

Texas Home Educator's Sports Association (THESA)

ATHLETIC HANDBOOK

Christ-like Champions

What does it mean to be a Christ-like champion? Most importantly it means that we need to honor Christ in how we conduct ourselves on and off the playing field. This is a tough thing to do because the world does just the opposite. We must remember that we are not of this world (John 15:18-19). Our focus should be on Jesus who will change our attitudes and goals (Isaiah 55:8-9). Our desire is that our athletes, coaches, and parents will be Ambassadors for Christ and will be filled with the Spirit, which will be evident by our fruit. We want to love our opponents even though we are trying to gain victory in an athletic event. Remember that the game is a passing event, but the way we treat others may have an eternal impact. We must have self-control in the midst of a tough game and the occasional bad call. We also must be humble in victory. In defeat we can still be champions by conducting ourselves in a way that brings glory to our Lord. We thank the Lord for the gifts and abilities he has given us. Let's use them to be Christ-like Champions.

ATHLETE AND PARENT INFORMATION

Commitment to a team is an important character quality. If an athlete is playing for THESA and another sports team, then any scheduling conflicts must be discussed with the coach and it will be expected that the THESA commitment will have priority over the other sport. This is to maintain team unity and reliability for the coaches. Therefore, we want each of our athletes and parents to decide, before an athlete tries out, if they want to make such a commitment to THESA.

Because commitment is a character quality and an example of integrity, an athlete who chooses to quit after the season has started may not return to that sport until the next year. Because God desires that there be peace among his children, the athlete will be responsible to follow the Matthew 18 principle to make sure the athlete and the coach do not have a severed relationship.

1. Tryouts

To allow each team to perform at its optimum level, tryouts will be held prior to each season. The number of players on each team will vary depending on the sport and the levels of ability. Because each team has limited time to prepare for the season, teams are chosen at the earliest time possible. An athlete who misses any part of a tryout will not be dropped, but the athlete will be at a disadvantage. If an athlete cannot make it to tryouts, he/she will have to meet with the coach to see if anything can be done. It is then up to the coaches to either set up an alternative tryout, or not allow the athlete to play. Once initial rosters are established, players may be added to the roster at the discretion of the coaches for the benefit of the team.

At the Junior High (JH) School level, coaches will choose teams based on attitude, effort, and ability. Coaches will also choose their starting team based on these criteria. Coaches are encouraged to develop all JH players through practice and playing time in games. Every effort should be made to offer playing time to each player through substitutions and game management so that the players have a chance to contribute, learn, and be as successful as possible; however, there is no guarantee of playing time.

At the High School (HS) level, coaches will choose teams based on attitudes, effort, and skill. Starting teams will be based on these criteria. At this level of competition, the coaches will play the best players. Because THESA is not playing in a recreational league, and because THESA desires to be competitive in the league that they participate in, playing time is NOT guaranteed at this level of play; although coaches will be sensitive to their player's desire to participate. Athletes and parents must recognize that success is not synonymous with

playing time. Coaches are more than happy to speak to players about areas of improvement, but under no circumstance will they discuss playing time.

If an athlete does not make the team after tryouts, he/she may approach the coach to discuss the athlete's strengths, weaknesses, and areas of improvement. It may be determined that the athlete may be allowed to continue practicing with the team to continue development for the next year.

2. Parental Support

Parents and other spectators at the games are vital representatives of THESA and witnesses for the Lord Jesus. Parents and fans are expected to cheer and comment in a positive manner, encouraging and supporting all players, coaches, and officials. Parents and fans are expected to leave the coaching to the coaches. Players become confused and frustrated when instructions are shouted from many directions. The coaches have a purpose behind their methods, and correction should be done through them. Parents are encouraged to come to as many games as possible, because support and enthusiasm add excitement to the game. Parents and other spectators should refrain from openly criticizing coaches, officials, and players. Parents should demonstrate trust and respect to those in authority at all times.

3. Practice

Practice schedules will be provided to the athletes by the coach. The practice sites will remain relatively constant; however, all changes will be announced. It is the athlete and parent's responsibility to know where each practice/game takes place. Email, text messages, and the SportsEngine app are typically the primary modes of communication for practice and game changes and other communication.

All practices are at the discretion of each coach, but will not exceed three hours. Wednesday practices will be avoided as much as possible.

4. Attendance

Because practices are more productive, beneficial, and fun when all team members are present, and because godly character is exhibited through discipline and commitment, all athletes are expected to attend practices, games, as well as meetings/activities called by the coach. Athletes show consistency and faithfulness to their teams by being on time and being properly dressed out for all practices and games. Absences and tardiness disrupt practice and games, and discourage a team. Because unexcused absences show a lack of commitment, faithfulness, and discipline and because athletes and parents will know the schedule in advance, unexcused absences from practices and games should be avoided. Excused tardiness and absences include, but may not be limited to, death in the family, personal illness, medical appointments, academic tutoring with teacher involvement, and other homeschool-related commitments. While there will be no immediate consequences, game playing time may be affected at the coach's discretion. Athletes must show respect to the coach and team by personally calling the coach if they will be late or miss a practice (an email on the day of the event is not acceptable).

Athletes need to stay for the duration of every practice and game. Teams are not dismissed until the coach dismisses them and coaches will make every effort to dismiss the team on time. All athletes **MUST** be picked up no later than 10 minutes after dismissal.

If you cannot pick them up, please have a backup plan so that the coaches do not have to stay later.

5. Discipline

Because discipline is needed in all areas of life, athletes should make it their routine to give 100% both mentally and physically to practices and games. An individual's performance and attitude affect the whole team. An athlete who chooses to perform below his/her capability or who demonstrates a poor attitude during practices will be subject to disciplinary action and, at the coach's discretion, may not play in the following game, because such attitudes and behaviors work against team unity, instructions, and goals. Disciplinary action may include, but not limited to, extra drills, running, sitting out, etc.

Suspensions, Technical Fouls, Cautions and Ejections

Any athlete receiving a conduct technical foul, a caution card, or a verbal caution due to a lack of self-control, may be removed for the remainder of the game. Any athlete who displays a negative response to an official or to a coach may be removed for the remainder of the game. Any athlete receiving an ejection card or ejection from the game due to an inappropriate conduct may be suspended from the next game and may be requested to attend a coaches/parent/and or board meeting. A second ejection will result in disciplinary action which could include removal from the team for the remainder of the season. We do not want our athletes doing anything that would cause them to be ejected from a game. Such behavior does not show Christ-likeness, nor does it show respect for the sport, the officials, the coaches, or self.

An athlete's response to a corrected offense is more important than the offense itself. The athlete's response defines and reveals character in a more obvious way. We as Christians are not permitted to respond in a disrespectful way. It is therefore necessary for us to be accountable so that we might mature in our responses and in the character and humility of Christ. Therefore, if an athlete continues to display unwillingness to change, blatant disrespect for authority, or an attitude/action that is contrary to the Christian philosophy, the athlete will be removed from the team at that time.

An athlete may be dismissed from a team due to: 1) an uncoachable or uncooperative attitude; or 2) an act or deed that harms the testimony of the team and/or THESA; or 3) A player/parent/guardian that habitually fails to honor either the Matthew 18 principle and/or the THESA Culture of Honor.

Any coach receiving an ejection card or ejection from the game due to an inappropriate conduct must provide a letter of explanation to the Board. A second ejection will result in a meeting with the Board and disciplinary action. We expect our coaches to be good leaders and to uphold the integrity of the game and the THESA organization.

Our unchanging goal is to accurately reflect the character of Christ in our attitudes and sportsmanship in an ever-increasing way. Coaches will look for and encourage this character, and any athlete who desires not to pursue godly character will not play for THESA.

6. Matthew 18 Principle

Matthew 18 gives us clear instructions for dealing with conflict. In the event that a player has a question or complaint, he/she first must go to the person (coach or other player) in a spirit of reconciliation and love to work out any differences (NOTE: complaints about playing time will not be discussed). This needs to take place before a parent discusses the issue with the coach! If the problem is not resolved, the player may request a meeting with the person of conflict and the coach. If the issue is not resolved between players and coach, then a meeting with a representative of the board may be requested. If the coach is the person in conflict with a player, the player may request a meeting with his/her parents and the coach after the player has talked to the coach personally. If the athlete, coach, and parent still have issues to be resolved, then they may request a meeting with a board representative.

7. Fees

THESA endeavors to keep sports fees as low as possible to help home schooled families meet all educational needs. Fundraisers may be required to help offset out of pocket expenses over and above posted sport and administrative fees.

Fee Structure:

- THESA Membership fee is required for each family for each year of participation. See the THESA membership fee document for additional information. This fee covers administrative expenses for the organization.
- Sport Fees are required for each player for each sport they participate in.
- Postseason expenses, if any, are typically in addition to the Sports Fee.

Sports fees will be set by each sport coordinator based on the projected number of players, number of games/tournaments, equipment needs, and other costs. Coaches will publish a list of all fees either prior to the tryout or before the first practice. Please be aware that in most cases the athletic fees do not cover the entire cost of each sport and fundraisers may be required. It is the intent of the THESA board that no qualified player will be turned away due to the inability to pay 100% of the athletic fees. Please contact the coach if assistance is needed.

Unless other arrangements are made in advance, fees are due no later than the first game of the season. Some sports may require fees earlier than the first game in order to pay for uniforms, equipment, practice space, tournament fees, etc. Due to the fact that THESA make commitments and budgets based on the number of players on the roster, all fees are non-refundable after the first game.

8. Uniforms

Uniforms will be issued at the beginning of every season. Each athlete will be responsible for his/her own uniform throughout the season. Every player is responsible to bring his/her complete uniform to every game. Uniforms should be laundered prior to each game. For those sports where part of the game/practice uniform(s) are provided by THESA, they must be returned after the season ends. Failure to return any THESA property in a timely manner could result in additional fees that will be required to be paid prior to the athlete participating in any additional THESA sports.

9. Medical/Liability Release and Physicals

Each school year every athlete must have a medical release form, liability release form, and medical information sheet, on file with the coach prior to the first practice. Athletes will not be allowed to participate until ALL forms are complete and in the student's file. Absences due to missing forms will be considered unexcused. Coaches will keep this information on hand at all times for practices and games. Due to the strenuous nature of competitive sports on the human body, physical examinations signed by a physician are highly recommended and expected prior to beginning any sport. Parents are responsible to ensure their child is in the physical condition required for the sport and that they have no medical issues that will affect the child's health or safety.

Concussion or impact baseline testing is required for all football players prior to beginning football practice (spring or fall). Updates may be required from time to time. This program is offered to help medical professionals determine if a player is capable of returning to football after a head injury or impact of concern.

10. Transportation

Transportation to and from games and practices is the sole responsibility of the athletes and the parents.

11. Facility

Although we do not own the facilities we use, we are blessed to have the facilities available to us. Please be good stewards of what the Lord has blessed us with. Please do all you can to keep the facilities clean and in better shape than we found them.

12. Eligibility

All athletes will meet all of the requirements for eligibility prior to and throughout the season.

13. Multiple Sport Participation

Athletes may participate in multiple sports within THESA. Players should not be discouraged from participation in multiple sports; however, participation on a sport team during its regular season should take precedence over participation on sport teams playing in the "off-season". Athletes participating in "off-season" sports should not be unduly penalized for playing another sport; however, it should be recognized that due to the competitive nature of some skill positions in sports, players could fall behind on skill development.

14. Appearance

All athletes and coaches shall make a positive statement with their appearance at all THESA events and contests by being well-groomed ('clean cut', neatly maintained hair; etc.); appropriately dressed before, during, and after competition; uniforms properly laundered; no visible undergarments; no visible tattoos or piercings; caps worn front and centered; arrive at the athletic venue and warm up in appropriate uniform. The THESA standard is to be morally upright and exhibit good taste in our appearance so as not to draw attention to ourselves, represent the THESA organization and team well, and glorify the Lord in all that we do.

15. Year-Round Play

Each sport is able to set up their own program; however, it is not the intention of the Board that each THESA sport to provide a year-round program. While athletes are encouraged to use off-season time to improve their skills and gain strength, the organization recognizes the importance of "balance" for athletes, parents, and coaches as well as the biblical concept of "Seasons." Accordingly, the organization would not expect or tolerate athletes being punished in any way for choosing "not" to participate in off-season games, practices, or tournaments. However, for those athletes desiring to play at the "next level" the off-season time is vital since competition for positions at the next level is intense. With those thoughts in mind, we would encourage athletes to recognize the importance of this off-season time in their athletic development. The off-season is "their" time to develop any abilities God may have blessed them with.

16. The THESA Culture of Honor

The THESA Culture of Honor begins with the fact that THESA is an expressly Christian organization and is derived from Matthew 22:37-40 where Jesus stated the greatest command is to love God and the second is like it to love your neighbor as yourself. It means all participants, coaches, administrators and parents should honor one another and give preference to one another in all things. To honor means to "regard or treat (someone) with admiration and respect" (Webster's) or, in other words, to elevate another person before or above yourself. It also means, as a Child of God, to honor and love yourself because it is hard to give what you do not have.

Actions by anyone involved with THESA that are demeaning, have a substantial risk of physical or mental harm to self or others, do not represent THESA's values well, are morally inconsistent with Christian principles, are destructive in nature to self or others, promote practices or beliefs inconsistent with THESA's statement of Belief and/or traditional Christian values, or which constitute a disruption of an acceptable environment are in

violation of THESA policy and the THESA Culture of Honor. THESA representatives will properly address any such issues within the context of the Culture of Honor and with grace. Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including the participants being removed from THESA athletic teams by THESA representatives or the THESA Board per THESA guidelines. The Board reserves the right to use its own discretion to determine, on a case-by-case basis, what constitutes disruption of an acceptable environment and also reserves the right to make inquiries of athletes, representatives, and parents regarding these issues.

In addition to the above, THESA upholds a traditional Biblical view of sexual morality (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5). THESA believes that students should abstain from all types of sexually promiscuous behavior (e.g., premarital sexual relations of any sort, homosexuality, bisexuality, etc.) at or away from THESA events. THESA also believes that Parents have the primary responsibility for educating, training, mentoring, and protecting their children in the area of sexuality. However, it is THESA's policy that athletes, THESA representatives, or parents who disrupt the Christian environment by promoting or participating in promiscuous sexual practices or beliefs or by professing to be homosexual, bisexual, or other non-Biblical sexual orientation may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including exclusion of the athlete, parent, family, or representative from the organization (Leviticus 20:13, Romans 1:27). This policy is in place to prevent sexual abuse within the participants of THESA and to aid parents in protecting their children's well-being.

17. Responsibilities for THESA Players and Parents

THESA Players and Parents Will:

1. Be responsible to, respond appropriately to, and submit to the authority of THESA Coaches, Team Captains, and others in authority.
2. Respect and be courteous to opposing teams (players, coaches, and fans). Always demonstrate good sportsmanship before, during, and after games.
3. Respect officials at all times and never talk negatively about calls or address an official in an inappropriate way.
4. Stay composed and exercise "self-control." Negative emotion hurts you and your team.
5. Respect the privilege of using playing facilities by cleaning up benches, locker-rooms, stands, and grounds after a practice or game.
6. Never use profanity or demeaning speech at any time at a THESA event.
7. Come to each event prepared and on time (well-nourished, hydrated, proper equipment, mentally and physically ready, etc.).
8. Be an Encourager and Energy Giver. Communicate, communicate, communicate—in a positive manner. Coaching and correction is for the coaches; your role is to encourage.
9. Be willing to serve in any role to build TEAM success. Understand that the TEAM comes before the welfare of an individual player.
10. Make reasonable efforts in advance to be excused from any scheduled classes or activities that conflict with practices, games, or team functions.
11. Communicate to the coach ahead of time when they will miss a practice or game.
12. Dress in a manner that could not be considered offensive or morally suggestive at all THESA events.
13. Ask the question on motivation prior to confronting (see below).
14. Communicate and directly address any issues with the offending party (other coach, parent, player, or fans) at an appropriate time. Never discuss issues behind another's back or allow issues to not be resolved quickly.
 - Tell the coach of your concerns or problems instead of talking to others about them.
 - Seek to resolve personal conflicts with teammates. Speak to them first and seek reconciliation.
 - "Speak the truth in love." Ephesians 4:15

PRIOR to ANY Confrontation, ask YOURSELF this question:

What is my motivation?

- **Wrong answer:**
 - To make them conform to me / I don't accept their differences.
 - To get my way.
 - To keep them from making me mad.
 - To ventilate frustration on them and make me feel better.
- **Correct answer:**
 - To protect them.
 - To build our relationship.
 - To discover the whole truth.
 - To prevent unrighteous thoughts and feelings. To keep others from being harmed.
 - To obey God and glorify Him.

18. Program Improvement Guidelines

THESA desires to improve what we do and how we do it each year so that all THESA athletes will have a meaningful and positive experience while being a THESA athlete. The following are guidelines on how ideas for improvement should be brought to THESA leadership.

Preface:

THESA is primarily a volunteer organization starting with the THESA Board and going down to the coaches and other volunteers that help with the programs. There are many things the THESA Board and THESA coaches have a desire to do differently given more time, resources (financial and other), equipment, facilities, and additional skilled personnel, among other things. Therefore, all ideas for improvement should start with how to honor and enable the existing THESA leadership to do what they are called to do (in other words, ask, "What can I do to help?" or better yet, just find a place to serve the volunteer leadership to help them better do their jobs).

Guidelines:

1. Check your motivation prior to presenting an idea for change. Spend some time studying the perceived need for change to understand as many aspects as possible.
2. Discuss thoughts or ideas with the appropriate level of leadership to better understand why things are done the way they are.
3. Develop a credible solution or change to discuss or present to THESA leadership. In other words, do not bring leadership a problem; bring them a solution.
4. Always present new ideas and solutions to leadership at an appropriate time.
5. Changes and solutions should be presented to the sport Head Coach first if the idea affects a particular sport team. If the idea affects an entire sport program, the idea should be presented to the Sport Coordinator. If the idea affects the entire THESA organization, the idea should be presented to the THESA Board.