

North Wilkes High School

Social Media Policy for Student Athletes

Facebook and other social media use is becoming prevalent among students. As a student athlete at North Wilkes High School, you are required to follow student handbook guidelines, NCHSAA guidelines and local district policies even though an event or posting may happen off school property or after school hours. At no time should any student athlete access, use or post to social media accounts or sites during school hours or on school property per school district policy.

Social Networks: Social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, MySpace and other electronic sites are tools that allow students to communicate with others and can be valuable if used *appropriately*. Inappropriate use, however, carries consequences. It is imperative that North Wilkes High School student athletes recognize the potential consequences and risks if they choose to create, participate or use any social media sites. Additionally, student athletes must agree to use any such sites responsibly.

North Wilkes High School does not forbid or ban student athletes from using social media except at school. However, it is expected that any use of social media follow federal, state and local policies including those listed in the student handbook as well as the policies of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association. This applies to public postings. While freedom of speech is important, it is necessary for students to realize that freedom of speech does not mean freedom from consequences. As a North Wilkes High School student athlete, it is important to use any social media responsibly and be aware of the policies and consequences. Sportsmanship and wise choices are expected from all student athletes. Athletes serve as role models in their school and home communities. As such, they are held to a high standard. Participation in athletics is a privilege, not a right.

Electronic and Social Media Rules:

1. Student athletes must not use derogatory language or remarks about teammates or coaches; faculty, teachers, coaches and other students or athletes.
2. Student athletes must not use derogatory language or remarks directed at another school's team, student athletes, faculty or students including taunting and threats.
3. Student athletes must not use demeaning statements about or threats to any third party.
4. Student athletes must not post incriminating photos or statements depicting violence; hazing; sexual harassment; vandalism, stalking; underage drinking, selling, possessing, or using controlled substances; or any other inappropriate behaviors.
5. Student athletes must not post or create a post that poses a serious danger to the safety of another person.
6. Student athletes must not post or make a credible threat of serious physical or emotional injury to another person.
7. Student athletes must not have posts that indicate knowledge of an unreported felony theft or felonious activities.
8. Student athletes must not have posts that indicate knowledge of an unreported school or team violation—regardless if the violation was unintentional or intentional.

Any of the above can infractions can lead to a school investigation if it is posted publicly.

Consequences:

Consequences can include but are not limited to

1. Verbal or written warning.
2. Suspension from a game(s).
3. Suspension from a team.
4. Suspension for the remainder of a season
5. Suspension from athletics for the remainder of the year.

Consequences will be determined by the seriousness of the infraction(s), attitude and situation of the students involved. Students are not entitled to athletic participation; students are entitled to an education. Athletics and other extra-curricular activities are privileges, not rights.

Guidelines for Student-Athletes

Here are recommended guidelines for student athletes and how to use social media in a responsible manner:

1. Do not share private information such as social security numbers, birthdates, addresses and contact information in a public setting. Personal information including email addresses can be used to access your account information. Criminals can use your personal identification for identify theft and other criminal enterprises. Once you post information and pictures, those things become property of the website owner and stay on the server, even if you remove them from the page.
2. Increasingly, college admission offices and employers search social media sites to gain information on prospective employees and students. Anything you post in a public forum can be used by these corporations or institutions to form opinions and make decisions about your admission or employment.
3. Be careful when asked for passwords and other information in unverified or unsolicited emails or posts.
4. Freedom of speech is not unlimited and not without consequences. Although freedom of speech is guaranteed under the First Amendment to the Constitution, numerous court cases have held that student free speech can be restricted if it is disruptive to the school environment.
5. Photos and other information can be tagged and found using search engines even after they might have been pulled down from your site. Present the image you would want anyone to see from potential employers to parents to other adults and fellow students.

Student Signature _____ Date: _____

Parent Signature _____ Date: _____

Special thanks to Scott Suleski, St. Thomas Aquinas H.S.
<http://www.stalux.org/podium/default.aspx?t=141671>