**Junior Knights Coaching Resource and Guidelines**

**THANK YOU:** A sincere thanks to you for your willingness to coach this season. As Billy Graham once said, “A coach will impact more young people in one year than an average person does in a lifetime.”

The Jr. Knights board has some information, guidelines, and recommendations for conducting your season of coaching:

 **MISSION STATEMENT OF JR KNIGHTS:**

**The mission of the Junior Knights program is that our athletes gain worthwhile experience in athletic skills, sportsmanship, and teamwork while also developing their character and friendships in an environment that represents Jesus, our Savior.**

* Jr Knights is strictly a parent volunteer run organization that currently provides multiple athletic opportunities outside of the sports programs offered in our Lutheran elementary schools in La Crosse Area Lutheran Schools Athletic Conference (LALSAC). Some of these sports are not offered in LALSAC (such as tackle football) and others are in addition to a sport already offered at the elementary schools (such as basketball).  We combine players from our different Lutheran elementary schools and they play on a team at their grade level together facing other teams in public/community leagues.
* Jr Knights athletics’ intent is to be a supplemental experience to LALSAC and not to be in competition with our schools and school spirit participation. Our goal is not to conflict with any LALSAC events and encourage parents to prioritize their school participation and academics before committing extra to this program.

* There are many public community leagues and club groups in operation in our local areas that many athletes participate in addition to their local school teams to increase their skill and experience. Jr Knights strives to provide an avenue for the students in our schools, who want to participate in such leagues, to do so in an organization that promotes Luther High School and is operated and coached by those in our church family.
* It is supported by Luther High school but not organized or operated by them.  It is organized by volunteer parents within our church and schools. It is open to ALL our regional LALSAC schools, WELS congregations, and homeschooling families.

***JR KNIGHTS GENERAL COACH INFORMATION***

**JR KNIGHTS PARENT BOARD to COACH COMMUNICATION and MEETINGS**

* The Jr Knights parent board is simply a group of volunteer parents that help facilitate and connect our teams to the leagues we participate in and assist the coaches with promotion, registration, finances, and communication. The parents may change some each year as most stay to help while their children are in Jr Knights and then move on. Typically, we have parents helping in the roles of chairperson, secretary, treasurer, scheduler, promotion/communications, and uniforms. General information on the program can be found on the **www.lutherjuniorknights.com** website. You can also find it on the Luther High School website under the athletics link. The board will update their contacts each year and it should be posted on the Jr Knights website.
* The parent board usually communicates through e-mail so having updated email contact information is important. Prior to each sport season there should be an email communication sent to any previous coaches verifying their plans/commitment for the new season. If new coaches are needed there will be an active recruitment. Pre-season meetings prior to each sport with the coaches is a goal-please watch for invitations and attend if at all possible.
* A new program is currently being trialed. It is an online training program called Trusted Coach. It provides a certification for coaches that can protect against some liability concerns.
* The Jr Knight Board will have parent meetings throughout the year. The coaches are not mandated to attend, however, they are welcome to attend if interested and are copied onto the notifications by request.
* **For BASKETBALL only: Attend the Coach/Parent meeting in EARLY October for basketball season**. Coach's meeting will be scheduled usually same day just prior to the parent meeting to hand out uniform bins of jerseys, the coach's handbook, player contact list, and discuss any questions. Players will be directed to come see the coach right after the parent meeting to refine contact list, establish communication preference, and discuss your plan for practices.

**COACH TO PARENT COMMUNICATION**

* **Communicate to your parents via e-mail as soon as you receive your registered list of players**. Once the registration deadlines are met, our registrar should e-mail the registered player list with contact information to you. If you ever are interested it earlier just ask. We suggest you reach out to them after the registration deadline **immediately** via e-mail or phone if you prefer, with an introduction of yourself, contact information, and your *tentative* plan for practices. If you have coached this team already in the year past, trying reaching out to them prior to deadlines to invite them back!
* **We highly recommend having a parent meeting in person at the first practices to review your personal philosophies of coaching your team.**  Review topics such as practice requirements, how parents should address concerns with you, what to expect for player time, etc. We suggest to help the parents get to know each other by providing a player list with jersey number, name, and parents name and school. Encourage parent communication with each other to arrange carpooling.
* Some coaches have implemented increased communication by gathering parent cell numbers and verified texting options if there are last minute changes. This is strongly encouraged. Some have used automated testing apps.
* **BASKETBALL ONLY:** You will receive a copy of your registered players contact information at the coach/parent meeting in early Oct or it will be e-mailed to you. Ideally, you are attending the parent meeting in Oct to meet your players and families that are in attendance to discuss and if you already have your practices planned (especially the girl teams) this can be handed out to parents right away.

**STUDENT ATHLETE AND PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

Athletic participation is a privilege offered to all students who meet team requirements and are willing to assume the responsibilities of team membership. As redeemed children of God and as an expression of his/her faith, the student-athlete and parents should be directed to:

 1) Witness his/her love for his/her Lord by representing Him, his/her parents, school, community and himself/herself properly at all times. We often are the only Christian based athletic team at a tournament. H**ow a coach, player, or parent behaves at these games represents more than themselves. They represent the team, Luther High School, and Christ.**  Coaches should not only hold themselves accountable but their team and fans/parents as well.

 2) Display Christian behavior at all times.

 3) Display respect for rules, officials, coaches and all in authority.

 4) Display a spirit of cooperation and teamwork.

It is a coach's discretion on how to handle situations where these expectations are not upheld. We encourage first to set an example but also to remind parents and students of these responsibilities at a parent meeting.

**ATHLETE PLAYING TIME**

 It is the responsibility of each coach to balance the responsibility of teaching the fundamentals of sport specific skills and blending the group of individuals into a competitive team.

At the 5th and 6th grade level the primary goal is to teach the athletes the fundamentals of the game. Teaching of character and the basic sport skills is to be the coaches’ primary objective. We encourage coaches to strive for relatively equal playing time and participation.

 By 7th and 8th grade, coaches will continue to emphasize character development (self-discipline, honesty, humility, etc.) as in the lower grade level. However, they may also provide additional opportunities for those athletes who have demonstrated dedication, desire, skill, and discipline to be successful in athletic competition. Every effort should be made to give all student-athletes as much participation as possible, but equal playing time is not expected by our association at the higher-grade levels. However, be understanding that parents are wanting the best experience for their child and have paid fees for their involvement. Many of these players still have much to learn fundamentally even at 7th and 8th grade level since for some, their experience up to this point have been limited.

 Whatever a coach’s philosophy, we recommend strongly that this is communicated and discussed to the parents of the players at the **beginning of the season.** See section on parent communication. Please share the benefit of being part of the team (what they are learning in practice) regardless of the amount of playing time. Explain your strategies and reasoning behind choices. Encourage players communication with you. Get creative and try to accommodate players by using some of these strategies that others have used:

**1)** Trying choosing one game to be more equal in playing time and pick another to be more competitive when deciding your rotation. Play some games for experience and some for the win.

**2)** If you have 4-5+ games/meets in the season and you have an abundance of players, consider splitting the team and take one group to one and another group to another.

**3)** Organize some additional scrimmages with another school so that more players can get an opportunity for learning. You can even coordinate with another coach in LALSAC and see if they would like to work in a scrimmage sometime for basketball or volleyball. St. Paul's in Onalaska usually struggles with large numbers and trying to find playing time for their teams. Check with their AD to see if a scrimmage could be arranged. Careful to arrange similar skill levels of play.

**4)** If you anticipate a large team, recruit for another coach that may be willing to split into 2 groups. This needs to be done early however, as registration happens in August.

**PARENTAL SUPPORT**

There will be times when issues arise that may cause concerns among parents. Coaches are expected to respond quickly in a God-pleasing matter. The following principles are suggested for you to relay to your parents at a pre-season meeting:

Encourage parents to:

1) Pray for God’s guidance in tactfully raising concerns.

2) Speak directly with the coach or offending party. Open, forthright discussion will often lead to a complete understanding from both sides.

3) Find an appropriate, non-threatening time and place to address your concerns.

4) Feel confident that coaches will listen and react in a God-pleasing manner to any issues raised.

We recommend you direct parents **NOT** to:

1) Write letters anonymously.

2) Use email to replace face to face discussion with coaches regarding any concerns.

3) Relay their concerns to a coach during or at the conclusion of a game.

4) Remain silent for fear of retribution.

**CONCUSSION AWARENESS AND COACHES TRAINING**

Concussion Awareness – Management Procedures Wisconsin state law mandates that, “At the beginning of a season of youth activity, the person operating the youth athletic activity shall distribute a concussion and head injury information sheet to each person who will be coaching that youth athletic activity and to each person who wishes to participate in that youth activity. No person may participate in a youth athletic activity unless the person returns the information sheet signed by the person and, if he or she is under the age of 19, by his or her parent or guardian.” To comply with this state law, all athletes must review the concussion awareness pamphlet and return the signed concussion agreement form. The Concussion awareness forms and agreement forms should be included in the league packets given to the coaches.

Trusted Coach is a new program that our organization intends to register each volunteer coach in that will do a background check and offer online training modules for concussion, first aid, and even coaching technique.

***JR KNIGHTS BASKETBALL SPECIFIC COACH INFORMATION***

 **BASKETBALL LEAGUE GNBL**

* Jr Knights works within the **Great Northwest Basketball** **League (GNBL).** Please familiarize yourself with their website at [www.gnbl.com](http://www.gnbl.com) as this will be where you will look to review the league rules, posted schedules for your tournaments, and contact persons for questions. This league organizes the tournaments according to all the schools submitting, along with hosting locations available and ultimately decides our schedule.
* Packet from the GNBL will be mailed to each coach or emailed information. Any invoices should be given to the Jr Knights acting treasurer for payment.

* **Straight from the GNBL website:**

**Game Rules for GNBL:** A complete set of revised Rules for the season is posted on the GNBL website (gnbl.org). Rather than be part of an undisciplined or disorganized League, we want coaches to embrace the benefits that come from knowing that it doesn't matter where you play in The Great Northwest, the Rules are the same everywhere. Please don't file complaints or ask questions unless you have made an attempt to read and understand the League Rule about which you have a concern. We, of course, welcome calls if you fail to understand a particular rule, feel that a certain rule should be changed, or believe another team is in violation of a specific rule.

**Rosters, Liability Waivers / Concussion Agreements: (these are prepared and sent in by each coach):** At least one week before the first meet your team will play in, we must receive the following for your team:

1. A roster for your team. Rosters can be submitted on the "roster form" posted on the website (or a word-processed document with all of the information) and must contain each player's first and last name, jersey number, home address, school and grade during the 2018-2019 school year. Updates to this list can be submitted via email throughout the season as needed by providing the names of new players, delete names of players no longer on the team, changes in jersey numbers, changes in addresses, etc. Rosters can be returned via regular mail (GNBL, P O Box 506, Hudson, WI 54016), by email to heidi@gnbl.org or by fax to 715-688-2452.

2. A "Consent for Medical Treatment and Voluntary Release, Acknowledgement and Acceptance of Risks Indemnity Agreement" (hereafter "Liability Waiver/Concussion Agreement"). For the 2018-2019 season, we have combined the Liability Waiver, the "Parent and Athlete Concussion Law Agreement" and the coach’s Concussion Agreement into one document to simplify the paperwork for coaches and associations. Liability Waivers/Concussion Agreements must be submitted each season for each player and each coach – we must have a newly submitted form each season. We strongly urge you to take this process seriously. The Liability Waiver/Concussion Agreement provides legal protection to you as a coach, your school and your referees, not just those parties organizing the League. Last season we introduced an online system for submitting the Liability Waiver/Concussion Agreement and will use this system exclusively for the 2018-2019 season. To submit Liability Waiver/Concussion forms online, have each parent from the team visit our website at gnbl.org, then click on "Waiver/Concussion Info" in the top menu bar. From there you can follow the online instructions. If you have questions during the process, please contact Heidi Hach at heidi@gnbl.org.

**PLAYER REGISTRATIONS**

 **Dates and Deadlines**: We appreciate a commitment to coach for the following season prior to the season ending. We prefer player registrations for the next season also by August due to GNBL requirements but the final deadline for the **early** registration discount will be Sept 15th. Non-discounted price will be offered from Sept 15th until the Parent Meeting held mid-October. Final registration deadline is at the meeting and we discourage later registrations

* **Early Commitment:** Coaches are encouraged to stress the importance of on time registrations and should attempt to get an idea of how many returning players they will have for the following year. Registering returning players and getting a coach’s commitment for the following season is a goal before the current season ends.
* **Communications:** The Jr. Knights board will send communication out to all ADs informing them of early registration for the next BB season ahead before school ends for summer break in May. We also will send a reminder to the ADs again in July and again once school starts in Sept. **If players don't register, their communication will be limited greatly.**  We use the registration e-mail to send more direct information to the player families. ADs have been requested to pass on this communication to their students but they are not obligated. Primary communication is by posting flyers at Luther and having a presence at Luther during main events such as Luther Knight summer camps, joint band or choir events, the LALSAC BB tournaments and VB meets.
* **How to Register:** Registrations are encouraged online at our website [www.lutherjuniorknights.com](http://www.lutherjuniorknights.com). You can also access this site at the JR KNIGHTS LINK located on the Luther High website. (Link to Athletics, link to Jr. Knights). At this time, payment will need to be mailed to Luther at the address provided. There will be a flyer also sent to ADs via e-mail to post at their schools or distribute to the students.

**ENROLLMENT AND TOURNAMENT SCHEDULES**

* GNBL has an enrollment information posting on their website under enrollment forms link. Each coach is highly advised to **READ THIS POSTING**. It is full of information to many often-asked questions regarding how team levels are decided, when to expect tournament schedules, the RULES by which the league functions under, and the responsibilities of the coach in submitting paperwork to the league.
* GNBL has deadlines set each week in August for each grade and gender levels for registering teams. The Jr Knight board scheduler will be submitting the tournament date requests and hosting dates to GNBL in August and early Sept, doing his/her best to avoid all LALSAC and other school related conflicts.
* In general schedulers will request 3 tournaments for grades 5&6 and 4-5 tournaments for grade 7&8. This will be tailored according to coach's communication. We usually rate our level of skill at a "B" on a scale of (A,B+,B,C) unless otherwise specified by the coach. Any preferences on number of tournaments, personal conflict dates, or level of their team should be communicated from the coach to the board scheduler before August.
* The GNBL BB tournament season runs primarily Nov-Feb for the girls and Dec-Feb for the boys. These are Sat meets.
* Once the preferences are submitted in August/Sept we have little control over the finalized schedule posted from the league. They will do their best to honor our requests.
* **GNBL will mail a packet to each head coach as soon as the tournament schedule is finalized between late Oct and mid Nov.** Each team is finalized on a different week starting with girl teams in late Oct to boy teams in mid Nov. All team’s schedules are first posted to the GNBL website and the coach is also mailed his/her team’s schedule. You will receive a roster form to complete and send in along with concussion information waivers. **You may also receive an invoice for payment to the league. This invoice should be transferred to the Jr Knight board treasurer for payment.**
* If there are questions on receiving your packet you should contact the GNBL coordinator directly. Her information is on the website. **Do not cancel or add tournaments without discussing with board scheduler as there are fees involved.**

 **PRACTICES**

* **It is advised to start practices early.** GNBL sometimes doesnot post the meet schedule or notify the coach until 2 weeks prior to first tournament so it is encouraged to **start planning your practices ahead of time.** **Do NOT wait for your tournament schedule to be posted before you start practices. It is recommended to start practices at least 1 month prior to first tournament.**
* Girls coaches especially since your season starts early, we recommend starting your practices by mid-October as your first tournament for girls is usually mid-November. Boys consider starting early Nov. as first tournament may be early Dec.
* How many practices to hold a week and when, is the choice of the coach. However, consider your team dynamics (what grade level is the team, how far are they driving, how competitive is the group, how invested are the parents). Some groups have only 1 practice a week and others may choose to practice 2-3 times a week. A **general** guideline is 1-2 practices for 5th and 6th graders and 2-3 practices for 7th and 8th graders depending on their LALSAC practice schedule that week. Take into consideration that they have LALSAC practices already generally twice a week and a game every Friday. Try to be flexible and maybe some players will not be able to be at every practice. **Work with parents to make sure that academics comes first.** Keep in mind that we operate a program with players coming from long distances and we don’t want to discourage participation due to the demands of the practice schedule. The mission of Jr Knights is a balance between a recruitment and relationship forming program for Luther and a competitive training environment for athletes wanting to excel and improvement their skills.
* Coordinate with Luther High (Athletic Director Joel Babinec) directly to plan practices at their facility Luther or you can use your school's gym if you have permission. Luther tends to be more centrally located for students.

**UNIFORMS and EQUIPMENT**

* Each basketball team has reversible jerseys (black and white) provided for use and to return. Each season registration includes a team T-shirt as a Warm-up that the players get to keep. Sweatshirts are offered for additional cost to keep as this is popular with players. Team shirts will be made available before first tournament.
* Black shorts are required by the player for games and basketball shoes. To maintain some uniformity is it recommended to encourage players to wear shorts without color stripes and wear undershirts that are either black or white to match the jersey. Most teams come dressed very sharp and we should encourage some team spirit and pride with a sharp appearance as well.
* Bins with the uniforms as well as a bag of basketballs and a first aid kit are given to each coach at the beginning of the season, usually at the parent/coach's meeting in Oct. The coach is responsible for the return of all the jerseys and equipment back to the Jr Knight Uniform person at the end of their season. These are requested to be brought back to Luther at the end of the season and placed in the school office clearly labeled for Junior Knights for proper storage. Please notify the uniform person from Jr Knights once it is dropped off.

***JR KNIGHTS VOLLEYBALL SPECIFIC COACH INFORMATION***

* Jr Knights works within the **Wisconsin Independent Volleyball League that offer 4th/5th grade combined team, 6th, 7th, and 8th grade team slots. This is a new offer for Jr Knights as of 2018.**
* Meets take place on eight consecutive Saturdays in the Spring: Starting late March through Mid May (season ending League Championship Tournament).
* Coaches determine how many meets they want to play and how many matches for each Sat.
* **The same website for the basketball Great Northwest Basketball League is the one for this volleyball league. Please familiarize yourself with their links under the website at** [**www.gnbl.com**](http://www.gnbl.com) as this will be where you will look to review the league rules, posted schedules for your meets/tournaments, and contact persons for questions. This league organizes the meets according to all the schools submitting, along with hosting locations available and ultimately decides our schedule.
* Below is some information directly from the website:

If you are a coach or team contact who plans to enter one or more teams into the Spring 2018 Wisconsin Independent Volleyball League ("WIVL"), please read this posting thoroughly. This backgrounder, along with the referenced Enrollment Form and Rules, will answer virtually every question you will likely have about how to enter a team and how the League functions.

**Spring YEAR Enrollment Form**

The Enrollment Form to participate in the Spring YEAR season of the WIVL must be submitted by early March (each year will have a specific deadline). However, if you have questions, please call Tracie Tilton at 715-749-9048 or, if you can’t reach her, call Terri Green at 715-386-4317.

\*\*\***NOTE that the Jr Knights scheduler will complete the enrollment form and submit.** Look for his/her communication to the coach on requests for number of meets/matches per meet, entering the tournament, and conflict dates to avoid.

**2018 Spring Rules**

WIVL 2018 League Rules can be viewed on our website at *gnbl.org*, by clicking on the "Volleyball League" tab at the top of the page and then "Rules & Forms" tab. These rules cover not only match rules, but also how the League is organized, the League’s fee structure and meet management. Because these rules are quite detailed and self-explanatory, we don’t spend a great deal of time in this post discussing their content. **It is imperative that all coaches looking to enter one or more teams in the League read and understand these rules**. While we will consider changes in these rules for the 2018 Spring season, any changes at this point must reflect a majority view of League participants. If you have suggested rule changes, or you have questions about the rules, please contact Tracie Tilton at 715-749-9048 (*tracie@gnbl.lorg**) or Terri Green at 715-386-4317 (**terri@gnbl.org*).

**First week in March** : Registration deadline for all teams wishing to play in the WIVL.

**Late March**: Detailed meet schedule will be posted on the website only for all teams playing in a late March meet. “Skeletal" meet schedules will be posted on the website for all the Sat meets for the season (i.e., at this time, we’ll post who plays where and how many matches, but not the exact opponent and time of each match).

 The detailed meet schedules will be posted on the website 1 week prior to each meet. This process will be repeated weekly throughout the season every Sunday by 11:00 p.m. for the next Saturday’s meets.

**JR KNIGHTS NOTES:**

* Jr Knights will enroll and promote any grade level team that we have a willing interested coach and enough interested players 4th/5th-8th grade. This can vary each year until the program is better established.
* Uniforms presently are a purchased jersey that each player can keep. We are looking into purchasing permanent jersey options. Jr Knights have a uniform person that will place the order after the registration deadline. All black shorts or spandex are acceptable for play. Discretion to be used on length of short; would recommend at least a 5inch inseam.
* Current registration fee for each player is $75-$85; may change in the future with adjustments in fees to the league
* Practices using Luther High facilities can be arranged through Joel Babinec Luther AD as in basketball. Coach may need to connect with a Luther VB coach in setting up the gym as needed for practices or arranging access to equipment. Practice times are determined by coach; can vary between 1-2+ practices a week depending on coach and situation. This season may partially overlap track and softball in LALSAC so the coach should keep that in mind when balancing this program.
* Jr Knights is currently in process of purchasing several sets of volleyball equipment bags. In the meantime, may coordinate with your grade school or Luther High to borrow volleyballs as needed.

Edited: 3/19/19