

High School Interscholastic Athletic Program

Parents' Handbook



Irvine Unified School District

Adopted February 1994

Revised 7/05

Athletic Programs and Personnel Complaint Procedures

Complaints concerning District athletic programs and personnel are welcomed when motivated by a sincere desire to improve the quality of the athletic program and to perform tasks more effectively.

Personnel or Program Complaints

1. Complaints regarding an individual coach must be made directly to the coach by the complainant. Every effort should be made to resolve the problem at this stage.
2. Complaints not resolved with the individual coach must be submitted in writing to the Athletic Director. The written complaint must contain the following:
 - a. The name of the coach or the specific sport, level of competition, and/or the general athletic concern involved.
 - b. A brief but specific summary of the nature of the complaint and the facts surrounding same.
 - c. The complaint must be signed by the complainant.

Note: Because playing time and level or position placement are the sole responsibility of the coach, complaints regarding these items will not be heard beyond the Athletic Director.

3. For complaints not tied to an individual coach, the first contact for concerns about any phase of the athletic program is the Athletic Director. This may be done either verbally or in writing.
4. Complaints regarding an individual coach or program not resolved with the Athletic Director will be referred to the school's administrator in charge of Athletics for resolution. The administrator in charge of Athletics shall receive a copy of the written complaint and a written report of the efforts made to resolve the problem. The complainant shall receive a written response.
5. Complaints not resolved by the school's administrator in charge of Athletics and/or the principal may be referred in writing to the Superintendent for study and resolution.

Conduct of Coaches

Above all else, athletics at the high school level, is an educational endeavor. Athletes learn lessons that serve them for their entire lives. Among these are sportsmanship, perseverance, teamwork, and appropriate responses to winning and to losing. For these lessons, each coach is the teacher.

The coach sets the tone for these lessons, and the **coach's behavior serves as a model** to the crowd, and most of all, to the athletes.

Athletic coaches in the Irvine Unified School District are expected to reflect a positive attitude in all their approaches to and their interactions with officials and opponents.

There can never be justification for physical or verbal abuse of an athlete, nor for personal malignment in any form. Coaches are expected always to treat every athlete with dignity and respect.

In the Irvine Unified School District athletic programs, **swearing and the use of obscenities are always inappropriate**, whether at practice or during an event.

Eligibility

The student must have passed a minimum of 20 units during the previous grading period. Only 5 units can be in physical education.

The student must be currently passing 20 units of class work, regardless of GPA, in order to be eligible.

Before a student can participate in a sport, he/she must have a clearance from the Athletic Secretary stating the student athlete has a physical, health insurance, parent consent form, an Associated Student Body card, and has signed the athletic code.

The student must be living with the parent/guardian within the boundaries of the school attendance area. If not, the student must be eligible under an intra- or inter-district permit.

Policy adopted by the Board of Education provides that participants with less than a 2.0 average for the last marking period may be placed on "Academic Probation" for the subsequent quarter. Students on Academic Probation will work with school staff to monitor progress and provide guidance and support. Two consecutive quarters of less than a 2.0 average will result in ineligibility for the subsequent quarter and continue until a 2.0 average is attained. During the four high school years, no student will be placed on Academic Probation more than once.

Irvine Unified School District

MISSION STATEMENT Athletics

Our mission is to enrich the mental, physical, and emotional well-being of all students by providing competitive opportunities in which the lifelong values of sportsmanship, individual effort, teamwork, integrity, and commitment are emphasized.

(Adopted by the Irvine Unified School District in 1991)

Irvine Unified School District

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Beliefs

- We believe **students** are our highest priority.
- We believe the **dignity, worth, and self-esteem of participants** should be paramount in all athletic activities.
- We believe the most important result of competition is the **development of life-long values and skills**.
- We believe the athletic program is an **integral part** of the high school experience.
- We believe high school athletics should be **fun and rewarding**.
- We believe athletic programs are most beneficial when they are **competitive**.
- We believe **winning is an attitude** resulting from optimum preparation, concentrated effort and a deep commitment to excel.
- We believe well-designed athletic programs promote **community and school pride**.
- We believe **open communication and mutual respect** among coaches, parents, and athletes provide the foundation of a successful athletic program.
- We believe morale, satisfaction, and performance are enhanced when **athletes work together** as a team.
- We believe **well qualified coaches and program administrators** are important components in a successful athletic program.
- We believe **positive parent support** and involvement enhance student growth and program quality.

Conduct of Spectators

Spectators, both students and adults, are an important and integral part of all athletic events. Spectators serve to validate the positive values learned through athletic experiences, and to support the personal efforts and successes of individual athletes.

Occasionally, the excesses of spectator behavior can unnecessarily taint the activities at an athletic event. What follows is an effort to provide clarity about inappropriate behavior, and about the consequences of such behavior.

At athletic events, to reduce the potential for conflict among spectator groups, it is **appropriate** to sit on the team side or team seating area, if so designated.

At athletic events, it is **inappropriate** for spectators to engage in:

- violence
- verbal abuse
- vandalism
- throwing objects
- obscenity or obscene gestures
- possession or use of alcohol
- using illegal substances
- harassment of officials

Each of these inappropriate spectator behaviors, whether by students or adults, shall be cause for **immediate removal** from the event. A pattern of these behaviors shall result in being barred from future events.

Conduct of Parents

At the high school level, the importance of parents behaving as model spectators cannot be overstated. Support by parents for the rules of conduct defined in Conduct of Athletes is also critical. Of particular concern are parents who directly or indirectly participate in providing alcohol to athletes and/or knowingly permit athletes to drink alcohol. Such parents are potentially responsible for the adverse consequences to their own athlete as well as to the team.

Conduct of Athletes

An important part of the educational aspect of high school athletics is the learning of behavior appropriate to the circumstances. Because athletes often perform publicly, their behavior is subject to more than the usual scrutiny.

With this in mind, there are some behaviors that are particularly offensive and are subject to standard consequences.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

If an athlete is ejected from a game for any reason, (unsportsmanlike conduct, fighting, etc.), the athlete shall be prohibited from participating in the next contest also.

Drugs and/or Alcohol

Possession or use of drugs or alcohol, in or out of season, on school time or at a school event, or based on verifiable information outside of school, shall result in immediate removal of the athlete from participation in all athletic contests for not less than 10 school days. A second offense shall result in immediate removal from the team for the remainder of the season, up to one calendar year with an appeal process available to the student at the end of the season.

Interaction with Officials

If an athlete physically assaults an official, the athlete shall be banned from interscholastic athletics for the remainder of the student's eligibility (CIF Blue Book Sect. 522).

Parent support for this Athletic Code of Conduct is crucial to its success.

If in the judgment of the Superintendent or designee, a specific case merits review, the Superintendent or designee may convene a panel consisting of all high school Athletic Directors to consider an appeal.

Parents Supporting Their Own Athletes

Learning Even in a Losing Cause

The life lessons learned through participation in athletic competition are held in high regard by current and former athletes. Particularly beneficial is the experience of working cooperatively toward a common purpose in a close knit group, the values of team work, and the development of the concept of fair play.

While the Board of Education takes great pride in winning, it does not condone "winning at any cost," and discourages any and all pressures which might tend to neglect good sportsmanship and good mental health. At all times, the athletic program must be conducted in such a way as to justify it as in educational activity.

The educational side of athletics is to help students benefit from the lessons learned through participation. While winning is usually more fun, the lessons learned from losing are often beneficial.

Parents can help athletes learn from their losses by:

Moving From the Loser's Column

- Blaming
 - the coach
 - other players
 - officiating

- Focusing too long on errors or mistakes

- What didn't work

- Bemoaning the loss

- Denial and anger

Moving To the Winner's Column

- Crediting
 - the other team
 - players on the other team

- Focusing on what might be improved next time
 - by my athlete
 - by the team

- What did work

- Giving one's best effort

- Acceptance and move on

Learning the Life-Long Lessons of Winning

In winning as in losing, the long-range value of the experience is promoted under certain conditions. An undue emphasis on winning can easily leave the false impression with student athletes that their athletic activity has value **ONLY** if the competition results in a "win." A winning-is-everything approach leads directly to unsportsmanlike behavior and to cheating, and translates to unacceptable ethics and life-long values. In an educational setting, we emphasize preparing in a fashion to be competitive, and we focus on doing our best.

Often, though certainly not always, sound preparation and focusing on doing our best results in winning the contest. However, the experience of winning carries an enhanced value if parents can help students, even in winning, **focus on the efforts and strategies**, both by individuals and by the team, that resulted in the win.

Parents can help athletes learn the real value of winning by:

- Offering congratulations for winning **AND** identifying and discussing the efforts made by individuals and by the team.
- Rewarding the winning efforts **AND** rewarding the growth in individuals and in the team – the growth that contributed to the win.
- Emphasizing competitiveness.
- Emphasize doing your best.

High School Athletics versus Club Programs

High school athletics is truly co-curricular and is not a pay-for-play club program. Student athletes earn credits toward diploma requirements. The high school athletic program is designed and operated deliberately as a valued educational experience for all participating athletes. Competitive success is desired and valued, but is always secondary to the educational result.

Keeping Parent Support in Perspective

All parents should be proud parents. All parents should be advocates for their children. All parents should help and encourage their children to pursue their potential. When these important parental attributes are taken to extreme, however, athletes can miss important life learnings, and can miss significant growth opportunities. Unfortunately, we have all seen parents who seem satisfied *only* when their athlete is starring and/or winning. Apparently trying to relieve their own life through the life of their athlete, some parents seem to have difficulty maintaining perspective.

Supporting student athletes, even though one may disagree with the coaches' judgment, regarding playing time and level or position placement, is an important parent role. (However, challenging the coaches' judgment regarding playing time or selection which is his/her assigned role, is not appropriate). Supporting the athlete in the pursuit of improved skills or alternate interests is the appropriate parent role.

Balance is the key. Maintaining a balanced perspective between savoring the possibility of one's student athlete becoming a professional athlete, and a realistic assessment of skills and possibilities. Keeping a balance between protecting one's athlete from adverse events and helping a student athlete learn from the lessons of adversity. The balance between blindly defending one's athlete when assessments seem unfair and helping a student athlete learn to view circumstances from an outside perspective. Balance between blaming others and accepting responsibility. Balance between holding onto perceived injustices and moving forward positively.

Being a supporting parent is a complex business. The athletic skill of balance is appropriately applied here, too.

Perspective on College Scholarships

Many high school athletes dream of becoming a professional athlete. It is a notable dream, but somewhat unrealistic for most high school athletes. Many parents dream of their son getting a football scholarship or their daughter a full-ride college scholarship. That, too, is unrealistic for most kids and parents. The type of athletic program offered in the Irvine Unified School District (IUSD), emphasizes discipline, character, and cooperation. It accentuates the classroom and getting an education first. It doesn't emphasize winning at all costs nor displaying one player so that a given athlete is more important than the team.

We want every athlete who is deserving of a scholarship to get one. Coaches in IUSD will do everything they can to help athletes go to college and to procure a scholarship, if one is merited. IUSD will offer a quality program that emphasizes education.

Some parents will agree with the above for everyone except their son, who was all-county Jr. All American. To those parents we say, look at the statistics. In the 1993 study released by Utah State University shows the likelihood of a high school senior getting an athletic scholarship and moving on to professional athletics:

- 59% of high school football and basketball players believe they will get a college scholarship.
- 98 out of 100 high school athletes will never play in college.
- Only 1 out of every 100 high school athletes will receive a scholarship to a Division I school.
- Only 1 out of 12,000 athletes will go on to become a professional athlete.
- Only 1 in every 5,200 college football players will go on to become a professional player.
- 67% of all NFL players do not have a college degree.
- The average career in the NFL lasts 3-1/2 years.

Participation in athletics is highly valued in the Irvine community. The importance of scholarships, however, must be placed in a broader perspective.