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Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to introduce players and their families to the procedures for the Taft Lacrosse Club's 2015 season. Taft Lacrosse follows the same code of conduct as other high school sports. This handbook is not inclusive of all policies however, this is a good starting point. If a player or parent has questions about the content of this handbook, ask the coaches for clarification.

Please note this is a living document and may change at any time.

Team and Coach Philosophy

At this time, Taft High School's Lacrosse program is a "club" sport. Taft HS recognizes the club, and allows players to letter. However, we will conduct ourselves as a fully sanctioned IHSA sponsored varsity program. The word "club" is interchangeable with varsity program in our eyes and does not denote a lower level of competition or commitment.

We will do our best to script practices, our season schedule, and game plans that will enhance individual player knowledge of lacrosse as well as what it means to be on a team. This will come from a positive, supporting environment on and off the field and will create valuable life lessons, friendships and memories.

Taft's program is one of the oldest in the Chicago Public League. Playing for Taft Lacrosse is considered a privilege and not a right. The coaching staff decides the best chance of a winning outcome in every game. Every player on the bench plays a vital role and this may not always manifest itself as playing time. We will do our best to remind each player he contributes to the greater good of the team.

For those that earn a position on the Taft Lacrosse program, the following are the requirements and responsibilities each individual MUST fulfill:

- Good academic achievement and attendance records. (Minimum 2.0 G.P.A.)
- Following of IHSA/CPS/TAFT athletic code and team rules.
- Behaving at school and in the community on a year round basis in a way that only reflects positively upon our program.
- Working hard and listening in practice.
- Working to develop positive team relationships.
- Taking care of shared responsibilities and duties.
- Working hard to improve your individual lacrosse skills and knowledge of the game.
- Working to improve your team play.
- Putting the team first and you second, become a family.

Communication

Communication is the key to our program's success. Misinformation can spread quickly and lead to misunderstandings. We must work hard to foster a positive environment where every player encourages rather than tear down their fellow teammates.

If a player has a concern of any kind, he should set up a time to talk to the head coach before or after practice, NOT during. Players are encouraged to ask for clarification if there is something they don't understand.

Our staff will maintain an "open door" policy; we do not mind talking to parents about lacrosse or their child's development (ex. camps, extra drills, etc.). We can be reached by phone, email and/or after games/practices as time permits. We will NOT discuss playing time or personnel decisions made during games. First hand communication is the most accurate, and questions players have should come from the players directly, not through a parent. If a parent has a concern about their player's health or well-being, they are encouraged to call immediately and we will work together to help their child.

If a parent wishes to file a complaint about a coach, they are to set up a time with the Athletic Director. This meeting must be at a time when the coaches, parents, school representatives, and player can meet as one group.

Due to the number of players on the team, the coaching staff will primarily communicate with the team and parents via Email. One member of team leadership will be appointed as the 'team communicator' and will post information out via text message and/or social media. Missing a team activity because, 'I didn't know about it' is not an acceptable excuse. The Coaching staff and team leadership will do everything in its power to get the information out. It is the player's responsibility to read it.

Team Leadership

Lacrosse is unique in the significance a team leader has to the team; unlike other sports (i.e. Football, Baseball, Basketball, etc.), any player can be appointed to the leadership group by teammates or the coaches. We expect all of our players to be leaders. We want you to become better sons, friends, and young men as well as better lacrosse players by first becoming leaders, and understanding you are part of something bigger than yourself.

We look for players that make those around them better and are more concerned with team outcome. They are also happy to fill their role whatever it may be and lead by example. They do the work that is required and become contagious with that attitude. At Taft, we believe that there are several qualities our leaders must have;

- Pride
- Integrity
- A Commitment to improving
 - Themselves
 - Teammates
 - The game as a whole.

Players should be on the lookout for teammates who possess these qualities among others they believe a leader should have.

Members of the leadership group will be given responsibilities for some team activities. Some of those include:

- Leading stretching, warm-up or cool-down sessions
- Being the conduit between the team, coaching staff, and school officials
- Representing the in the Community
- Organizing off-field activities
- Finding ways to include teammates who are less integrated into the team
- Helping settle disagreements among teammates
- Assigning other routine tasks, such as carrying equipment or preparing practice fields, making sure to take their turn in leading by example.

Approximately two weeks before our first sanctioned game there will be an election of the leadership group for the season. Each player will vote for up to three players putting them in ranking order. The coaching staff will determine the leadership group from these votes, making sure it is not simply a popularity contest.

Members of the leadership group need to always be a leader; you are the leader on weekends, at school, when at off field activities, etc. It's an all the time thing and one that is greater than just playing for "Taft Lacrosse". You are representing the entire sport of Lacrosse, so we look for players who can handle that role. At Taft, we view the leadership group as an extension of our coaching staff. Your actions will always speak louder than your words.

Team Rules

1. Players are to treat others with respect - whether it is teammates, coaches, opponents, referees, fans, teachers, etc. **HONOR THE GAME. HONOR YOUR PROGRAM, HONOR YOURSELF!!**
2. Players are to let the coaches do the coaching.
3. Players are to let the Officials do the Officiating. Complaining to an official will **NEVER** get a call changed. But 'riding the ref' can and will earn you a trip to the box.
4. Players are to be at practice **ON TIME** - dressed and ready to go. This means all gear on, stick in hand, mouth-guards in etc. it is very difficult to run a successful and meaningful practice without consistent attendance and we will be practicing four (sometimes more!) days a week.
5. Players are to follow all rules as outlined in the IHSA/CPS/TAFT/ code of conduct. Consequences are pre-determined and we have no ability to interpret/modify any of these rules or disciplinary actions.
6. Any activity relating to or including hazing will result disciplinary action according to the IHSA/CPS/TAFT code of conduct. Additional Team penalties may also be issued.
7. Players are responsible for any and all club issued equipment and apparel. Items must be turned in at the end of the season.
8. Players that are unable to practice due to injury are required to attend practice and help out by shagging balls, etc. to the best of their ability. They will continue learning plays and offensive and defensive sets. On game days, these players will be asked to keep stats, shoot video, run water etc.
9. **NO lacrosse sticks or balls in school halls during the class day.** Practices will be later in the day, so please keep your gear (sticks/pads/balls etc.), in your locker during the school day.
10. Reviewing all offensive or defensive sets, understand each play and if you are not sure of your responsibilities, **ASK QUESTIONS.**

Eligibility

Players will maintain a minimum of a 2.0 grade point average and understand that participation in TAFT Lacrosse is a privilege and not a right. Accrual of 2 F's, even before semesters end, may result in your inability to participate in practice according to the IHSA/CPS/TAFT code of conduct. Players need to be **students first** and lacrosse players second. If there are problems in school, we encourage the player **and** parents to contact the coaches immediately. Our coaching staff understands the importance of education and will do what we can to help.

Players on suspension for IHSA/CPS/TAFT athletic code violations will not be allowed to practice or play in games. They are required to attend practice and help out by shagging balls, etc. They will continue learning plays and offensive and defensive sets. If they are subject to IHSA/CPS/TAFT code of conduct violations that prohibit them from being on school grounds, they are unable to attend practice for any reason until they are reinstated in school.

Practice Procedures

We have the **privilege** of using practice fields from Taft High School and the Chicago Park District, it is not our RIGHT and therefore we must always leave the field in better condition than when we found it. Also, these privileges **can be revoked at any time**, so all players must be on their best behavior when traveling to and from all fields so as to not disturb the neighborhoods or other property.

- All players are expected to arrive at practice **a MINIMUM of 15 minutes early** to provide for adequate time to have ALL equipment on, including helmets buttoned up, and TAFT LACROSSE practice uniform ONLY by the time practice starts. NO club, college etc. reversible/shorts/shooters etc. will be allowed. The coaching staff will do their best to arrive at practice early; however, due to unexpected traffic problems that may arise; the captains are to start warm-ups exactly at the designated practice time start. Coaches or captains will designate players to remove the soccer goals (if applicable) from the field and place the goals in their creases, this is to be completed prior to the start of warm-ups.
- Players who are inexcusably late for, or miss a practice or meeting, will not be able to practice and will miss up to the first quarter of the next game. The Head Coach will consider extenuating circumstances with his decision being final. The coaches will deal with additional tardiness as they see fit.
- Players that arrive with less than 15 minutes prior to practice must be in full equipment by the time the captains start warm-ups or will pay the penalty or disciplinary actions to be determined by the coaches.
- All players should have proper protective equipment **INCLUDING MOUTH GUARD**, Taft practice uniform, as well as running shoes and adequate clothing to run or practice outside no matter what the weather conditions.
- All Varsity players must have two **LEGAL** sticks at all practices and games. The coaching staff will periodically check the legality of each player's sticks. Depending on the cause of the penalty the stick may be banned from use. Occasionally, coaches may also select which stick a player will use for practice on any given day. This is to ensure players are comfortable with "back-up" sticks should their primary stick break or become illegal during a game.
- Defensemen should have at minimum an extra legally strung head at all practice and games, preferably a complete backup long pole. However you will be subject to the same 'backup stick' checks and practice that the other players will be. It is **STRONGLY** recommended Goalies have a backup.

Game Day Procedures

90% of our games are played at local fields (Lane Tech, Hanson Stadium, Taft, etc.) players are responsible for getting to these games **ON TIME**. Players are encouraged to car pool or make arrangements with parents.

When playing games or tournaments at venues that the travel is substantial, team transportation will be provided by bus. If on a school day, we will apply for early release from school if necessary to make game time.

When team transportation is provided for games, any player that rides the bus to the game is required to ride the bus back to Taft. Allowances can be made for special circumstances, but must be approved in advance. **DO NOT** ask after the game. The answer will be **NO**.

Home and Away games:

- Players are to arrive no less than 45 minutes before game start time. Any equipment problems should be dealt with prior to these 45 minutes (ex. shooting strings, pocket depth, etc.)
- All bags will be arranged behind the bench area in a single file.
- All extra sticks will be arranged in a single file line behind the bench area, closest to the substitution box. This will facilitate quick stick changes and maintain a clean bench area.
- Players must have all equipment on, including helmets, 30 minutes prior to game start.
- Warm-ups will begin 30 minutes before game time and will include one lap around our half of the field, 10 minutes of static and dynamic stretching, pre-determined line drills, pre-game shooting and goalie warmups.
- **ALL PLAYERS WILL REMOVE THEIR HELMETS AND GLOVES FOR THE POST GAME HANDSHAKE.** At Taft Lacrosse, we honor the game, our opponents, the officials and ourselves. The Goalie that **FINISHES** the game, leads the handshake line.
- **ALL** Defensive players are to wear their practice pinnie over their game jersey for pregame warm-ups in the **OPPOSITE/CONTRASTING** color of our game jerseys. Blue Jersey/White pinnie. Grey Jersey/**BLUE** pinnie.
- It is the responsibility of each player to be in by no later than 11 PM the night before a game. Rest is of utmost importance. This is a strong recommendation of the coaching staff and may be enforced by parents if they so choose; however, as young adults we expect you to make the right decisions for the team. The leadership group will determine school attire on the day of games.

Team Equipment Rules

GLOVES

Game Days:

- Players will only be allowed to wear gloves that are a combination of Royal Blue/White/Grey.
- ROYAL BLUE or WHITE should be the dominant color.
- Team designed and approved gloves will also be allowed.
- Taft issued and approved gloves will also be allowed.
- Gloves that are any other color or combination of colors will not be allowed in games.
- There are no glove restrictions for practices.

Let me make one thing clear: You are NOT required to buy a pair of the team gloves.
Let me say that again: You are NOT required to buy a pair of the team gloves.

HELMETS

Taft Lacrosse supplies an approved team helmet for game day. However some players feel more comfortable wearing a helmet that they have purchased and are the only wearer. These are allowed as long as they meet the following requirements:

- Shell: Royal Blue (NO MATTE/FLAT finishes)
- Visor: Silver
- Chin: Silver
- Mask: Blue or Chrome or Black
- Chinstrap: Royal or White
- No additional Decals allowed (unless issued by the Team)

Any helmet that does not meet these requirements or is not issued by Taft will not be allowed on the game field.

Let me make one thing clear: You are NOT required to buy a game helmet.
Let me say that again: You are NOT required to buy a game helmet.

There are no helmet restrictions for practices.

I want to be crystal clear:

You are NOT required to buy a pair of the team gloves.
You are NOT required to buy your own game helmet.

Players with Jobs

We understand employment is important, and several players maintain part-time jobs. Players with jobs must make appropriate arrangements with their employers to assure attendance of both practices and games. Players must inform employers of their team involvement, and the possibility of special practice or activity called on short notice. We will endeavor to schedule and publish practice and game schedules in advance so each player can plan accordingly. If team practice, meeting, or function is in conflict with a player's work schedule, it is his responsibility to immediately contact the employer to advise he will miss work (in whole or part) for the scheduled time or arrange coverage for the shift.

You will find most employers understanding and flexible; if the player meets with them early in the season and shares this policy.

Drivers ED/Range in Season

We understand how important Drivers ED and Range are to you as students and as young men. That said, please schedule Range around games and practices.

Concluding Remarks

We have a unique opportunity to make Taft Lacrosse the best program in the state of Illinois. The combination of dedicated parents and players will elevate this program to the next level. The coaching staff appreciates the commitment that each family makes to provide for their child to play and grow this sport in the State of Illinois. Although the wording in this handbook may be a bit harsh or inapplicable to our current team, we want to plan for every potential problem and hopefully curtail problems before they arise. We hope to run a fun and successful program but to do that; we will need a little guidance and discipline. Our staff is proud to be a part of TAFT Lacrosse and hope that together we can be the leaders in CPS and the state of Illinois.

Contract of Commitment

Between Lacrosse Parents and Taft Lacrosse Team

I _____ and _____ along with our child _____ have read and understand the policies and procedures as outlined by the coaching staff. We agree that the parental involvement in high school sports should be that of full support for not only our child, but our child's teammates as well.

We have read and understand all of the procedures as outlined by the coaching staff. Also, we understand that being a part of the Taft Lacrosse team is a privilege, not a right and if our child should violate any of these rules, he/she may be dismissed from the team permanently. We agree to not criticize our child's teammates at any time or talk negatively about his teammates. We agree to this as we realize that for the team to have success and for there to be team unity, that this type of conversation is counterproductive.

We understand that there may be times when we don't understand or agree with the coaches' decisions, but realize that we are not at practice every day, we are not in team meetings during games and before and after practice - therefore we understand that we don't possess all the information that the coaches have when they make their decisions. With this understanding, we will not put our son/daughter in a difficult position by questioning or criticizing coaches.

It is our commitment to the players and coaches of the Taft Lacrosse team that we will be supportive (win or lose), display sportsmanship at all times that will positively represent our community, program and school. In addition, we will cheer equally for all members of our team and display sportsmanship with opponent parents and players.

We will also behave ourselves in the stands as adults at games and NOT communicate with any official in any way, shape or form. Only coaches are allowed to talk to game officials. If we violate this rule and are removed from a game, we will remove ourselves from this game as well as 4 future games, no exceptions.

Signed this _____ day of _____, 2015.

Print Parent or Guardian's name Signature

Print player name (for the team) Signature

SIGN AND RETURN THIS FORM BEFORE TEAM TRYOUTS.

NOTES