



## **Mitchell Road Christian Academy 2024-2025 Athletic Handbook**

*“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” – Isaiah 40:31*

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***The mission of Mitchell Road Christian Academy is to partner with Christian parents to equip children to become ambassadors for Christ through academic excellence and an integrated worldview.***

Mike O'Leath, Athletic Director  
Dr. Phil Graybeal, Interim Head of School  
Gail Simmons, Principal

## Athletic Philosophy, Objectives, and Teams

### Philosophy

The philosophy of coaching and athletics at MRCA is to encourage and guide athletes to exemplify and glorify Christ in their actions and words (1 Cor. 10:31) and to develop athletes physically and spiritually. We desire that our student athletes conduct themselves in a positive manner both on and off campus.

### Objectives

- To bring glory to God and be witnesses for Him by our words and actions.
- To develop and enhance the talents with which God has blessed each athlete.
- To build positive attributes of sportsmanship, such as:
  - Self-discipline
  - Respect for self, teammates, coaches, officials, and opponents
  - Positive representation of MRCA and the mission of the school
- To strive for excellence both on and off the field/court/course.

### Teams

- Fall Teams: Co-ed Cross Country; Boys Soccer; Girls Volleyball
- Winter Teams: Boys and Girls Basketball
- Spring Teams: Co-ed Golf; Girls Soccer; Boys Baseball

## Conference Affiliation and Purpose

Mitchell Road Christian Academy is a member of the Carolina Middle School Conference (CMSC), which consists of the following schools:

Bob Jones Academy

Christ Church Episcopal School

First Presbyterian Academy at Shannon Forest

Langston Charter Middle School

Lead Academy

Mitchell Road Christian Academy

Southside Christian School

Spartanburg Day School

Spartanburg Preparatory School

St. Joseph's Catholic School

St. Mary's Catholic School

The members of the Carolina Middle School Conference, realizing the benefits that accrue for our students from uniting in our education goals, shall strive to promote and administer athletic events, which will enhance the development of our students and the relationship between the member schools.

# Student Requirements and Eligibility Guidelines

## Age

MRCA requires students to be enrolled as a full-time 6th – 8th grader in order to be eligible to participate in sports. Given extenuating circumstances that may arise from year-to-year, the Head of School and Athletic Director may decide to include 5th graders as candidates.

## Extra Sports Team Involvement

Students may only participate in one MRCA sport per season unless approved by the Athletic Director. Participation in any organized non-MRCA sport team should be brought to the attention of the coach prior to tryouts in order for the coach to discuss expectations, conflicts, etc. before selecting the team roster. Students must be present for the entirety of their MRCA team's games to be eligible to play for MRCA.

## Physical Examinations

MRCA requires students participating in middle school sports tryouts to have a physician's exam stating that they are physically able to participate in tryouts and athletic team sports. The required form is available to students on the school website and app and must be turned in prior to tryouts. The physical examination form must be dated on or after June 1<sup>st</sup> of the current year and is valid for one calendar year.

## Required Forms

The following documents, which can be found under the Athletics tab on the MRCA website, must be completed and turned in to the Athletic Office before students can try out for a team and/or participate in practices:

- Pre-Participation Physical Evaluation Form
- Release of Liability Form
- Concussion Awareness Form
- Athletic Handbook Acknowledgement Form

If any portion of these forms are left blank, it will be considered incomplete and will be returned to the student. Students will not be able to try out or participate until the forms are complete.

## Academic Requirements

Any students participating in any MRCA middle school sports team must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Maintain a C (70) average or above at each grading period and have no F in any subject. Failure to do so will result in immediate ineligibility from the team until grades improve.
  - Ineligibility will be determined by the Athletic Director and Principal at the end-of-quarter date as noted on the school calendar. The 4<sup>th</sup> quarter report card of the previous school year will determine eligibility for fall sports. The Athletic Director will notify students of academic ineligibility.
  - The teacher(s), student, and student's parent(s) will set up a conference to create a strategy for success to help support the student in obtaining reinstatement on the team.
  - Students may not participate in any team-related games or practice while ineligible.
  - The Athletic Director will review grades with the principal two weeks after ineligibility to determine if a student may be reinstated.

- Students receiving school suspension for any reason will be subject to suspension of practices and game(s) or removal from the team.

### **Participation Eligibility**

- Any student seeking to play a fall sport must be enrolled in MRCA by September 1st.
- Students are not permitted to participate in an athletic event before the Athletic Director has declared them eligible.
- The team activity fee will be invoiced through FACTS and must be paid before students selected for a team will be permitted to practice and compete in their sport. The activity fees for each sport are as follows:
  - \$100 for Cross Country
  - \$150 for Basketball, Volleyball, and Soccer
  - \$175 for Golf and Baseball
- Students who quit a team for any reason other than medical may forfeit their opportunity to play on a team during the next athletic season. Final determination will be made by the Athletic Director.
- Students must attend school the day they are participating in after-school athletics. Students arriving after 11: 30 am on the day of a game will be ineligible to participate in a practice and/or game unless excused by an administrator. Likewise, students who leave school early because of illness will not be permitted to participate in that day's practice and/or game.
- If students do not participate in scheduled PE classes, they are ineligible to participate in after-school athletics, unless the Athletic Director approves.
- If students miss a practice for any reason, it will be the coach's decision whether they will be allowed to start the next game or if they will sit out for a portion of or the entire game.
- Students should report to practice on time and in proper attire. Tardiness is not tolerated.
- If students forget their uniform for a game, they are not permitted to play until they are in uniform.
- If MRCA students' conduct either inside or outside of the athletics program is found to be detrimental to the philosophy of the Athletic Department and the mission of MRCA, they will be subject to suspension or removal from the team. Any form of poor sportsmanship, bad attitude, disrespect, or foul language will result in removal from a game and possible suspension from and/or removal from the team.

## **Training and Practice**

### **Conditioning Standards**

Each team must have at least five cumulative days of practice and students must participate in four practices on four different days prior to the first conference game in all sports.

### **Length of Practices**

- Practice days and times will be given to parents prior to the first day of practice.
- The length of practice will vary with each sport, but it is advised that practice be limited to no more than 2 ½ hours per day.
- Practices and/or team meetings are not permitted on Sundays or Wednesdays.
- Holiday practices are optional, not mandatory.

## **Team Camp**

Coaches are permitted to host a weeklong team camp with approval from the Athletic Director. Camps are exempt from the time limits set for regular practice days.

## **Practice Area and Equipment**

Practice areas must be kept clean and safe by all teammates and coaches. Likewise, sports equipment must be kept in good repair apart from the wear and tear of normal use.

## **Water Breaks**

If practice lasts more than one hour, there must always be a water break. In case of extreme heat, water breaks should be more frequent.

## **Injury Protocol**

- In case of an injury during a practice session, the coach should make an evaluation of the severity of the injury and submit an Incident Report to the Athletic Director. Parents must always be notified of all injuries.
- If there is a head injury, the coach must follow the proper concussion protocol and inform parents of their findings.
- Call EMS for needed support with head, neck, or back injury and for any broken or suspected broken bones.

## **Inclement Weather Policy**

- If school is cancelled due to inclement weather, all athletic events will be cancelled. This includes games, practices, and team meetings.
- If inclement weather is expected, coaches should exercise extreme caution.
- Practice will pause or be cancelled when lightning is observed in the vicinity. If practice is cancelled after it has begun, the coach will send communication through a GroupMe text notifying the parents where and when to pick up their children.

## **Insurance**

MRCA provides secondary insurance for students to cover school activities.

# **Parent and Spectator Guidelines**

MRCA has a history of quality athletic teams, great parental and fan support, and a positive testimony throughout the CMSC. We look forward to that continuing and for each sport season to be a positive athletic experience for every student.

As soon as a team has been selected, the team coach will host an organizational meeting on campus for parents. Information regarding team policies and philosophy of the Athletic Department will be covered.

## **Parental Guidelines**

Parents are expected to support and partner in the philosophy of MRCA's athletic program, exemplifying and glorifying Christ with both actions and words. To that end, the following points outline the conduct expected of MRCA parents:

- The testimony for Christ is to be preeminent in every aspect of the athletic program. The conduct of parents in support of their children, the team, and the coaches is a vital part of that testimony. Parents are asked to set a positive tone when speaking about an MRCA sport. Support should be given to all athletes without critiquing the officiating, the coaching (of either MRCA's or the opponent's team), or the opponents.
- Coaches choose and manage their teams based on certain criteria that has been previously discussed and approved with the Athletic Director. The starting line-up, rotation, practice schedule, and playing time is at the discretion of the coach.
- Parents are expected to lend their support of the team and the coach. If some element of the coach's management of the team seems problematic, parents should meet with the coach and discuss it in a respectful manner. Do not approach a coach before or after practices or games in lieu of scheduling a meeting. Please contact the Athletic Office to schedule a meeting with the coach.
- Sports teams have a unique opportunity to teach valuable lessons about both victory and disappointment. By helping your children understand healthy competition and find biblically-sound ways to deal with disappointment, their maturity and wisdom in those areas will grow and will help as the coach addresses those emotions throughout the season.

### **Spectator Guidelines**

Spectators should provide a positive witness to all who are present at each event. Spectators should encourage MRCA's team as well as acknowledge a good play by an opponent. Outward, explosive criticism of the officials, coaches, or players will not be tolerated.

If any spectator's exhibits unsportsmanlike conduct, that individual may be barred from attending future MRCA athletic events.

## **Transportation to and from Games and Events**

Parents will be provided with a travel itinerary, accurate directions, and departure and return times for each athletic event not on the MRCA campus.

All players are to travel to games on school-provided transportation. It is preferred that all players travel back to school together after an event to build camaraderie. However, parents may choose to personally take their children home after the event may do so provided they sign him/her out with the coach prior to leaving an away game. If bus transportation is unavailable for any reason, coaches will inform parents and alternate transportation plans will be made.

Students shall adhere to the following rules and regulations when riding on MRCA buses:

- Students will observe the same conduct as they do in the classroom.
- Students will be courteous and respectful of others, including other drivers on the road.
- Students will enter and exit the bus in an orderly fashion.
- Students will always remain in their assigned or selected seat.
- Students will always have their seat belt fastened.
- Students are not to unfasten their seat belt while the bus is in motion.
- Students will keep head, hands, and feet inside the bus always.

- There will be no eating or drinking on the bus unless the trip is longer in duration and the students have been given permission by their coach/chaperone.
- There will be no shouting while on the bus.
- There will be no distracting the bus driver.
- Students are not to use phones or earbuds/headphones on the bus or at practices and games.
- Students are not to open the back door without permission.
- Students are to pick up and dispose of all trash on the bus insuring it is clean when they exit.

If students will be riding home from an away game with someone other than their parents, the parent/guardian must complete a Travel Release Form (kept by the coach) that gives them permission to ride with the designated person.

- Coaches will be responsible for coordinating with the Athletic Director the use of school buses to and from an athletic event.
- If a sport's event is being held off-campus, the coach will provide a travel itinerary, accurate directions, and departure and return times for the team parents.
- Due to insurance regulations, coaches are not permitted to transport a student for official school or athletic purposes if they will be in a one-on-one situation at any time, and coaches are not permitted to transport students (other than their own) after practices and/or games
- It is the responsibility of the coach to supervise all athletes until they have been picked up by their parents.
- Coaches are responsible for the conduct of their team from the time players leave MRCA until they return.

## Guidelines for Coaches

Coaches acknowledge that all MRCA athletes are legal minors and should be protected as such through the support and adherence to MRCA's policies and procedures.

### Requirements

Coaches must complete the following documents and action items before they are permitted to coach or to be involved in any team activities:

- |                                      |                                  |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Application with testimony         | • Bloodborne pathogen test       |
| • Background check                   | • Child abuse awareness training |
| • Signed employee agreement          | • Concussion awareness training  |
| • Bus driver training, if applicable | • CPR certification              |
| • MR driver screening, if applicable | • Tourniquet training            |
| • TB skin test                       |                                  |
- 
- Coaches will lead with our 4Dimensional Coaching Model (Physical, Mental, Spiritual, and Application) and will teach and model the values of cooperation, self-control, and the proper spirit of competition.
  - Coaches will support and enforce the policies and standards of behavior and sportsmanship set forth by MRCA.



- Coaches are to be positive ambassadors for Christ and for MRCA and are to abide by the policies, procedures, and guidelines set forth in both the Family Handbook and the MRCA Employee Operations Manual. Any concerns, questions, or complaints that are brought to the coaches' attention that are outside the realm of their duties must be redirected to the appropriate school administrator.
- Coaches will know and follow the CMSC and school rules governing the sport they are coaching.
- All team supervision must be by an approved team coach or assistant coach. Parents (or other) volunteers are not permitted as substitutes in any circumstance where a coach is unavailable.

### **Communication**

- Coaches are responsible for establishing training rules for their teams. These rules must be submitted to the Athletic Director for approval before distribution and then distributed to students and their parents during the informational meeting at the beginning of the sport's season.
- Information regarding tryouts, practices, games/meets and other informational or team-related communication will be sent out through the Athletic Office.
- If there has been a game schedule change, the coach will first consult with the AD before sending out the change via GroupMe.
- Parents may opt in or out of GroupMe texts and supplemental emails.
- The outcome of all games and any requested statistics must be reported to the Athletic Director and Athletic Office within 24 hours of a game.
- Any special reporting or game recap will be sent out by the Athletic Office within 24 hours of the event to parents who have opted in for those emails.
- Meetings between coaches and parents (and athlete, if applicable) must be scheduled through the Athletic Office assistant in the Athletic Office.
- Communication from coaches directly to players will take place only at practices or games. Coaches and assistant coaches may not call, text, email, or communicate via social media directly with students.
- Coaches and assistant coaches may not be in a one-on-one situation with any MRCA student on or off campus without the student's parent present.
- Any event, activity, or special team-building opportunity apart from regularly scheduled practices and games must be scheduled and approved by the Athletic Director prior to the start of that sport's season. If a coach wants to add any additional activities after the season begins, a request must be submitted to the Head of School two weeks in advance. This also applies to out of season events.
- Coaches may not charge or request donations of money or any additional items without prior Head of School approval.
- The school's policy against discrimination or other harassment applies but is not limited to communication. Therefore, any communication that adversely reflects on the coach's or school's Christian testimony, that contains confidential school, student, or parent information, that disparages the school or other employees of the school or church, or that violates the school's antidiscrimination/anti-harassment policies may result in a request remove the communication and in employee discipline, including termination.

### **Tryouts, Team Selection, and Practices**

- Coaches will not allow students to participate in tryouts, practices, or games without submitting the following completed forms: Pre-Participation Physical Evaluation, Release of Liability, Handbook Acknowledgement, and the Student/Parent Concussion Awareness.

- Coaches will prepare a list of students for eligibility and present it to the Athletic Director before students are notified of their status on the team. If any edits to the list are made after the initial team is selected, those changes must be made known to the Athletic Director immediately for approval.
- Coaches will coordinate with the Athletic Director to have a pre-season meeting with the team parents. An outline of the meeting's talking points will be submitted to the Athletic Director no less than two days prior to the meeting.
- Coaches must coordinate with the Athletic Office for approval and to reserve and use any space on campus. These requests must be made at least three weeks prior to the proposed date of use.
- Before every practice and game, coaches will have a devotional time with their team. Practices and games should also include a time of prayer.
- Authorized MRCA coaches will plan and supervise practices and ensure that the age, maturity, and abilities of the players will be considered when establishing practice sessions.
- Students should be permitted and encouraged to attend academic help sessions if they are offered and needed. This is an acceptable reason for tardiness to practice.
- Coaches are responsible for each athlete until they leave campus. Coaches must never leave athletes unsupervised.
- Coaches should not begin outside practice if lightning is in the immediate area.
- If practice must be ended early due to unforeseen circumstances (such as inclement weather), the coach will send a GroupMe message to parents indicating such as well as where and when to pick up their child.

### **Practice Area, Equipment, and Uniforms**

- Coaches will maintain the safety, orderliness, and cleanliness of all practice areas and home game/meet areas.
- All equipment must be kept in good repair throughout the sports season. Coaches will establish and enforce rules for the proper use and care of athletic equipment.
- All equipment must be picked up and returned to the proper equipment storage facility following each practice. It is the coach's responsibility to account for all equipment and to keep the storage area clean and orderly.

### **End-of-Season Responsibilities**

- As soon as a sport's season has finished, the following end-of-season responsibilities must be completed:
  - Report the season record and special team accomplishments to the Athletic Director.
  - Designate award winners, if applicable.
  - Instruct students and parents to clean and return team uniform and gear within one week of the season's end.
  - Identify any items that need to be purchased for the following season and submit that information to the Athletic Office within two weeks of the season's end.
  - Turn in all equipment, First-Aid bags, student forms, receipts, and ID badges/fobs to the Athletic Office within one week of the team's last game/meet.

### **Marketing**

All marketing must be approved by the Athletic Director and the Director of Communications at least two weeks prior to its proposed application. Use of the MRCA logo must be pre-approved in all circumstances, whether in print, electronic form, or on promotional items/gear. The request should be made via the Approval

Form for Marketing Materials, available upon request. Outside photography and videography providers must also be pre-approved before their services may be utilized.

### **Social Media**

Coaches are expected to reflect a positive Christian testimony and serve as Christian role models both in and out of school. The school's policy against discrimination or other harassment applies as well to any electronic communication. Therefore, any electronic communication within the following parameters (including pictures) may result in requests to remove the communication and/or in employee discipline, including termination:

- Adversely reflects on the employee's or school's Christian testimony,
- Potentially endangers the safety of students or staff,
- Contains confidential student, parent, or school information, Disparages MRCA or other employees or officers of the school, and/or
- Violates MRCA's anti-discrimination/anti-harassment policies.

Coaches are expected to adhere to the following guidelines when using electronic social media/networks:

- Coaches should never electronically "friend" a student at MRCA.
- Coaches should not post pictures of students who are not members of their own personal family.
- When responding to students on a social media site, coaches should only respond with comments that are academic, sports related, or spiritually encouraging in nature.
- Coaches should be good stewards of their time by not using, posting on, or commenting on posts during school hours.

## **Mitchell Road Sports Club**

The Mitchell Road Sports Club (MRSC) is a recreational sports club that is associated with CESA soccer and NFL flag football. MRSC conducts its practices on the school/church campus, but it is a separate entity and operates independently. Any questions, feedback, or communication regarding the club should be addressed to its director, Mark Martin.

# Athletic Handbook Acknowledgement Form

Mitchell Road Christian Academy provides a copy of its athletic rules and regulations to each student trying out for a sport. Please read this handbook carefully, sign this acknowledgement form in the space provided, and return the form to the appropriate coach or to the Athletic Office.

By signing below, both the student and parent/guardian acknowledge that they have read the information and will abide by the policies, rules, and regulations that are contained in the MRCA Athletic Handbook.

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Student

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Parent/Guardian

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Please list each sport you hope to play for the 2024-2025 school year

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Date

Please sign this page and return it to the Athletic Office or the coach with whom you are trying out. Keep the Athletic Handbook for your reference.