

The School of Champions **The Bearspaw Sports Program**

One of the many positive aspects of the culture that has developed at Bearspaw School is the extracurricular sports activities provided for our students. We have a tradition of teams that are made up of student athletes who whether they win or not display championship effort, attitude, and team work. When there is enough interest to form a team we participate in the Rocky View extra curricular sports program. Participation by students is optional, teachers coach on a volunteer basis, and there is no requirement that we have a team in every sport. The division runs grade seven and eight leagues in the sports of, volleyball, basketball, badminton, and track and field. There are also short introductory programs for grade six soccer, volleyball, and basketball.

At the middle school level the Rocky View sports program is designed more for large schools with the ability to field many teams in all the sports offered. We do not always have enough students or qualified staff to run a team in all sports, but our school has a rich and successful history, especially in the areas of **Track and Field** and **Badminton**. Despite our small student and teacher population at the grade seven and eight level, we have usually managed to enter full teams in these sports, which have consistently developed the skills to compete at a high level. Because of our small numbers we have not always entered a team in the sports of volleyball and basketball. None of Rocky View's K - 8 or small middle schools can consistently find the athletes or coaches needed to fill the spots for the twelve teams that a school could field in these sports. There are active community programs in these two sports so that our students still have the ability to participate in these activities even if the school can not run a team. This helps to take the pressure off an already overloaded school calendar. However, there is not always easy access to the sports of track and badminton for our student athletes so we tend to focus our limited resources on these sports. The other positive aspect of these two sports is that they involve the most students. The track and field team can involve over 50 athletes, and a full badminton team includes 32 students.

The division runs each team sport at three levels. The grade six level sports are strictly non-competitive with all students who are interested becoming part of the team. The season is short and there is only one tournament. The "B" level sports (often mostly grade sevens, but can include eights) are also developmental with all interested students getting a spot on the team, and a little less of a competitive atmosphere than our "A" level leagues. They usually compete in two or three tournaments. The "A" level leagues (often mostly grade eights, but can include sevens who are skilled enough to play at that level) have a competitive atmosphere and have championship banners awarded. At the "A" level there may be evaluations in order to select the players that will form our most skilled team. Those students who make the team attend an all day championship meet (badminton and track) or play in three or four tournaments which include a playoff for a championship (volleyball and basketball).

Gr.6 - Expose, Junior B - Develop, Junior A - Develop/Compete

Our philosophy at Bearspaw School is one in which at the grade six and “B” level, students are given the opportunity to explore the nature of each sport without high levels of competition. If we are able to have a team at these levels, there are no evaluations or cuts, and playing time is expected to be as equal as possible. The “A” level is the first opportunity for our students to experience the characteristics of a more competitive program. Cuts are made, and playing time although very close to being equal, may be a little bit higher for the more skilled players in key situations. However, it must be remembered that even the “A” level sports are still developmental when compared to high school or elite community programs, so even the best players should only get a little more playing time in any one game if it is felt that is what is needed to compete adequately.

“A” and “B” Teams

- Generally, the majority of a “B” level team is made up of grade sevens so they can develop for “A” competition the next year, but can include grade eights who did not make the “A” team or who do not want to play the sport at a higher competitive level.
- Grade eights that were not on the “A” team can play at the “B” level, but only if numbers and resources allow.
- If the “B” team becomes so large that players are not going to get a reasonable amount of playing time (and more coaching can’t be found) then using only grade sevens may have to be considered. This would be the only situation in which students (grade eights) may not be able to join a “B” level team.
- The “A” level team is usually made up of mostly grade eights, but can include grade sevens that are skilled enough to play at that level.

When deciding if we are going to have a team representing Bearspaw School in a certain sport we there are a couple of important points to be considered:

- ✓ Are there enough students to field and/or try out for a team? We always seem to get enough to fill the track and badminton teams. Also, since these sports are more individual in nature you could still attend the meet with a small number of athletes. However, in soccer, basketball, and volleyball you need at least 15-20 students to sign up for try outs to enter a team.
- ✓ Is there a teacher qualified in the sport willing to volunteer and able to add this optional activity to their required academic assignment? This must be considered because, of course, at Bearspaw School academics come first!

Community Coaches

On occasion when our staff is unable to provide a qualified volunteer coach a community member steps up from outside the school staff and volunteers to coach. Although we really appreciate this extra help, and have had some success in

providing interested students with a team in this manner, we have also experienced some major pitfalls. Obviously the big advantage is that students are able to participate in a sport that the school has no coach to otherwise make this opportunity a possibility. As well, the community coach sometimes possesses skills and knowledge that none of our teachers have. However, we have run into the following difficulties in the past:

- Community coaches have occasionally had trouble understanding the developmental nature of our sports and have appeared to be much more worried about winning.
- The coach has not followed our philosophy on equal court time and played certain players much more than others. This has happened to the point where some children have played very little, or not at all, in some pivotal games.
- Often the coach is a parent of one of the athletes and this leaves them open to accusations of favoritism in playing time for their child.
- Similarly, especially if the coach is a parent, they have been accused of unfair evaluations of athletes when players are selected for the “A” level teams.
- Sons or daughters of community coaches have “leaked” confidential information that they have overheard regarding the performance or status of other players on the team.
- Community coaches have been more likely to set poor examples for our students when it comes to dealing with officials and referees.

Again, we are very thankful for parent help and input at Bearspaw School, and many of our experiences have been quite positive when it comes to the help of community coaches, but it only takes a few of these negative occurrences to taint the otherwise positive image our school sports have maintained.

Therefore, Rocky View School Division and Bearspaw School have implemented some requirements that must be met before a community coach can work with our students. They are as follows:

1. All coaches must complete the on line coaches course “Respect in Sports” before they can coach a team (this includes teachers). The actual certificate of completion must be presented before the season begins.
2. Coaches must read the Bearspaw Coaches manual and sign the statement of understanding form provided in the manual.
3. Coaches must read and sign the Rocky View Code of Conduct form.
4. A sponsor teacher must be found to work with the community coach and will be at each event that the team participates in.

The Parent Coach Relationship

Coaches and parents both want participants to have an enjoyable and successful experience as they take part in our extracurricular programs. The key faucets of

these experiences should be the development of better physical and interpersonal skills.

In order to make sure we give the student athlete every chance to develop these skills there must be a positive relationship between the parent and coach. To allow that to happen we ask that all parties follow these simple guidelines:

- Athletes, parents, and coaches must make sure they are aware of the philosophies and traditions that guide the level of sport that the student is participating in.
- If a commitment is made to participate as an athlete in a sport these commitments must be lived up to and every effort must be made to attend all practices and competitions. Coaches must make every effort to communicate practice and game schedules as soon as possible.
- It is not appropriate for parents to discuss team strategy and tactics, play calling, or the conduct of other student athlete's performances with the coach. Coaches should not discuss a player's behaviour or attitude with a parent in front of other parents or athletes.
- Parents and coaches will not discuss any concerns or issues directly before, during, or after practices and games. There will be a twenty four hour rule so that these concerns should only be discussed in the proper manner at a later time. Call or email to set up an appointment the next day.

Athletes in Good Standing

To participate in school sports the athlete must be in "good standing." What does this mean?

To be in good standing the athlete must have fulfilled the following requirements:

- a) School accounts must be paid prior to participating in a sport.
- b) Their core subject teachers must be satisfied that all assignments are up to date and that as a student they are contributing to the class environment in a positive manner.
- c) Their record of student conduct is in good order (no recent incident reports or suspensions).
- d) The librarian and other staff are satisfied with their conduct in the library, computer lab, etc. There can be no overdue or damaged library books or school equipment attributed to the athlete.

Bearspaw Sports Program
The Home of Champions

Community Coaches Code of Conduct Declaration

Coaches who are not part of the staff of Bearspaw School are welcome and appreciated but only under the following guidelines (please initial each one and then sign at the bottom of the page indicating that you have read and understand the coaches manual and in particular these important points):

I understand that:

- At Bearspaw School the most important feature of the sports program is development of skills and positive attitudes **not necessarily winning.** ____
- Playing time will be very close to **equal** allowing that at the junior “A” level the best players may get some extra court time in the last few minutes of a pivotal game. ____
- At the grade six and “B” levels there will be no cuts made. At the “A” level evaluations will be made in an **impartial and fair manner.** Every attempt will be made to involve school staff in this process. ____
- If the coach has a child on the team they will **not** receive special privileges, and it will be made clear to them that they can not discuss any information that they hear pertaining to the team or its players. ____
- Under **no** circumstances will game officials and referees ever be questioned on their decisions or handling of the play in any game. ____

I have read taken the “Respect in Sports” program and produced my certificate to the school staff. I have read the Bearspaw coaches manual and have signed the Rocky View code of conduct form.

I understand, and I will do my best to follow, the expectations and traditions of the Bearspaw sports program.

Signature_____

Date:_____

General Rocky View Middle School Sports Calendar

Although the sports program varies from year to year in terms of specific date the general flow of the year usually remains the same.

The following is a rough time line for the middle school sports program in Rocky View:

- 7-8 **Track and Field** Meet is held around the first week of October with practices commencing almost as soon as school starts.
- Jr. A **Volleyball** is from approximately mid October until early November with Jr. B starting in early December. The grade 6 tournament is also usually held in October but has been as late as December.
- **Basketball** season usually has the Jr. A tournaments beginning in early January and ending in mid to late February followed by Jr. B. The grade six tournament can be fit in any time in this window as well.
- 7-8 **Badminton** usually holds its divisional tournament in early May with practices starting in late March or early April depending on when the spring break occurs.
- Grade six **Soccer** finishes off the year with a tournament in early May.

Generally the staff is polled at the first staff meeting of the year as to who might be interested in volunteering to coach or sponsor a team. After this the community is informed as to which teams have a sponsor but no coach and volunteers are requested. By October first the list of teams that will be offered at Bearspaw for the year is set and publicized.