athletes who miss practice may not be allowed to be in the starting line-up. If a student-athlete has repeatedly missed practices, he/she will be required to attend a meeting with the Athletic Director and Coaches to discuss their commitment to the team and their future status, up to and including potential dismissal from the team.

## 6. Playing Time Policy

- The SMLCA Athletic Department desires to see student-athletes succeed on the field or court just as much as in the classroom. While everyone would ideally have the opportunity to play in every game, that is not always feasible.
- Below is SMLCA's policy on playing time as it pertains to each level.

### Varsity

- The purpose of varsity sports is to compete at the highest level available to high school athletics, and ultimately to win as many games as possible.
- Varsity coaches are instructed to play the individuals that will give them the best opportunity to win.
- Seniority, age, or number of previous years played does not guarantee playing time.

### Junior Varsity

- Junior varsity sports are still seeking to compete and win games; however, it is also a developmental level of athletics. With that being said, athletes are not guaranteed playing time, but the goal is for junior varsity coaches to provide each player with opportunities to improve and develop as the season progresses.

### Middle School

- Middle school sports are meant to be competitive, but the main emphasis is on the development and understanding of the game.
- Every athlete is expected to be given the opportunity to participate throughout the course of the season. It is up to the coach to distribute minutes for each game.

## 7. Academics

- At SMLCA, we believe student-athletes are just that: students first, then athletes. Student-athletes are required to maintain good academic standing while participating in athletic programs.
- A student-athlete must maintain an **average of 70 (C-)** or above in each class to remain eligible for competition in an extracurricular activity. If a student-athlete does not maintain an **average of 70 (C-) or above in all courses**, he or she will adhere to the following guidelines.

- *Every Wednesday*, each student-athletes' course grades will be reviewed for eligibility. If a student-athlete has earned a *grade of 69 or below*, the Athletic Director and coaches will be notified, and the athlete will be placed on Academic Probation until the next Monday review. Student-athletes on Academic Probation are required to attend practice and work on course studies. Student-athletes on Academic Probation will be required to attend games with the expectation that they will sit out of competition and out of uniform in the team's designated area. This process starts September 1st of each school year.
- The Administration reserves the right to assess a player's right to participate in their seasonal sport after being placed multiple times on academic probation.
- Each quarter will reset the student-athlete's grade review, allowing for a "grade reset".
- Student-athletes are allowed only one "Special Grading Request" per year. The "Special Grading Request" is used when a student-athlete, who has been placed on Academic Probation, needs an assignment graded quickly in order to improve their grade average so they can be eligible to participate in a game or competition the week of Probation. Consultation with the teacher will be required to determine if the student-athlete may use their "Special Grading Request".

## **8. School Conduct**

- Student-athletes are representatives of SMLCA and are expected to follow the rules and guidelines provided in the SMLCA Student Handbook. Failure to follow the Student Handbook policies may result in Out-of-School or In-School Suspensions, and/or removal from athletic activities at the discretion of the Administration.
- Out-of-school suspensions will result in the student-athlete not participating in or attending any athletic events (practice or games) while on suspension.
- In-school suspensions will result in the student-athlete not participating in any athletic games while on suspension; however, they will be expected to attend practice. For any games, the student-athlete is expected to remain with the team, out of uniform, on the bench.
- 20 School Demerits will result in reduced playing time as well as potential removal from the team roster.

## 9. School Attendance

- School attendance is mandatory to participate in both practices and games. If a student-athlete does not attend school on the day of a game, they will not be allowed to participate in the game. Similarly, student-athletes may not practice if they do not attend school that day. Refer to the Practice Policy in section 5 for further clarification on practice expectations. While the necessity of medical and dental appointments are understood, a note from a physician or dental practice must be submitted to the office upon arrival.
- Habitual tardiness or leaving early from school on practice or game days will negatively affect playing time.
- Some Away games require travel distances of an hour or more. Part of team commitment is learning time management and the flexibility necessary to complete homework assignments despite a late night. **Student-athletes are required to arrive at school on time the next school day, despite a late night.** If a student-athlete misses school or arrives late the next day without a legitimate excuse, it will result in limited playing time the next game. Additionally, the student-athlete will not be allowed to be in the starting line-up for the next game.

## 10. Transportation

- SMLCA will provide transportation to all away games, as it is expected and required that all athletes will ride with the team, when possible. Transportation details will be communicated in advance and any changes will be sent out as soon as possible.
- In the cases where SMLCA is either closed or is dismissing early, student-athletes will be required to provide their own transportation to practices or games.
- With permission from the Athletic Director, student-athletes with valid drivers licenses and whose legal residence is located in the proximity of the opponent's venue may be allowed to drive their own vehicle to that game. If departing from school, these student-athletes will be required to follow the team vehicle.
- Student-athletes must sign a liability release form in order to ride home with non-family members or non-immediate family members following a game/event.

## 11. 24-Hour Rule

- When allowing your son/daughter to participate in athletics at SMLCA, you must agree to abide by the 24-Hour Rule. This rule provides an opportunity to collect thoughts about an issue, while also providing time for tempers to cool as necessary. It is critically important that our SMLCA family stays unified as we seek to represent the body of Christ through our Athletics program. We believe allowing 24 hours before reaching out to a coach can help prevent many of these potential conflicts. All SMLCA members are encouraged to use the Matthew 18 principle when dealing with conflict.

- The 24-Hour Rule states that if a parent/guardian has an issue or concern that they would like to discuss with a coach, they must wait 24 hours before doing so. If you still feel that you need to speak with a coach after the 24-hour period, it is appropriate to contact the coach by email or phone to schedule an appointment to discuss the matter at hand.
- Coaches are instructed not to engage with parents/guardians directly after games in any confrontational manner. The only appropriate thing to say to a coach after a win or loss is “good game coach”. Outside of that, we ask that you implement the 24-Hour Rule.
- If you need to speak with the Athletic Director about a coaching or playing issue, send an email to *mgreathouse@SMLCA.org* or call the SMLCA North Campus office to schedule an appointment.

## **12. Lettering Policy**

- Lettering in a sport means that the student-athlete has fulfilled the requirements below for their individual sport. If a student-athlete has not fulfilled these requirements, the Athletic Director and coaches may award a varsity letter IF they feel the particular student in question has contributed in that way.

### **Requirements to Receive a Varsity Letter**

- Participated in at least 50% of the quarters played by the varsity team in the regular season, or in the opinion of the coach have made a major contribution.
- Attended at least 90% of the in-season practices and workouts. Injuries, sickness, family emergencies, etc are the only exceptions to this rule and will be taken into consideration by the Athletic Director.
- Maintained good academic standing all season with a 2.0 GPA (Grade C) or higher.

## **13. Homeschool Participation**

- SMLCA welcomes homeschool students to participate in athletic programs. In an effort to ensure that all students (on-campus and homeschooled) are held to the same standards and expectations, SMLCA requires any homeschool participant and one parent/guardian to have an initial face-to-face meeting with the Athletic Director and Administration to review qualifications and determine admittance into the Athletics Program.

## **Academics**

- Homeschool student-athletes are required to report to the Athletic Director and Administration on what classes are being taken before a season begins.
- While we cannot perform weekly grade checks as we do for our SMLCA student-athletes, each homeschool parent is required to submit a mid-quarter and quarter end progress report detailing their student's grades and progress. These reports will be requested by the Athletic Director and should be submitted within two (2) weeks of the request. Failure to submit the requested documentation may result in dismissal from the Athletic Program.

## **Athletic Fees**

- Homeschool students are required to pay an athletic fee for each sport they participate in. The homeschool fees for each sport are provided below.
  - Archery - \$25
  - Basketball - \$150
  - Baseball - \$100
  - Cross-Country - \$25
  - Golf - \$50
  - Football - \$250
  - Soccer - \$100
  - Tennis - \$25
  - Volleyball - \$100

## **Roster Limitations**

- According to the VACA Constitution, member schools may allow homeschooled athletes to participate in their school's athletics as long as they do not use more than the following amount for each team.
  - Soccer – no more than 4 per team
  - Volleyball – no more than 3 per team
  - Basketball – no more than 3 per team
  - Baseball/Softball – no more than 4 per team
  - Golf – no more than 2 per team
  - Cross Country – no more than 3 per team
  - Tennis- TBD
  - Archery-TBD
  - Football - TBD

## 14. Sports Injury Procedures

- Throughout the course of the season, student-athletes may receive injuries sustained from participating in an athletic competition. It is extremely important for athletes to make parents and coaches aware of these injuries immediately. Once a student-athlete receives an injury, appropriate medical attention needs to be the first priority. For more serious injuries, a doctor's note is required before an athlete may return to play. An athlete that misses practices or games due to an injury may not return until they have been cleared by a physician.

### Concussions

- A concussion is a physical force against the brain that causes a change in behavior, which disrupts the normal functions of the brain. The severity of the concussion is dependent upon how many disconnections happen within the brain. Athletes showing any symptoms of a concussion will be **immediately ruled out** for the remainder of the contest and immediately placed in concussion protocol.

### Symptoms of a Concussion

- *Physical:* Headache, fatigue, light sensitivity, noise sensitivity, blurred vision, nausea, dizziness, numbness, poor sleep, impaired hearing, seizure
- *Cognitive:* Inattentiveness decreased concentration, poor memory, impaired judgement, slowed processing speed, executive dysfunction
- *Behavioral:* Depression, anxiety, agitation, irritability, aggression, impulsivity
- If it appears that an athlete may have sustained a concussion, they will be ruled ineligible to play for the remainder of the game, and will be required to go through concussion protocol before they are allowed to return to ANY practices or games.
- We will utilize a step-by-step procedure for gradually introducing an injured student-athlete back into athletics on a case by case basis. Each head injury is different; therefore, it must be treated as such.

In the step-by-step progression protocol, the 1<sup>st</sup> step begins usually between 24-48 hours after the incident:

**Step 1.** Directly after being diagnosed with a concussion, the athlete should have limited physical and cognitive activity.

**Step 2.** Light aerobic activity without resistance training. This is usually 5-10 min increments of walking, light stationary or bike riding.

**Step 3.** Sport-specific exercise – Light activities without head impact, still not doing any activities at 100%.

**Step 4.** Non-contact practice with progressive resistance training. The athlete may be entered into some drills and may begin doing things such as sprints and full-speed non-contact drills.

**Step 5.** Full, unrestricted practice

**Step 6.** Return to competition

*Concussion Protocol from Liberty University's Athletic Concussion Protocol; all recommendations are based on those outlined in the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA)'s Position Statement on Management of Sport Related Concussion. Other statements on concussions and head injuries were derived from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.*

## **15. Athletics Philosophy**

- SMLCA is blessed to offer a wide array of sports opportunities to its student population. Our athletic staff seeks to build a program that first and foremost glorifies God, while shepherding student-athletes to realize their full potential as Kingdom leaders both during competition and life as they live out Mark 12: 30-31.

### ***Mark 12:30-31***

*And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself. "There is no other commandment greater than these."*