

ST. THOMAS MORE ACADEMY



ATHLETIC HANDBOOK (2024-2025)

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A Prayer to See God in Youth Sports

We pray for young athletes...

Who, through sports, develop important values such as loyalty, perseverance, friendship, and sharing.

We pray for coaches...

Who appreciate the gifts of all players and have respect for the game; who place players before winning and value sportsmanship.

We pray for parents...

Who love their children for who they are, not for how they perform.

We pray for officials...

Who inspire fair play and protect the integrity of the game and players.

*O God, we pray for all who participate in games;
may their hearts be open to see your presence in and through sports;
may their minds remember the element of fun reflective of your Spirit;
may their bodies reflect the gracefulness and wonder of your creation.*

*Let all who play the games be enriched by your presence in the gym,
locker rooms, and on the fields. Amen.*

St. Thomas More Academy: Home of the GRIFFINS



The Griffin is a half-lion, half-eagle creature with a long and venerable history. With classical roots stemming from the Greco-Roman world, the creature was eventually adopted by many Christian writers and thinkers, and soon become a symbol for Christ and the Hypostatic Union of the two natures in Christ.

The eagle, which is lord of the sky, reminds us of His divine nature, while the lion, which is lord of the earth, reminds us of His human nature. Together, they remind us that Christ our Lord is the true King of the heavens and the earth.

Go Griffins!

Mission and Purpose

The Athletic Department at St. Thomas More Academy is more than just a collection of sports programs. Our primary mission is to develop the virtues and character of our student-athletes and teach them the discipline of excellence. We want our student-athletes to be role models in their school, their family, and their community. Therefore, the larger purpose of STMA Athletics is to teach our student-athletes how to become their best selves within a community of friendship, thereby honoring God with their gifts and talents.

STMA Values

Servant Leadership
Teamwork
Mission and Purpose
Accountability

Athletic Awards

St. Thomas More Award: Servant Leadership
Holy Family Award: Teamwork
St. Augustine Award: Most Improved
St. Sebastian Award: Athletic Excellence

2024-25 STMA Athletics (5th-8th grade)

FALL	WINTER	SPRING
Girls Soccer	Boys Basketball	G/B Track & Field
Boys Soccer	Girls Basketball	G/B Tennis
G/B Cross Country	Girls Cheerleading	Boys Baseball
Girls Volleyball	Boys Wrestling	Boys Golf

2024-25 STMA Athletics (High School)

FALL	WINTER	SPRING
Co-ed Soccer	Girls Basketball	G/B Track & Field
Co-ed Cross Country	Boys Basketball	Boys Golf
		Girls Tennis

Conference Affiliation (5th-8th)

St. Thomas More Academy is a member of the Inter-City Catholic League (ICCL). The ICCL coordinates and regulates inter-scholastic athletic competition among Catholic grade schools located in Saint Joseph and Elkhart counties. In addition to STMA, other ICCL members are listed below:

Christ the King, St. Adalbert, Corpus Christi, St. Anthony de Padua, Holy Cross, St. John, Holy Family, St. Joseph, Mishawaka Catholic, St. Jude, Our Lady of Hungary, St. Matthew, Queen of Peace, St. Michael, St. Pius X, St. Thomas.

As a participating member of the ICCL, St. Thomas More Academy follows the league's policies. These rules and regulations are set forth in the ICCL Constitution, available for review at www.icclsports.org

All football and soccer games, and many basketball games, are held at the athletic facilities of Marian High School and Saint Joseph High School. All ICCL member schools will try to offer their own athletic facilities to host other games for different sports. Some sports may use public school athletic facilities or public athletic parks for some sports such as baseball and softball.

If STMA does not have a sufficient number of interested students to field a team, we will make every effort to join another ICCL school for our students to participate in the sport.

The ICCL requires that each team, and those in attendance, recite the ICCL prayer before each ICCL contest:

God our Father, help us to put forth our best effort, to represent our school with class, to respect our opponents, and to grow as disciples of Your Son, Jesus.

Keep us safe from injury and harm through the Intercession of Our Lady, the mother of your Son and our mother, too.

*We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen!
Saint Sebastian, pray for us!*

Conference Affiliation (High School)

For the 2024-25 academic year, St. Thomas More Academy is a member of the South Shore Athletic Conference, a loose collection of Christian schools in the surrounding area. Other member schools include Granger Christian, Victory Christian, La Lumiere, Heritage Christian, Portage Christian, Clinton Christian, Hammond Academy of Science & Technology, and a few others. Conference tournaments are held for soccer and basketball.

Moving forward, St. Thomas More Academy plans to apply for membership into the Indiana High School Athletic Association and become a full member school.

Registration

To register for STMA Athletics, students in grades 5-12 must submit the following every year:

- IHSAA physical form, completed and signed by a physician after April 1st of the current academic year.
- Emergency Medical Authorization Form – to be filled out and signed by parent
- “Concussion / Head Injury & Sudden Cardiac Arrest Form”- signed by student and parent
- Signed “Player’s Code of Conduct” and “Parent’s Code of Conduct”
- Registration fee per sport – paid via FACTS account or by check in the office.

Playing Time Philosophy

5th-6th: Playing time is expected to be roughly equal amongst all players, as the focus at this age is still on skill development and learning the sport! The team coach maintains the right to play the “best lineup” at the end of a close game.

7th-8th: In middle school, while playing time is still guaranteed, it is not expected to be equal. Coaches will play every player, but the amount of playing time is at the discretion of the coach.

9th-12th: In high school, playing time is earned and not guaranteed. Head coach makes all playing time decisions. Coaches are encouraged to get as many players in the game as possible, especially when the score of the game is not close.

Academic Eligibility Policy

High School

To be considered “academically eligible”, a student-athlete cannot be failing more than one subject AND must possess an average grade, throughout all their classes, of 80% or better. If these requirements are not met, the student will be placed on “academic probation” and will not be allowed to practice or play in games until their grades improve.

If a student-athlete is on academic probation or close to being so, that student may be required to agree to an academic remediation plan, which may include study sessions and/or tutoring before school, after school, or on weekends. This may involve missing practices in order to study.

5th-12th

If a student-athlete is failing multiple classes, regularly doesn’t turn in work, shows little to no participation in class, or repeatedly causes disruptions with their behavior, this may be grounds for being deemed “ineligible” to practice or play in games. This will be a collaborative decision between the teacher and Mr. Everett. Participating in extracurricular athletics is an earned privilege that results, first and foremost, from a student’s effort and attitude in the classroom.

We are champions in the classroom and in athletics!

Other Eligibility Rules, Requirements, and Expectations

Absences from School

Students who are absent from school are not permitted to participate in extracurricular activities, including athletics, on the day of their absence. For purposes of extracurricular participation, a student will be considered absent for the day if they are not present in school prior to 11:30 a.m. A student will be considered absent for the day if they leave school for an illness at any time during the day.

Attendance at Practices and Games

Student-athletes should recognize the time commitment necessary to participate in sports at STMA. Players are expected to attend all practices and games. A player who cannot attend a practice or a game should inform the coach, in advance, as soon as possible once the reason for the absence becomes known. In addition to the natural consequences that result from missing practice instruction or game experience, consequences for missed practices or games are within the discretion of the team's coach (especially at the high school level).

STMA recognizes the importance of growing in our athletic ability and leaving time for family activities and other extracurriculars. There will be no sports practices on Wednesdays. We will follow the schedule below to the best of our ability to meet these goals:

4th-6th grade: 2 practices and 1 game a week

7th-8th grade: 2-3 practices and 1-2 games a week

9th-12th grade: 3-4 practices and 1-2 games a week

Dress Code and Uniforms

Student-athletes are highly visible representatives of St. Thomas More Academy and, thus, are responsible for using good judgment in their overall appearance. STMA provides uniforms for its sports teams. For certain sports, however, the purchase of additional clothing and equipment may be required.

Student-athletes must wear their school-issued uniforms and treat their uniforms with care and respect. Players must keep their uniforms clean and may not make modifications to their uniforms. School-issued uniforms are the property of St. Thomas More Academy and must be returned promptly to the team coach or to the AD at the conclusion of the season. Parents will be charged the cost of replacing any uniform that is not returned by the date the AD specifies.

Parent and Student-Athlete Behavior & Sportsmanship

Parents and student-athletes are expected to represent St. Thomas More Academy in an exemplary manner, demonstrating good sportsmanship both on and off the playing field/court

and encouraging good sportsmanship by their teammates. Good sportsmanship is always the rule, with no exception. Furthermore, STMA parents and student-athletes are expected to display the best Christian courtesy and manners to all officials, opposing coaches, players, and spectators.

Determination of the penalty for a parent or student-athlete's unsportsmanlike behavior during a practice or a game will be left to the coach's discretion, with input from the Head of School and the Athletic Director. Potential penalties may include game suspension, or in extreme cases (for example, when a student-athlete has been ejected from a game), a multiple-game suspension or even dismissal from the team. In such a circumstance, the Athletic Director and the Head of School will make the final decision as to the consequences for the student-athlete following a meeting with the student-athlete, his/her parents, and the coaches.

All parents and student-athletes must review and sign the "Code of Conduct" form each year.

Selection, Training, and Evaluation of Coaches

In consultation with the Head of School, the Athletic Director is responsible for the selection, training, and evaluation of all STMA coaches. Coaches must complete required background checks and Safe Environment training, complete online trainings to ensure student-athlete safety, and read, sign & put into practice the coaches' code of conduct.

Coaching Expectations

St. Thomas More Academy coaches are responsible for the safety, development, and overall well-being of the student-athletes under their supervision. As a paid member of STMA's community, coaches must be messengers of the school's mission, ensuring that the Athletic Program embodies the Catholic character of our school. In addition to being teachers and mentors in their respective sports, coaching is considered a ministry at St. Thomas More Academy. Consequently, coaches are expected to be examples of Christ the Teacher and to serve as role models for student-athletes to emulate. It is important for coaches to always display proper conduct.

Conduct of Coaches

St. Thomas More Academy coaches are called to be role models to their faith and are expected to uphold high standards of conduct both in and out of season. Should a coach violate the rules, regulations, or policies of St. Thomas More Academy, he/she may be dismissed by the Athletic Director and/or Head of School.

Prayer

Athletic experiences can play an important role in the spiritual formation of STMA student athletes. To support our school's mission to be Christ-centered, we must carefully and conscientiously prepare those who are in positions of leadership. Coaches, as team leaders, are chosen not just to be mentors and role models for student-athletes, but to be true Christian witnesses. Prayer is central to the mission of STMA and is vital to the spiritual life of our school community. For these reasons, coaches are encouraged to build and create prayer traditions into their approach to coaching. Prayer should be an essential component of every team's culture, not just a rushed event before or after a practice or a game.

Coaching Responsibilities

In addition to serving as a witness and model of faith, STMA coaches are expected to fulfill the following responsibilities:

- Plan practices and game strategies
- Supervise student-athletes during practice and until they are picked up from practices/games
- Maintain a safe environment for student-athletes to practice and compete
- Condition student-athletes properly
- Assess student-athletes readiness for practice and competition
- Carry Emergency Medical Authorization Forms and a first aid kit to all practices and games
- Report any injuries to the Athletic Director
- Teach skills and develop teamwork
- Communicate practice and game schedules and any updates to student-athletes and their parents
- Understand and comply with the academic and other eligibility rules for student-athletes
- Report any unruly players, parents, or spectators to the Athletic Director
- Supervise and develop assistant coaches
- Create a positive, team-focused atmosphere

Goal Setting for Coaches

Personal Goals — STMA coaches grow as individuals by:

1. Modeling moral character, sportsmanship, dedication, and faith
2. Recognizing and appreciating moments of grace throughout the season
3. Being a student of the game that they coach
4. Maintaining perspective in all athletic endeavors, recognizing that teaching experiences arise in practices and in games.
5. Fostering a positive attitude with student-athletes, their parents, and the school

Team Goals — STMA coaches develop teams by:

1. Infusing a positive team philosophy for practice and games
2. Creating a sense of responsibility in each athlete as well as team responsibilities
3. Teaching specific skills required by a specific sport and helping each athlete achieve their personal best skill performance
4. Instilling an attitude of fair play and fair competition, preparing student-athletes and the team to succeed
5. Helping to develop relationships on the team that will positively influence the student athletes in the greater school community

School Goals — STMA coaches contribute to the school community by:

1. Ensuring that that school's mission is embodied in all athletic activities
2. Promoting academic excellence as an essential part of the development of the student athlete
3. Communicating effectively with school administrators, teachers, parents, and student-athletes
4. Helping student-athletes develop as leaders and role models for the greater school community
5. Creating a culture of school unity and spirit, as exemplified through sportsmanship, positive fan participation, team unity, and respect for all

COACHES' CODE OF CONDUCT

The purpose of our coaching is to help our players become people of empathy and integrity who will lead, be responsible, and change the world for good. We are transformational coaches.

Believe in every player. Remember, "In youth is where miracles are made."

Protect our players. Be big enough to build up, not tear down.

Remember that our job is to put our players in a position where they can develop to their fullest potential through proper teaching and nurturing.

Each player is part of our family, deserves every chance to succeed, and deserves the upmost respect. We are coaching and nurturing successful people, not just successful athletes.

Our players are student-athletes, and we are teacher-coaches. We hold ourselves accountable as teachers of young people and the lessons they need to navigate life.

Remember that parents are our partners. We strive to work with each family to help their son or daughter succeed and grow as a player and a person.

Love your players and the other coaches.

Know the difference between shaming and coaching. No screaming, shaming, swearing or sarcasm. Affirmation is powerful! If a player makes a mistake, correct them in an uplifting way.

If you don't know, say so and get appropriate information. Don't bluff! Your players will know.

Don't be afraid to apologize! We all make mistakes. When mistakes are made publicly, apologize publicly. When mistakes are made personally, apologize personally.

Treat all opposing coaches and their teams with the honor true competitors deserve.

Respect all referees, officials, and timekeepers. They are imperfect and are trying their best.

Be process-oriented, not results-oriented! Focus on your team getting 1% better every day.

Regardless of our wins and losses, we will be successful if we carry out the above items.

Because I am a role model who has the power, position, and platform to make a positive difference in the lives of my players, I commit to this code of conduct. When failing to live up to our standards, I will allow for accountability and take responsibility for my actions.

Coach's Name

Signature

Date

PLAYER'S CODE OF CONDUCT

I accept responsibility for my behavior on and off the field. I understand that what I do and say affects my teammates, my school, and other people either positively or negatively.

I lead courageously and live with integrity by speaking up against injustice and on behalf of others even when it is hard or unpopular.

I act with respect toward myself and the people and things around me, including my parents, coaches, teammates, teachers, opponents, and the spectators.

I act with empathy. I try to understand what is going on in the hearts and minds of others and what is causing those feelings so that I can be supportive and encouraging. I ask, "How can I help *you*?"

I serve as a role model at all times by talking politely and acting courteously toward coaches, teammates, opponents, officials, and spectators. I understand that it is a privilege to represent my family, school, and community as a student-athlete.

I give 100 percent effort to practices, games, and events. I understand that my effort demonstrates my commitment to the team and my respect for my coaches and teammates.

I strive to get 1 percent better every day! I focus on the process, not the result. I care more about the success of the team than my own individual stats and accomplishments.

I display good sportsmanship. I acknowledge and applaud the efforts of others. I encourage my teammates with positive statements. I refrain from boasting to my teammates and "trash-talking" to members of other teams. I accept defeat graciously. I accept victory with humility. I congratulate my opponent on a game well played.

Because I represent my family, school, and team, I abide by the policies, rules, and guidelines of the school, team, and coaches.

Signature

Print Student Name

Date

PARENT'S CODE OF CONDUCT

Know and endorse our purpose: to help our students become people of empathy and integrity who will lead, be responsible, and change the world for good.

Support the coaches by applauding behavior in your child and their teammates that demonstrates characteristics of integrity, empathy, sacrifice, and responsibility.

Acknowledge and appreciate players' growth toward maturity and their effort in establishing stronger relationships with teammates, coaches, and themselves.

Affirm your child and their teammates when good character, healthy sportsmanship, and other-centered behaviors are displayed. Do not affirm only their athletic performance or a victory. Do not boast about their accomplishments.

Serve as role models for our players, talking politely and acting courteously toward coaches, officials, other parents, visiting team parents, and spectators at practices, games, and meetings.

Please model good sportsmanship. Acknowledge and applaud the efforts of team members and opponents. Accept defeat graciously by congratulating the members of the opposing team on a game well played. Support the team regardless of how much or how little your child plays or what the win-loss record is.

Encourage your child and their teammates with positive statements, even when they make mistakes. At every practice they are growing physically and emotionally. At every practice they are learning moral and ethical lessons. At every practice they are developing character.

When problems or questions arise, please have your child present the problem to their coach. We want players to develop self-advocacy.

Because I am a parent with the power and platform to make a positive difference in the life of every player, I commit to this code of conduct. If I fail to live up to these standards, I will allow for accountability and take responsibility for my actions.

Signature

Print Student Name

Date