

Co-Ed Participation in Contact Sports

In the Catholic Schools and Parishes of the Diocese of Harrisburg athletic programs contribute importantly to the Church's religious mission and teaching ministry and play a vital role in the process of catechesis, in the nurturing of Christian discipleship and in the formation of the Christian personality. These programs would not exist in what are essential Catholic apostolates but for their role in developing a Christ-centered foundation for mature Catholic adulthood. Gospel-based values are taught and learned in these athletic programs by developing respect for self and for others through competitions and other forms of human interaction in which dignity, integrity, fairness and moral strength are emphasized. Christian witness to authentic Gospel values is given by all who are involved in these programs in the form of adherence to appropriate norms of conduct, decorum and moral discipline.

Preparation for Christian adulthood likewise involves the development and encouragement of appropriate, dignified and respectful forms of contact between male and female students. The Diocese therefore believes that it is incompatible with its religious mission and with its efforts to teach Gospel values to condone competitions between young men and women in sports that involve substantial and potentially immodest physical contact.

Consequently, the Diocese has adopted this policy prohibiting co-ed participation in the following sports: wrestling, tackle football and tackle rugby.

In any sport in which co-ed participation is permitted, the appropriate ecclesiastical authority designated by the diocesan bishop may issue and enforce rules of conduct that reflect morally appropriate norms of contact between participants.

Adopted: July 1, 2014

Revised: December 1, 2018

RWG/Bishop of Harrisburg

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Attachment: Co-Ed Participation in Contact Sports

The following are mandatory guidelines for particular sports:

Wrestling:

1. Under no circumstances may Catholic school, parish, CYO or club team permit its athletes to wrestle someone of the opposite sex.
2. Catholic schools, parishes, CYOs or clubs would not permit a female on a male wrestling team.
3. In the event a match is scheduled with someone from the opposite sex from an opposing team, the Catholic school, parish, CYO or club athlete would either have to forfeit the match or negotiate the match with the opposing teams, so a female wrestler would not wrestle one of our athletes.
4. If a wrestler reaches the individual competition level of the PIAA post-season championship competition, it will be left to the discretion of the wrestler's parents whether or not to allow that wrestler to wrestle an opponent of the opposite sex.
5. If the school, parish, CYO or club enters into a co-operative arrangement with another team, that team would have to honor the Catholic co-ed contact sports policy regardless of which team is the host.

Tackle Football:

1. Catholic schools, parishes, CYOs and clubs would not permit a female on a tackle football team.
2. This would not prevent Catholic schools, parishes, CYOs or clubs from playing teams with female athletes on the opposing team. Catholic co-ed sports policy is only for Catholic teams and cannot impose its policies on other teams.
3. If the school, parish, CYO or club enters into a co-operative arrangement with another team, that teams would have to honor the Catholic co-ed contact sports policy regardless of which team is the host.

Tackle Rugby:

1. Catholic schools, parishes, CYOs and clubs would not permit a female on a tackle rugby team.
2. This would not prevent Catholic schools, parishes, CYOs or clubs from playing teams with female athletes on the opposing team. Catholic co-ed sports policy is only for Catholic teams and cannot impose its policies on other teams.
3. If the school, parish, CYO or club enters into a co-operative arrangement with another team, that teams would have to honor the Catholic co-ed contact sports policy regardless of which team is the host.