



PORTER-GAUD

Athletics Guidelines



2025-2026

Porter-Gaud Athletic Handbook

Porter Gaud School Mission Statement

To inspire lives of purpose, learning, and service through cultivating each student's God-given potential.

Athletics Mission/Vision Statement

The Cyclone Athletic mission is the same as the mission of Porter-Gaud School. Building a competitive and respected athletic program is not an end unto itself. It is a means by which we develop young men and women who are committed to faith, honor, and knowledge and who are vigilant in watching their words, actions, thoughts, character, and habits. Developing teams made up of scholar-athletes with these values results in those teams pursuing excellence and therefore being highly competitive. Excellence follows from consistently doing the right things the right ways for the right reasons.

The Cyclone athletic program aims to:

- Promote self-discipline, perseverance, and responsibility.
- Develop teamwork, sportsmanship, and a competitive spirit.
- Cultivate the pursuit of excellence, both individually and as a team.
- Build school pride and unity, and serve as ambassadors for the school.

Expectations Within Cyclone Athletics

For Coaches

- Model behaviors and values consistent with our mission.
- Teach and mentor scholar-athletes, on and off the field.
- Communicate effectively with students, parents, and all school constituents. This includes clarity, tact, respect, and fairness.
- Respect and honor the educational mission of the school and the athletic department.
- Balance individual development with team competitiveness.
- Pursue excellence in knowledge of the sport.

For Scholar-Athletes

- Model behaviors and values consistent with our mission.
- Place the goals of the team above your own individual status and accomplishments.
- Be committed to the team, adhering to all rules and expectations, including arrangement of your schedule and priorities.
- Put forth your best effort at all times, in practice or game situations.
- Demonstrate good sportsmanship at all times, on and off the field.

- Recognize that as a Cyclone athlete, you are an ambassador for the school.
- Be your own advocate with your coaches regarding your role on the team, playing time, or similar concerns.

For Parents, Caregivers, and Fans

- Model behaviors and values consistent with our mission.
- Recognize that the athletic experience must be owned by the scholar-athlete and supported by their families.
- Be positive fans—cheering for Cyclones, and respecting the decisions of coaches and officials.
- Encourage your scholar-athlete, in good times and hard ones, to learn lessons from their athletic experiences that are bigger than the results on the scoreboard.
- Encourage your scholar-athlete to be his or her own advocate in discussions with coaches. Refrain from interjecting yourself into those discussions.

For Faculty and Administration

- Recognize the complementary roles of academics, athletics, and the arts in educating our students within the overall mission of the school.
- Support and encourage our scholar-athletes to apply the lessons learned in athletics to the classroom and to life.

Priorities at Different Levels of Play

All Cyclone teams strive to teach the same life lessons and provide a meaningful experience for all of our players. All of our teams seek the same four basic goals, and all are important. However, the four goals are prioritized differently based on the competitive level of the team within the overall program.

At the Middle School Level, the priority is:

1. Excellence in WATCH—Words, Actions, Thoughts, Character, and Habits.
2. Participation. This does not mean a guarantee of equal playing time, but we try to play every player in every game at this level.
3. Individual Development for the “Next Level.” Although our middle school teams are not primarily concerned with being a “feeder” for the JV and varsity squads, the development of good habits and sound fundamentals which will be of benefit to the higher-level teams are stressed.
4. Competitive Excellence. Every team and every team member wants to compete well and have a chance to win. We always make an effort to be as competitive as possible in every contest.

At the Junior Varsity Level, the priority is:

1. Excellence in WATCH.
2. Individual Development for the “Next Level.” The JV exists to “feed” the varsity team. We would rather develop great varsity players and teams for next year than have an undefeated JV season this year.
3. Competitive Excellence. This is the level where more separation begins to take place between starters and role players, and also those who will not continue past the JV level.
4. Participation. We recognize that for many of our student-athletes, this could be their last experience in a particular sport. We also know that athletes develop physically at different rates. So a high priority is placed on giving all team members the opportunity to play and develop.

Note: Some of our “JV” teams include students in both middle and upper school. Those teams will be philosophically run as “JV,” but with appropriate care taken to respect the proper physical and emotional development of the athletes on the team.

At the Varsity Level, the priority is:

1. Excellence in WATCH.
2. Competitive Excellence. At this level, our teams and players expect to compete at the highest level they can, even if it means that some players do not get to compete in every game.
3. Participation. We also recognize that being a part of a varsity team is itself an outstanding experience. We want to maximize every player's opportunity to contribute within his or her own role on the team and to learn lessons and make memories that last a lifetime.
4. Individual Development for the "Next Level." Although we are very proud of our Cyclones who have gone on to play sports at the college level and beyond, and will make every effort to help our student-athletes who seek that opportunity to be successful, the goals of the team transcend those of the individual, especially at the high school varsity level.

Note: Some of our teams only offer a single level of play. On those teams, the prevailing philosophy of the team will be that of a "varsity" team, but the coaches may modify expectations for younger athletes. In some cases, a middle school athlete may be able to compete at a varsity level. Coaches will be careful to consider the age and development of these athletes within the framework of varsity expectations.

Porter-Gaud School Athlete's Code

A firm and fair policy of enforcement is necessary to uphold the regulations and standards of the athletic department. The community, school administrators and the coaching staff feel strongly that high standards of conduct and citizenship are essential in maintaining a sound program of athletics. The welfare of the student is our major consideration and transcends any other consideration. All athletes shall abide by a code of ethics which will earn them the honor and respect that participation and competition in the interscholastic program affords. Any conduct that results in dishonor to the athlete, the team or the school will not be tolerated. Acts of unacceptable conduct, such as, but not limited to theft, vandalism, disrespect, immorality or violations of law, tarnish the reputation of everyone associated with the athletic program and will not be tolerated.

- The use of alcoholic beverages, un-prescribed drugs, narcotics, tobacco, or e-cigarettes is strictly forbidden. Use of banned substances or being under the influence of banned substances while under the supervision of Porter-Gaud School, whether on campus or at away games, may result in expulsion. Any athlete confirmed by a member of the staff using alcoholic beverages, un-prescribed drugs, narcotics, tobacco, or e-cigarettes off-campus may be suspended or dismissed from the team for that season and may face additional School consequences.
- Each team member is responsible for notifying the coach in advance if they will miss a practice or a game, except when the student has been absent from school all day. Illness, unavoidable doctor's appointments, school activities, religious holidays, family emergencies, or a wedding in the immediate family are valid excuses for missing games or practices.
- Because academics are at the heart of Porter-Gaud's mission, a student-athlete is expected to be present for all scheduled classes on the day of a practice or game in order to participate. Students are also expected to be at school on time and for the entire day following late games. Any exception to that expectation must be approved by the Assistant Head of Upper School and/or the Head of the Upper School in consultation with the Athletic Director.
- Students must be academically eligible according to the current SCISA rules to be able to play. Porter-Gaud reserves the right to impose more stringent standards to ensure the academic success of student-athletes.
- All athletes should display high standards of social behavior off the field and high standards of sportsmanship on the field, particularly in respecting other athletes, cheerleaders, officials, spectators, and those in authority. This expectation includes appropriate use of technology and social media.
- All athletes should be cooperative with their coaches, teachers, and peers, maintain a good appearance, and use language that reflects well upon themselves, their families, and the school.

- Hazing, bullying, or harassment of any sort is expressly forbidden.
- Team captains should use their leadership ability and influence to assist in the enforcement of these rules.
- Should a violation of this code occur, the Assistant Head of Upper School, the Head of Upper School, and the student's parents/guardians will be advised and consequences will be determined by the Head of Upper School, Athletic Director and/or the coaching staff. Consequences may include temporary benching, suspension from the team, or expulsion from the team. Students serving disciplinary and honor consequences assigned by the School can expect to face additional consequences assigned by the Athletic Department.

Wearing a Porter-Gaud uniform is a privilege. It connects you to your current teammates and coaches as well as those that have worn the uniform before you. Understand that the decisions you make will not only impact your life, but also your family, your team, and Porter-Gaud, as well.

Porter-Gaud Community Sportsmanship Guidelines

Porter-Gaud's teams are expected to conduct themselves in a spirit of good sportsmanship, particularly in relation to other teams. Porter-Gaud may use every means at its disposal to impress upon its coaches, student-athletes, and fans the values of sportsmanship in the preparation for, conduct of, and management of our sports programs at all levels.

The number one goal is developing pride in our programs. This requires a united effort of dignity and accountability for all of our actions. Each of us has a responsibility to encourage and insist upon the following actions from our coaches, student athletes, and spectators:

Be Courteous to All

It is paramount that the Porter-Gaud community treat participants, coaches, officials, staff and opposing fans with respect. Applaud during introductions, shake hands with opponents, show concern for injured players, extend hospitality to visiting players, coaches, cheerleaders and fans.

Know the Rules, Abide by and Respect the Officials' Decisions

Utilize every opportunity to promote understanding of the rules of the contest within the School and community; accept the officials' decisions without a display of temper, argument, or derogatory remarks.

Win with Dignity, Lose with Character

Treat competition as a game and a privilege to compete in a Porter-Gaud uniform. While the final result is important, it is more important how we respond to that result.

Exercise Self-control

Present yourself, your team, and Porter-Gaud School positively. Support the activity by displaying total unity as fans, as opposed to boasting or using antics which draw attention to you instead of to the contest.

Permit Only Positive Sportsmanship

Encourage those around you to display only positive sportsmanlike conduct. Likewise discourage use of profanity, taunting, or other destructive mannerisms.

As a Porter-Gaud coach, athlete, or fan, you are expected to conduct yourself with integrity, sportsmanship, honesty, pride, and humility. Your conduct is closely scrutinized as you and your team compete at home and on the road. A student-athlete is looked upon as a role model, particularly by peers and younger children, and it is important that the student-athlete's personal conduct is above reproach at all times. Realize that you are representing yourself, your family, your team, and Porter-Gaud School. Do so with class!

Social Media & Electronic Communication

General

In our modern, technologically-connected world, it is important to remember that interactions online are both public and permanent. All expectations and rules governing student-athletes' behavior extend to the digital world, as well. Cyclones must be mindful of their role as an ambassador of their team and their school in their online behaviors. With the rapidly changing technologies available to athletes, coaches, and teams, it would be impossible to have a rigid set of "rules" governing every interaction. Instead, follow the principle that every interaction involving our student-athletes needs to protect the safety, privacy, and dignity of everyone involved. Please also remember that emails and texts cannot convey tone and can lead to misunderstandings. Where possible, the best interactions are face-to-face.

Preferred Methods of Communication

In adherence to the school's Code of Conduct, individual student-coach "text" communications are prohibited. The standard mode of communication is through a safe and secure third-party platform such as the school's email, the Blackbaud system, or Remind. Messages between a coach and an individual student must include at least one other adult. Our communications policy follows national independent school best practices.

School and Team Social Media Accounts

Porter-Gaud maintains official social media accounts, both for the school and for athletics, and regularly posts and curates content based upon policies and best practices established by the Communications Department. Additionally, many coaches and teams maintain their own social media accounts that publicize their own programs and athletes. All social media team accounts must be approved by the Communications Office and managed by a coach. Students may not operate accounts without direct supervision from a coach. The school reserves the right to edit and/or delete posts from these accounts that do not reflect school or department policy. Student-athletes are encouraged to "like" or re-post content from these school-approved accounts. When posting content on personal social media accounts or commenting on posts that feature PG athletes or their opponents in uniform or otherwise depicts Cyclone teams, student-athletes and their families must use good judgment, be mindful of school rules and core values, and consider the impact on themselves and other members of the community.

General Athletic Department Policies

Extracurricular Eligibility

To maintain extracurricular eligibility, Porter-Gaud School expects a student to adhere to the South Carolina Independent School Association's Student Eligibility Rules. The Academic Requirements for eligibility are as follows:

- Students below the 9TH grade must pass four (4) subjects each grading period/semester.
- Any student who did not receive credit for at least 50% (one-half) of all courses taken the previous school year cannot be declared eligible for athletic participation until the successful completion of the first semester.
- A student who is academically ineligible to participate is also prohibited from practicing with the team until the time the student is academically eligible to participate.
- Any student with multiple grades in the 60-69 range may be suspended from athletic participation at the discretion of the teacher, department chair, and administration.

Practice Times

Any team that includes upper school students may not begin practice earlier than 4:20 PM on school days. This is to accommodate the upper school chorus, yearbook, and other elective classes that meet until 4:10 PM, as well as academic tutoring in the Lyceum. Teams composed of only middle school students may start at 3:30 PM. While teams may have conditioning, film study, or other voluntary activities between the end of school and the start of practice, no Porter-Gaud student should ever be forced to choose between participation in the arts or athletics.

Missing Practices and/or Games

Being a part of a Cyclone team is a privilege, and comes with the responsibility to make the team a priority. Student-athletes are expected to attend all scheduled practices and contests. Illness, unavoidable doctor's appointments, family emergencies, weddings in the immediate family, and religious holidays are the only valid excuses for missing games or practices.

Academic and Extracurricular Conflicts

The Athletic Department makes every effort to preclude conflicts between scheduled practices, interscholastic games/matches, and major academic or extracurricular events. However, on occasion such conflicts may occur, e.g. the annual Youth in Government conference, SCISA academic or extracurricular competitions, or academic field trips. Porter-Gaud's guiding principle is that School-sponsored academic activities take priority. Consequently, no penalties (such as

extra practice, or suspending or benching an athlete) are prescribed when a student-athlete chooses to participate in such an activity and informs his/her coach at the earliest opportunity and well in advance so that there is sufficient time for appropriate planning and resolution in the interests of all concerned. The coach should consult with the Athletic Director in the event of unanticipated circumstances or unclear interpretation of this policy.

Club and Travel Sports

Porter-Gaud athletics are education-based. Our mission and aims are different from those of most pay-to-play teams. While we applaud the efforts of our students to develop their athletic skills, we believe that specialization in a single sport, particularly at an early age, is not in the best interest of most young athletes. Participation on a pay-for-play team is never a requirement for playing a Porter-Gaud sport. As a general rule, Porter-Gaud coaches are not expected to make the same sorts of accommodations to balance athletes' outside-of-school activities with their Cyclone team responsibilities as they would for other school-related activities (whether athletics, arts, service, or spiritual). Any adjustments made to accommodate outside sports team play are at the discretion of the Porter-Gaud team's coach, and may vary based on individual circumstances.

Multi-Sport Athletes

Over 80% of Porter-Gaud middle and upper school students participate on one or more of our athletic teams. As a department, we encourage athletes to participate in multiple Cyclone sports. Although our sports seasons overlap, there will always be an opportunity for athletes to try out for a winter or spring sport at the conclusion of their fall or winter team's season, with no penalty. Coaches of multi-season athletes will coordinate with each other to ensure that neither team's requirements preclude full participation in the other. Student-athletes may not begin practice for a new season's sport until after the final competition in their current season. In some rare cases, a student-athlete may be able to compete for two Cyclone teams in the same season. Those cases are only allowed when approved by both teams' coaches and the Athletic Director, and require very high levels of communication between teams, the athlete, and the family.

Pre-Season/In-Season/Off-Season Requirements for Athletes

Being a Cyclone athlete, particularly at the varsity level, requires a high level of commitment and self-discipline. Many of our teams have pre-season or off-season strength and conditioning requirements as a prerequisite to participation. These requirements should be arranged so that being a member of multiple Cyclone teams is both possible and complementary. Our head strength & conditioning coach will design appropriate in-season and out-of-season programming to meet the needs of multi-sport

athletes. The S&C coach and team coaches will work with student-athletes to manage any conflicts, but it is the responsibility of the student-athlete to communicate and coordinate with his or her coaches. It is expected that the In-season athlete strength trains twice per week during their season. The in-season training will always take precedence over any off season training sessions.

Use of Athletic Facilities/Supervision

Porter-Gaud is blessed to have outstanding athletic facilities. These facilities were built for our students, and all students are encouraged to take advantage of them. However, students may not under any circumstances use any of our athletic facilities without adult supervision. As a general rule, that means that students may only use the gyms, fitness center, etc. when accompanied by an adult who has been issued a Porter-Gaud ID/Key Card that allows access to those spaces. If a student is working out while a faculty member is present and providing supervision, the student must leave when the faculty member does.

Locker Rooms

The newly-renovated locker rooms in the Wendell Center are assigned to specific teams each season. Those teams' coaches and athletes are then responsible for taking care of them. No one should use the varsity locker rooms during the school day; if taking a PE class, you should use a PE locker for that class. Athletes should never prop open the locker room doors to keep them from locking.

Dropping or Changing Sports

One of the lessons taught in athletics is perseverance. Quitting a team is strongly discouraged, and failure to finish a prior season may be taken into account in roster decisions in following years. Any athlete who quits a sport after regular-season contests have begun may not join another Cyclone team in that same season, nor may they participate with a team in the following season until their teammates can (for example, a basketball player who quits cannot begin track practice until the basketball season concludes). Any exceptions to this policy must be approved by the coaches of both teams and the athletic director.

Uniforms and Equipment

Athletes are responsible for any equipment issued to them. All school-issued uniforms and equipment must be returned at the end of the season (even if you plan to wear the same jersey the next year). Athletes' families will be billed for the replacement cost of any equipment lost or damaged. As a general rule, uniforms and equipment that is personalized, custom-sized, or will be kept by the athletes at the end of the season are paid for by the student's family.

Travel

Athletes should travel with their team to and from any “away” contest for which school transportation is provided unless special permission is granted by the Head Coach, in consultation with the Dean or the Division Head. To receive that permission to travel to or from an away game in non-School transportation, the student athlete must provide the Coach with written permission from his/her parent, stating specifically with whom the student is allowed to travel.

Early Dismissals

Due to the number of teams we field and the number of contests in which we participate, there are numerous early dismissals for athletics throughout the school year. Athletes should be proactive in communicating with their teachers regarding missed classes or any make-up work. Being irresponsible regarding early dismissals undermines the integrity of the athlete, the team, and the athletic department. Student-athletes leaving school early must sign out at the front reception desk.

College Commitment and Signing Ceremonies

The Cyclone athletic department is pleased to recognize and celebrate our student-athletes who are invited to continue their playing careers at the collegiate level. Students wishing to celebrate a scholarship signing or formal commitment must have a verified roster spot (whether scholarship, Division 3, Ivy League, or Preferred Walk-On) on their collegiate team.

Training Staff, Sports Medicine Center, and “Return to Play” Protocol

Porter-Gaud is fortunate to be able to employ certified athletic trainers (ATC) who coordinate the care and treatment of sports-related injuries. Student-athletes can receive treatment in the Sports Medicine Center by signing up for an appointment with an ATC. One of the responsibilities of the ATC is supervising “return to play” for injured athletes. No athlete, parent, coach, nor athletic administrator can, nor should, overrule the ATC in decisions of whether it is safe to resume practice or play. The athletic trainers, in collaboration with our team physician(s), are the staff members who have both the authority and accountability for player safety decisions.

Music Over Public Speakers

Students may have the opportunity to play music over a public speaker, whether a PA system at the stadium or in the gym, over the speakers in the fitness center, or even over a wireless speaker brought from home. It is essential for all users of our facilities to remember that our school community is made up of children of many ages, multiple generations, and families with widely different musical tastes. Even if you are alone when your music starts, any playlist should be built with the expectation that any member of our school family could overhear the music at any time.

If there is any question as to whether a music choice might offend, wear headphones or choose something else.

Roster Size and Cuts

Many Cyclone teams are able to carry an unlimited number of athletes, and have a “no-cut” philosophy. Many others are, or traditionally have been, effectively “no-cut” due to the number of athletes who usually come out for the team relative to how many can be effectively carried. However, some teams are limited to a certain number by rule, and others are limited by facility space or by how many athletes will be able to get meaningful playing time. Even “no-cut” sports involve a certain element of selectivity in terms of position assignments, event selection, selection of travel squads, etc. There is no way to create a completely objective and transparent mechanism that governs roster decisions—that is part of the art of coaching. Porter-Gaud coaches are expected to handle these decisions thoughtfully, professionally, and with regard for the feelings of the students affected.

Communication With Coaches

One of the lessons we hope our athletes will learn through athletics is how to be their own advocates with those in positions of authority, including coaches and officials. Athletes, particularly at the varsity level, are encouraged to speak directly to their coach about any concerns regarding positions, assignments, playing time, etc. Parents should not interject themselves into these conversations and take away their student’s opportunity to learn and grow through them. Coaches and athletes are expected to handle any such interactions in a professional manner. This includes tact, discretion, picking a good time to talk (almost always NOT at a time when emotions are high), and mutual respect. Coaches will never penalize a player for communicating candidly and respectfully.

24-Hour Rule

Competition and adrenaline contribute to great athletic experiences, but very rarely lead to productive conversations in the heat of the moment. If a parent feels the need to speak to a coach about a negative experience during a game, please wait until the next day before doing so.

The Cyclone Athletic Program

Porter-Gaud's interscholastic athletic program comprises approximately 60 teams competing in 30 sports at the middle school, junior varsity, and varsity levels. Over 80% of middle and upper school students participate in interscholastic athletics. Athletics have been a key component of a Porter-Gaud education since the merger of Porter Military Academy, the Gaud School, and the Watt School in 1964. The Cyclones competed independently until 1974-75, when the boarding department closed and we joined the SC High School League. Porter-Gaud left the SCHSL in 1988 to join the PAC (Palmetto Athletic Conference), and since 1994 has competed in SCISA (The South Carolina Independent Schools Athletic Association). The Cyclones have won over 150 state championships since 1975.

Fall Sports

- Football (Varsity 10-12, JV 8-9, Middle School 6-7. No-Cut)
- Volleyball (Varsity 9-12, JV 8-10, Grade-Level Middle School Teams 5-8)
- Swimming (Boys Varsity 6-12, Girls Varsity 6-12. No-Cut)
- Cross-Country (Boys Varsity 7-12, Girls Varsity 7-12, Middle-School 5-8. No Cut)
- Cheerleading—Sideline and Competition (Varsity 8-12, Middle School 5-8)
- Sailing (Coed Varsity 9-12)
- Tennis (Girls Varsity 6-12, Girls JV 6-10)
- Golf (Girls Varsity 6-12)

Winter Sports

- Basketball (Boys and Girls Varsity 9-12, JV 8-10, Boys and Girls Middle School 5-8)
- Sporting Clays (Boys Varsity 9-12, Girls Varsity 9-12)
- Bowling (Girls Varsity 9-12, Boys Varsity 9-12, Coed Varsity 9-12)
- Cheerleading/Dance Team—Sideline (Varsity 8-12, Middle School 5-8)
- Equestrian (Varsity 5-12)
- Wrestling (Middle School 6-8, Varsity 8-12)

Spring Sports

- Baseball (Varsity 9-12, Middle School 5-8)
- Tennis (Boys Varsity 6-12, multiple coed Middle School teams 5-8)
- Golf (Boys Varsity 7-12)
- Soccer (Boys Varsity 8-12, JV 6-10, Girls Varsity 8-12, JV 6-10)
- Track & Field (Boys Varsity 6-12, Girls Varsity 6-12, No-Cut)
- Lacrosse (Boys Varsity 9-12, Boys JV 7-10, Boys MS 6-8, Girls Varsity 7-12, Girls JV 7-10, MS 5-6)