

ATHLETIC MANUAL

Georgia Christian Athletic Association

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DIVISION TITLE

The athletic division of the Georgia Association of Christian Schools (GACS) is known as the Georgia Christian Athletic Association (GCAA).

I. PURPOSE OF THE DIVISION

The purpose of this division of the GACS is to teach Christian ethics and build Christian character through Christ-centered athletic competition and to regulate interscholastic relationships through and by a governing body composed of its own member schools.

II. MEMBERSHIP

Any Christian school, which is a member in good standing with the GACS, may become a member of this division. An application needs to be submitted to the Commissioner as a means of notification of the desire to participate in GCAA competition. The Commissioner will determine the beginning of competition, scheduling and other aspects of participation. Each member school must adhere to the rules and regulations in this manual and pay the applicable annual base dues and participation fees (See ARTICLE IV below).

III. ATHLETIC DIVISION DUES AND FEES

All dues and fees are **non-refundable**. Funds received from the following dues and other athletic fees go for the operation of the GCAA and its related activities:

A. Base Dues

The base dues for each school per year will be **\$200**. These annual dues and registration fees are payable in advance to the Commissioner on or before March 31 for the following year. They need to be submitted with the *Athletic Registration Form* (GCAA Form #1). A fine of **\$25** will be assessed if paid after March 31.

B. Participation Fees

Participation fees for each varsity team will be **\$200**. The fee for competitive cheer will be **\$100**. These annual participation fees are payable in advance to the Commissioner on or before August 1. They need to be submitted with the *Athletic Participation Form* (GCAA Form #2). A fine of 10% of the amount to be paid (minimum of **\$25**) will be assessed if paid after August 1. The GCAA will designate **\$10** of the participation fee from each sport directly to the Jerry Lanier Scholarship Fund.

C. Re-Application Fee

The re-application fee of **\$500** will be charged for any school that drops its GCAA membership and later reapplies. The Appeal Board may set this fee aside if the Board agrees that the dropping of membership was due to hardship.

NOTES –Dues and fees must be postmarked no later than the due date. Schools, which are not current in payment of dues or fees, are not eligible to vote and any GCAA conference games or contests participated in by all teams of the school between the due date and the date of payment will be forfeited.

IV. GOVERNING BODIES

A. *Officers*

The officers of the division will consist of the Commissioner and the Secretary.

1. Selection Procedure

The Athletic Commissioner may be selected as follows:

- a. If the Commissioner is a full-time employee of the Georgia Association of Christian Schools, he shall be recommended by the Executive Committee and approved by the GACS membership.
- b. If the Commissioner's position is part time, the Commissioner will be elected at the spring meeting of the athletic division. The term will be three years beginning on July 1 of the year elected.
- c. The Secretary will be elected the following year. The term will be three years beginning on July 1 of the year elected.
- d. Participating schools may submit names of nominees up to 60 days prior to the spring meeting of the year of election. A description of the qualifications and credentials of the nominees in respect to the office must also be given at the time of nomination. Nominees must be in the employ of a school that participates in the athletic division. NOTE – Athletic directors, coaches, and assistant coaches may hold the office of Commissioner provided the GACS Executive Committee grants prior approval.
- e. The nominating school must contact all nominees prior to their name being submitted. They must have stated a willingness to serve and discharge the responsibilities of the Commissioner or the Secretary.
- f. Election to these offices will be by two-thirds (67%) vote of the participating schools present.

2. Officer Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Commissioner or the Secretary are as follows:

The Commissioner will:

- a. chair all meetings of the athletic division.
- b. interpret the Athletic Manual and impose penalties outlined (rulings may be appealed to the Appeal Board).
- c. distribute any amendments or rule changes, that were passed at the annual spring rules or special meetings, to all participating schools for attachment to their copies of the Athletic Manual (after receiving the exact wording from the Secretary).
- d. issue master GCAA Conference Game Schedules (round robin schedules) at the athletic meetings prior to the seasons to which they apply.
- e. be responsible for securing all GCAA trophies. He (or his representative) will also be present at the championship games to award the trophies.
- f. be responsible for collecting and receiving all funds belonging to the athletic division and for forwarding them to the GACS office to be held in trust until needed for authorized spending. (The GACS office will present a written financial report at the fall convention meeting of the athletic division.)
- g. receive remuneration as established by the Executive Committee.

The Secretary will:

- a. act as the recording secretary and read (or distribute) the minutes at all meetings of the athletic division.
- b. receive remuneration as established by the Executive Committee.

B. Executive Committee

Membership of the Executive Committee of the athletic division will consist of the Commissioner and the members of the Executive Committee of the GACS.

C. Board of Trustees

The Executive Committee of the GCAA will serve as the Board of Trustees of the athletic division. The Board of Trustees will receive and hold title to all real and personal property of the organization and will have general custody and administration of this property with power and authority to lease, sell, and convey title. However, they cannot sell or convey any real property held by them in trust for the organization without first being authorized to do so by a two-thirds (67%) vote of the membership of the organization at a regular or special meeting.

D. Appeal Board

The Executive Committee of the GACS shall serve as the Appeal Board of the athletic division.

E. Athletic Committee

The Athletic Committee shall include five members, comprised of the GCAA Commissioner, the GCAA Secretary, and three other members appointed by the Commissioner. The three appointed representatives shall include a school administrator, an athletic director, and one at-large member (which may be a pastor, teacher, coach, administrator, or athletic director). Each appointed committee member will serve for a minimum of one year and maximum of three years. They will meet at the request of the Commissioner, and advise him on disciplinary action, rules change proposals, and GCAA tournaments and functions. The Athletic Committee's authority comes from the GACS Executive Committee, and may not override the Executive Committee.

F. Other Committees

Committees may be appointed as needed by the Commissioner.

V. MEETINGS

A. Meeting Notification and Attendance Requirements

Participating schools must be represented at all athletic meetings where proper notification has been given.

1. The Commissioner will notify participating schools of regular and special meetings of the GCAA at least two weeks prior to the meeting stating the date, place, and time of the meeting.
2. Provided proper notification has been given, participating schools which are not represented at regular and special rules meetings by the pastor, administrator, or other designated person with voting power (designation must be in writing by the pastor or the administrator) or have not been individually excused by the Commissioner will be fined **\$50**.

NOTE—a representative must be present at April meetings. If the fine is not paid within ten days of notification, all GCAA conference games or contests played by all teams of the school between the date of notification and the date of payment will be forfeited.

B. Meetings - Regular

Regular meetings of the GCAA will be held four times each year. These meetings will normally be held in July, October, January, and April as scheduled by the Commissioner.

- **JULY** – The summer meeting will deal with game scheduling and related matters. In addition, interpretation of rule changes in fall and winter sports, and clarification of amendments to the Athletic Manual will be handled. All athletic directors must attend unless excused on an individual basis by the Commissioner. Administrators, pastors, and coaches may also attend.
- **OCTOBER** – The fall coaches meeting will be held during the annual GACS convention when possible. All athletic personnel are eligible to attend.
- **JANUARY** – The winter meeting will basically be limited in purpose to game scheduling and related matters and needs to be attended by coaches, athletic directors, administrators, and pastors as determined by participating schools.
- **APRIL** – The spring rules meeting will basically be for the purpose of amending the Athletic Manual and/or considering any changes in the rules and regulations applying to any sport. The Commissioner will announce the meeting date and the procedures by which rule changes and amendment proposals will be circulated to the participating schools prior to the meeting. It is recommended that the pastor or administrator, along with the Athletic Director, attend this meeting (See Note VI.A.2).

C. Meetings – Special

Special meetings may be called as needed by the Commissioner. The meetings must be announced at least two (2) weeks ahead of time by notifying each participating school of the time, place, and purpose of the meeting.

VI. AMENDMENTS AND VOTING

It takes a two-thirds (67%) vote to amend the Athletic Manual. 75% of the participating GCAA schools will be considered a quorum.

1. Proposed amendments to the Athletic Manual or proposed changes in the rules of any sport must be submitted in writing to the Commissioner and postmarked or emailed by March 1 of the current year.
2. These proposals will first be reviewed by the Athletic Committee and finally by the Executive Committee. Proposals must pass through both committees in order for membership to vote on proposals.
3. Voting will take place on rules changes only at the spring rules meeting each year. EXCEPTION – The Commissioner may call special meetings in regards to proposed amendments or rule changes provided two week notice is given to participating schools.
4. Each participating school is entitled to one vote at the rules or special meeting. The person with voting power will be the pastor, administrator or other designated person (designation must be in writing by the pastor or administrator). Voting delegates must be present at the rules meeting to vote. There will be no provision to vote by proxy.
5. All amendments and rules changes will go into effect immediately after the vote unless specified otherwise in the amendment or rule change.

VII. GENERAL PROVISIONS

A. Sanctioned Sports

For a sport to be an official sanctioned sport of the GCAA there must be no less than four teams participating on the conference level. The following format will be used to determine the number of teams advancing to playoffs.

Number of Teams	Teams in Playoffs
4-5	2
6-8	4
9-11	6
12-15	8
16+	Divisions

B. Regional Conferences

There will be no regional divisions in a sport when the number of schools participating allows for all teams to play each other within the regular season. In sports where regions are required, the Commissioner will determine rules for separation of the state into regions for competition. For sports in which competition is held on a regional basis, schools must participate in their assigned regions in regard to official schedules. Inter-regional games are permitted, but these games will have no bearing on regional standings unless the games are a part of the official schedule as set by the Commissioner. Region champions will be established by region record only.

C. Classification System

1. For sports with less than 16 teams (15 and under), there will be no classification system. All participating schools will have the same classification regardless of school size. When possible, regions will still be assigned by the Commissioner for conference play. The table in VIII.A will determine the number of teams in the state playoffs.
2. For sports with 16 or more teams, the 1/2 classification system will be used. Proximity of schools will determine regions. All schools (regardless of size) will play within their region for the regular season. At the conclusion of the regular season, the top teams in each region (a maximum of eight within the state) will compete for the Division I state championship, and the next tier of teams (maximum of eight within the state) from each region will compete for the Division II state championship. Region champions will have not have 'class' on their trophy.

D. Athletic Division Office

The office of the athletic division will be determined by the location of the current Commissioner.

1. Bulletins and all other routine blanks and forms will be sent out from the Commissioner's office. Completed forms and requests for such material by member schools need to be addressed to the Commissioner at his office.
2. Dues, fines, and other moneys will also need to be sent to the Commissioner at his office. All checks are to be made payable to the GCAA.
3. Secretarial costs of the athletic division will be paid by the GACS office upon submission of a time sheet by the Commissioner or the Secretary. The Executive Committee sets the hourly rate.

E. Reporting Forms

Official GCAA forms will be provided to each member school for reporting purposes. The administrator is responsible to see that they are completed and submitted to the proper recipient at

the time and manner prescribed in the Athletic Manual or by the Commissioner. The Commissioner is authorized and directed to reject, return, and levy a **\$10** fine for each form submitted that is not an official GCAA form.

F. Game Schedules and Reporting of Results

1. Each participating school will be assigned a MaxPreps.com username and password by the Commissioner for each of its sanctioned football, boys' soccer, volleyball, basketball, baseball, and softball team. The official GCAA schedule issued by the Commissioner will serve as a game contract must be honored unless a change is agreed upon and submitted to the Commissioner for approval by both schools involved on a Conference Schedule Change Request (GCAA Form #4). Each school will be responsible for entering its schedule on MaxPreps.com and submitting an Official Game Schedule (GCAA Form #3) seven days before a season begins. Any school that does not honor a conference-game contract, as designated in the online schedule, will be subject to a penalty assessed by the Commissioner.
2. A school who forfeits a game less than **two days** before the date of scheduled game will reimburse the host school for any expenses regarding rented facilities and referees that cannot be avoided and an additional **\$50** cancellation fine. This may be waived with the agreement of both schools.
3. It is the responsibility of the **home team** to enter the results of a contest in a timely manner on Maxpreps.com. A timely manner is defined as two school days. Schools that neglect this responsibility may be subject to a fine by the Commissioner.
4. Cross country, cheerleading, golf, and future sports where Maxpreps.com cannot be used will have schedules and results produced and published under the authority of the Commissioner. The host school will be responsible for notifying the Commissioner of completed results.

G. Ineligibility for State Championships

1. If a school leaves the GCAA and returns, they will not be eligible for region or state championships for two years. If the exit is due hardship, the school may be eligible for championships upon review by the Athletic Committee and the Executive Committee.

H. Forfeiture, Suspension, Probation and Fines

With sufficient evidence of a violation to an athletic division rule (by a school under its jurisdiction), the Executive Committee or the Commissioner has the authority to:

1. FORFEIT ANY GAMES OR EVENTS

Any game that is forfeited will be scored on the official record according to NFHS rules books for forfeits in that particular sport.

2. SUSPEND FROM ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE ATHLETIC DIVISION

Suspension from participation will be for the period of time designated by the Executive Committee or the Commissioner.

3. PLACE ON PROBATION

A school that is placed on probation may participate in all regular-season and play-off games with the understanding that if further violations occur, suspension or elimination from competition will result.

4. LEVY A FINE

Fines may be levied as authorized in the Athletic Manual (Also, See VIII.I)

NOTES – *One or more of the above penalties may be assessed. Appeal may be made to the Appeal Board by the school for any of the above penalties. Any school under suspension or probation is subject to normal dues and assessments.*

I. Rules and Regulations

All GCAA athletics (except golf) will be played under the regulations of the current NFHS Rules Books. All golf matches will be played in accordance with the rules of the United States Golf Association (USGA). (**NOTE – The GCAA Athletic Manual has precedence when there is a conflict or variance with the NFHS or USGA rules.**) When an issue arises that is not addressed by NFHS/USGA rules or the GCAA Athletic Manual, the GHSA rules may be consulted. Final determination of a situation/rule in question will be determined by the Commissioner.

J. Appeals

Participating member schools may submit appeals to the Commissioner requesting a meeting of the Appeal Board in cases of disagreement or hardship.

1. PENALTY APPEALS

FORFEITURE, SUSPENSION, PROBATION, AND FINES – All appeals relating to penalties issued by the Executive Committee or the Commissioner due to a violation of an athletic division rule must be made to the Commissioner in writing accompanied by a **\$500** check.

- a. If the appeal is upheld, **\$400** will be refunded to the school that has appealed. The remaining **\$100** will be retained to help defray the expenses of the meeting.
- b. If the appeal is denied, the fee will not be refunded.

2. DISAGREEMENT APPEALS

All appeals that involve any type of a disagreement between or among two or more schools (including all problems dealing with officials, misconduct of personnel or spectators, or any game disputes) must be made to the Commissioner in writing accompanied by a **\$500** check.

- a. The letter must clearly state that prior to the filing of the appeal, the pastors (of church-related schools) or administrators (of non church-related schools) have endeavored to reach a settlement of the matter being appealed but have been unable to do so. No appeal will be heard until after this attempt for settlement is made. If these leaders cannot agree, the Commissioner will call a meeting of the Appeal Board and the parties involved.
- b. If the appeal is upheld, **\$400** will be refunded to the school that has appealed. The remaining **\$100** will be retained to help defray the expenses of the meeting. The other school involved will also be assessed **\$100**, which will help with the expenses.
- c. If the appeal is denied, the fee will not be refunded.

3. HARDSHIP APPEALS

All hardship and other similar requests (except problems of school disagreement such as those listed above) must be made to the Commissioner in writing accompanied by a **\$200** check. The Commissioner will call a meeting of the Appeal Board to consider the request.

- a. The Appeal Board has the authority to consider requests to have a rule set aside for the benefit of individual students and will consider these requests at a meeting held for that purpose.
 - 1) Eligibility rules (except those in regards to age) that have the effect of working an undue hardship on a student, in the opinion of the Appeal Board, may be set aside.
 - 2) Any ruling made by the Appeal Board in regards to additional semesters of participation

- (beyond eight semesters in grades 9 through 12) must be made in accordance with Student Eligibility rules (See IX.C).
- 3) The decision of the Appeal Board to set aside the effects of a rule in an individual case will not be considered as setting a precedent for other cases of a somewhat similar nature.
 - b. The Chairman of the Appeal Board needs to forward written results of the meeting to the Commissioner for filing purposes.
 - c. If the request is granted, **\$100** of the fee will be refunded. The remaining **\$100** will be retained to help defray the expenses of the meeting.
 - d. If the request is denied, the fee will not be refunded.

K. Outstanding Fines

Fines must be paid (postmarked) within ten days of notification or date designated. If fines have not been received by their due date, all GCAA conference games or contests played by all teams of the school between the date of notification and the date of payment will be forfeited.

VIII. SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES AND ELIGIBILITY RULES

A. School Responsibilities

A member school is eligible to participate in GCAA interscholastic contests, if it adheres to the following:

1. GAME SCHEDULES

GCAA Form 3 must be submitted to the Commissioner, and the schedule and roster must be submitted at Maxpreps.com. These are to be completed for each team and each sport that the school plans to participate in on an official basis.

- a. Proper Filing of Forms: These forms must be submitted ***no later than seven days*** prior to the first game or contest (including jamborees) with a member or non-member school.
 - 1) Failure to properly file either of these forms will result in a **\$25** fine (for each form) and, upon the judgment of the commissioner, possibly the forfeiture of each GCAA game played by the team or teams in question prior to their submission.
 - 2) If the fine or fines are not paid within ten days of notification or designated day, all GCAA games played by all teams of the member school between the due date of the form(s) and the time the fine is paid shall be forfeited.
 - 3) All forms (and any related change forms) must be filled out correctly and completely on official GCAA forms. (See VIII.E)
- b. Game Schedules – In addition to the proper filing of the Official Game Schedule, the following regulations must be adhered to:
 - 1) If there is a request to change the master GCAA Conference Game Schedule (round robin schedule) issued by the Commissioner or the Official Game Schedule (on Maxpreps.com) and both schools do not agree to change, then the Conference Schedule Change Request (Form 4) must be submitted by the member school requesting the change. The Commissioner will make a ruling on the change request. Schools who submit a game change form to the Commissioner without the approval of the other school will receive a forfeit for the game if it cannot be played on the original date or the proposed date.
 - 2) No member school can enter or sponsor any tournament, other than official GCAA

tournaments, unless the Commissioner has approved the tournament in writing. The listing of tournament games or contests on the Official Game Schedule does not constitute approval by the Commissioner.

- 3) Teams or players will not be permitted to participate in any post-season game or contest, except where the Commissioner has given specific authorization. This rule includes so-called “bowl” and “All Star” games or contests.
 - a) Schedules for each sport can be viewed by each member school at MaxPreps.com. It would be courteous for admission prices, dress code requirements, and concession information for games to be emailed between competing schools before a contest.
 - b) No scheduled game can be canceled without agreement and consent of the other school and/or decision of the Commissioner if there is not agreement between the schools. Any school failing to carry out a scheduled game may be fined not more than **\$100** by the Commissioner for the first offense and suspended up to one calendar year for the second offense. NOTE – *Calendar year means twelve months from the date of the scheduled contest in question.*

2. ELIGIBILITY LISTS

In addition to the proper filing of the Official Team Eligibility List (Form 5), the following regulations must be adhered to:

- 1) Any change to the Official Team Eligibility List for students who are to be added to the list after it has been submitted or for students who become ineligible during the season for academic or other reasons (and for reinstatement), must be submitted to the Commissioner on an Add Sheet (GCAA Form #6B).
 - a) These added or reinstated players are not permitted to take part in a game or contest until the Commissioner has received this Add Sheet. In emergency cases, tentative approval can be given by phone from the Commissioner’s office subject to his receipt of the form.
 - b) Failure to submit an Add Sheet will make the player ineligible and upon judgment of the Commissioner all games that the player dresses out for will be forfeited. In addition, there will be a **\$25** fine when this form is submitted after the player has dressed out for a game, unless previous approval has been given by phone.
- 2) Once a student has been listed as approved by the Commissioner for any particular sport, no further approval is needed during the school year for that sport unless the student is listed as ineligible and needs to be reinstated.

3. PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS, PROOF OF INSURANCE, AND LIABILITY WAIVER

Each member school is responsible for the safety and liability requirements specified below for their participating student athletes. NOTE: Copies of all physical examination, proof of insurance and liability waiver forms must be on file in the school office.

- a. Physical Examination – Provide for, in some manner, a physical examination by a competent, licensed physician for each and every athletic participant.
 - 1) This examination must be given each school year before an athletic participant can compete. Physicals are valid for 12 months (per doctor’s approval).
 - 2) The physical examination must state that the participant has been examined and approved for physical competition. (See an example of a recommended physical examination form – Appendix B.)

NOTE – *It is strongly recommended that a physician be made available by the home*

team at all varsity football games. Also, each school should have arrangements made for quick medical service for any accident occurring in practice or at a game.

- b. Proof of Insurance – Require each participating student to provide proof of insurance against athletic injury.
- c. Liability Waiver – Have each student athlete submit a Liability Waiver (GCAA Form #7) to be kept on file at each school.

4. PERSONNEL CONDUCT AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. Each member school must insist that all of its coaches, players and personnel conduct themselves at all times in a Christ-like manner toward all officials, participants, and fans at games and contests.
- b. The administrator, athletic director, and coaching staff must read the current GCAA Athletic Manual and the NFHS Rules Books (for the particular sports they are coaching). They must also sign an Agreement and Support Clause (GCAA Form #8) to be submitted to the Commissioner prior to the start of the season.
- c. If a school plays an ineligible player in a GCAA contest, the contest will be considered a forfeit and that school will be removed from consideration for any post-season competition in that sport.
- d. Head coaches of all GCAA-sanctioned sports must attend an approved coaches' or officials' clinic for any sport(s) they coach. In order for cheerleading squad to participate in the GCAA Cheerleading Competition one of their coaches must be certified by the AACCA.

B. Academic Eligibility

Computation of academic eligibility for athletes will be done on the basis of grade reports issued each three weeks during the school year. The first of these is to be issued during the fourth week of school and should be based on grades compiled during the first three weeks. Subsequent reports will be issued every third week of classes thereafter throughout the school year (week 7, 10, 13, etc.).

- 1. Athletes must attain at least a 2.0 average on a 4.0 scale and have a passing grade in all subjects to be eligible for competition. In schools using individual pace materials, students must complete twelve paces in at least three separate subjects each nine weeks with an average grade of at least 80.

Grading Scale: A = 4.0	B = 3.0	C = 2.0	D = 1.0	F = 0
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(Any half unit courses, etc. should be weighted accordingly in determining the average.)

- 2. Athletes who do not attain at least a 2.0 average on any three-week report will be ineligible for competition in all GCAA games or contests (region and non-region) until the issuance of the next three-week report with at least a 2.0 average. Athletes will be restored to academic eligibility only at the time grade reports are issued (each three weeks).
 - a. If a student is academically eligible at the time report cards are issued, but falls below a 2.0 average when grades are checked at the three-weeks period, an additional three weeks of evaluation may be granted by the principal. This should be granted only to students who, in the judgment of the principal, will be able to raise their grade point average to 2.0 by the end of the additional three weeks. These students will then be placed on “academic probation” and their records kept at the school. Students not attaining a 2.0 average at the end of the additional three weeks must remain off the team (including the next sport, if applicable) for six weeks instead of three weeks.
 - b. If a student is academically ineligible at the time report cards are issued, academic probation cannot be granted.

3. All necessary eligibility information must be forwarded to the Commissioner immediately following computation by means of Drop Sheet (GCAA Form #6A).
4. The Commissioner has the authority to call for a record of academic probation or an official copy of any athlete's three-week or permanent grade report at any time for verification.

C. Student Eligibility

A student is eligible to represent his or her school in GCAA interscholastic competition, if he or she:

1. is a full-time student in grades 7 through 12 or a senior completing work required for graduation and taking at least three units of work. A unit is defined as a regular class period meeting five times a week for 36 weeks. Partial units are computed on this basis.
 - a. Students in sixth grade will be permitted to participate in certain cases, upon written request to and approval by the Commissioner, if it is apparent that this participation is necessary to field a team. Students below sixth grade may not be used.
 - b. Home school students may participate in GCAA competition for any member school if the student is classified as an enrolled student at the member school. Home school students must take the same number of classes as full-time on-campus students in grades 7 through 12. Seniors completing work required for graduation must take at least three units of work in either the school's full-time or home school program under the auspices of the member school. (Under the auspices is defined as enrolled in the academic program of the member school where successful completion of the academic program enables the student to graduate from the member school.) Home school students that are not associated with the school's academic program and grading system will not be eligible.
2. is not a graduate of a high school or its equivalent.
3. meets age limitation. Students must not have attained their nineteenth birthday (varsity) or fifteenth birthday (for junior varsity invitational tournaments only—regardless of grade level) prior to May 1, preceding their year of participation.
4. exemplifies a Christ-honoring character. This refers to the student's deportment both in and out of GCAA games or contests. The Executive Committee or the Commissioner has the authority to suspend a student if a signed violation statement is received from a game official or the student's administrator (in the case of a violation outside the sphere of competition).
5. has not violated the transfer rule. A student must be enrolled in a GACS school, attending classes, and listed on the Official Team Eligibility List (GCAA Form 5) or through an Add Form (GCAA Form #6B) by the day of the first scheduled conference game on any sport in which the student may take part. Any student who transfers from a GCAA member school to another GCAA member school during the school year will be ineligible for the remainder of that school year. **Players enrolled before the first conference game may be added or replaced at any time before the start of the last two regular-season games in football and the last four regular-season games in all other sports (conference or non-conference). A violation of this rule will be considered illegal participation and will result in a forfeiture of any game the player participates in from the starting time of these final games until the end of the season. *Players not enrolled before the first conference game are INELIGIBLE for that sport for that season.*** **Exception** – Any student who has moved with their family to the area of a member school from outside a 50-mile radius and applies to this school no later than one month after the move would be eligible for competition. The student must be enrolled, attending classes, and listed on an Add Sheet that is received by the Commissioner at least 30 days prior to any regional or state play-off game in which the student might compete.
6. has not violated the eight semester rule if enrolled in grade 9 or above. This means that a student

has eligibility status for only eight consecutive semesters from the date of his/her first entrance into ninth grade at any school. (A semester is considered to be equivalent to one half of a normal school year.) This rule applies whether or not the student was enrolled in any school during these eight semesters.

Exceptions –a student transfers to a member school from a non-member school and, at the time of transfer, **MUST** be put back a grade for academic reasons, or the student cannot participate for medical reasons. The following would apply:

- a. Students may be allowed two additional semesters of athletic participation (provided they meet the age requirement) if they have not participated in inter-scholastic athletics before the transfer.
 - b. A written request must be submitted for hardship appeal consideration in such cases (See VIII.I.3). This request must be accompanied by documents and transcripts, which verify the student's academic status from the time of his first entrance into the ninth grade. The Appeal Board will determine the student's eligibility.
7. is an amateur. An amateur is defined as one who has never violated his or her amateur standing by receiving money, tuition, board, or pay of any description as compensation for playing on a professional athletic team or in a professional exhibition. It is also one who has never played professionally under an assumed name, received any expenses for any professional try-out, or signed any professional athletic contract.
 8. is listed on an Official Team Eligibility List (GCAA Form #5) and on the roster on Maxpreps.com (signed by the administrator and filed with the Commissioner).

D. Team Eligibility

Varsity and junior varsity teams may participate in GCAA competition.

1. OFFICIAL TEAMS

An Athletic Participation Form (GCAA Form #2) listing all teams of official participation from a member school, along with the annual participation fees (See IV.C), needs to be submitted in advance to the Commissioner on or before August 1 of each year. These teams will be listed on a master GCAA Conference Game Schedule (round robin schedule) for each sport.

- a. Addition of Teams – After the round robin schedule for a sport has finalized, teams for that sport can only be added if there is a team opening on the schedule and permission is granted, the following applies:
 - 1) A **\$50** per team charge will be made for each late application for any school that was a GCAA member at the time the schedule was finalized.
 - 2) No charge will be made for any school that was not a member at the time the schedule was finalized.
- b. Cancellation of Teams – After the round robin schedule for a sport has been finalized, member schools have 30 days (without penalty) to notify the Commissioner in writing of their decision to cancel a team.
 - 1) A fine of **\$200** for each varsity team involved will be levied if the cancellation is made after the one-month period stated above.
 - 2) A fine of **\$50** will be added to those above if written notification is not given prior to 30 days before that team's first scheduled game on the round robin schedule.
 - 3) The fine(s) must be paid within ten days of notification, or all GCAA conference games or contests played by all teams of the school between the date of notification and date of payment will be forfeited.

- 4) The above fines do not apply to a school that must cancel a sports team for academic or disciplinary purposes.
- 5) Whether the cancellation occurs before or after any Region games have been played, no Region games will be counted towards Region standard for remaining schools (as forfeits or otherwise).

2. TEAM MEMBERS

Players on both the varsity and the junior varsity teams (JV Teams—GCAA invitational tournaments/meets only) must meet the requirements listed under Academic and Student Eligibility (See IX.B and IX.C). Boys may not participate on girls' teams, and girls may not participate on boys' teams with the exception of golf.

3. TEAM ROSTERS

A maximum number of eligible players may be carried on a team roster at any given time.

- a. Additions Or Changes – Additions or changes to team rosters must be reported to the Commissioner by means of a Drop-Add Sheet (GCAA Form #6A/B) prior to the participation of the involved athletes. The Commissioner must confirm the eligibility of any new participants. Junior varsity players may be added to varsity teams by means of an Add Sheet within the outlined time frame (IX.C.5).

4. SIMULTANEOUS PARTICIPATION ON VARSITY AND JUNIOR VARSITY TEAMS

Athletes meeting the age limitations under Student Eligibility (See IX.C) may participate simultaneously on varsity and junior varsity teams of the same sport at the discretion of the school throughout the regular season and for playoff, tournament, and state championship games.

- a. The following limitations apply to the sports listed below for all athletes who participate on both levels:
 - 1) Baseball – A pitcher is limited to seven innings in a day, ten innings in two consecutive days, and 14 innings in four consecutive days. If the pitcher pitches more than seven innings in two consecutive days, he must rest two days (48 hours), or if he pitches 14 innings in four days, he must rest two days (48 hours).
 - 2) Basketball – The athlete cannot play more than six quarters on a single date (except **tournament** and playoff games).
 - 3) Football – The athlete who plays in a junior varsity game during any particular week cannot play more than one quarter in any varsity game played during that same week.
- b. Athletes participating simultaneously on both teams must be listed on both eligibility lists and on both Maxpreps.com rosters.
- c. The above guidelines apply to both regular season and tournament games (except basketball).

5. VIOLATION OF ELIGIBILITY RULES

The Commissioner is authorized to investigate (by requesting oral or written information and formal documentation pertaining to the investigation) and to judge whether or not a school has violated an eligibility rule.

A school judged guilty is subject to one or more of the following penalties as levied by the Commissioner:

- 1) A fine of not more than **\$100** for each offense
- 2) Suspension from the GCAA for a period of up to a calendar year.
- 3) Forfeiture of all GCAA conference games or contests played during the time an ineligible player is listed on the Official Team Eligibility List.

A school judged guilty must accept the ruling of the Commissioner. Any fine imposed must be paid, or an appeal made for a hearing by the Appeal Board, within ten days of the ruling.

NOTE – *Further explanations and definitions can be found under Forfeiture, Suspension, Probation and Fines (See VIII.G).*

IX. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A. *Appearance and Dress Standards*

Participants in all athletic events must adhere to the statement of standards held by the GACS.

1. All young people (students) and adults (faculty and staff members) participating in athletic events or awards ceremonies at athletic events will be expected to meet the following minimum standards:
 - a. Girls' Dress Code: Dresses or slits in dresses shall be no shorter than the top of the knee when standing erect and otherwise shall be modest according to conservative standards. Modest slacks may be worn.
 - b. Boys' Hair Code: Hair may not touch the top of the ears, collar, or eyebrows and must have a reasonable degree of taper and thinning completely around. No beards for students. (See Hair Code Illustrations – Appendix C). GCAA does not allow boys hair to be of unnatural color, or of the latest fad style, or for the boy's hair to draw undue attention to oneself (e.g. no mohawks, shaved sections, corn-rows, rubber bands or any jewelry in the hair, etc.).
2. Bracelets, chains, and jewelry (including any worn with body piercing) are not to be worn in athletic competition.
3. Tattoos that may be visible must be covered from the time the player leaves the locker room, during athletic competition, and after the game until the player reenters the locker room to change from his/her uniform.
4. The lower part of the girls' athletic uniforms must be modest and loose fitting with a gradual flare to the top of the kneecap. If the uniform rises during play, it must be loose enough to fall back to the top of the kneecap when the player returns to a standing position. Underwear lines should not show through uniform material. Modest uniform pants may be worn for athletic competition.
5. In any boys sport sweat pants or warm-ups may be worn by the players for purposes of modesty, if so desired and approved by the school. The sweat pants or warm-ups should be of the same color, if worn by the entire team. They should be the same color as the shorts of the other team members, if worn by one or more individuals on the team.
6. Women participating as coaches or in any official capacity with GCAA athletic teams should wear dresses, skirts, modest slacks, shorts that meet guidelines in #4, or the lower part of girls' athletic uniforms as described above during competition.
7. Cheerleaders must wear skirts or culottes. The minimum length of cheerleaders' skirts or culottes is the top of the knee when standing. Cheerleaders should be especially careful, even in uniforms that meet GCAA standards, to be modest in their movements. Because skirts do fly up and midriffs could be exposed during cheers, we require that biker shorts which cover the thigh and body suits be worn while in uniform. Body suits may be sleeveless, but must be modest in the neckline and around the arms. These guidelines apply at all times.
8. Cross Country uniforms will consist of t-shirts with sleeves and knee length shorts. School PE uniforms may be used. The shirt must have the school name on the front of the shirt. The material used for the uniform must not be 'see-through'.

9. Any member school which has field or gym requirements regarding standards of dress, etc. applying to spectators, or standards for participants more stringent than those stated above, must inform all other member schools and the Commissioner in writing not later than two weeks prior to their first home game for that school year. Member schools, which play at the fields or gymnasiums in question, shall have the responsibility of informing their respective teams, students, and potential spectators from their schools of these standards.
10. It is the responsibility of an official of the opposing team to mention an apparent dress code violation to an official of the offending team the day/night of the contest. A Grievance Form (Form #15) should then be sent to the Commissioner the day after the contest.
11. Failure of a team to abide by the aforementioned appearance and dress standards will make them subject to forfeiture of games/events or fines as determined by the Commissioner.

B. Refusal to Comply with Penalties

Any member school refusing to abide by and follow through with the penalties levied against it by the Commissioner or the Appeal Board will automatically be eliminated from competition for one calendar year. The school may apply for reinstatement consideration at the end of the calendar year after paying a **\$500** fine.

C. Scholarship

No student will be given scholarships, grants-in-aid, or any other remuneration (either monetary or services) of any kind purely for athletic purposes.

1. The Commissioner will determine if scholarships and/or financial aid are being given for athletic purposes.
2. Any student who desires to participate in athletics, and receives tuition other than from parents or legal guardians, must be reported to the Commissioner before permission for legal participation can be granted.

D. Completion of Scheduled Games

All GCAA conference games must be completed as scheduled and in a timely manner.

1. NUMBER OF GAMES TO PLAY EACH MEMBER SCHOOL

Each member school will normally play each other member school (or member school within the region, as the case may be) two games in every sport (except football) on a home and away basis. In football, each member school will play each other member school (or member school within the region, as the case may be) at least one game. Only the games listed on the official schedule will count as conference games (See VIII.B).

2. REGULAR-SEASON COMPLETION

All scheduled regular-season games must be completed at least seven days prior to regional or state play-off games unless approved by the Commissioner. Any school that does not honor a game contract, as designated in the schedule, will be subject to a penalty assessed by the Commissioner (See VIII.F).

3. COMPLETION OF A SCHEDULED GAME AFTER IT HAS BEGUN

A member school which refuses to complete a scheduled game without valid reason, after it has begun, will have two losses credited to its record and will be required to pay **\$100** to the opponent. Only the physical inability to complete such a game or the existence of conditions, which would make continuation of the game dangerous, will be considered valid.

4. CURFEW LIMITATIONS

There are no curfew limitations in GCAA competition. The home team has the responsibility of informing the official(s) of this fact before the start of each game. If the officials refuse to finish a scheduled game because of a curfew question, the home team will forfeit the game.

E. On-The-Field Personnel

Only personnel who are deemed necessary for the efficient functioning of the game or contest will be allowed on the playing field or court in direct contact with officials, players, or coaches and their prescribed areas (See *Section G*).

1. Doctors, security personnel, ambulance attendants, yard markers, equipment operators, team trainers, managers, cheerleaders, statisticians, and other such persons are considered authorized personnel.
2. School administrators, pastors, teachers, parents, and others, unless they are functioning in an official capacity (see Point 1 in this section), belong in the spectator areas and not on the team bench, in the dugout, or in direct immediate contact with any of the recognized on-the-field personnel.

F. Administrative Representation

A member of the administrative staff from each GCAA participating school, or their designated representative (designation must be in writing by the administrator), must be present at each athletic contest.

G. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

Conduct at any GCAA athletic game or contest which results in the ejection of a player, coach, or school official by a game official must be reported by all schools involved to the Commissioner on the first school day following the occurrence on an *Unsportsmanlike Conduct Report* (GCAA Form #10). Failure to report an ejection will result in a **\$250** fine for the school which had the ejection, and **\$50** for the non-ejection school. Ejection procedures for officials are found in Appendix D.

1. The following regulations apply to any player, coach, or school official:
 - a. Ejection from a game or contest will result in automatic suspension from the next two games [see Note]. Exception – football will be only a one game suspension, and the number of games suspended may not be more than 20% of the scheduled regular season (regular season includes GCAA and non-GCAA games as listed on Form 3). Games which a player or the coach sits out must be the same level as the game from which he was ejected. Ex.: If a person who plays or coaches both junior varsity and varsity is ejected from a *varsity* game, that person must sit out the next two *varsity* games.
 - b. Two ejections (same individual) in one season will result in a three consecutive game suspension [see Note], a **\$150** fine and the Commissioner's review for possible expulsion for the remainder of the season.
 - c. Any player, coach, or school official who leaves the bench area during a disturbance on the court/field will be suspended for two games and fined **\$250** per person. Note: This does not apply to coaches or school officials who are attempting to stop the disturbance. However, coaches/school officials are not to make contact with members or personnel from the opposite team.
 - d. Belligerent physical contact with a game official or coach/player from the opposite team will result in mandatory suspension for the remainder of the season and a **\$500** fine.

Note: If there are no games left in the regular season to fulfill the suspensions, they must be

served in postseason games, and the next season of that same sport, if necessary. Any suspended student/athlete may attend the games from which he/she is suspended, but may not dress out and may not sit with the team during the games. Any suspended coach may not attend the games from which he/she is suspended.

2. The following regulations apply to spectators:
 - a. Any spectator who enters an athletic court/field during a disturbance will be banned from attending any GCAA games for two weeks.
 - b. Any spectator who enters an athletic court/field during a disturbance and makes contact with an official or coach or player from the other team will be banned from any GCAA games for the remainder of the season and the spectator's school will be fined **\$500**.
 - c. Failure of the school of the offending spectator to enforce the penalty on the spectator will result in the forfeiture of all games (in the sport where the offense occurred) for the remainder of the season.
3. The Commissioner is authorized to handle any case of misconduct or refer it to the Appeal Board. Action for those involved in such conduct could include one or any combination of the following:
 - a. Warning, probation, suspension, or fining in regards to an offending school.
 - b. Suspension from competition or participation for a period of time in regards to any player, coach, school official, or team.

H. Simultaneous Participation of Schools

A school cannot be a member of the GCAA if they officially participate in any other athletic conference, federation, association, or similar organization in sports offered by the GCAA. The Executive Committee may consider temporary participation in an outside conference or organization upon the request of a member school. Each request must be made in writing by the July GCAA meeting each year and will be considered individually. The decision will be determined on the basis of the purpose of the request and its possible impact upon the GCAA.

I. Home and Visiting Team Jerseys

In football, basketball, and soccer all team members are required to have two regulation jerseys, one predominantly light in color and the other predominantly dark. Light jerseys are to be worn by the home team and dark jerseys by the visiting team (reverse for football) unless the coaches have previously agreed otherwise. In play-off games at a neutral field or court, the Commissioner will designate or teams will draw prior to the game to determine the home and visiting team status.

J. Game Passes and Free Admission

Admittance fees for adults and students will be regulated by each GCAA participating school for their regular-season home games. Special provision has been made for designated personnel and participants for athletic games or contests sponsored by a GCAA member school through game passes and free admission policies.

1. GAME PASSES

The Commissioner will issue a preset number of GCAA game passes to each member school. Each GACS and GCAA officer will also be issued a pass.

- a. The pass will admit the person holding it and immediate family members to any regular-season athletic game or contest sponsored by a GCAA member school.
- b. Game passes are for the use of the designated school personnel and will be forfeited if misused.

2. FREE ADMISSION

Team members (including cheerleaders), along with one coach, one assistant coach, one manager, and one statistician per team will be admitted free of charge to regular-season athletic games or contests sponsored by a GCAA member school.

- a. Marching bands and drill teams in uniform will be admitted free to football and soccer games. NOTE: Pep bands and pep clubs will not be admitted free to any games.
- b. An administrator (or their designated representative), athletic director or coach from the visiting team must be at the gate to identify those who are to be admitted free.

K. Practice and Camps

Practice is defined as a sports training session attended by a coach or potential coach and three or more players or potential players. Any such practices fall under the established GCAA bylaws regarding start dates and out of season camp guidelines. Training sessions by coaches with only one or two players present are not considered a team practice and may be conducted at any time during the year.

X. OFFICIALS – SPORTSMANSHIP, ETHICS AND RULE CLARIFICATION

A. Officials' Associations

Officials for all GCAA athletic games or contests must be members of an approved GHSA officials' association or other associations approved by the Commissioner.

1. These officials must be in full regulation uniform and have complete control over all aspects of any game or contest they are officiating between two GCAA teams.
2. Each member school must complete an Officials' Association Form (GCAA Form #11) listing the officials' association being used for each of the sports they participate in. This form must be submitted annually to the Commissioner prior to the start of any sports season (preferably by the beginning of the school year). The Commissioner will then send a letter to each of the officials' associations listed on the forms along with a copy of the Statement of Ethics Regarding Athletic Officials (See copy of Letter to Officials – Appendix D).

B. Securing Officials

The home team, or the team that designates the site for the game, will secure the officials (and furnish game balls) for regular-season games. Every effort should be made to rotate officials from game to game.

C. Sportsmanship and Ethics for Officials

It is the responsibility of the coach of the home team (or the Commissioner or his representative in any play-off or championship game) to give (or read) the following statement to each official prior to any game sponsored by the GCAA. The Commissioner will provide copies of this statement to each participating school.

Statement of Ethics Regarding Athletic Officials

In any Georgia Christian Athletic Association contest requiring the use of an approved officials' association, the areas of officiating ethics listed below need to be followed:

Sportsmanship Conduct

The GCAA strives to maintain a strong emphasis on sportsmanship in all athletic contests. We therefore ask those officiating at any GCAA game to have no hesitation to penalize or remove from the game, court, or field any participant or spectator who is guilty of any rule infraction that displays poor sportsmanship. This especially applies to the use of any abusive, foul, or obscene language that will not be tolerated in GCAA contests. **We request that any player who is heard by an official using profanity or seen displaying an obscene gesture be ejected immediately from the game and that both coaches be informed as to the reason for this ejection.**

Ineligible Officials

In relationship to the home team in regular-season games or either team in play-off or tournament games, persons in the following categories are not to be used as officials:

- Any person who is related to a student, a teacher, a board member, or an administrator
- Any person who is a member of an affiliated church
- Any person who is a business associate of any parent, teacher, or administrator
- Any person who is a close personal friend of the coach

Rotation of Officials

Every effort must be made to provide for rotation of officials from game to game during regular-season games and from session to session during play-off and tournament games.

D. Clarification of Rules to Officials

Any difference in GCAA rules and procedures from those of the NFHS (or the Georgia High School Association, if applicable) must be discussed and clarified prior to the start of any athletic game or contest. The responsibility to fulfill this clarification of rules is as follows:

1. Regular-Season Games – The responsibility belongs to the home team coach in the presence of the officials and the away team coach.
2. Tournament, Play-off and Championship Games – The responsibility belongs to the Commissioner (or his representative) in the presence of the officials and all the coaches of the competing teams.

XI. REGULATIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR INDIVIDUAL SPORTS

FOOTBALL

Team Players – Boys	Team Limit – 35 Players
Rules – NFHS Football Rules Book	Maximum Regular-Season Games – 10 (not including play-off games or approved tournaments)

Practice (off-season) – No more than two weeks (ten consecutive school days) of off-season practice is allowed during the school year. Players may participate in organized clinics and camps during the summer vacation. Schools may give their students permission to participate on a community team in addition to the school’s GCAA team. Sports camps must be completed within seven consecutive days.

Practice (Pre-Season) – No pre-season practice is to begin prior to the third Monday in July. Conditioning sessions without pads may begin earlier. Headgear, face guards, mouthpieces, and shoes may be used in conditioning sessions.

Regular Season – The regular season begins the second Friday of August. The state championship game will be scheduled by the first Friday in November.

Medical Personnel – It is the responsibility of the home team to provide qualified medical personnel, when needed, for the treatment of injuries for both teams. Qualified medical personnel may be nurses, doctors, sports trainers, EMT’s, and other medical professionals with proper training. At the start of the game, the home team will be responsible for notifying the visiting team who the designated medical personnel will be.

Game Frequency – No more than one game or any part of a game (such as a jamboree, etc.) can be played per week.

Mercy Rule – At any time during the second half of a game, when the score difference becomes 30 points or more, the game goes to a running clock. The clock will only stop for time-outs, injuries (at the discretion of the officials), and scores (touchdown or field goal). If the score difference drops below 30 points, operation of the clock will return to normal (the running clock will cease).

Junior Varsity (Special Regulations) – The following regulations apply to junior varsity games:

- The offensive team has the option of using a football of regular or junior size (weight – 12 to 14 oz., long axis – 10” to 11”, long circumference – 26” to 27”, short circumference – 19” to 20”).
- Games are to be played in eight-minute quarters with intermission and warm-up times being the same as for the varsity team.

Tie-Breaker Procedures – Detailed instruction sheets explaining the procedures to be followed for the extra period(s) need to be given to (and discussed with) coaches and officials before any game.

- The “ten-yard line overtime procedure” according to the NFHS Football Rules Book needs to be followed to break a tie in eight-man football. A coin flip will determine which end of the field of play is used and who will be on offense first. Each team will receive four downs. If the offense has a turnover, they forfeit the remainder of their downs. If a tie remains after each team has had an opportunity to be on offense, then the process is repeated with the rotation of who is on offense first. This cycle will repeat until a winner can be determined.

Lightning detectors are required at all outdoor GCAA athletic events.

CROSS COUNTRY

Team Players – Boys and Girls	Team Limit – three per team (two team max)
Rules – NFHS Track and Field/Cross Country Rules Book	Maximum Regular-Season Games – N/A

Practice (off-season) – No more than two weeks (ten consecutive school days) of off-season practice is allowed during the school year. Players may participate in organized clinics and camps during the summer vacation. Schools may give their students permission to participate on a community team in addition to the school’s GCAA team. Sports camps must be completed within seven consecutive days.

Teams – The minimum number runners required for a team is three runners. A school may have two teams for each gender and level. The first three-person team will be designated as the A-Team with an additional three-person team designated as the B-Team. A school may have more than three runners for a team, but only the top-three times will be used for competition. A runner may compete at the varsity or JV level but not both.

Meets – All meets will consist of no more than 3.1 mile courses for varsity runners and no more than 2.0 mile courses for JV runners.

- Each runner/team must participate in at least two meets (no exceptions).
- The date, participants, and scores must be sent to the Commissioner to avoid disqualification.

State Qualification – Each team must compete in at least two scheduled GCAA meets to qualify for state. Individuals must compete in at least two scheduled GCAA meets to qualify as a medalist.

Dress Code – It is the responsibility of each school to know the dress code and to follow GCAA standards (SEE X.A.8).

Lightning detectors are required at all outdoor GCAA athletic events.

GOLF

Team Players – Boys and Girls (may be Co-ed) Rules – USGA Rules of Golf	Team Limit–Two per team (two team max) Maximum Regular-Season Games – N/A
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Practice (off-season) – No more than two weeks (ten consecutive school days) of off-season practice is allowed during the school year. Players may participate in organized clinics and camps during the summer vacation. Schools may give their students permission to participate on a community team in addition to the school’s GCAA team. Sports camps must be completed within seven consecutive days.

Teams – A school may have two teams. The first four-person team will be designated as the A-Team with an additional four-person team designated as the B-Team. No alternates are to be brought for a match without the host school’s permission.

Matches – All matches will be nine holes with the exception of the state championship, which will be eighteen holes.

- Each school must participate in at least two matches (no exceptions).
- The date, participants, and scores must be sent to the Commissioner to avoid disqualification.

State Qualification – Each team must score ___ or less in a nine-hole match to qualify for state. Individuals must score 50 or less to qualify as a medalist.

Dress Code – It is the responsibility of each school to know the dress code of the course and to follow normal GCAA standards.

Bags/Carts – Pull carts are acceptable for regular-season and post-season competition (motorized carts or caddies are not permitted).

Girls – Girls will use the tee boxes designated for ladies in both regular-season and post-season competition.

Lightning detectors are required at all outdoor GCAA athletic events.

BOYS' SOCCER

Team Players – Boys

Rules – NFHS Soccer Rules Book

Team Limit – 25 Players

Maximum Regular-Season Games – 20

(not including play-off games or approved tournaments)

Practice (off-season) – No more than two weeks (ten consecutive school days) of off-season practice is allowed during the school year. Players may participate in organized clinics and camps during the summer vacation. Schools may give their students permission to participate on a community team in addition to the school's GCAA team. Sports camps must be completed within seven consecutive days.

Practice (Pre-Season) – No pre-season practice is to begin prior to the third Monday in July.

Regular Season – The regular season may begin the second Friday of August and must end by the second Saturday in October. For regular season standings, three points awarded for a win, one point awarded for a tie, and no points awarded for a loss.

Playing Time – Playing time for varsity teams will be according to the first option of the NFHS Rules Book, unless shortened periods are mutually agreed upon as stated in the current rules book. Playing time for junior varsity teams will be four twelve-minute quarters, unless shortened periods are mutually agreed upon.

Tie-Breaker Procedures – The following procedures need to be used in case of a tie game:

- **Regular Season Games** – Two extra periods of five minutes each will be played according to the procedure stated in the current rules book.
- **Play-off and State Championship Games** – The procedure as listed under “Tournament Games” in the rules book will be followed, namely:
 - Two five-minute overtime periods. If a tie still exists, then,
 - No more than two five-minute “sudden death” overtime periods. If a tie still exists, then,
 - Penalty kicks at the goal keeper (as described in the rules book).

Mercy Rule

- If you have achieved the seven-goal differential at the 20-minute mark of the first half, the half will end. The second half will be 20 minutes in length, unless a ten-goal differential is attained and then the game ends.
- If you have achieved the seven-goal differential at the end of the first half, the second half will be 20 minutes in length unless a ten-goal differential is attained and then the game ends.
- If the goal differential goes below seven during the second half, that half is still 20 minutes.
- If you attain a ten-goal differential in the second half, the game ends immediately.

Lightning detectors are required at all outdoor GCAA athletic events.

VOLLEYBALL

Team Players – Girls

Rules – NFHS Volleyball Rules Book

Team Limit – 20 Players

Maximum Regular-Season Games – (See Below)
(not including play-off games or approved tournaments)

Practice (off-season) – No more than two weeks (ten consecutive school days) of off-season practice is allowed during the school year. Players may participate in organized clinics and camps during the summer vacation. Schools may give their students permission to participate on a community team in addition to the school's GCAA team. Sports camps must be completed within seven consecutive days.

Practice (Pre-Season) – No pre-season practice is to begin prior to the third Monday in July.

Regular Season – The regular season begins the third Friday of August and must end by the fourth Saturday in October.

Game Ball – Only volleyballs that meet the specifications of the NFHS Volleyball Rules Book will be considered as official for use in GCAA matches. If a ball has the **NFHS** stamp, it is considered a legal game ball. If the home team uses a different brand of ball from the visiting team that is NFHS-approved, it should provide the visiting team with such balls during warm-up time.

Matches – The maximum number of *dates* to play by any one team during the regular season is 20. This does not include play-off games or approved tournaments.

Scoring – For best three-of-five, the scoring will be by the rally method with 25 points by two points with no cap needed to win each of the first four games and 15 points to win the final game. For best two-of-three, the each set will be to 25 points, win by two, and no cap.

BASKETBALL

Team Players – Boys and Girls (Separate Teams)

Team Limit – 20 Players

Rules – NFHS Basketball Rules Book

Maximum Regular-Season Games – 25

(rules apply to both boys and girls)

(including invitational tournaments)

(not including play-off games)

Practice (off-season) – No more than two weeks (ten consecutive school days) of off-season practice is allowed during the school year. Players may participate in organized clinics and camps during the summer vacation. Schools may give their students permission to participate on a community team in addition to the school’s GCAA team. Sports camps must be completed within seven consecutive days.

Practice (Pre-Season) – No practice or try-outs may begin prior to the third Monday in October.

Regular Season Games (Start-Up) – No games except intra-squad games within the school (or team-faculty, team-alumni or team-parent games) may be played prior to the first Monday in November.

Playing Time – The playing time for each team is as follows:

- Varsity (Boys and Girls) – Four eight-minute quarters with one-minute intermissions after the first and third quarters and a ten-minute intermission between halves.
- Junior Varsity (Boys and Girls) – Four six-minute quarters (eight-minute intermission).

Order of Play – The normal order for games to be played at a given time is:

1. Junior Varsity Girls
2. Junior Varsity Boys
3. Varsity Girls
4. Varsity Boys

If this order is to be changed, it must be by prior agreement of both schools. The normal order will be followed if either school disagrees with a proposed change of order.

School-Night Games – School-night defined as a date when a ‘school day’ is the next day. If two varsity games are to be played on a school-night, the first varsity game must begin no later than 6 PM. If one varsity game is to be played, it must begin no later than 7:30 PM.

3-Person Official Crews – All GCAA conference and playoff varsity games must use a three-person official crew. JV games may use a two-person official crew.

Scorers and Timers – Guidelines for basketball scorers and timers are:

- Experienced faculty members are preferred for these positions. If they are not available, other experienced adults should be used. Information on choosing and training scorers and timers is found in the NFHS Basketball Rules Book under “Part V, Assistant Officials.”
- Scorers and timers are considered to be assistant officials and, as such, need to conduct themselves with the same impartiality and maturity expected of officials. This includes avoiding outward display of favoritism for their team.
- In order to fulfill the duties of these important positions, scorers and timers need to be familiar with the current NFHS Basketball Rules Book and must read and understand the sections in it that relate to their duties. NOTE – The GCAA Appeal Board will consider an appeal for the forfeiture of a game if it can be shown that the official scorer or timer was untrained or incompetent.

Game Ball – Only basketballs that meet the specifications of the NFHS Basketball Rules Book, will be considered as official for use in GCAA games or contests. If a ball has the **NFHS** stamp, it is considered a legal game ball. If the home team uses a different brand of ball from the visiting team that is NFHS-approved, it should provide the visiting team with such balls during warm-up time.

Mercy Rule – the **GCAA Varsity mercy rule** is the same as the GHSA: each quarter will be reduced to six minutes if: (a) the point differential at half time is 40 or more points and the trailing team’s coach chooses to have the mercy rule imposed - or - (b) the point differential at the beginning of the fourth quarter is 30 or more points, then the rule will be imposed automatically.

JV mercy rule – each quarter will be reduced to four minutes if: (a) the point differential at half time is 25 or more points and the trailing team’s coach chooses to have the mercy rule imposed – or – (b) the point differential at the beginning of the fourth quarter is 20 or more points, then the rule will be imposed automatically.

NOTE – *Regulations for age limitations and junior varsity participation for sixth and tenth graders are covered under Student Eligibility (See IX.C) and the six-quarter rule under Simultaneous Participation on Varsity and Junior Varsity Teams (See IX.D.4).*

CHEERLEADING

Team Players – Girls	Team Limit – 14
Rules – NFHS Spirit Rules Book	Maximum Regular-Season Games – N/A

Cheerleader sponsors should be familiar with and exercise leadership in directing cheerleader squads to follow the NFHS Spirit Rules Book and the GCAA cheerleading guidelines below:

Overall Emphasis – The overall emphasis of GCAA cheering, as an integral part of the sports program, should be to exemplify Christian sportsmanship through positive, considerate, modest, courteous, and fair conduct in cheering, realizing that cheering can do much to set the proper attitude of spectators at an athletic contest.

Role – The primary role of cheerleaders is to support the team and focus attention on the game and not themselves. They should do all they can to discourage jeering, heckling, booing, or negative cheering by spectators who represent their school.

Conduct – The conduct of cheerleaders, as that of athletes, is as important before and after the game as during the game. The cheerleader uniform immediately identifies cheerleaders with their school and with GCAA activities. Conduct should not bring discredit to the school or to the Lord.

Field/Gym Placement – Cheerleaders should not be on the field or gym floor at any time during a live ball. When a time-out is over, the cheerleaders should curtail any cheer in progress and leave the floor immediately. They should avoid, as much as possible, being in the line of vision of spectators (especially when not cheering).

Uniforms – Each school has the responsibility to be certain that all cheerleader uniforms conform to GCAA standards. (See X.A.7) There should be no question about this at any game.

Megaphones – Megaphones should only be used by the cheerleaders (not by spectators). They should not be used in any way that would interfere with the officiating of the game.

Cheers/Stunts/Pyramids – The following recommendations need to be taken into consideration:

- The content of each cheer (both words and motions) used by a school should be carefully scrutinized by school officials to be sure that nothing derogatory, discourteous, or contrary to Christian philosophy is included. This is especially important when adapting cheers from secular sources.
- Basic cheers need to be emphasized in order to encourage the participation of as many spectators as possible. Elaborate and complicated cheers should be avoided.
- Stunts and pyramids need to be minimized since they tend to bring attention to the cheerleaders more than emphasizing the game or the team. Elaborate and dangerous stunts and pyramids should be eliminated.
- In order to standardize our annual cheerleading competition, cheerleaders must never lose contact with one another while performing any stunts or pyramids. (Therefore, no tosses, catches or jumping from pyramids are allowed.) Pyramid height will be limited to two high while standing and three high while kneeling or stooped.

Cheerleading Courtesy – Cheerleading teams should show courtesy to each other by not starting cheers while the opposing cheerleaders are cheering and by allowing for alternation of cheers during successive time-outs, etc. It is recommended that agreement be made on this prior to the game.

Tournament

- Competition time will be three minutes with 30 second leeway.

NOTE – *The Commissioner will send a copy of these guidelines to each participating school, along with the state competition regulations, at the beginning of each school year.*

BASEBALL

Team Players – Boys

Rules – NFHS Baseball Rules Book

Team Limit – 20 Players

Maximum Regular-Season Games – 20

(not including play-off games or approved tournaments)

Practice (off-season) – No more than two weeks (ten consecutive school days) of off-season practice is allowed during the school year. Players may participate in organized clinics and camps during the summer vacation. Schools may give their students permission to participate on a community team in addition to the school’s GCAA team. Sports camps must be completed within seven consecutive days.

Practice (Pre-Season) – No practice or try-outs may begin prior to the first Monday of February.

Regular Season – No games may be played prior to the fourth Monday of February.

Game Times – The home team, or the team that designates the site for the game, will set the time for games and will determine whether they will be night or day games.

Pitching Rule – A pitcher is limited to seven innings in a day, ten innings in two consecutive days, and 14 innings in four consecutive days. If the pitcher pitches more than seven innings in two consecutive days, he must rest two days (48 hours), or if he pitches 14 innings in four days, he must rest two days (48 hours).

Entry into the ballgame as a pitcher constitutes an inning pitched. After the initial-inning pitched by that individual, one pitch constitutes an inning pitched. Innings pitched in a terminated game that is a no-contest count.

Junior Varsity (Special Regulations) – The following regulations apply to junior varsity games:

- Field dimensions are to be the same as those for varsity baseball.
- Two approved officials, as designated under the section on officials (See ARTICLE XI), are to be used.
- Any pitching rule would apply to any combination of JV and varsity games in which a student/athlete may participate (See IX.D.4).

Mercy Rule – 15 runs after 2.5 or 3 innings; 10 runs after 4.5 or 5 innings

Suspended Games – When a game is stopped before it becomes a legal game (4.5 or 5 innings), it is considered ‘no contest’ and any replay will begin from the first inning.

When a game is stopped after it becomes a legal game and a winner can be determined, it is a completed game.

When a game is stopped after it becomes a legal game and a winner cannot be determined (score is tied), any replay will begin from the point of interruption. The location for resumption of play will be determined by Commissioner.

If games are halted due to weather, unplayable conditions, or mechanical malfunctions, the umpires may halt play for up to one hour. The one-hour interruption(s) is cumulative, but does not include time needed to prepare the field for the resumption of play.

Double Headers – Regular season double headers are typically five innings. NFHS rules state that double headers are seven innings. Therefore, GCAA regular season double headers MAY be seven innings, if both coaches agree PRIOR to the beginning of the first game.

Lightning detectors are required at all outdoor GCAA athletic events.

SOFTBALL

Team Players – Girls

Rules – NFHS Softball Rules Book

Team Limit – 20 Players

Maximum Regular-Season Games – 20

(not including play-off games or approved tournaments)

Practice (off-season) – No more than two weeks (ten consecutive school days) of off-season practice is allowed during the school year. Players may participate in organized clinics and camps during the summer vacation. Schools may give their students permission to participate on a community team in addition to the school’s GCAA team. Sports camps must be completed within seven consecutive days.

Practice (Pre-Season) – No practice or try-outs may begin prior to the first Monday of February.

Regular Season – No games may be played prior to the fourth Monday of February.

Format – The GCAA teams will participate in fast pitch softball according to the NFHS rules.

Time Limit and Ten-Run Rule Agreement – When a softball game is to be followed by a baseball game (or another softball game) and there is the possibility of darkness before the end of the second game, a time limit must be agreed upon by the coaches prior to the start of the first game. Also, there must be agreement as to whether the ten-run rule will be in effect.

Junior Varsity (Special Regulations) – The following regulations apply to junior varsity games:

- Field dimensions are to be the same as those for varsity softball.
- Two approved officials, as designated under the section on officials (See ARTICLE XI), are to be used.

Mercy Rule – 15 runs after 2.5 or 3 innings; 10 runs after 4.5 or 5 innings

Suspended Games – When a game is stopped before it becomes a legal game (4.5 or 5 innings), it is considered ‘no contest’ and any replay will begin from the first inning.

When a game is stopped after it becomes a legal game and a winner can be determined, it is a completed game.

When a game is stopped after it becomes a legal game and a winner cannot be determined (score is tied), any replay will begin from the point of interruption. The location for resumption of play will be determined by Commissioner.

If games are halted due to weather, unplayable conditions, or mechanical malfunctions, the umpires may halt play for up to one hour. The one-hour interruption(s) is cumulative, but does not include time needed to prepare the field for the resumption of play.

Double Headers – Regular season double headers are typically five innings. NFHS rules state that double headers are seven innings. Therefore, GCAA regular season double headers MAY be seven innings, if both coaches agree PRIOR to the beginning of the first game.

Lightning detectors are required at all outdoor GCAA athletic events.

GIRLS SOCCER

Team Players – Girls

Rules – NFHS Soccer Rules Book

Team Limit – 25 Players

Maximum Regular-Season Games – 20

(not including play-off games or approved tournaments)

Practice (off-season) – No more than two weeks (ten consecutive school days) of off-season practice is allowed during the school year. Players may participate in organized clinics and camps during the summer vacation. Schools may give their students permission to participate on a community team in addition to the school’s GCAA team. Sports camps must be completed within seven consecutive days.

Practice (Pre-Season) – No pre-season practice is to begin prior to the first Monday in February.

Regular Season – The regular season may begin the fourth Friday of February. For regular season standings, three points awarded for a win, one point awarded for a tie, and no points awarded for a loss.

Playing Time – Playing time for varsity teams will be according to the first option of the NFHS Rules Book, unless shortened periods are mutually agreed upon as stated in the current rules book. Playing time for junior varsity teams will be four twelve-minute quarters, unless shortened periods are mutually agreed upon.

Tie-Breaker Procedures – The following procedures need to be used in case of a tie game:

- **Regular Season Games** – Two extra periods of five minutes each will be played according to the procedure stated in the current rules book.
- **Play-off and State Championship Games** – The procedure as listed under “Tournament Games” in the rules book will be followed, namely:
 - Two five-minute overtime periods. If a tie still exists, then,
 - No more than two five-minute “sudden death” overtime periods. If a tie still exists, then,
 - Penalty kicks at the goal keeper (as described in the rules book).

Mercy Rule

- If you have achieved the seven-goal differential at the 20-minute mark of the first half, the half will end. The second half will be 20 minutes in length, unless a ten-goal differential is attained and then the game ends.
- If you have achieved the seven-goal differential at the end of the first half, the second half will be 20 minutes in length unless a ten-goal differential is attained and then the game ends.
- If the goal differential goes below seven during the second half, that half is still 20 minutes.
- If you attain a ten-goal differential in the second half, the game ends immediately.

Lightning detectors are required at all outdoor GCAA athletic events.

XII. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MUSIC AT ATHLETIC GAMES OR CONTESTS

While it is realized that athletic contests are usually exciting and emotional activities eliciting enthusiastic response and participation by spectators, we must also take into account that the underlying purposes, goals, and standards, which we desire to see in all of our Christian school programs should also be evident in athletic contests. The GCAA Athletic Manual has been written to assure that the overall athletics program within our association is in accord with Christian principles, as well as adhering to the accepted rules and regulations of the various sports.

Music played and used at athletic events has the potential of much influence in regard to team and spectator response and participation. It can add to or detract from the enjoyment and the sportsmanship displayed at games. How and when it is used and what type of music is used are all important factors in respect to the influence of game music. Because of the potential impact of game music (including marching bands, pep bands, individual or groups of instruments, recorded music, and any other types of music), the GACS makes the following recommendations regarding music used at GCAA games and contests:

1. The underlying philosophy and purpose of game music (all music used before, during, and after games at the game location) should be to honor Jesus Christ in accord with I Corinthians 10:31, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."
2. Even though game music may have a different setting and different objectives than music used in the Fine Arts Competition of the GACS, the categories of music which are not permitted in our competition should not be permitted for games. The basic music for games should be march music, pep songs, and chants that are not of a rock, rap or jazz nature. We realize that our students are influenced by what they often see and hear at college and professional games (including dance steps, jazz, rap and rock music, loud and boisterous actions of pep bands, etc.). However, as administrators, teachers, music directors, and advisors of students, we have the responsibility to help them with discernment in this area.
3. Band directors, administrators, and those who have responsibility for the content and style of game music should recognize that spectators, including Christian and non-Christians, are present at games. We must remember that spectators gain an impression of Christian schools not only from the conduct of players, coaches, and our students, but also from the music that is presented at our games.
4. The GACS does not desire to start approving or disapproving individual songs and pieces. However, we ask that all schools keep in mind that music that may be considered "borderline" by some may be very clearly offensive to others. If there is some doubt about a type of music or a particular piece that may be offensive, we ask that the music director or person in charge not play it.
5. The volume of music should also be taken into consideration, since some small gyms have much echo, and a large group of instruments or pep bands could actually cause discomfort in hearing, etc. Conductors should be sensitive in this regard.
6. If there is a student director of game music, there must be an adult staff member (preferably the music director) in the vicinity of the band to oversee the music. Any complaints should be addressed to the administrator (or his designee) of the school to whom the complaint is made.
7. Drums have proven to be a special area of potential difficulty. It is well known among musicians that drums can lead and basically control the tempo, beat, rhythm, and volume of other instruments. In the past, drums have been a problem at games, and this has resulted in complaints by both spectators and teams. Since basketball is the sport where pep bands and

drums are used most often, we are recommending that drums at basketball games be kept to a proper volume and be used only as part of a band or pep band (not by themselves). The music director needs to be very careful to avoid jazz and rock-type drum beats.

In stating the above, the GACS has tried to be fair and consistent with the overall purpose and direction of our athletic program. It is not our desire to dictate what songs are played at games or in any way dampen school spirit or enthusiasm. However, we realize that spirit and enthusiasm must balance and be aligned with Christian testimony in order to maintain consistency. We are asking for the cooperation of each school (that has musical individuals/groups or plays recorded music at athletic games or contests) so that further limitations will not have to be considered.

XIII. TOURNAMENT AND STATE PLAYOFF GAMES

Location, dates, times, and structure for all GCAA tournament, play-off and state championship games (meets) will be decided by the Commissioner. NOTE – *No member school can enter or sponsor any tournament, other than official GCAA tournaments, unless the Commissioner has approved the tournament in writing.* The listing of tournament games or contests on the *Official Game Schedule* and submitted to MaxPreps.com does not constitute approval by the Commissioner.

A. Location of Games

Play-off and championship games are held at locations as designated by the Commissioner.

B. Host School Facilities and Responsibilities

Facilities of a school serving as host are actually being loaned to the GCAA. The Commissioner or the Executive Committee has the final decision-making authority for any questions or controversies that may arise in relationship to these games. The administrator of the host school must agree to comply with the following:

1. Provide adequate facilities (dressing rooms, restrooms, parking facilities, etc.) for all participants and spectators. Minimum standards for fields used for the Football State Championship Game must be met in regards to seating capacity, lighting and locker rooms.
2. Secure the services of competent scorers and timers who are not directly connected with any of the participating teams. (See “Guidelines for Basketball Scorers and Timers” Page 24). Each team participating in a particular game may have a scorer at the table with the official scorer for consultation purposes. Each team scorer should be competent and experienced. In an area of disagreement, the official scorer has the responsibility for the final decision, unless overruled by the head official.
3. Submit the results of the contest to MaxPreps.com within 12 hours.

C. Securing Officials

The Commissioner will oversee the securing of officials for all state championship games. Host schools for playoff games should secure officials and notify Commissioner.

D. Placement of Teams

Placement of teams in state playoffs will be determined on a win/loss percentage basis of regional conference games or from the results of region tournaments when applicable. For tie-breakers, the guidelines listed on the bottom of each official schedule will be used.

E. Team Rosters

Member schools need to complete a *Team Roster for State Tournaments* (GCAA Form #13) for each of their teams participating in a State Championship Tournament and verify this matches their

roster on Maxpreps.com. The form needs to be submitted to the Commissioner with a copy being sent to the host school (when applicable) to provide information needed for preparation of programs.

XIV. TROPHIES AND AWARDS

Official GCAA trophies and awards will be provided for the various sports as determined by the Commissioner and/or the Executive Committee. No trophies or awards are to be purchased by member schools for presentation to their teams as GCAA championship, runner-up or other placements other than the official GCAA trophies.

A. Regional Championship Trophies

Championship trophies will be awarded to the first place team respectively for each sport that is involved in region competition or region tournaments when applicable.

B. State Championship Trophies and Awards

The following trophies, plaques, medallions, and ribbons will be awarded for state competition:

1. GOLF/CROSS COUNTRY

Trophies and plaques are presented at the awards ceremony following the State Championship Meet.

- a. **State Championship Teams** – Championship and runner-up trophies will be awarded to the first and second place teams respectively.
- b. **Low Medalist Individuals** – First and second low medalist plaques will be awarded to the two lowest individual golfers/runners in the state meet. Cross Country will have Low Medalist Medallions for each level (varsity girls, varsity boys, JV girls, JV boys).
- c. **All-State Team** – The five lowest scores/times for the GCAA golf/cross country state meets will make up the all-state team. An official GCAA certificate will be given to each of the participating schools to award to these players.

2. FOOTBALL, SOCCER, VOLLEYBALL, BASKETBALL, BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL

Trophies and plaques are presented at the awards ceremony following the State Championship Games for each of these sports.

- a. **State Championship Teams and MVP** – Championship and runner-up trophies will be awarded to the first and second place teams respectively. The MVP of the State Championship Game will be recommended by the coach of the winning team. The MVP plaque will be awarded to this player.
- b. **All-State Teams** (varsity only) – Each sport will have First and Second All-State teams. The member of each All-State team will be based upon the number of required starters (Soccer-11, Football-8, Volleyball-6, Basketball-5, Baseball/Softball-9). From each school, coaches will submit their recommendations from their teams based upon character, statistics, grades, etc. A state-wide vote among GCAA coaches for that sport will determine the All-State Teams. An official GCAA certificate will be given to each of the participating schools to award to these players.

3. CHEERLEADING

Trophies and medallions are presented at the award ceremony following the Cheerleading Competition that is held in conjunction with the State Basketball Tournament.

- a. **State Championship Squad** – Championship and runner-up trophies will be awarded to the first and second place squads respectively.

- b. **Most Spirited Squad** – Sponsors and judges from the state tournament will each nominate two squads that have shown a positive attitude and have been the “most spirited” throughout the competition. The squad with the most votes will receive a trophy.
- c. **All-State Squad** – One girl from each squad competing in the State Cheerleading Competition will be named to an “All-State Cheerleader Squad”. Each girl named will receive a medallion and an official GCAA certificate will be given to each of the participating schools to award to these players. NOTE – Sponsors need to submit the names of girls from their squad who have performed all season in a Christian manner both on and off the court.

XV. CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT

It is the responsibility of each member school to educate and train all coaches and athletic personnel in the areas of concussion management. All related documents to concussion management may be found in each school’s Dropbox.

Each school should use the following guidelines for a concussion management program provided by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) when there is suspicion a concussion has occurred:

Remove the athlete from play.

Look for signs and symptoms of a concussion if your athlete has experienced a bump or blow to the head or body. **When in doubt, keep the athlete out of play.**

Ensure that the athlete is evaluated by a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussions.

Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Health care professionals have a number of methods that they can use to assess the severity of concussions. As a coach, recording the following information can help health care professionals in assessing the athlete after the injury:

- Cause of the injury and force of the hit or blow to the head or body
- Any loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out) and if so, for how long
- Any memory loss immediately following the injury
- Any seizures immediately following the injury
- Number of previous concussions (*if any*)

Inform the athlete’s parents or guardians about the possible concussion and give them the fact sheet on concussion.

Make sure they know that the athlete should be seen by a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion.

Keep the athlete out of play the day of the injury and until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says they are symptom-free and it’s OK to return to play.

A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first—usually within a short period of time (hours, days, or weeks)—can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in edema (brain swelling), permanent brain damage, and even death.

There is a free online course that each coach should complete:

<http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/clinicians/index.html>