



ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

H I G H S C H O O L

Athletic Handbook

2017-2018

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MISSION STATEMENT

St. Thomas Aquinas High School is a caring community, transforming the lives of students through a rigorous Catholic education, guided by the light of the Gospel.

- Developing their unique gifts,
- Strengthening their personal faith and integrity, and
- Fostering within them a commitment to justice, service, and moral leadership.

ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT PHILOSOPHY

The St. Thomas Aquinas Athletic Department tries to instill in student-athletes the desire for excellence, hard work and integrity on the field, in the classroom and in our community. We believe that all of our student-athletes are blessed with natural talents and our coaches will strive to develop and encourage each of our student-athletes to develop their unique gifts.

Student-athletes engage in athletics to enrich the educational experience at St. Thomas Aquinas. By pairing academics and athletics, the St. Thomas Aquinas Athletic Department will maximize the overall experience for both athletes and parents.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The ultimate goal of athletics is to see each participant grow to become an effective citizen in a competitive society. St. Thomas Aquinas athletics will achieve this goal through specific objectives:

1. Teamwork- Student-athletes will develop self-discipline, respect for authority and a great work ethic. Each student will learn to place team objectives above individual achievements.
2. Strive for Success- Student-athletes will learn that success doesn't come easy. They will learn to accept defeat by striving to win with intense dedication. They will develop a desire to excel to their best ability.
3. Display Good Sportsmanship- Student-athletes will learn to treat teammates, coaches, officials, and opponents as they would like to be treated. They will develop their capacity to control their emotions, be honest, and to cooperate with others.

REPRESENTING ST. THOMAS AQUINAS THROUGH ATHLETICS

Participating in the athletic programs at St. Thomas Aquinas High School is a privilege. The St. Thomas Aquinas Athletic Department views interscholastic athletics as an opportunity for student participation in an organized, competitive environment. While the ultimate goal of athletic competition is to know victory, the achievement of objectives such as fair play, sportsmanship, skill acquisition, and work ethic cannot be overlooked. Winning traditions are founded upon the concepts of pride, respect, dedication, character and loyalty. Coaches, athletes, and parents alike must strive to ensure that the athletic teams at St. Thomas Aquinas represent themselves in a manner that is conducive to both competitive spirit and good sportsmanship.

COMMITMENT TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Every St. Thomas Aquinas student is responsible for his/her own personal academic success. This responsibility guides the role that athletics plays in each student's life. Athletic participation is secondary to the academic requirements of every St. Thomas Aquinas student-athlete. Academic commitments take precedence over any athletic interest. Student-athletes need to properly plan and prepare their academic workload given the time and schedule demands made on athletes. Participation in athletics is not an excuse for poor academic performance. At St. Thomas Aquinas, schoolwork comes first!

SPORTS PROGRAMS

St. Thomas Aquinas competes in Division II of the New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association. All of our teams compete in Division II, except for Boys and Girls Basketball (Div III), girls lacrosse (Div III), and Alpine Skiing (Div III). The following programs are offered each season:

FALL

- Boys:
 - o Football
 - o Soccer
- Girls:
 - o Field Hockey
 - o Soccer
 - o Volleyball
- Coed:
 - o Golf
 - o Cross Country

WINTER

- Boys:
 - o Basketball
 - o Ice Hockey
- Girls:
 - o Basketball
 - o Ice Hockey
- Coed:
 - o Alpine Skiing
 - o Indoor Track
 - o Swimming & Diving

SPRING

- Boys:
 - o Baseball
 - o Lacrosse
 - o Tennis
- Girls:
 - o Softball
 - o Lacrosse
 - o Tennis
- Coed:
 - o Track & Field

LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION

Varsity: Varsity athletes are those student-athletes that exhibit the most skill of all the student-athletes that tryout for a team. These student-athletes will have the opportunity to compete against equally talented athletes from opposing schools. The purpose of varsity athletics is to mold a competitive team for St. Thomas Aquinas High School.

JV: Junior varsity athletes are those that are still learning the skills necessary for varsity competition. Junior varsity players will be given the opportunity to participate in competitive situations against opposing schools. These situations will allow student-athletes the opportunity to gain valuable knowledge, skill and experience needed for varsity competition. Occasionally, junior varsity athletes may be asked to participate in a varsity contest by the coaching staff based upon the progress the student-athlete has made. This should not be misinterpreted as a permanent move to the varsity team.

Freshmen/Reserve: Freshmen/Reserve athletes are those that are not yet ready for the competition level of junior varsity contests. St. Thomas Aquinas allows all ninth grade students the opportunity to play at the freshman/reserve level. St. Thomas Aquinas offers freshman/reserve level play in a number of sports based on the level of interest in each particular sport. Freshman/Reserve teams are designed to allow student-athletes to gain experience, skill and knowledge of the sport. Occasionally, students may be asked to participate on the junior varsity or varsity team by the coaching staff based upon the progress the student-athlete has made. This should be not misinterpreted as a permanent move to the next level of competition.

STA STUDENTS ARE STA ATHLETES

St. Thomas Aquinas prides itself on being a community. In the spirit of that community, St. Thomas Aquinas requires that all student-athletes may only participate in interscholastic sports for their school, St. Thomas Aquinas. St. Thomas Aquinas students may not play for interscholastic teams for public schools if the sport is available at St. Thomas Aquinas.

PREREQUISITES FOR PARTICIPATION

SPORTS REGISTRATION

Each student-athlete must be registered via FamilyID (www.FamilyID.com) prior to each season of participation.

PHYSICAL FORM

Each student-athlete must have a physical exam completed by a board certified doctor prior to participating in a school sanctioned practice or game. Student-athletes must complete and turn in a physical exam every two years to the STA Athletic Trainer. It is recommended that student-athletes should have a physical completed prior to their freshman and junior years, unless they are a transfer student. Student-athletes who participate in more than one season are not obligated to have a physical exam prior to each season.

IMPACT

IMPACT is a computerized test used to assess the neuro-cognitive abilities of the brain. It is used by medical providers to assess the healing process with a concussion. The first step of IMPACT is to have a baseline test done prior to athletic activity and the potential for concussion. This will then be used to assess the healing process after sustaining a concussion. IMPACT testing is required to be completed for nearly all STA athletes prior to the sports season beginning. There are a few exceptions, being: golf, XC, indoor track, track and field, tennis, and swimming. However, if your child plays one of these sports, they are more than welcome to get baseline tested if they wish. STA provides this testing at no charge and is administered at the school via Ashley Leighton, STA Athletic Trainer.

ACADEMIC AND DISCIPLINARY GOOD STANDING

Student-athletes at St. Thomas Aquinas High School are here for their education, first and foremost. Athletic participation is a privilege granted only to those who are deserving of this opportunity. Problems with grades or behavior are justifiable reasons for Academic or Disciplinary Ineligibility. Student-Athletes are expected to:

1. Meet all academic criteria for eligibility as stated in the Student Handbook
2. Remain in good disciplinary standing
3. Attend school on time, by 8:30 am, to be eligible to practice or play on a daily basis

SPORTSMANSHIP

THE SCHOOL'S ROLE

It is the expectation of the St. Thomas Aquinas High School Athletic Department that everyone in the school community will conform to and demonstrate good sportsmanship and fair play during all athletic contests. This concept is presented to the staff and to the athletes throughout the school year. The Athletic Department at St. Thomas Aquinas High School views the need for good sportsmanship as a very important issue. We will continue in our efforts to assure that every student-athlete understands this concept.

THE ATHLETE'S ROLE

Student-athletes at St. Thomas Aquinas must respect their teammates, coaches, game officials and opponents. Every member of a St. Thomas Aquinas athletic program has a specific role to fill for their respective program. St. Thomas Aquinas expects its athletes to compete every time they go to practice or a game, but to never lose sight of the ultimate goals of the program. St. Thomas Aquinas athletes need to learn to control their emotions during games and remain focused on helping their team realize victory. Be thankful for worthy opponents and competent officials, without them athletes would never be able to compete.

THE PARENT'S ROLE

Our athletic program relies upon the support of our parents. The parents of our student-athletes are vital to the success of our programs. In order for sportsmanship to be taught effectively, everyone involved with St. Thomas Aquinas Athletics needs to be a good role model for our student-athletes. Please respect the fact that every official, coach and player are trying to do the best job they possibly can do at all times. Respecting opponents, teammates, officials and coaches is an essential part of good sportsmanship.

COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES

Effective communication is the key to success for any athletic department. The St. Thomas Aquinas Athletic Department strives to keep open and professional lines of communication between its coaching staff, student-athletes and parents. Our coaching staff will make every effort to communicate all important information to their respective student-athletes and parents on a regular basis.

24 HOUR RULE

Athletics are naturally emotional. Gamedays are an emotional time for coaches, athletes and parents. The St. Thomas Aquinas Athletic Department requires parents, athletes and coaches to wait 24 hours until addressing conflicts that occur during games or practices. The time allows for emotions to be taken out of the conflict and a more constructive resolution to be reached. The only exception to this rule is if a child's safety is at stake, then immediate action should be taken.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

A very important life lesson learned through athletics is self- advocacy. At St. Thomas Aquinas, we allow our students to practice this very important skill by having them speak directly to their coach if there is a conflict or misunderstanding. If no resolution can be reached then we ask the student athlete to speak directly with the Athletic Director. If the problem still remains unresolved, then the parent should contact the coach. Only after following these steps should the parent contact the Athletic Director. The steps are summarized below:

1. Athlete speaks to Coach
2. Athlete speaks to AD
3. Parent speaks to Coach
4. Parent speaks to AD

St. Thomas Aquinas strives to hire the most professional and knowledgeable coaches that it can for each sport program. With this in mind, please respect that every coach and student-athlete works hard to ensure that their program or team reach its highest potential. Our coaches will not discuss their coaching strategy, playing time decisions or other members of the team with parents at any time. If a meeting between a parent and a coach needs to take place, please arrange a private place at a mutually agreed upon time for the meeting.

ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT POLICIES

INJURIES

During games or practice sessions where the STA Athletic Trainer is present, the Athletic Trainer will assume all responsibility for assessment, treatment and follow up care of student-athletes. If a student-athlete needs to be taken to a medical facility, the Athletic Trainer or a Coach will accompany the student if a parent or guardian is not available. Parents will be notified of the situation immediately.

If a concussion is suspected, the athlete will be pulled from play and evaluated by the Athletic Trainer. No athlete will be allowed to return to play with a concussion. Any athlete who sustains a concussion has to follow the laws and protocols set by the State of New Hampshire, the NHIAA, and St. Thomas Aquinas High School. The knowledge and understanding of the St. Thomas Aquinas Concussion Policy is expected of all student-athletes who wish to participate in a sport, as well as their parents. An abbreviated version can be found in the appendix of this document.

RETURNING FROM AN INJURY

Any student-athlete held out of a practice or game by a parent or guardian due to injury or illness must present a note from that parent or guardian to the Athletic Trainer prior to being allowed to return to play. Any student-athlete held out of a practice or game by a doctor or medical provider must present a note from that doctor or medical provider to the Athletic Trainer prior to being allowed to return to play. The Athletic Trainer has the authority, relevant to physical condition, to manage the participation of all student-athletes in athletic events.

GROOMING AND DRESS CODE

All St. Thomas Aquinas athletes are expected to be well-groomed, according to the school dress code policy. As an athlete, your appearance, expression and actions on and off the field reflect on the entire athletic program and the school.

PRACTICE SESSIONS

Information regarding practice schedules and attendance requirements will be made available to all student-athletes by coaches prior to the start of the season. Student-athletes are not permitted to hold or run practices without supervision of a coach at any time.

DAILY TEAM ATTENDANCE

It is extremely important that a coach be notified if a student is not going to be present at a practice or a game. This communication is the responsibility of the student-athlete. Practice is where plans for upcoming contests are devised and perfected. The coaches in our program expect their athletes to be present at all team-related activities. Suspension or dismissal from the team may take place as a result of such absences.

Students are excused from team activities for illness, injury, academic, family emergencies, or religious reasons. Prior notification is strongly recommended and expected.

Any athlete who is late, or misses a practice because he/she attended an extra help session or test makeup will not be penalized. Athletes who are late to off-campus practices will not be penalized for tardiness; speeding to avoid lateness is unacceptable and will result in team disciplinary action. Any athlete who receives a detention and comes late to practice or games will be subject to team rules regarding lateness and may be kept out of games.

If school is cancelled due to bad weather, decisions regarding sports practices and games will be announced as soon as possible. Given the regional geography of our school, parents must make the ultimate decision about travel in bad weather. If a parent feels that it is too dangerous for them or their child to drive to the event, then the player should stay home. Players must notify their coach. Student-athletes will not be subject to team rules regarding lateness or absence in this situation.

Every team member is expected to be present for all team practices and games. Because of scheduling parameters, many of our teams practice and/or play during scheduled school vacations. Students who plan to be absent for any extended period of time due to vacation or a planned extended absence should discuss this situation with the coach prior to trying out for a team.

RELEASE FROM CLASS FOR ATHLETICS

Athletes who are released from class early so that they may travel to away games or matches will be responsible for any schoolwork missed during their absence. Arrangements must be made ahead of time with all teachers involved. A teacher may refuse to release a student for academic or disciplinary reasons.

CONFLICTS IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

An individual student who attempts to participate in too many extra-curricular activities will undoubtedly encounter a conflict of obligations. The Athletic Department recognizes that each student should have a broad range of experiences and will attempt to schedule events in a manner so as to minimize conflicts. When conflicts do arise, moderators/coaches will work together to find a solution that is in the student's best interest. If a solution cannot be found then the student should make a decision based on the following:

1. The relative importance of each event
2. The importance of the event to each group/team involved
3. The relative contribution the student can make
4. How long each event has been scheduled
5. Make a decision in cooperation with parents

Please note the following NHIAA policy about non-school sport participation:

N.H.I.A.A. Section 8 Non-School competition - A member of a school team is a student athlete who is regularly present for, and actively participates in, all team practices and competitions. Bona fide members of a school team are prevented from missing a high school practice or competition to compete with an "out-of-school team." Whenever a conflict arises between the high school team practice/competition and an out-of-school practice/competition on the same day, the high school team practice/competition must be honored by the

student athlete. Priority must be given at all times to the high school team, its practices, and its contests. Penalties: Any student athlete who violates this rule for the first time shall be declared ineligible for the next 4 consecutive interscholastic events or 3 weeks of a season in which the student athlete is a participant, whichever is greater. This penalty is effective from the date of his or her last participation in a high school sport. Any student athlete who violates this rule a second time or subsequent time shall be declared ineligible for participation in any high school sport for the balance of the school year.

UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT

Students have an obligation and responsibility for all equipment issued to them. Each student is responsible for the proper care and retention of their equipment from the date of issue to the date of return. Equipment should be stored in a locked locker at all times when not in use. Experience has shown that most losses are due to lockers left open or unlocked. St. Thomas Aquinas High School is not responsible for personal belongings, or issued equipment, of student athletes. If a student loses school equipment or fails to return same, they are responsible to pay the current replacement cost of the equipment. Payment is required at the time of the loss, prior to the next season of athletic involvement, or graduation, whichever comes first. No student will be allowed to try out for another sport until all outstanding equipment has been returned or paid for.

If an athlete leaves the team during the season due to injury, academics, discipline, or quitting, it is his/her responsibility to return all school equipment immediately to the Athletic Department.

LOCKER ROOM CONDUCT

All changing for practices and games/matches must be done in a locker room and not in a school bathroom. No one except assigned coaches and players are allowed in the locker room. No one is allowed in the locker room without a coach present either in the locker room or the coach's room. Rough housing or throwing towels or other objects is not allowed in the locker room. The use of cell phones in locker room areas is strictly prohibited. No glass containers allowed in the locker room. At no time should shoes with cleated soles be worn inside the building. Serious injury can occur from slipping on cement or tiled surfaces.

BUILDING AND FACILITY ACCESS

At the conclusion of each day, student athletes should bring all items they will need the next day into the athletic locker room area. Students will not be allowed access to the main school building after practice, games, or on non-school days without being accompanied by a coach. No student will be allowed access to any athletic facility without proper supervision by a school staff member. Students may not use any school facility unless there is a coach, teacher, or staff member present.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation to games is usually provided by St. Thomas Aquinas bus or hired buses. However, if the demand for transportation is greater than can be accommodated, other arrangements will have to be made. In some cases, the school may ask for families' assistance in transporting athletes. Students are not allowed to be transported to games by other students without the permission of the Athletic Director and the written request of the parents of both the driver and rider.

Parents who wish to transport their child home from an away contest must sign a release form from the coach. No student will be allowed to ride home with another student's parent unless a note has been given previously to the athletic director or coach.

Athletes may drive to a game with written parental permission only. Permission letters must be received, by the Athletic Department, at least 24 hours in advance of the event. For games held on non-school days,

athletes may drive themselves to games when transportation is not provided. This will only happen for events that are held close to STA.

Transportation to practices is the responsibility of the athlete and their families; this includes practices that take place at venues away from the school. Transportation to games at venues away from the school, Dover Arena, Dearborn Park Tennis Courts, Dover or Portsmouth Pools, Track Practices, etc, is the responsibility of the athlete and their parents. Car pools should be arranged for those students who do not drive however a Transportation Waiver signed by the parents of both the driver and passenger(s) must be turned in to the athletic office prior to the season.

Proper behavior is expected of all athletes when on bus trips. Once a game is over, athletes are expected to return to school as a team on the bus provided. The only exception to this rule is if a parent wishes to take his/her own child home with them. On all away games, coaches must ride on the bus or van with their team. Only players and managers are to ride to and from games on the bus. Spectators are not allowed to ride on school buses to or from games.

DRUGS, ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO

Students who make a commitment to sports do so with the knowledge that the commitment brings extra responsibilities, obligations, and effort beyond that expected of all St. Thomas Aquinas students. Medical research substantiates the fact that the use of steroids, tobacco, alcohol and any type of mood modifying substances produces harmful effects on the body. Further, the use of such substances alters the individual's ability to make reasonable choices and to live up to the commitments that have been made.

The student/athlete may not use tobacco in any form nor **possess, use, transmit, be in the presence of, or be in the possession of paraphernalia for the use of, or be under the influence of any alcohol, unlawful drug, or narcotic at any time, on or off school premises.**

Any athlete who violates this policy will be suspended from sports participation for a period equal to 25% of the total events/matches/games of the current, or upcoming, season or four weeks of the season as determined by the Director of Athletics in consultation with other Administrators. The student will be allowed to practice with the team beginning seven days prior to the first scheduled game/event in which he/she is allowed to participate for conditioning/training purposes. The suspension from one activity may mean suspension from succeeding activity seasons depending on the severity of the incident(s), and/or the time in the season that the offense occurs. Any second violation of this policy will result in the student being removed for any sport in season and may result in suspension of the student from all sports and extra-curricular activities for a period of one year, twelve months, from the date of the offense.

Prior to returning to participation, the suspended student may be required to attend a substance abuse program sponsored or approved by St. Thomas Aquinas and to submit proof of such attendance to the Director of Athletics and the Dean of Students. After a student is allowed to return to a team, the coach will make all decisions regarding participation including role, playing time, uniform number, position, etc.

The student and the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) will be notified of the suspension and the time that the student is allowed to return to participation. An arrest or court conviction is not necessary before a student may be suspended for violation of this policy. Consequences under this policy may be in addition to other consequences imposed by the school, the organization, and/or the community.

HAZING

Hazing refers to any activity expected of someone joining a group (or to maintain full status in a group) that humiliates, degrades or risks emotional and/or physical harm, regardless of the person's willingness to

participate. Hazing activities are generally considered to be physically or mentally abusive, hazardous, and/or sexually violating. Anything that causes mental anguish or physical discomfort is considered to be classified as hazing.

Hazing or harassment practices of students will be disciplined according to School Board policy and will be reported to the police, in accordance with the State of NH Student Hazing Law RSA 631.7.

AWARDS AND LETTERS

THE MEANING

The granting of interscholastic athletic awards to students is based upon achievement, earned distinction, and overall contribution to their team.

TYPES OF AWARDS

Students who are members of an athletic team are eligible to receive the following school awards:

1. Certificates: will be given out to all team members
2. Letters: awarded for successful completion of required standards.
3. Emblems, Bars, Pins:
 - a. Metal emblems will be awarded for the first time an athlete letters in each sport.
 - b. Bars will be awarded for each additional year lettered in that sport.
4. Other Awards
 - a. Other awards to be given at the discretion of the coach.

LETTER REQUIREMENTS

All student-athletes who have successfully completed, at the discretion of the head coach, an Athletic season in good academic and disciplinary standing on a Varsity team will receive a Varsity Letter.

APPENDIX I

STA ABBREVIATED CONCUSSION POLICY

Abbreviated Concussion Policy

If a concussion is suspected, the athlete will be pulled from play and evaluated by the Athletic Trainer. No athlete will be allowed to return to play with a concussion. Any athlete who sustains a concussion has to follow the laws and protocols set by the State of New Hampshire, the NHIAA, and St. Thomas Aquinas High School. An abbreviated version of these protocols is listed below in an easy step-wise process.

*****Medications with concussions: Preferably, no OTC medications should be administered. However, if it is absolutely necessary for headache pain, please only use ACETAMINOPHEN/Tylenol.*****

1. **Diagnosis** – The Athletic Trainer will evaluate the student-athlete and determine if a concussion is present. If diagnosed, the athlete must rest both physically AND mentally as much as possible through the recovery period. **No athlete will be allowed to participate in any physical activity until cleared by the Athletic Trainer and parent permission is given.**
2. **Academic Plan** – the student athlete and parents must contact their designated guidance counselor as soon as possible to set up the academic plan. Guidance is experienced and has a process in place to help the concussed student athlete heal as well as complete necessary school work.
3. **Recovery** – The student-athlete is expected to see the Athletic Trainer daily for a re-evaluation and submission of a symptom sheet to evaluate progress. Absolutely NO physical activity as well as maximum mental rest must occur. They must also check in with guidance every 3 days to evaluate the academic plan.
4. **Asymptomatic** – once 24 hours asymptomatic, the athlete will re-test the IMPACT test to make sure their brain is back to their baseline level. If it is not, more rest will occur. If their level is back to the baseline level, the athlete will proceed to STEP 4.
5. **Return to Play Protocol (RTP)** – each step must be separated with 24 hours, if at any time symptoms occur the athlete will rest and repeat the last asymptomatic stage. All stages will occur under the observation of the Athletic Trainer.
 1. Light aerobic activity. 20 minutes maximum.
 2. Increased aerobic activity and sport specific drills. 20 min. max.
 3. Non-contact skills & coordination. 20 min max.
 4. Full practice (first day with team).
 5. Game ready, given parent sign off.

With new information coming out daily about the health risks of concussions, it is a necessity that the concussed student-athlete be evaluated by a Sports Concussion Specialist (listed below). **These physicians are the most knowledgeable in the diagnosis and treatment of concussions and work very closely with me to make sure the student-athlete gets back as soon as possible without complications.**