

CHILDREN'S ATHLETIC MINISTRY



HOME OF THE 'OWLS' ATHLETE'S HANDBOOK

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“On a Whim & a Prayer”

Lord God,

**Fill us with your spirit of love and
fair play as we begin. Help us to
remember that, win or lose, we
are your beloved children.
Through Christ our Lord.**

Amen

**Our Lady of the Woods,
pray for us.**



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Parish Mission Statement

Under the protection of the Mother of God, we are a faith community called by the Father, energized by the Son, and moved by the Spirit to unite in witnessing and proclaiming the Good News.

Children's Athletic Ministry Mission Statement

The mission of the Children's Athletic Ministry is to provide the youth of the parish an opportunity to participate in athletic events in order to foster sportsmanship, develop morals and experience teamwork at its highest level. We expect all participants to learn, train and play the games to prepare themselves for adult Christian life. While we support each person playing and competing, it is experiencing teamwork, applying Catholic moral philosophy and developing sportsmanship that is of primary importance.

GO

OWLS!

History

The Athletic Association began early in 1995 with a conversation between two parishioners with kids who loved sports. Feeling the parish youth could only benefit from the creation of a sports program, these two parishioners approached Fr. Bill Finnegan and Fr. Tom Libera for guidance, encouragement and support. With much enthusiasm and the blessing of Fr. Bill, the Athletic Association was born and kicked off in the fall of 1995 with 32 young men, grades 6 through 8, forming three teams playing local churches. We were off and running! The spring of 1996 saw the addition of girls' soccer and that fall we began the girls' basketball program. In the spring of 1997 the Athletic Association added boys' soccer to the line-up and rounded out our sports roster in 1998 to include boys' and girls' volleyball. Junior golf was added in the spring of 2013. Through the persistent efforts of several parishioners, soccer fields were secured in 2000 and home games are now held at the Palos West school grounds. Due to the labors and financial contributions of many parishioners we now have a gymnasium/multipurpose room which had its inaugural season with boys' volleyball in the spring of 2002. The Athletic Association continues to financially support the upkeep and maintenance of the facility.

In the spring of 2012 the Athletic Association became formally known as the Children's Athletic Ministry and is now a part of the newly renamed Education Commission: the Education and Formation Commission.

Assisting our Ministry

It is up to us, individually and as a parish, to make the Children's Athletic Ministry a success. The Board works hard to achieve this goal, and with your support will continue to reach new goals. This is a long-term commitment that the Board builds upon and looks for your support and involvement. Although we usually draw the majority of our volunteers from our current roster of team participants, we can always use your help. Support our children in becoming Christians and community members of whom we can be proud.

Responsibility for the Athletic Program

The pastor is the primary authority over the Children's Athletic Ministry at Our Lady of the Woods. The pastor has delegated authority to run the Children's Athletic Ministry to the Athletic Administrator and the Board. The majority of parish athletic programs and sports events fall under the realm of the Athletic Administrator and the Children's Athletic Ministry.

The Children's Athletic Ministry Board has developed by-laws which govern the scope and direction of the programs offered at Our Lady of the Woods. Any problem/grievance which arises will be handled by the Athletic Administrator and/or the Children's Athletic Ministry Board. Only those matters which cannot be rectified by the Athletic Administrator and/or the Board will be presented to the Pastor.

TEAM NAME:"OWLS"

TEAM COLORS:NAVY AND WHITE

Sports Offered

The athletic programs are open to all boys and girls whose families are registered parishioners and who are currently attending our Religious Education Program.

Sport	Season	Grade	Sign-Up
Girls' Basketball	Fall	3-8	May/June
Boys' Basketball	Winter	3-8	August/Sept.
Girls' Volleyball	Winter	4-8	August/Sept.
Spring Soccer	Spring	1-8	January
Boys' Volleyball	Spring	4-8	January

Information regarding registration can be found in the weekly parish bulletin, bi-weekly e-mail blasts or, when necessary, through the mail. The Children's Athletic Ministry has a policy to accept every boy and girl into the program, provided they meet all eligibility and deadline requirements spelled out in this handbook and in the registration packets. For basketball and volleyball, in those instances where there are enough players for more than one team, grades 3, 4 and 5 teams will be split evenly (per Archdiocesan policy). The teams will be "shuffled" in 5th grade, still maintaining equal talent. Beginning in 6th grade, teams will divide into A/B format. Please refer to document regarding change to A/B format dated April 16, 2013 for details.

Registration Forms

Registration forms can be accessed on line at www.ourladyofthewoods.org.

Participant Placement

Final decisions regarding participant placements will be at the discretion of the Athletic Administrator and the coordinator. Car pool accommodations will not be taken into consideration when selecting teams or adding players to a team.

Uniforms

Athletic participants are to wear the uniform issued by the Children's Athletic Ministry to all games - home and away.

Gym Time

All gym time, regardless of ministry, is scheduled by the Athletic Administrator. The gym will be closed for weekend liturgies, holy day observances, liturgical celebrations, and the Religious Education Program unless prior approval is given by the Pastor or Director of Religious Education. When sport seasons overlap, gym practice time will be limited in order to accommodate the large number of teams vying for practice time.

Leagues/Tournaments

Grades 3, 4, 5 and 6 will participate in one league* and will be permitted to join two tournaments. Grades 7 and 8 have the option of joining a second league and can participate in three tournaments. No participant shall be excluded from tournament play.

*For extenuating circumstances, the head coach should contact the Athletic Administrator.

Finances

The athletic programs offered by Our Lady of the Woods are designed to be self-supporting. Fees are set to allow as many students as possible to play and also to cover the costs associated with running the programs. This includes the day-to-day needs of teams; equipment, uniforms, gym time, tournament/league fees, etc.

To help defray the costs associated with all the athletic programs, the Children's Athletic Ministry sponsors at least one major fundraiser each year. Families participating in the Our Lady of the Woods Children's Athletic Ministry are encouraged to support the fundraiser(s).

Manna Program - Ongoing Fundraaising

This fundraising vehicle monetarily supports the Children's Athletic Ministry at Our Lady of the Woods. Manna can be purchased Monday through Friday in the church office. For further details contact the church office.

Refund Policy

After the Children's Athletic Ministry commits to the league(s) for the particular sport for which you are registering, a service charge of \$25.00 will be levied for players who quit. No refunds will be allowed after the first game. A full refund will be given only before league commitment.

Waiting Lists

All registration forms received after the advertised deadline for that particular sport will be placed on a waiting list with no guarantee of team placement for the child.

REP ATTENDANCE

The majority of leagues in which our teams participate require the children on a parish team to attend that parish's school or religious education program. The Children's Athletic Ministry Board and parish staff have formulated an attendance policy for REP students who want to participate on our parish teams. The REP eligibility for participation is as follows:

A student is required to maintain an 80% attendance rate.

If your child does not attend the mandatory number of REP classes this year, he/she maybe in jeopardy of having to sit out the next season in which he/she wishes to participate.

Please keep in mind when you are making your decision as to whether to attend REP or a game that was inadvertently scheduled during class time there are no excused absences for games during REP class time. If you choose not to attend REP because of a game, whether regular season, tournament, playoff or championship, your student will be marked absent. Please know if students arrive tardy, arrival time is recorded so that they do receive credit for all time spent at REP. No student will leave REP early or arrive late to class because of practice.

Furthermore, please know that the Children's Athletic Ministry was established with the understanding that no games would be played during REP classes and during Mass times on Sunday mornings.

Sacraments

Athletic participants shall be required to attend all preparatory classes necessary for the reception of sacraments at Our Lady of the Woods Parish. All athletic participants shall receive sacraments at Our Lady of the Woods Parish. In the event that a participant elects to receive a sacrament somewhere other than Our Lady of the Woods Parish that participant will be immediately barred from further participation in all sports programs at Our Lady of the Woods.

Meetings

The Children's Athletic Ministry normally meets monthly, September through June. Summer meetings are optional. Individuals who want to be placed on the agenda should notify the Athletic Office by the Friday before the scheduled meeting. These items will be brought to the table during the first half-hour of the meeting.

Alcohol

No alcoholic beverages will be permitted at any team party, sports banquet, etc. held on church property. This rule will apply to any event sponsored by the Children's Athletic Ministry held off site where children of the program(s) are present. The use of alcohol, drugs and tobacco by participants is highly inconsistent with our ideals about Our Lady of the Woods athletes. All incidents will be referred to the pastor.

Parish Athletics Sponsoring Policy

The majority of the parish athletic programs and sports events fall under the authority of the Athletic Administrator

and the Children's Athletic Ministry Board. No athletic program, team or event may use the name of "Our Lady of the Woods" or "OWLS" or a derivative of the parish name without the approval of the Athletic Administrator and/or the Children's Athletic Ministry Board.

No individual or team may participate in any athletic event, competition, league or tournament as representatives of Our Lady of the Woods Parish without the knowledge and approval of the Athletic Administrator and/or Children's Athletic Ministry Board. In addition, no individual or team may participate in any athletic event, competition, league or tournament under any name if such participation is contingent upon their membership in Our Lady of the Woods Parish or its Religious Education Program.

The name "Our Lady of the Woods," "Woods," "OWLS" or any derivative of the parish name or logo may not be used in any form of product merchandising. The Our Lady of the Woods Children's Athletic Ministry is the sole distributor of all merchandise bearing the Our Lady of the Woods name and/or logo. Please contact the Athletic Office when in doubt.

Clothing

Our Lady of the Woods features a 'spirit sale' at various times. Please check with the Athletic Office to see when the next sale will occur.

Volunteering

Parents/guardians are encouraged to volunteer their help throughout their child's sports season. Please offer your help to our coaches and Athletic Administrator to see how you can be helpful.



Coaches

In order to foster sportsmanship Our Lady of the Woods expects coaches to model Christian behavior by upholding the Mission Statement of the Children's Athletic Ministry. Our Lady of the Woods will be judged by the behavior we adopt both as a team and individually more so than by the number of wins. Coaches are expected to teach and guide their team with a sense of fair play and dignity no matter the outcome of the game. In the event of a severe infraction or unbecoming conduct, coaches are mandated to appear in a closed meeting with the Grievance Committee of the Board and are subject to either a written warning or immediate dismissal.

In addition:

1. Head coaches must be at least 21 years of age at the time the sport is to begin. Assistant coaches may be less than 21, but in these cases a person 21 years or older must be on the bench for competitive events. All coaches must complete Protecting Gods Children Training.
2. A person is encouraged to be either a head coach or an assistant coach for one team per sport provided it is not at the same grade level.
3. There will be one team at each grade level unless an additional coach and additional assistant volunteer to coach.

4. In those instances where there are additional coaches and enough players for more than one team, the coordinator and coaches will divide the teams into equal teams and equal talent. Final decisions regarding placement will be at the discretion of the Athletic Administrator and coordinator.
5. The programs in grades 3, 4, and 5 are viewed as instructional. Each child who participates and meets all parish eligibility requirements shall play in every game* played by his or her team, including tournaments, playoffs, and championships. Coaches shall ensure that each participant receives equal playing time.
6. The programs in grades 6, 7 and 8 are viewed as more competitive. Each child who participates and meets all parish eligibility requirements shall play in every game* played by his or her team, including tournaments, playoffs and championships. Coaches shall ensure that each participant receives adequate playing time.
*For volleyball, a game is defined as three consecutive matches.
7. Coaches shall exercise discretion in determining equal (for grades 3, 4, and 5) and adequate (for grades 6, 7 and 8) playing time for each player. Upon an allegation of abuse of this discretion, the Children's Athletic Ministry Board shall require coaches to respond either in writing or at a hearing before the Children's Athletic Ministry Board.

8. The supreme command of the coaches is to represent the Church and the Children's Athletic Ministry in its best manner and to provide the participants with the thrill of competition, a sense of fair play and sportsmanship and instill an attitude of constant improvement in the knowledge, theories and command of the sport.
9. The decision to not play a child for good cause will rest solely with the coach. The coach is required to explain the reason for not playing the child and where the coach feels it is necessary also explain the actions to the parents/guardians. It is suggested that the coach make a record of any such action. Any action by the coach must be reported to the coordinator within 24 hours.
10. Coaches will not argue or degrade the decisions of game officials. Polite inquiries are recommended in the event clarification is needed.
11. All coaches will treat participants with uncompromising support and respect.
12. The Board will have complete authority on retention or dismissal of coaches. Coaches shall not play or allow any child that has not met eligibility requirements to participate in a practice session or game. Any ineligible player who participates in practice sessions or games runs the risk of suspension from all sponsored sport activity for one year.

13. Coaches may substitute players from other teams provided those players are listed on the current roster for that particular sport. However, substitutes should be played sparingly and should not receive more playing time than the team's regular players. Substitutes should only start a game if a team would otherwise not have enough players necessary to begin play.

Participants

The Board feels that the practices are for the purpose of learning skills of the sport and the games are the practical applications of those acquired skills. Therefore, a certain amount of discipline is required of the participants for their own benefit and the benefit of their teammates.

1. Participants will at all times show the highest degree of respect for coaches, parents or guardians, officials, opposing players and their fans.
2. Each participant will be required to attend all practices and notify the coach in advance of those practices that will not be attended. No reason needs to be given for being unable to attend practices.
3. Each participant will conduct themselves with the highest degree of respect for themselves and their teammates during practices and games.

4. Participants are required to strive for improvement in their character and conduct and to develop their skills to enjoy the sport.
5. Participants will not argue the call of an official nor degrade the decision of the officials in any manner at any time. It is the sole responsibility of the coach to inquire about decisions of the officials where clarification is needed.
6. Participants will meet REP criteria as outlined in the section entitled "REP Attendance."
7. Participants are responsible for the care of uniforms and equipment provided.
8. All participants must have completed a registration form and an athletic release form before they step foot on the playing field or court.

Parents or Guardians

1. Parents or guardians asked to use the "**24 Hour Rule**" and raise all questions, conflicts or concerns with the head coach of their child's team. If a question, conflict or concern has been raised to the head coach and a satisfactory result is not reached, the issue may be raised in writing to the Athletic Administrator. **The Athletic Administrator will not consider any issues that have not been raised with the child's head coach.** The Athletic Administrator will then resolve the issue in accordance with Children's Athletic Ministry policy. If necessary, the Athletic Administrator will consult the Children's Athletic Ministry Board.

2. Parents or guardians must accept that some of the participants will play a disproportionate amount of time in a game or competition due to ability, work ethics or other reasons as the coach feels is warranted to reward participants for hard work or being an outstanding role model.
3. Parents or guardians must support the program through volunteering or assisting with activities as needed.
4. Parents or guardians are expected to pay all fees at the time of registration for that particular sport or as soon as possible thereafter. Parents or guardians are also expected to return in good condition the participant's uniform and to do so within a reasonable time after the close of the season.
5. Parents or guardians are responsible for insuring that participants arrive and are picked up in a timely fashion for games and practices.
6. Parents or guardians are strongly encouraged to attend all games.

Gym Regulations - Facilities (General Use)

1. In following best practice for the safety of our Athletes, practices will be limited to Coaches and athletes only. We ask parents and siblings to kindly stay outside the gymnasium for pickup and drop off. This will help us to maintain Virtus trained adults only engaging with our athletes. In addition, with unprecedented pandemics this will aide in keeping our athletes and coaches as safe as possible.
2. No black soled or street shoes will be allowed on the court. Non-skid soles preferred. Absolutely no spikes.
3. No gum will be allowed in the gym. This applies to coaching staff, players and fans and all users in general.

4. It is strongly encouraged that all food and drink be consumed outside the gym. No food or drink allowed on the gym floor. Players will be allowed water bottles/sport drinks at the bench during games. During practice times all water bottles/sport drinks should be left in the hallway. When not in use bottles should be capped and in an upright position. Please deposit waste in receptacles provided.
5. No aiming of balls at speakers, scoreboards, clocks, banners, windows, fire alarms, extinguishers, etc. No throwing/hurling of balls in bleachers. Baseballs, softballs, tennis balls, footballs, golf balls etc. will not be allowed in the gym.
6. No running in the bleachers. No climbing onto closed bleachers for any reason.
7. No removal of gym equipment (balls, etc.) from the gym. This equipment belongs to the parish for everyone's use.
8. No hanging/swinging on wall pads, net baskets, bleachers or any other gym equipment.
9. Any act of vandalism and/or accident/incident that occurs in the gym or its environs must be reported to the Athletic Administrator or duly authorized representative. A vandalism report sheet or accident/incident report form must be completed.

Failure to comply with these rules will result in disciplinary measures and/or loss of gym privileges. An incident sheet for disciplinary problems must be filled out and filed in the Athletic Office.

Participants (OLOW Athletic Programs)

All gym regulations must be enforced and any violation of these rules will result in the loss of practice time/date and possible removal as head coach. The head coach has ultimate responsibility for the control of players, fans and assistant coaches. Any misconduct or rules violation will be assessed against the head coach.

1. Head coaches must notify Coordinator and receive approval of any changes or swapping of gym practices or game times.
2. Players and coaches are restricted to using only the gym, washrooms and entry to and from gym during practices. Use of classrooms for instructional purposes before or after practices is prohibited unless a space request form is received by the Athletic Administrator or the Church office seven days prior to anticipated use. Use of the classrooms for pre-game warm up or pre-game meetings is at the discretion of the Athletic Administrator.
3. Only players participating in the current scheduled athletic program/event are allowed on the court. There will be no open shooting by non-players before games, during time outs, half time or time between quarters. Only rostered players playing in the current scheduled game/event are permitted on the gym floor.

4. Coaches shall be limited to no more than two coaches and one scorekeeper per team.
5. The gym will be open no sooner than 30 minutes prior to a game. For practices, the first coach of the day must call the Church office when arriving in the parking lot in order to have the gym doors unlocked. Players must be picked up no later than ten minutes after the end of a practice or game.
6. Coaches must remove all players no later than five minutes following the end of their practice time. Coaches continuing their practice into another team's or ministry's time will be penalized their next practice session to the team or ministry that was "shorted" their time.
7. Any act of vandalism and or accident/incident that occurs in the gym or its environs must be reported to the Athletic Administrator or a duly authorized representative. A vandalism report sheet or an accident/incident report must be completed.

Failure to comply with these rules will result in disciplinary measures and/or removal from gym and/or loss of gym privileges. An incident sheet for disciplinary problems must be filled out and filed with the Athletic Office. These gym regulations are subject to revision at any time.

Archdiocesan & Parish Requirements/Regulations

All individuals 18 and over applying for volunteer positions that involve regular contact with children or other vulnerable individuals will be subject to a criminal background check as required by the Archdiocese of Chicago. An unsatisfactory report will result in an applicant's disqualification if he/she has not been accepted for volunteer work, or discharge if already accepted. A DCFS form as well as a Code of Conduct form must also be completed.

Furthermore, the Archdiocese has mandated that all volunteers 18 and over working with children must attend a Virtus Workshop - "Protecting God's Children." These workshops are periodically offered at Our Lady of the Woods and neighboring parish locations. In addition, the following items are policy at Our Lady of the Woods and have been mandated to safeguard all those involved in such positions:

1. There is to be no physical contact at any time during the course of any sport activity, including practice times, games, team parties, etc., between a coach, assistant coach, helper, etc., and a player. This includes, but is not limited to hugging and butt slapping. The only physical contact allowed will be handshaking or a "high five".
2. There must be at least two adults present any time the team is together. This includes practices, games and team parties. At least two adults must be present until the last child is picked up from a practice, game, team party, etc.

Dress Code

The following dress code is intended for those children participating in the Children's Athletic Ministry at Our Lady of the Woods.

1. Athletic shoes must be worn during all practices and games. No one is to practice in socks alone. No black soled or street shoes should be worn on the gym floor. No gym shoes with wheels and no spikes are to be worn in the gym or its environs.
2. Hats are not to be worn during practices or games. Please remove head coverings when you enter the facility.
3. For the ladies - all shorts, including spandex, worn for practice and games are to be of an appropriate length - with an approximate inseam. The shorts are not to be hiked up in any fashion.
4. For the ladies and gents - no exposed undergarments at any time.
5. No low cut necklines, tank tops or backless/ strapless tops, no sagging shorts at any time. No exposed midriffs at any time. Be on the safe side, wear a t-shirt or sweatshirt to practice.
6. For the gents - no bare chests at any time.
7. There is to be no changing of clothing in the hallway or gym at any time - please use the washrooms.

8. For games, the girls' leagues have specified no hair baubles or jewelry, including pierced earrings. Please keep this in mind when considering having your daughter's ears pierced.
9. For girls' volleyball - the league has specified that uniform shirts are not to be knotted at the bottom. The league has also said that if you are wearing a shirt under your uniform top, it must be the same color as your uniform shirt, in our case that would be blue.
10. For games - as outlined elsewhere in this handbook, players are to wear the uniform issued by the Children's Athletic Ministry to all games, home and away.

If a player wears clothing deemed inappropriate for practice, the coach will have the right to contact the player's parents or guardians to request compliance at the next practice. In the meantime, the player will be given the option of calling home for a change of clothing or wear clothing provided by the coach.

Furthermore, there is no reason for players to be in the hallway unless they are using the washrooms or getting a drink from the water fountain. All players should remain in the gym with the coaches and their team.

WHO AM I?

I am a Christian - I will always be in a Christian and moral manner, in and out of school, on and off the court, in games and in practices. Therefore, I will not wear to practice or to and from any games any apparel that is unchristian or promotes smoking, drugs or alcohol. I will remember that my actions will speak for the kind of person that I am.

I am Our Lady of the Woods - I will always remember that I represent Our Lady of the Woods. I will always obey the rules of the parish, as outlined in the Athlete's Handbook. I recognize that as a student athlete, I must always place my academic and religious education studies first. I will do nothing to embarrass Our Lady of the Woods or myself, especially when at another site. This includes, but is not limited to: unsportsmanlike conduct, name calling, abusive language, and showing disrespect for Our Lady of the Woods or the host school. I realize that I will be suspended for such action and may face removal from the program.

I am a member of the OWLS - I will show pride and respect for my team and teammates. I will do so by working my hardest in every practice, listening to and obeying the coaching staff, and supporting and encouraging my teammates in practices and games. I realize that this means that I am expected to be on time for practices and games and that unexcused absences or tardiness will not be tolerated. I understand that this is a team sport and that the team's success is also my success, regardless of my role in a particular game or match. I realize that failure to support my team or teammates will result in a suspension and that I can be removed from the team.

NOTES