



SPIRIT COACH'S MANUAL

This is an extension of the MHSAA Handbook

*Please check the MHSAA
Website for new 2018-19
Rules Revisions*

www.misshsaa.com



PHILOSOPHY

1. Interscholastic athletics/activities shall supplement the secondary curricular program and provide the students with educational experiences and learning outcomes that contribute toward the development of the attributes of good citizenship.
2. Spirit groups shall serve as support groups for the interscholastic athletic program within the school and as such, play a very important role in the administration of athletic/activities contest. Each squad should strive to:
 - a. boost school spirit
 - b. promote good sportsmanship
 - c. develop good positive crowd involvement
 - d. Help student participants and spectators achieve the most worthwhile educational objectives of the interscholastic program.
3. Being the most visible and recognizable representatives of a school, spirit groups are in a position of great influence: therefore, high standards of conduct are essential. Positive personal behavior and squad cohesiveness demonstrate these standards. Appropriate behavior will help earn the respect of the student body which is the core of developing effective school spirit and student involvement. Cheerleading activities should center on “leading” or “directing” the cheering of students and adult fans. Dance team activities should center on “performing” and “spirit raising”. The activities for both spirit groups should be focused on:
 - a. Creating a cooperative spirit among the cheerleaders, dancers, athletes, student bodies, school administrators
 - b. Recognizing outstanding plays and examples of good sportsmanship on the part of both teams,
 - c. Aiding the school and game officials in the promotion of good sportsmanship and in the administration of the contest.
4. The Mississippi High School Activities Association governs varsity, junior varsity, junior high, and middle school cheer and dance teams of member schools. Each school is given the ELECTIVE option to participate in the MHSAA Competition. If cheer /dance competition is approved as part of the school’s activities, it should be placed in perspective with the total educational program and should not interfere with the primary responsibility of the cheerleading squad - which is to support the interscholastic athletic program. Cheer/dance competition should serve to develop leadership, confidence, and skill.

GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

1. Cheer and Dance are considered sport activities.
2. ALL National Federation rules listed in the current year’s Spirit Rules Book **must** be followed.
3. Hair Devices: Hair must be worn in an appropriate manner for the activity. Hair can be secured out of the face by using bobby pins or plastic-coated barrettes.
4. All jewelry is prohibited during participation (practices or performing). Religious medals and medical medals are not considered to be jewelry. A religious medal without a chain must be taped and worn under the uniform. A medical alert medal must be taped and may be visible.
5. When standing at attention, apparel must cover the midriff. The midriff is not to be visible when standing at attention.
6. Fingernails/overlays/fake nails must NOT be seen when looking at the palms of the individual’s hands.
7. Glitter must readily adhere to the hair, face, uniform, or costume. Glitter may be used on signs, props, or backdrops if laminated or sealed.
8. Spring-assisted floors (or any height-increasing apparatus) are illegal for use during performance competitions. These devices are, by definition, “height-increasing apparatuses” and should not be used for anything other than a teaching tool.

Basketball Games

- a. Squads must be 3-4 feet from any boundary line.
- b. Squads must not be in the free-throw lane extended during live balls.
- c. Squads must remain outside the playing area during a 30-second timeout.
- d. **Fans cannot use artificial noisemakers or noise enhancers.**
- e. Cheerleaders may use megaphones.

Specific Basketball/Indoor Court Restrictions

The following skills are prohibited at basketball and other athletic contests conducted on courts, except where the area is free of obstructions and non-cheer personnel, and all skills are performed on a matted surface.

- a. Basket tosses, elevator/sponge tosses and other similar multi-based tosses
- b. Partner stunts in which the base uses only one arm to support the top person
- c. Released twists into or from stunts or pyramids
- d. Twisting tumbling skills

Additional Restrictions for Middle and Junior High School

The following restrictions for middle school and junior high teams are in addition to the above rules for high school teams:

- 1. Basket tosses, elevator tosses and similar multi-based tosses are prohibited.**
- 2. The total number of twists in a dismount from stunts cannot be greater than one rotation. Exception to this rule:**
 - a. Side facing stunts (i.e. Arabesque, Scorpion, etc.) may add a one-quarter twist in order to cradle to the front.**

PREGNANCY CLAUSE

All coaches may wish to add this statement to the school's rules and regulations regarding cheer squads. This statement was obtained from the MHSAA attorney.

"To participate in cheerleading, each cheerleader must obtain a statement from a medical doctor that the cheerleader is able to perform all routines and responsibilities of cheerleading. If after obtaining the statement and a cheerleader develops a medical condition or becomes pregnant, the cheerleader must inform the cheerleader coach of the medical condition or pregnancy and obtain clearance from a medical doctor and the cheerleader may continue performing the routines and responsibilities required of cheerleaders with specific instructions regarding any limitations. If a cheerleader is unable to continue performing the routines and responsibilities of cheerleading, the cheerleader will be removed from the team until the cheerleader is given medical clearance to resume the requirements expected of a cheerleader."

HAZING/HARASSMENT POLICY

The MHSAA is committed to encouraging and promoting good sportsmanship/citizenship on all levels of activities and interscholastic competition. We feel a responsibility in promoting a positive atmosphere during every event within the activities association. Some groups and organizations have taken it upon themselves to "initiate" newcomers and sometimes these celebrations can become abusive. Each individual plays an important role in making every event as safe as possible.

Hazing can be defined as "any act or ceremony which can create the risk of harm to a student in the form of initiation into a particular club or activity." Hazing includes activities that involve the risk of physical harm, whipping, branding, ingesting vile substances, sleep deprivation, over-exposure to heat or cold, restraint, nudity, kidnapping, i.e.

Hazing or harassment by any name is wrong! Anyone who witnesses or hears about a form of harassment should report it. Allegations of harassment may be the result of words, physical contact, emails, or other unwelcome verbal or non-verbal communication.

It is the responsibility of school administration, including the athletic staff, sponsors, and teachers, to report any form of hazing/harassment and to deal with the problem on the local level. The MHSAA office should only be contacted if an incident takes place during an MHSAA activity. Taking control in schools by establishing an anti-hazing policy that is explained and enforced is recommended. Students need a way to safely report incidents of hazing to the school guidance counselor and/or other administrative personnel.

SPORTSMANSHIP

The promotion of sportsmanship is the prime responsibility of cheerleaders. Good sportsmanship is conduct which imposes a type of self-control involving honest rivalry, courteous relations, and graceful acceptance of results. School spirit is a reflection of these attitudes and behavior. If a school is to succeed in one of its prime functions - that of developing good citizenship - it is necessary that student groups model proper sportsmanship conduct. Sportsmanship is good citizenship in action. Squads must always cheer in a positive manner. It is inappropriate to cheer against the other team. Cheer friendly. In a basketball game, the squad is not to cheer against the individual that is performing a free-throw. Props and actions that embarrass or demean opponents or spectators have no place at high school events. This includes, but is not limited to, signs, gestures, chants, cheers, etc. *A participant, coach, substitute, trainer, or any*

other team attendant must not commit an unsporting act. A participant, coach, substitute, trainer, or any other team attendant must not use tobacco, smokeless tobacco, alcohol, or other controlled substances while representing the school.

PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY

1. All spirit/dance teams are to follow the same eligibility rules that athletes must follow. Refer to the *MHSAA Handbook* for further information. **Sixth graders may not participate with or in any MHSAA sport or activity.**
Age:
Seventh graders must not have reached 14 years of age prior to August 1st.
Eighth graders must not have reached 15 years of age prior to August 1st.
Ninth graders must not have reached 16 years of age prior to August 1st.
2. Any pupil who becomes 19 years of age prior to August 1st shall be ineligible for participation.
3. See new rule regarding 7th and 8th graders competing at JV or Varsity levels.
4. Schools are given autonomy in the procedure for selection of the cheerleaders; however, any student trying out must be a “bona fide student, having enrolled no later than the 15th day of any semester” and meet at least minimum academic requirements of MHSAA and their school district.
5. Students who fail 7th or 8th grade, but achieve a 2.0 GPA at the end of the first semester, may tryout in the spring for the next year. However, they will not be covered under catastrophic insurance plan until eligible.
6. Cheerleader/Dance team members/mascots are **REQUIRED** to:
 - i. Complete the STAR Sportsmanship (at least once in either high school or middle/jr. high school)
 - ii. Have been examined by a physician and declared physically fit prior to any practice or camp.
 - Physicals are valid for one calendar year.

COACH QUALIFICATIONS - CHEER AND DANCE

1. It is recommended that cheerleader/dance coaches be a full-time employee of the school district. If not a full-time employee, the individual **MUST** take the para-professional courses offered by the MHSAA and given by the NFHS.
2. Cheerleader/Dance coaches/sponsors are **REQUIRED** to:
 - a. **Attend annual MHSAA District Rules Meetings/or complete the online Rules Module at www.misshsaa.com (checked by MHSAA)**
 - i. Meetings cover all rules and regulations governing spirit and safety.
 - ii. Failure to attend results in a \$50.00 fine.
 - b. **Be AACCA certified (send copy of certification or renewals to ldawson@misshsaa.com)**
 - i. New coaches/sponsors/paraprofessionals will be given one semester from hire date to acquire certification.
 - ii. AACCA (American Association of Cheerleading Coaches and Advisors) certification is good for **4 years** and is available on-line at www.NFHSLearn.com or <http://www.nfhslern.com/sportDetail.aspx?sport=spirit> OR to schedule a class, contact Kim Higgins at khiggins@uca.com (10 or more persons are required for a class).
 - c. **Hold current CPR certification (good for 2 yrs.) (school level/AD)**
 - d. **Completed a “Sports Safety/First Aid “course (good for 5 yrs.) (school level/AD)**
 - e. **Complete free, online “Concussion in Sports” course at www.NFHSLearn.com (school level/AD)**
 - f. **Complete free, online course “Heat Illness Prevention” at www.NFHSLearn.com (school level/AD)**
 - g. **Recommended free, online course “Understanding Copyright & Compliance” at www.NFHSLearn.com**
 - h. **Recommended free, online course “Sudden Cardiac Arrest” at www.NFHSLearn.com (required 2019-2020) (school level/AD)**
 - i. **Submit an eligibility list**
 - i. A list of every team member prior to the first game/performance/competition in which they participate (**put in C2Cschools.com**)
 - ii. Each cheerleader/dance team member/mascot on the eligibility list will be under the catastrophic insurance plan for all MHSAA sanctioned events. (**put in C2Cschools.com to be covered**)
 - iii. Fax to MHSAA at 601-924-1725 attention to **LeAnna Dawson**
 - j. **Have an Emergency Plan (AD keeps a copy on file) (sample copy on line at www.aacca.org)**
 - k. **All coaches must complete the Star Sportsmanship program – see your Athletic Director**

l. Follow the *National Federation's Coaches Code of Ethics*:

- i. Cheer/Dance coaches have a tremendous influence in the education of an athlete. Never place the value of winning above the value of instilling highest ideals of character.
- ii. Have thorough knowledge of the contest rules.
- iii. Constantly uphold the honor and dignity of the profession. Strive to set an example of the highest ethical and moral conduct.
- iv. Contest officials shall have the respect and support of the coach/sponsor. Conduct that incites players or spectators against the officials is unethical. Public criticism of officials or players is unethical.
- v. Take an active role in prevention of drug, alcohol, and tobacco abuse and do not authorize their use.
- vi. Avoid use of tobacco products when in contact with players.
- vii. Coaches shall actively use their influence to enhance sportsmanship.
- viii. Coaches shall promote the entire interscholastic program of the school and direct their program in harmony with the total school program.

m. Keep a current copy of the NFHS Spirit Rules Book (available at MHSAA for \$10 + \$2.50 for shipping)

n. Keep a checklist of skills (coach will keep documentation)

- i. This protects the coach in case of an injury.
- ii. Skills should be mastered before progressing.

LEGAL DUTIES OF A COACH

1. **Properly plan the activity.** Make sure that athletes are in proper condition. Teach athletes the sports skills in a progression so that they are adequately prepared to handle more difficult skills.
2. **Provide proper instruction.** Keep up-to-date on better and safer ways of performing sport techniques. Teach athletes the rules and the correct skills and strategies of the sport.
3. **Provide a safe physical environment.** Monitor current environmental conditions (i.e. wind chill, temperature, and humidity). Periodically inspect playing areas, the locker room, the weight room, and the dugout for hazards. Remove all hazards. Prevent improper or unsupervised use of facilities.
4. **Provide adequate and proper equipment.** Make sure athletes are using top-quality equipment. Inspect the equipment regularly. Teach athletes how to fit, use, and inspect their equipment.
5. **Match your athletes.** Match athletes according to size, physical maturity, skill level, and experience.
6. **Evaluate athletes for injury or incapacity.** Enforce rules requiring all athletes to submit to preseason physicals and screening to detect potential health problems. If an athlete is not able to compete without pain or loss of function (i.e. inability to walk, run, jump, throw, etc. without restriction), immediately remove him/her from the activity.
7. **Supervise the activity closely.** Do not allow athletes to practice difficult or potentially dangerous skills without proper supervision. Forbid horseplay. Do not allow athletes to use sport facilities without supervision.
8. **Warn of inherent risks.** Provide parents and athletes with both oral and written statements of the inherent health risks of their particular sport.
9. **Provide appropriate emergency assistance.** Learn sports safety/first aid and CPR. Use only the skills you are qualified to administer.
The law assumes that when you agreed to coach, you indirectly agreed to provide first aid care for any injury or illness suffered by any athlete under your supervision. Therefore, if no medical personnel are present when an injury occurs, you are responsible for providing emergency care.

If you give emergency care, you must use standard procedures taught by the American Red Cross

- * **RECOGNIZE** that an emergency exists.
- * **DECIDE** to act.
- * **CALL** the local emergency number for help.
- * **PROVIDE** care until help arrives.

HELP FOR SPIRIT COACHES

1. Organization and pre-planning are the keys to conducting successful tryouts.

- Post requirements for trying out that have been approved by your administration.
- Provide information to students and parents in regard to cost, commitment of time, performance requirements, travel, insurance, and any special support requested of parents (i.e. transportation)
- Parents must be given the inherent risks of the sport and request for permission for child to be treated for injury.

- A parent consent form must be signed and returned giving permission to student to participate.
- Hold a meeting for both the students trying out and the parents. Present a copy of the score sheet along with an explanation of performance requirements (i.e., Cheer/chant, individual or group jumps, etc.).
- Conduct workshops for several days prior to tryouts, practicing the material to be performed in tryouts. Include motion technique, jumps, entrance, exit, and any other area that will be judged.
- On the day of tryouts, be sure to start on time. The site should have been previously prepared for tryouts. There should be several sharpened pencils, scratch pads, judge sheets, and at least one calculator. Use mats if you have them!
- If you use outside judges, you should be certain they understand the score sheets and that there are no unresolved ties before releasing the scores.
- There are various ways of announcing the winners. Dismiss any outside judges before any results are announced. Have the tryout score sheets available to the students/parents at a time convenient for you. Many schools will wait until the next day or even one-week later. It is highly suggested that judges be paid on the day of the tryouts.

2. After conducting tryouts, organization is also essential to a successful year

- The way in which you organize and govern your cheerleaders/dance team will depend strictly upon your school policies, procedures, and administrative decisions.
- Have a meeting with newly elected cheerleaders/dance team and their parents.
- Cheerleading/Dance Constitution and/or rules must be approved by your administration.
- Present a copy to each cheerleader/dance team member and their parents and have them sign a separate page stating that they understand and will abide by the policies in the constitution.
- Parents and cheerleaders/dance team members should also sign an *Inherent Risks of Cheerleading/Dance* form.
- Parents **MUST** complete an *emergency card* for their child. **This card should be kept with you at all times.** This card is part of your “Emergency Plan” that is considered the “appropriate standard of care” for a coach.

3. Pre-Season ---- Getting cheerleaders/dance team members ready for performance.

- Physical -- Each cheerleader/dance team member should have a physical by a physician prior to summer camp. These physicals are good for a calendar year.
- Pre-season conditioning -- Every cheerleader/dance team member should begin a conditioning program immediately after tryouts. The conditioning exercises should focus on muscle strength, endurance, and flexibility needed for the sport.

4. It is REQUIRED that coaches have an Emergency Plan for injuries.

- Many injuries do not require emergency medical attention; however, do not take these no critical types of injuries lightly. They can severely impair performance and should be checked closely to ensure that no further complications exist.
- Steps for small injuries:
 - Evaluate the injury
 - Administer first-aid
 - Remove the athlete from participation if the athlete is in a great deal of pain or suffers from a loss of function (can't walk, run, jump, etc.)
 - Contact the athlete's parents
 - Complete the injury report form if required by your school district
 - Discuss the injury with parents
 - Suggest that the athlete see a physician to rule out a serious injury

Squad Selection/Tryouts

The MHSAA does not govern the selection process.

Selection can be held at any time the school desires.

The school will pay for judges on the day of tryouts -- MHSAA does not pay for your judges.

It is recommended that the school's administration/athletic director be involved in every aspect of the squad selection.

It is recommended that physicals be done prior to the selection process.

It is strongly recommended that a parent/guardian meeting be held prior to the squad selection.

Conducting Productive Preseason Parent Meeting

- The preseason meeting should include members of the cheer/dance coaching staff, team members, and parents/guardians.

- Written confirmation and understanding of basic rules of the school, cheer/dance department, and team should be obtained from every parent/guardian and kept in possession of the coach.
- The school and state association rules, regulations, and policies should be discussed. Emphasis should be placed on the academic requirements at the state and local levels.
- The code of conduct for student participation for both the state and local levels should be carefully explained.
- Emergency cards should be completed.
- Explain:
 - function and membership of your school’s booster clubs and the importance of involvement
 - fund raising programs and policies
 - basic operational policies within your program
 - varsity letters
 - awards, team rules
 - language
 - behavior
 - travel rules
 - academics
 - practices, games
 - other related topics.

SPIRIT ADVISORY BOARD GUIDELINES/POLICIES

1. Spirit advisory board will consist of:
 - a. One representative from each district
 - b. Two at-large representatives (north/south)
 - c. Varsity UCA/UDA representatives/consultants
 - d. “a” and “b” may be adjusted in order to balance the number of cheer/dance representatives.
2. Be a current cheer/dance coach of a MHSAA school (exception: current board member who changes positions within school, or who is no longer coaching, may continue to serve remaining term as long as maintains all certifications, and are in good standing with their school district.)
3. Attend MHSAA spirit board meetings
4. Are a support system for coaches in their district to assist with comments, concerns, questions etc.
5. Starting with the 2018-2019 school year Spirit Advisory Board Members will serve a 3-year term.
6. Spirit Board members may serve more than one 3-year term provide the terms are not consecutive.

STAR SPORTSMANSHIP REQUIREMENT

Beginning during the 2008-2009 school year, every school that was a member of the MHSAA was required to complete the Star Sportsmanship Program. Below are the requirements as passed by the MHSAA Executive Committee:

- Coaches, student-athletes, cheerleaders, and dance participants in middle school and high school sports will be required to complete the Star Sportsmanship Online Program which is endorsed by the Mississippi Department of Education, the Mississippi Association of Coaches, and the Mississippi High School Activities Association.
- It will be the responsibility of the head coach of each sport to insure that his or her team’s student-athletes and assistant coaches complete the Star Sportsmanship Program.
- Junior high and middle school coaches/students must complete the Star Program before their sport season ends.
- High school coaches and students must complete the Star Program BEFORE post-season play begins in their sport.
- Star Sportsmanship rosters of high school teams participating in the playoffs will be checked along with the required playoff eligibility rosters turned in by participating schools. Star Sportsmanship schools will be notified prior to the first playoff contest of coaches and/or students who have not completed the program.
- The high school head coach will not be allowed to participate in post-season play until all players and assistant coaches have completed the Star Sportsmanship Program.
- Middle schools will be randomly checked to insure completion of the Star Program. A \$500 fine will be assessed to middle school teams not completing the program.
- Any coach or player who is ejected must complete the Star Sportsmanship Program (if he/she has not already completed the program) plus take the remedial module Take 2 before the ejected player or coach can once again participate.

Who must complete the Star Sportsmanship program during the 2018-19 school year?

- Any coach or player who has not already gone through the training must complete it. All new coaches must complete the training.
- Coaches are encouraged to use the parent module at their team meetings.
- Middle school students who have gone through the middle school version do NOT need to go through the high school version if they are moving to high school.

The MHSAA Executive Board is using a proactive approach to a serious problem -- poor sportsmanship. To access the program, simply go to the MHSAA website -- www.misshsaa.com. Double-click on “STAR Sportsmanship School Finder” to get your school’s code. The training may be done at home, at school, at the library, or on any computer. If you have problems, call Learning Through Sports at 866-552-9192.

SPORTSMANSHIP

The **NFHS** and **MHSAA** disapprove of any form of taunting which is intended or designed to embarrass, ridicule or demean others under any circumstances, including on the basis of race, religion, gender or national origin. Good sportsmanship is conduct which imposes a type of self control involving honest rivalry, courteous relations and graceful acceptance of results. School spirit is a reflection of these attitudes and behavior. If a school is to succeed in one of its prime functions, that of developing good citizenship, it is necessary that student groups radiate proper sportsmanlike conduct. Sportsmanship is good citizenship in action. The promotion of sportsmanship is a primary responsibility of spirit groups.

1. Spirit teams always should cheer in a positive manner. It is inappropriate to cheer against the other team or to cheer in response to an opposing player's mistake. Initiating response cheers between home and opposing spirit teams or fans is strongly discouraged.

2. Cheers and chants with suggestive words and/or motions (ex. pointing at opposing teams or fans) shall not be used because in many situations they bring about an inappropriate response.

3. Spirit leaders should call attention to the importance of sportsmanship at all pep rallies. When permitted, placing sportsmanship posters promoting good sportsmanship on the wall of the gym or throughout the school is helpful.

4. Spirit leaders should discourage their followers from yelling or cheering while an opponent is shooting free throws. Intimidation of opponents has no place in high school athletics.

5. Spirit leaders are in a position to preview spirit signs that will be posted for their school's contests (when permitted). Prohibiting inappropriate signs from ever being posted can greatly assist the administration and helps students or school personnel understand the importance for positive signage that is to create and maintain a positive crowd atmosphere.

6. Obnoxious behavior should not be encouraged nor permitted under the guise of school spirit. Opposing players, officials and fans should be treated with respect and dignity. If inappropriate crowd behavior exists, assistance should be obtained from a school administrator or game -management.

FREE RESOURCES

NFHS as part of their website offers free courses on line for students and coaches. These are **NOT** required **BUT** are highly recommended.

Coach:

- ❖ Engaging Effectively with Parents
- ❖ Social Media

Student Athlete:

- ❖ Learning Pro: Homework Helper
- ❖ Learning Pro: Reading and Learning Strategies
- ❖ Learning Pro: Research Skills
- ❖ Learning Pro: Test Taking
- ❖ Social Media for Students
- ❖ Captains Course