

PARENT WELCOME LETTER TO SPORTS

Welcome to GRACEAC sports!! We are pleased you have chosen to register your child(ren) in our sports program. I would like to give you some information about how we operate our sports program.

We have 3 major types of leagues:

1) Catholic United (CU): all athletes in the diocese will compete together on one team
2) Catholic United East (CUE) or Catholic United West (CUW): We divide the athletes into 2 separate divisions: East side or West side. This will typically be based upon which feeder schools and how they typically attend each high school. Parents will decide upon registration which side to choose.

This list is not all inclusive, but does include most schools.

CUE: IHM, St Thomas, St Robert, St Paul, SJV, SJDA, Corpus Christi, ASA

CUW: ABVM, Holy Trinity, St Pats, OLC, Holy Spirit, St Anthony, ASA, Corpus Christi, Sacred Heart Academy

3) School sponsored: Athletes compete for their school or merge with another school and compete wearing that school's uniform

We break our sport sessions into 4 seasons: Fall, Winter I, Winter II and Spring. This is different from the high school seasons which are 3 seasons. Each season lasts roughly 9 weeks. We do not participate or play on Sundays. All of our coaches must go through the Bishops Protecting God's Children Program. This consists of being trained in Virtus one time, concussion training (lasts for 3 years), which is mandated by the MHSAA for all coaches, sign a Ministerial Behavior form, and complete background checks. This helps us ensure your children are being protected.

Nearly all of our coaches are parent volunteers. Our parents are the backbone of our program. We ask our coaches to teach our Virtues of Greatness Program. We supply weekly emails to the coaches and parents and inform the coaches on how the virtue of the week relates to sports. We ask that the coaches discuss the virtue with the athletes at every practice and game for a few minutes hoping to induce a good discussion. Our thoughts are that if they can learn the virtues for 4, 5 or 6 years, these will teach them how to deal with difficult times or tough situations and help them make the best decisions throughout their lifetime.

We use Teamsnap (TS) for our registration and communication. This app makes it simple to register, contact coaches or other members of the team, and see your schedule for games and practices. Please download the app.

Registration for each season is open for roughly 30 days. We open FALL registration in May and it runs through July 1st. After July 1st you may still register, but you will need to pay the \$35 late fee during the registration process. Winter I registration is open the month of September. Late fee registration is open for the first few week(s) in October. Winter II registration is open the month of November with late fee registration open for a few weeks in early December. Spring registration is open Jan 15-Feb 15 and late registration is open Feb 16 through early March.

FALL May-July 1st Winter I September 1-30 Winter II Nov 1-30 Spring Jan 15-Feb 15

We need the extra time to assign teams, merge teams, find coaches, certify our coaches, prepare schedules and tournaments. We will merge teams based upon need for participation and location proximity.

Our goal is to never reschedule a game. This is very difficult since we have many schools, many different playing sites and many other options for our student athletes to participate in. Each school has an Athletic Director (AD) and they are responsible for helping you register, informing you of the sports available, managing the coaches and managing the facilities for practices and games. The AD's are asked to supply the Program Director (PD) with a list of dates their student athletes are not able to play due to other curricular events happening: like choir concerts, Christmas programs, band concerts, religious education dates, etc. The AD's are tasked with making sure they supply the PD with these dates. Sometimes dates are missed or they schedule events after the sports schedule has been released. This means we must reschedule games. We always have multiple games happening at one location. So if one game must be rescheduled, we will reschedule all of the games at that location. This affects many teams and many families, including the officials. We want to make sure our officials are treated fairly and we want to give them multiple games in one evening or day.

If you have questions or concerns with a sport, please contact your AD. They are eager to help you navigate and answer any of your questions. If the AD does not know the answer, they will contact the Program Director to obtain the information for you. Your school office will have the AD's contact information.

Typically we host games for 7th and 8th grade on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays. 5th and 6th grades will normally play on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. This can change but we do this for a few reasons: 1) it gives continuity to the sport and makes it easier for you to plan your schedules 2) We utilize MHSAA officials for all of our 5th-8th sports. These are the same officials officiating the high school and college games, Most highschool games are played on Tuesday and Thursday nights. We want our 7/8th graders to have potentially the more experienced officials. 3) A family is more likely to have a sibling in 7th or 8th grade and in high school participating in athletics than a 5th or 6th grader. With games on M W, they can hopefully watch all of their children and siblings compete.

Our officials have worked more than 2,300 times last year alone. We have paid our officials more than \$100,000 last year alone. We have a large program with many games to schedule.

Scheduling is a difficult task. It is not at all like the high schools. In high school each team plays each other home and away plus a few single games which are not “home and home.” To give you an example, we have over 100 basketball teams. Each team will play 8-10 games. That is a lot of games to schedule in less than 6 weeks! Not all of our gymnasiums will host all of our grades. Most of our gyms are too small and not safe for our 7/8th graders and officials to participate in. This only gives us a few options on where to play. We also have schools that are “outlier” schools, meaning they are not in the GR area but surrounding areas like St Patrick of Parnell or Corpus Christi in Holland. You may have to travel far to their gyms to play a school that is near you and it doesn't seem to make sense. Just remember, those schools travel every game to a far away gym. They are spending more time traveling in a few games than most will during a season. Plus, they deserve to host games as well. Both of those mentioned have large enough gyms to utilize for our 7/8 programs.

24 hour rule: The 24-hour rule is a policy in our sports that encourages parents and coaches to wait 24 hours before discussing issues that may have arisen during a game or practice. The rule's purpose is to promote a more respectful and constructive approach to handling issues by allowing people to cool down and process their initial thoughts before addressing concerns.

While attending games, please keep in mind that you represent your school, Catholic United and your family. Be positive. Be encouraging. Be supportive. Be open to listening to your athletes. Be a role model. Show respect to officials, coaches and all fans. Ask your athletes about the virtues. Have fun, cheer loudly and proudly.

See you in the gym or on the field.

Blessings,

Brad Sturgell
Program Director Diocese of GR