

**ST. MARK  
COUGARS**



**ATHLETIC  
HANDBOOK  
2017-2018**

## A LETTER FROM THE ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

Dear Cougar Parents,

Welcome to another great year for Cougar athletics! I want to thank you for the commitment you make in your children's lives, especially for encouraging them to participate and excel in athletics. It takes a lot of teamwork to have a successful athletic program which requires the collective efforts of parents, teachers, coaches and athletes, but I know that if we all work together 2017-2018 will be a great year for the St. Mark Cougars.

Through athletics we strive to develop student athletes physically, mentally, and spiritually. Physically; athletics will help improve motor skills, and promote a healthy lifestyle. Mentally; athletics encourage social skills, positive self-esteem, and teach accountability to others. Spiritually; we use athletics as a vessel to glorify God and to be examples of Godly living. In every practice and game, win or lose, we will use our skills to thank and praise our Savior.

**And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3:17**

As a member of St. Mark Athletics, I look forward to the opportunity to get to know and work with you. It's my goal to promote a Christ centered athletic department that strives towards success in athletics and other aspects of the life of our students. Athletics provides opportunities for physical, mental, emotional, and social development. The competition of athletics is viewed as a valuable experience because it challenges each student-athlete to strive for excellence, helps each student-athlete discover their physical limits, requires each student-athlete to work cooperatively as a member of a team, and most importantly keep Christ at the center of their lives. Thank you for being a crucial part of St. Mark athletics program and Go Cougars!

Respectfully,

Creighton Runnels  
Athletic Director  
713-255-3629

## PHILOSOPHY OF ST. MARK ATHLETIC PROGRAM

It is the aim of St. Mark's athletic program to facilitate the mission of St. Mark Ministries through sporting activities. The student's participation in interscholastic sports will help to develop the student spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically and socially. Students will be encouraged to be the best they can be by doing the best they can do to the glory of God.

The interscholastic athletic program at St. Mark refers to the competitive sports between schools as an after school co-curricular event. One of the major goals of this program is to help students learn to apply Christian principles to their lives. Our interscholastic program is for students who demonstrate an emotional and mental readiness for competition and who possess a satisfactory level of physical and academic competence.

St. Mark's athletic program stresses the following points: technically correct physical skills, physical conditioning, commitment in team participation and team building, self-discipline, priority setting, the encouragement of others, perseverance, and respect for those in authority.

To maintain these values, we recruit teachers from our staff along with adults who have a commitment to the student, family, sport and mostly, to the ministry of our Lord. They are to keep the sport in perspective as part of the total educational experience of the student. It is vital they understand each student as an individual as they relate to team oriented activities.

## TEAM PARTICIPATION AND EXPECTATIONS

**FALL:** CROSS –COUNTRY (*coed*)  
SOCCER (*coed*)\*  
VOLLEYBALL (*girls*)\*

**WINTER:** BASKETBALL (*boys and girls*)\*  
  
CHEERLEADING (*coed*)

**SPRING:** SOFTBALL (*girls*)\*  
BASEBALL (*boys*)\*  
  
TRACK & FIELD (*boys & girls*)  
  
TENNIS (*boys and girls*)

\*HLAC League sport

# HOUSTON LUTHERAN CONFERENCE ASSOCIATION

EPIPHANY  
MEMORIAL  
OUR SAVIOR  
SALEM

ST. MARK  
TRINITY-KLEIN  
WESTLAKE PREP  
ABIDING WORD

## CODE OF CONDUCT

All St. Mark student athletes, coaches, and parents must abide by a Code of Conduct emphasizing good sportsmanship in a Christian atmosphere. Attitude, behavior, and language should be God-pleasing at all times.

## TEAM SELECTION

Team selection may be limited based on coaching personnel and available facilities. While St. Mark strives for maximum student participation, equal playing time is not guaranteed. The team selection process and decisions concerning playing time will be at the sole discretion of the coaches and the athletic director. If the number of student-athletes reaches a point where there are enough for multiple teams, they will be divided into an A and a B team.

Junior Varsity consists of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade student-athletes but may occasionally use 4<sup>th</sup> graders to fill the roster if need be. Varsity is made up of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade student - athletes. Should the number of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade student - athletes be insufficient to form a team at the varsity level, 6<sup>th</sup> grade students will be allowed to try out for the varsity team.

## ELIGIBILITY POLICY

St. Mark student-athletes must be in good academic and disciplinary standing to compete in school-sponsored events. Student-athletes will be evaluated every midterm and report card grading periods. A student – athlete be will considered ineligible for athletic involvement if he/she receives **TWO** or more failing grades (F's) in subjects in a midterm report, or if he/she receives **ONE** or more failing grade (F) on a report card. The ineligibility/ eligibility begins the day the midterm/report card is issued. The student will remain ineligible for a two-week period. If after two weeks the student is not passing all classes, the student will be evaluated on a week-by-week basis to determine eligibility. The student will not be able to participate in any athletic contests until they are academically eligible in all classes.

Ineligible student-athletes are **REQUIRED** to practice with their respective team unless determined otherwise by the athletic director and school principal, but will not be permitted to participate in games. If the student is ineligible for the remainder of the season they will be removed from the team, at the discretion of the coach, athletic director, or principal. Ineligible student- athletes are **NOT** to leave school early to attend games. Students become ineligible at any point during the school year will **NOT** be eligible for end of season awards.

Additionally, the athletic director or school principal may declare a student-athlete ineligible at any time for a specified period of time for disciplinary reasons. If a student serves an after school disciplinary detention, they will be ineligible for that evening's game.

### Age Requirements:

No student that is 15 years of age or older on September 1<sup>st</sup> of the current school year may compete in athletics. No student that is 13 years of age or older on September 1<sup>st</sup> of the current school year, or that is in seventh grade, may compete in a Junior Varsity team.

## **GAMES/PRACTICES**

We expect all players and support staff to be at the games. Each player should be at the facility at the time directed by the coaching staff. Late attendance or no attendance may result in loss of playing time.

Every participant is expected to be at every practice/game. Practices are designed to prepare the athlete for the next competition. This is vital for the student and his/her teammates. Excused absences include illness, family emergency and appointments (PLEASE avoid scheduling appointments on practice or game days). In case of emergency, a note will be required for the coaching staff.

Participation in St. Mark athletic activities should be given top priority. Other outside activities such as club practice/games, rehearsals, campouts, vacations etc... which do NOT involve St Mark will count as UNEXCUSED ABSENCES.

Unexcused absences could result in a loss of playing time, and possible one game suspension, or in severe cases, it could result in the student athlete being removed from the team. These decisions will be at the coach's discretion, in conjunction with the athletic director and principal.

***NOTE: IF A TEAM MEMBER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION, ALTHOUGH HE/SHE IS IN ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL, HE/SHE WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DAY'S PRACTICE OR GAME. ALSO, THE STUDENT MUST HAVE BEEN PRESENT AT LEAST ONE-HALF OF THE SCHOOL DAY TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY SCHOOL EVENT.***

## **PRACTICES OR GAME CANCELLATIONS**

In the event that a practice or game is cancelled, students will be given permission to use the phone as soon as possible after the cancellation is announced. Athletes who remain will be supervised by their coach until they are picked up or sent to extended care. Because of the heat indexes experienced in Texas there may be times when outdoor practice will be cancelled or accommodations made because of a heat index over 104 degrees.

## **TEAM ATHLETICS**

Students in 5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade may participate in a variety of team athletic programs at St. Mark. Students in Kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade may participate in a variety of programs with the West Houston Christian League who use our facilities for games and practices. In the West Houston league emphasis is placed on sportsmanship, the development of fundamental skills, mental discipline, and teamwork. Student athletes are expected to come fully prepared to participate each day with the appropriate clothing and necessary equipment.

Note: All students participating in a team sport (including cheerleading) must have a physical exam each school year. The physician's form must be turned in to the school office prior to any practices or games.

The St. Mark Sports Consent Form can be found at the following link:  
<http://www.gostmark.org/uploads/14-15SportsConsentForm.pdf>

## **CHEERLEADING POLICY**

The primary purpose of cheerleading at St. Mark is to promote school spirit and unity. Cheerleaders will encourage positive support of St. Mark athletic teams during games and pep rallies by leading spectators with organized cheers and choreographed routines. Cheerleaders should encourage crowd involvement and promote good sportsmanship.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

We have many athletes to transport to various events with inadequate transportation available with the number of students participating. The St. Mark Athletic Department will try to provide transportation to and from athletic events that are off campus, however, the coaches may need parental assistance in this area. If transportation is provided, parents can either pick their child up from the event or from the SML campus after the event. Carpooling after an event is permitted as long as written permission has been given to the head coach.

## **UNIFORMS**

St. Mark Athletic Department will supply uniforms for each participant. Supplementary items may be required which the student will purchase. Be sure that the uniforms are properly cleaned and student appears as a proper representative of St. Mark. Damaged or lost uniforms will be replaced at the full retail price at the student's expense.

Uniforms will be returned clean and in good condition at the end of the season. Report cards will be held until uniforms are turned in. Other sport uniforms will be held until past sport uniforms are returned.

## **DRESS CODE**

All participants and support staff should dress in a manner that will reflect a proper light on St. Mark Ministries and the Athletic Department. Coaches will require high standards for the students when not in uniform and representing St. Mark.

## ATHLETIC BANQUET

A recognition sport banquet will be held for all students that participated in junior varsity and varsity athletics. This sports banquet is usually held in May at the end of all the sports seasons. \*If at any time a student-athlete becomes academically ineligible, the nomination is automatically forfeited.

The following Athletic Awards will be given (if criteria are met):

### St. Mark Athletics "All Scholar Team"

This award is presented to all St. Mark varsity athletes who have a cumulative average of 95+ for the school year (calculated up to Q4 midterms)

### St Mark Athletics "All Cougar Team"

Selection for this award is based on playing 3 varsity sports. Athletes must stay in good-academic standing all year and have competed in **three** varsity sports to be eligible for nominations. Coaches will vote based on certain requirements. This award is presented to Varsity athletes who have met the following criteria:

- Must display good Christian character/sportsmanship on and off the field.
- Must show commitment to the team.
- Must exhibit a good attitude, be cooperative and coachable.
- Must be respectful at all times to teammates, coaches, officials and opponents. (NPM)
- Must remain in good academic and conduct standing throughout the season.

### St Mark Athletics "Cougar Pride Award"

This award is presented to 8<sup>th</sup> grade athlete(s) who has shown personal dedication, school spirit, and the "ultimate team player". Selection for this award is based on nominations by the coaches. The following criteria are used in the selection process:

- Must have excelled in at least 2 varsity sports
- Must display good Christian character on and off the field of play
- Must honorably represent St. Mark, exhibiting good sportsmanship and school spirit
- Must exhibit an exceptional attitude, be cooperative and coachable
- Must be respectful at all times to teammates, coaches, officials and opponents
- Must remain in good academic standing throughout the season

### St Mark Athletics Outstanding Cougar Athlete Award

This award is presented to 8<sup>th</sup> grade athlete(s) who has shown incredible dedication and uses their exceptional God given talent to the best of their ability. Selection for this award is based on nominations by the coaches. The following criteria, are used in the selection process:

- Must have excelled in at least 2 varsity sports
- Must display good Christian character on and off the field of play
- Must be an exceptional contributor to his/her team
- Must exhibit an exceptional attitude, be cooperative and coachable
- Must be respectful at all times to teammates, coaches, officials and opponents
- Must remain in good academic standing throughout the season

### St Mark Christian Athlete Award

This is the highest athletic award given annually at St Mark. This award is presented to 8<sup>th</sup> grade athlete(s) who have demonstrated discipleship and sportsmanship when participating in the varsity sports program. Selection for this award is based on nominations by the coaches. The following criteria, is used is used in the selection process:

- The athlete demonstrates true sportsmanship at all times
- The athlete is cooperative, coachable and respectful to coaches
- The athlete is respectful to officials and opposing teams at all times
- The athlete gives 100% in practice and games and never gives up
- The athlete demonstrates school pride in appearance and actions
- The athlete gives credit to God for his/her abilities and is modest in victory and gracious in defeat.

### **CODE OF ETHICS: STUDENTS, PARENTS AND COACHES**

I hereby pledge to provide support, care and encouragement to my child participating in St. Mark Sports Ministry by following this code of ethics.

- I will remember that the game is for the children and not for adults.
- I will place the spiritual, emotional, and physical well being of my child ahead of any personal desire to win.
- I will encourage good sportsmanship by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches and officials at every practice and game.
- I will do my part to ensure that my child plays in a safe and healthy environment.
- I will support the coaches and officials in an effort to provide a positive experience for all.
- I will uphold a drug, alcohol, and tobacco-free sports environment for my child and agree to refrain from their use at all games and practices.
- I will treat players, coaches, fans, and officials with respect, regardless of religion, race, sex, creed, or ability.
- I will encourage my child to treat other players, coaches, fans and officials with respect, regardless of religion, race, sex, creed or ability.



## **THE PARENTAL ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDENT ATHLETE**

The parents of a student are usually the determining factor in their child's becoming an athletic participant. The parents have an important, if not vital role in the student's co-curricular life. A portion of the responsibilities and roles are listed below:

1. Teach by example a Christian attitude towards all. All members of St. Mark Lutheran Church and School will encourage and help, but it is the parent who must be the main director.
2. Assist the student to establish proper priorities with respect to church, family peers, studies and play.
3. Encourage and participate in the development of the student's athletic abilities.
4. Teach the student and be a role model for the student in dealing with coaches and peers.
5. Support the student's commitment to teams. Make a commitment to attending games, driving for the team, helping in supporting roles such as the concession stand and fundraisers, assisting in setup and cleanup, being active in the student's activities and being a positive public relations avenue.
6. Develop within the athlete, foresight that enables him/her to accept responsibility for both individual and group actions.
7. Instill in the athlete, good health habits regarding, food, sleep, exercise and spiritual life.
8. Enthusiastically support teams at athletic events with support for all players, coaches, and officials.

In general, the student is an extension of his/her role models, the parents.

## **PARENTAL VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS**

In an effort to help offset the enormous expense of running a comprehensive athletic program, parents are required to assist in game management functions such as sale of concessions, gate, scorekeeping, etc. We do not require an athletic fee to participate in athletics at St Mark. In order to run a successful athletic program we need your help. Specific details and actual assignments will be communicated prior to the start of the respective sport season by the sport coordinator.

## **CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND GRIEVANCES**

Students, parents, teachers, and administrators at St. Mark are encouraged to work in partnership toward the common goal of excellence in Christian education. When questions or conflicts arise, they should be addressed courteously and directly with the coach involved. If a player and or parent need to discuss team issues with the coach, especially if the issue is centered around playing time, the first step is to ask the player to discuss with the coach. We ask that the player talk directly with the coach to help the player-coach relationship develop and for the personal growth of the player. If continued discussion is necessary or player to coach communication is not possible, it is then appropriate for the parents and players to contact the coach. Discussing issues during a game or immediately afterward is not permitted. The coach is focused on the success of the game and reflecting on performance immediately after a game. We ask that parents wait 24 hours after a game before discussing issues with coaches. If issues are not satisfactorily resolved, please discuss the matter with the athletic director.

The Biblical directive for conflict resolution at St. Mark Lutheran School is found in Matthew 18:15-17.

*If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or tax collector.*

## **PRAYER FROM THE SIDELINES**

God, help me keep a cool head.

Help me remember it's my child's game, not mine.

Help me see the joy in the game:  
the nobility of trying your best,  
and the satisfaction that comes with playing your heart out.

Help me keep my eye on the fun and off the scoreboard.

Let me cheer for *all* the children  
and keep my comments about the referees to myself.

Help me to realize that the opposing coach is a child of God,  
and their best player is still a child,  
with feelings that hurt and a heart that can break.

Let me be a big enough sport to let my child  
make blunders without my harassment.

And may I model sportsmanship and honor,  
no matter what the others may say or do.

***Amen.***