

Guidelines and Contract for Student-Athletes: Social Media

Taft High School Student-Athletes,

As you begin participation in the current athletic season, the Athletic Department of Taft High School wants to make sure you are aware of the revised social networking guidelines. The Athletic Department recognizes and supports the student-athletes' rights to freedom of speech, expression, and association, including the use of social networks. In this context, however, each student-athlete must remember that playing and competing for the Cincinnati Public School District is a privilege. As a student-athlete, you represent the school district and you are expected to portray yourself, your team, your school and the school district in a positive manner at all times.

Below are the new social networking guidelines which provide the following direction for social networking site usage:

- Everything you post is public information – any text or photo placed online is completely out of your control the moment it is placed online – even if you limit access to your site. Information (including pictures, videos, and comments) may be accessible even after you remove it. Once you post a photo or comment on a social networking site, that photo or comment becomes the property of the site and may be searchable even after you remove it.
- What you post may affect your future! Many employers, college admissions officers, and athletic recruiters review social networking sites as part of their overall evaluation of an applicant. Carefully consider how you want people to perceive you before you give them a chance to misinterpret your information (including pictures, videos, comments and posters).
- Similar to comments made in person, the Cincinnati Public School District department of athletics will not tolerate disrespectful comments and behavior online, such as:
 - Derogatory language or remarks that may harm teammates or coaches; other Taft student athletes, teachers or coaches; and student athletes, coaches or representatives of other schools, including comments that may be disrespectful to opposing teams.
 - Incriminating photos or statements depicting violence, hazing; sexual harassment; full or partial nudity; inappropriate gestures; vandalism; stalking; underage drinking, selling, possessing, or using controlled substances; or any other inappropriate behavior (including the use of profanity).
 - Creating a serious danger to the safety of another person or making a credible threat of serious physical or emotional injury to another person.
 - Indicating knowledge of an unreported school or team violation – regardless if the violation was unintentional or intentional.

Social media outlets will be used as communication device. They will also be used to encourage involvement with family, friends, fans, colleges and recruiting outlets. Do not be afraid to retweet and “Like” so we can promote all three sites.

For this reason all student-athletes need to comply with the following:

1. Follow @Taftnation on Twitter and Instagram as well as allow TaftNation to follow you.
2. “Like” TaftAthletics on Facebook.
3. Sign up for emails though our website at www.taftathletics.com
4. Never involve yourself with alcohol or any other controlled substance. Posting pictures, retweeting or “liking” a post where this behavior is going on also indicates your approval.
5. If you are asked to remove a post, you must do so immediately! This is for the protection of your reputation and that of Taft Athletic Department.

In short, do not have a false sense of security about your rights to freedom of speech. Understand that freedom of speech is not unlimited. The online social network sites are NOT a place where you can say and do whatever you want without repercussions. The information you post on a social networking site is considered public information. Think about who you represent: yourself, your family, your teammates and coaches, and your school. Like it or not, people are going to associate everything you post with you and what you represent. Protect yourself by maintaining a self-image of which you can be proud for years to come.

By signing this social media contract, you are stating that you will follow the rules indicated above and you understand that disciplinary actions may be imposed for failure to comply with those rules.

Student Athlete _____ Date _____