

Santa Cruz High School
Parent Athletic Handbook



Being a Sport Parent
A Guide to a Successful Experience

The purpose of this handbook is to assist the parents and guardians of the student athletes of *(Insert School Name Here)* High School. Being a parent can be a difficult and trying experience for both the parents and the children. Participation in high schools sports can be a fulfilling and positive life experience if everyone has a better understanding of the issues and concerns that surround students' participation in interscholastic athletics.

In order to ensure that the educational experience that your son or daughter has while participating in our interscholastic athletic program are positive, we feel that it is vital that we share this information with you. The California Interscholastic Federation, in cooperation with Character Counts! Sports in Los Angeles and the Positive Coaching Alliance at Stanford University has developed most of this information.

We hope that you will find this information both informative and beneficial.

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WHY KIDS PARTICIPATE IN SPORTS

1. Having fun
2. Improving skills
3. Develop fitness/exercise
4. Being with my friends
5. Experiencing thrills and excitement
6. Being on a team
7. Opportunities for personal accomplishment
8. Staying in shape
9. Doing something I'm good at
10. Winning

TOP REASONS WHY KIDS QUIT SPORTS

1. Not having fun
2. Too much pressure from parents and peers
3. Too much emphasis on winning
4. Concerns about coaching
5. Not getting enough playing time

Interscholastic Athletics vs. Professional Athletics

It is very important that everyone understands the purpose of high school sports and not confuse them with collegiate or professional sports. Interscholastic high school sports is a classroom that teaches young people many values and characteristics that cannot be found in any other educational setting. CIF sports is about the "Pursuit of Victory with Honor..." and the efforts that are necessary to compete. Unfortunately, the examples that we witness on the newscasts and on televised sports are a different model, a "Professional" model that does not reflect the goals of high school sports.

Interscholastic - Educational Model	Professional Model – Business Model
<p>Teaching Athletics is a tool that schools use to teach core values that will benefit students in their adult lives.</p>	<p>Entertainment Winning is most important because it sells tickets and fills the stadiums. The financial aspects of business and profits are their motivation.</p>
<p>Teaching life lessons is most important, even at the expense of winning.</p>	<p>Winning is most important.</p>
<p>Behavior Expectations Athletics promotes character development in our students. Coaches include behavior, character and attitude as part of the evaluation process.</p>	<p>Performance Expectations Performance expectations, not behavioral expectations. Do your job during the contest. Win and be entertaining. (this is why you see poor examples on TV)</p>
<p>Teams, athletes and coaches are an important aspect of a comprehensive high school. A coach is a teacher; their classroom is on the fields and in the gyms.</p>	<p>Teams, athletes and coaches are commodities.</p>

What We Believe About High School Sports “Pursuing Victory with Honorsm”

At its best, athletic competition can hold intrinsic values for our society. It is a symbol of a great ideal: pursuing victory with honor. The love of sports is deeply embedded in our national consciousness. The values of millions of participants and spectators are directly and dramatically influenced by the values conveyed by organized sports. In the belief that the impact of sports can and should enhance the character and uplift the ethics of the state, we have established a framework of principles and a common language of values that should be adopted and practiced widely.

On November 5, 1999 nearly 50 interscholastic sports and educational leaders representing California's 1292 high schools voted unanimously to adapt and endorse “Pursuing Victory With Honor” as operating beliefs and principles of the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF). “Pursuing Victory With Honor” is the result of a conference convened May 12-14, 1999 in Scottsdale Arizona by the Josephson Institute of Ethics, CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition and the United States Olympic Committee. Listed below are just a few of the principles. For the complete list go to: www.cifstate.org

- The essential elements of character building and ethics in CIF sports are embodied in the concept of sportsmanship and six core principles: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and good citizenship. The highest potential of sports is achieved when competition reflects these "six pillars of character."
- To foster the development of good character, school sports programs must be conducted in a manner that enhances the academic, emotional, social, physical and ethical development of student athletes and teaches them positive life skills that will help them become personally successful and socially responsible.
- Participation in school sports programs is a privilege, not a right. To earn that privilege, student athletes must abide by the rules and they must conduct themselves, on and off the field, as positive role models who exemplify good character.
- Everyone involved in CIF competition; parents, spectators, associated student body leaders and all auxiliary groups has a duty to honor the traditions of the sport and to treat other participants with respect. Coaches have a special responsibility to model respectful behavior and the duty to demand that their athlete's refrain from disrespectful conduct including verbal abuse of opponents and officials profane or belligerent trash-talking, taunting and inappropriate celebrations.
- The profession of coaching is a profession of teaching. In addition to teaching the mental and physical dimensions of their sport, coaches, through words and example, must also strive to build the character of their athletes by teaching them to be trustworthy, respectful, responsible, fairness, caring and good citizens.

What Parents Can Do

Before the Game

- Tell your child you are proud of him or her regardless of how well he or she plays.
- Make a commitment to honor the game no matter what others may do.

During the Game

- Cheer good plays by both teams.
- Mention good calls by the officials to others.
- Encourage others to honor the game.
- Remember to have fun! Enjoy the day.

After the Game

- Ask your child open-ended questions:
 - “What was the most enjoyable part of the game for you? Least enjoyable?”
 - “Do you feel you gave it your best effort?”
 - “How did you respond to any mistakes you made?”
 - “Did you bounce back?”
 - “What did you learn from the game?”
- Tell your child again that you are proud of him or her! (Especially if the game didn't go well)
- Thank officials for doing a difficult job.
- Thank the coaches for their effort.

What If

- The official makes a “bad” call against your team? *Respect and Honor the Game—be silent!*
- Another spectator on your team begins to berate the official? *Ask them to Respect and Honor the Game, that officials are human and make mistakes.*
- Your child does not get to play/participate in the game? *Review the reasons why kids play sports on page 3.*

Modified and adapted from:
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Pursuing Victory With Honor*

Code of Conduct for Parents/Guardians

Athletic competition of interscholastic age children should be fun and should also be a significant part of a sound educational program. Everyone involved in sports programs has a duty to assure that their programs impart important life skills and promote the development of good character. Essential elements of character building are embodied in the concept of sportsmanship and six core ethical values: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and good citizenship (the "Six Pillars of Character"SM). The highest potential of sports is achieved when all involved consciously Teach, Enforce, Advocate and Model (T.E.A.M.) these values and are committed to the ideal of pursuing victory with honor. Parents/guardians of student athletes can and should play an important role and their good-faith efforts to honor the words and spirit of this Code can dramatically improve the quality of a child's sports experience.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

- *Trustworthiness* — Be worthy of trust in all you do.
- *Integrity* — Live up to high ideals of ethics and sportsmanship and encourage players to pursue victory with honor. Do what's right even when it's unpopular or personally costly.
- *Honesty* — Live honorably. Don't lie, cheat, steal or engage in any other dishonest conduct.
- *Reliability* — Fulfill commitments. Do what you say you will do.
- *Loyalty* — Be loyal to the school and team; Put the interests of the team above your child's personal glory.


RESPECT

- *Respect* — Treat all people with respect at all times and require the same of your student athletes.
- *Class* — Teach your child to live and play with class and be a good sport. He/she should be gracious in victory and accept defeat with dignity, compliment extraordinary performance and show sincere respect in pre- and post-game rituals.
- *Disrespectful Conduct* — Don't engage in disrespectful conduct of any sort including profanity, obscene gestures, offensive remarks of a sexual nature, trash-talking, taunting, boastful celebrations or other actions that demean individuals or the sport.
- *Respect for Officials* — Treat game officials with respect. Don't complain or argue about calls or decisions during or after an athletic event.

RESPONSIBILITY

- *Importance of Education* — Support the concept of "being a student first." Commit your child to earning a diploma and getting the best possible education. Be honest with your child about the likelihood of getting an athletic scholarship or playing on a professional level. Reinforce the notion that many universities will not recruit student athletes who do not have a serious commitment to their education. Be the lead contact for college and university coaches in the recruiting process.
- *Role Modeling* — Remember, participation in sports is a privilege, not a right. Parents/guardians too should represent the school, coach and teammates with honor, on and off the court/field. Consistently exhibit good character and conduct yourself as a positive role model.
- *Self-Control* — Exercise self-control. Don't fight or show excessive displays of anger or frustration.
- *Healthy Lifestyle* — Promote to your child the avoidance of all illegal or unhealthy substances including alcohol, tobacco, drugs and some over-the-counter nutritional supplements, as well as unhealthy techniques to gain, lose or maintain weight.
- *Integrity of the Game* — Protect the integrity of the game. Don't gamble or associate with gamblers.

**Our athletic program subscribes to the Pursuing Victory With Honor Arizona Sports Summit Accord. "Pursuing Victory With Honor" and the "Six Pillars of Character" are service marks of the CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition, a project of the Josephson Institute of Ethics. Reproduced*

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- *Sexual Conduct* — Sexual or romantic contact of any sort between students and adults involved with interscholastic athletics is improper and strictly forbidden. Report misconduct to the proper authorities.

FAIRNESS

- *Fairness and Openness* — Live up to high standards of fair play. Be open-minded, always willing to listen and learn.

CARING

- *Caring Environment* — Consistently demonstrate concern for student athletes as individuals and encourage them to look out for one another and think and act as a team.

CITIZENSHIP

- *Spirit of the Rules* — Honor the spirit and the letter of rules. Teach your children to avoid temptations to gain competitive advantage through improper gamesmanship techniques that violate the highest traditions of sportsmanship.

I have read and understand the requirements of this Code of Conduct and acknowledge that I may be disciplined if I violate any of its provisions.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

What Parents Can Expect From Their School

Communications you should expect from your child's coach:

1. Philosophy of the coach
2. Expectations the coach has for your child
3. Location and times of all practices and games
4. Team requirements, i.e. practices, special equipment, out of season training
5. Procedures to follow should your child be injured during participation
6. Discipline that may result in the denial of your child's participation

Communications that coaches expect from parents:

1. Concerns expressed directly to the coach
2. Specific concerns with regard to a coaches philosophy and /or expectations
3. Notification of any illness or injury or missed practices

Appropriate concerns to discuss with the coaches:

1. Treatment of your child, mentally and physically
2. Ways to help your child improve
3. Concerns about your child's behavior

It is very difficult to accept your child not playing as much as you may hope. Coaches are teachers. They make judgment decisions based on what they believe to be best for all students involved. As you have seen from the above list, certain things can and should be discussed with the coach. Other things, such as the ones listed below, must be left to the professional judgment of the coach.

Issues not appropriate to discuss with the coach:

1. Playing Time
2. Team strategy
3. Play calling
4. Other student athletes

There are often situations that may require a conference between the coach and the parents. The student athlete will be invited and involved in these meetings. To resolve the problem, we must have everyone's help and involvement. These meetings are encouraged.

If there is a problem:

1. Have your son/daughter talk to the coach, one on one (it's part of growing up).

If this does not resolve the problem, the parents should:

1. Call the school and request a returned call or a face to face meeting with the coach.
2. Coaches will make time available in their day to meet with students and parents.

Parents MUST not:

1. Confront the coach before/after practice
2. Confront the coach before or after a game

Coaches are teachers. A parent would not walk into a classroom during class time and yell at the teacher about a poor grade, so please do not confront the coach in public setting. There are proper ways to communicate and have your concerns addressed. Practices and games are highly emotional times for everyone involved, players, coaches and parents. Meetings and concerns do not get resolved during emotional times.

What to do if the meeting with the coach did not provide a satisfactory resolution: Call the school Athletic Director. The Athletic Director will attempt to mediate a resolution.

We hope this information helps make your child's and your experience with the athletic program less stressful and more enjoyable.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **I am very concerned about my child's coach, but I fear that a conversation with the coach will lead to retaliation and resentment. What should I do?**

If your child was having problems in their math or science class, would you call the school and ask to schedule an appointment with the teacher to find out what you as parents can do to assist your child? If your child continued to have pain in their teeth long after visiting the dentist, would you schedule a follow-up visit? The answers are obvious, YES. Your concerns regarding retaliation should not enter your mind. Of course, much will depend on your manner of inquiry. Like most people, coaches will get defensive when attacked so the best method is to schedule a face-to-face meeting with the coach and include your child at the meeting, just like a meeting with their math teacher. Make sure you are seeking answers to questions that will ultimately enhance your child's sports experience and what you, as a parent, can do to assist in that effort.

2. **Why do school administrators protect incompetent coaches?**

Much of the answer is in defining the term incompetent and the age-old adage, "in the eye of the beholder." Often when you hear individuals in the stands yelling "fire the bum" or "the coach doesn't know what their doing" it really means that their child is not getting enough playing time or the fan's ego is hurt. There are incompetent coaches just as there are incompetents in other professions. However, school administrators, based on the educational philosophy of the school and the mission of educational athletics to promote the positive values of the school, evaluate coaches yearly. Retention of coaches should be based upon their ability to assist and improve their student's character development and life long learning skills. Winning contests is just the icing on the cake.

3. **When my child played youth sports everyone got to play. Now that my child has made the high school team, it seems she doesn't get much playing time. Should I encourage my child to seek other interests?**

You are assuming that your child's role on the team has not been rewarding. Listed on page three (3) of this handbook are the results of a national study on why kids plays sports and nowhere in the top ten answers is "playing time." Kids play for a variety of reasons and everyone including parents have a desire for more playing time and a higher profile on the team. Not everyone can be the star on a team, yet the most successful teams are ones where all members contribute, be it in practice or the games. Kids learn great life-long skills about commitment, dedication, teamwork, effort, accountability and never giving up while participating in high school sports. These are the character traits we all want our children to learn.

4. **How can I ensure that my child is getting a qualified coach?**

In 1998 the State CIF instituted a nationally recognized program "Coaching Principles" that teaches coaches how to be better at their profession. Over 11,000 coaches in California have been certified in the past few years in this class that covers sports philosophy (Pursuing Victory with Honor), physiology (how to deal with students and adults), nutrition, team management, risk management and basic CIF rules and regulations. Ask if your schools' coaches are required to take this class as a requirement to coach. Go to www.cifstate.org and click on "education programs" for more information on this program and others that can help schools and their coaches.

5. **Our high school team has not won very many games, shouldn't the coach let the younger kids play and gain experience?**

It will depend on the philosophy of the coach making the decision. When teams are struggling to win, everyone has suggestions. The coach must balance the desire to play the best players while keeping an eye on the future. It is not an easy decision, but ultimately, it is the coach's decision who gets to play.

6. Is one particular coaching "style" more effective?

About the time that you argue that one style is more effective, a host of exceptions comes to mind. There is no one way to coach. We generalize that there are the three basic coaching styles as taught in the CIF "Coaching Principles" classes; command, submissive and cooperative. We strongly advocate a combination of all three. A command style coach might be viewed as a "my way or the highway" type of personality, yet when it comes to the health and safety of the students, the coach must be assertive as to expectations. There are times when the best lessons kids learn are when we let them fail and they have to recover and studies have shown that kids and teams excel best when the team has some say in the goals and decisions for the team. However, again, ultimately the coach is the adult and has the duty to ensure that the kids grow and mature under their leadership and good coaches use a multitude of tools and styles to accomplish that goal.

7. Why is officiating so poor at our high school games? I wouldn't yell so much if the officials were better.

An unfortunate attitude in our society these days is to "place the blame" and the official becomes an easy target or villain. We hope that you will recognize officials the same as we do players, coaches and teams...some are good and some are not so good. It is difficult finding people who are willing to become game officials as the potential for abuse far out-weighs the pay. High school sports officials receive very low pay (this is not the NBA) and most officials do it for the love of the sport. Officials, just like coaches and teachers, are constantly being evaluated and rated for competency, but they are human and do make mistakes. But, as the student in the videotape said, "give them a break, they are right most of the time." Be a Fan, not a Fanatic!

8. Should I be concerned with the increase in violence in sports?

YES! We all need to be concerned about the increasing violence that takes place during and after the contest. Most incidents are occurring in the stands and parking lots, not on the field of play by the game participants. Most parents and fans are outstanding role models for kids. However, it only takes a few people to ruin this great sporting experience. Schools must set and demand high behavioral expectations from spectators, including parents. Pre-season parent meetings like the one you have attended help set those standards for parents. As the young lady in the videotape stated, "the good parents have to stand up and tell the bad parents to sit down and shut up." Parents, school administrators, coaches and spectators have to be courageous and demand acceptable behavior from all involved in high school sports if we are going to provide positive life lessons for our children.