

Sacred Heart Athletic Association Guidelines for Athlete Evaluations

Pursuant to policies and guidelines promulgated by the Diocese of Pittsburgh Diocesan on student athlete participation:

- The overall objective of Catholic elementary school sports is to provide each student with a positive Christian athletic experience through instruction, practice and game participation. Although a reasonable competitive approach is encouraged, a win-at-any-cost philosophy is not.
- It is extremely important that each school provide some way for every interested student to be able to participate. This can be done by having an additional team to serve students unable to make the more competitive team.
- Because children develop differently, their ability to acquire the skills necessary to perform well in any sport will vary widely. Coaches must keep them interested, committed, content and confident. Too many children have such a bad experience with sports programs that they quit early in life, never having the chance to meet their full potential.

To ensure that all interested student athletes have the opportunity to participate on teams, evaluations are used at certain grade levels to determine the best mix of athletes to comprise team rosters. These guidelines are intended to inform parents and students of how player evaluations take place and to ensure uniformity and consistency in all student athlete evaluation processes. Team representatives and coaches volunteer significant amounts of time and effort to this process and their respective seasons with the goal of providing athletes with a positive experience which will increase their interest in their sport of choice as well as improving their skills.

Development Sports (Grades K – 4)

There are no evaluations for student athletes in grades K – 4. Sports programs at these levels are developmental in their focus, and children are to be divided among the appropriate number of teams to accommodate the number of registrants. When multiple teams are required due to the number of participants, players are to be equally divided to create the same levels of skill, competitiveness and opportunity for development among all teams in a single grade level. We recognize that the skill level of children in these age groups can vary greatly, so coaches will work to develop all children. In addition, children at these grade levels will get substantially equal participation time in drills, scrimmages and games throughout the regular season. During tournaments or in postseason competitive play, where player participation is optional, variations in playing time and team composition can be determined by coaches in their reasonable discretion.

Junior Varsity and Varsity Sports (Grades 5 – 8)

If the number of interested students at the JV or Varsity levels is high for a sport, players will be sorted into multiple teams, some of which may be based on grade level while others may be based on skill level. This determination will be made by the SHAA from season to season based on the number of students registered for a sport and the prevailing practices within the Diocese, among other factors. For those teams based on skill level, player evaluations will be

conducted in such a manner so as to encourage all students to participate in sports programs of their choosing. Evaluations will also be conducted with the goal of fostering positive and healthy experiences for all participants. Ultimately, every student that wishes to participate in a sport at Sacred Heart will be given the opportunity to do so (i.e., everyone makes a team).

For schools, such as Sacred Heart, that field multiple teams, the Diocese distinguishes those teams using different terms depending on the sport. These teams may be referred to by color (such as red, black or white) or, in the case of teams determined by skill level, sometimes as “A” and “B” teams. Regardless of which team a student is assigned to, player development and competition are stressed at the JV and Varsity levels. All students, regardless of which team they play on, must recognize and appreciate that playing time is a privilege and may be affected by attendance at practice, behavior, effort and attitude.

The key difference between “A” and “B” teams is that a “B” team has the primary focus on player development and coaches will strive to provide as equal playing time as possible for all team members throughout the season except in competitive tournaments, where variations in playing time can be determined by coaches in their reasonable discretion. On the “A” team, development remains important but reasonable competition takes precedent. As a result, playing time may be based more on the needs of and situations arising within games. While not every player will be guaranteed playing time in every game, coaches must always strive to ensure a positive Christian athletic experience for all players and make every effort to keep all players interested and committed.

If parents have a preference that their child be placed on a “B” team and not an “A” team, they must inform the team representative or Athletic Association president prior to evaluations. No 6th or 8th grader will be placed onto a “B” team roster as the lone 6th or 8th grade on that team, unless such placement is requested by the parent of that child.

Parents and students will be provided sufficient notice of when evaluations will take place. Every effort will be made to schedule two (2) evaluation sessions. Athletes are encouraged to attend all sessions but must attend at least one (1) evaluation session in order to be considered for an “A” team. Any student that wishes to participate on a JV or Varsity team but fails to attend at least one (1) evaluation session will automatically be placed on the “B” team, unless exceptional circumstances, such as injury, exist and the coaches/coordinators are aware of the situation prior to evaluations.

Evaluations are CLOSED to spectators, so that only athletes, evaluators, coaches and an SHAA member or representative may be present; provided, however, no coach or SHAA member or representative may be present at the evaluation of a son, daughter, family relative or friend. Parents and siblings are not permitted at evaluations as this can lead to unnecessary distractions for both the athletes and evaluators. Parents should bring their children to evaluations at least 15 minutes early and then return to pick them up at the designated time.

The process for evaluating student athletes at the JV and Varsity levels is designed to gather as much information as possible prior to team rosters being finalized. Evaluations combine both objective and subjective components. In order to have objective criteria upon which to evaluate athletes, the SHAA president and team representative for the sport will

endeavor to schedule two (2) to three (3) independent evaluators with knowledge and ability for the sport in question from outside of Sacred Heart to be present during evaluations. If this is not attainable, evaluators may be from Sacred Heart so long as they are not a parent, relative or friend of any of the students being evaluated. During evaluations, students will wear a number and that number will be used for identification purposes. If a student attends multiple evaluation sessions, that student will wear the same number for all sessions he or she attends.

Evaluations will focus on a variety of skills which will be determined by the team representative, SHAA president, coaches and evaluators. Each evaluator will be in possession of an evaluation form which, as the athletes complete the various tasks, will be used to score their performance. Evaluation scoring and results will be kept strictly confidential by the School, the SHAA, evaluators and coaches.

Placing athletes onto teams will not be based solely on the objective data gathered in evaluations, as it would be unfair to students to base team placement solely on what takes place over the limited amount of time of evaluations. A variety of factors, including but not limited to nervousness, injury and sickness may impact how a student performs in evaluations and their performance may not be an accurate reflection of their abilities. Therefore, while the data gathered by evaluators will be a significant factor in the overall construction of team rosters, coaches will also utilize their subjective knowledge of the athletes and team needs in preparing team rosters. At all times, coaches will conduct themselves in a fair, impartial and unbiased manner in finalizing team rosters.

In the days following the final evaluation, the team representative will email the team rosters to the parents of all those students that participated. Any questions regarding the outcome of evaluations or team rosters should be directed to the team representative and SHAA President within 48 hours of when the rosters are released.