

# 2023-2024 Tennessee Middle School Athletic Handbook



Information, Policies, and Procedures  
for Parents & Student-Athletes

**TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
840 Alabama Street ♦ Bristol, TN 37620  
(423) 652-9449 ♦ [tms.btcs.org](http://tms.btcs.org)

## A Letter from Tennessee Middle School Athletic Coordinator

Dear TMS Parent/Guardian:

Welcome to Tennessee Middle School Athletics! Whether your family is new to our athletic family or a returning participant, we are happy you have chosen to be part of our Viking program.

Viking athletics has a rich tradition of excellence. At the middle school level, we continue to build on the fundamental skills of each sport and strive to grow and challenge each individual based on their unique skills and abilities. We teach our student-athletes the importance of discipline, commitment, accountability, responsibility, and teamwork. We hope their experiences at TMS will develop a passion and love for their sport(s) as they transition to Tennessee High School and beyond.

I encourage you to read this handbook carefully. It should answer most questions about our athletic policies and procedures. If you have additional questions now or throughout the season, please contact your child's coach. Go Vikings!

Sincerely,



Jon McClain  
TMS Athletic Coordinator

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## **TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT PARENT & STUDENT-ATHLETE GUIDELINES**

Athletic participation is a privilege granted to all students who voluntarily accept the rules and regulations outlined in these guidelines. These guidelines provide information to student-athletes and parents about athletics at Tennessee Middle School. Student-athletes and their parents should refer to these guidelines to provide answers to questions that may arise during the year. These guidelines outline the requirements, responsibilities, and expectations of a Tennessee Middle School student-athlete and their parents. It is important that all student-athletes and their parents understand these guidelines as they must uphold all rules outlined in the Tennessee Middle School Athletic Handbook and other expectations established by Bristol Tennessee City Schools, Tennessee Middle School, and the head coach of their sport.

It is impossible for this handbook to provide solutions to all situations that might arise; therefore, the school's athletic coordinator and principal will have the authority to deal with other situations that may arise. Any alterations to these guidelines will require the approval of the athletic coordinator or principal of Tennessee Middle School.

### **PURPOSE OF ATHLETICS AT TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Athletics at the middle school level should continue the development of fundamental skills and the teaching of more advanced skills for athletes. Winning is stressed. However, the primary purpose is to continue to teach the importance of discipline, commitment, accountability, responsibility, and teamwork. We aim for all athletes to continue their passion and love for their sport and athletics as they move to the high school level.

### **PHILOSOPHY OF ATHLETICS AT TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Tennessee Middle School and Bristol Tennessee City Schools believe athletics are an integral part of the total middle school educational experience and should therefore be an extension of the overall academic program at Tennessee Middle School.

As such, athletics provides opportunities and emphasizes definite goals which are difficult to duplicate or achieve in other middle school activities. It is desired that athletics be an enriching and healthful experience in which physical, mental, and social growth are stimulated through interscholastic competition. The Tennessee Middle School Athletic Department emphasizes academics, self-discipline, high morals, and team play. Teachers, coaches, and administrators seek to build a solid foundation for student-athletes to prepare them to become productive citizens.

## **TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION (TMSAA)**

Tennessee Middle School is a member of the Tennessee Middle Schools Athletic Association (TMSAA) and agrees to follow the guidelines set forth in the TMSAA Bylaws. The Tennessee Middle School Athletic Department will not compromise its integrity when it comes to following TMSAA policies. Student-athletes are responsible for knowing and understanding all TMSAA policies. These guidelines provide an overall understanding of TMSAA policies that affect student-athletes. Any questions concerning the TMSAA Bylaws should be addressed with the head coach of the sport in which a student-athlete is participating. The bylaws may also be viewed on the TMSAA website, <http://tssaa.org/tmsaa-constitution-and-bylaws>.

## **PARENT/GUARDIAN COMMUNICATION**

The Athletic Department of Tennessee Middle School strives to keep open lines of communication between student-athletes, parents, coaches, and the public. Much of the information needed to keep current with the events and policies of the various Tennessee Middle School sports teams can be accessed by using the athletic website, [tms.btcs.org/Athletics](https://tms.btcs.org/Athletics).

**Parental Support:** Both parenting and coaching are extremely challenging and rewarding. Tennessee Middle School coaches and administrators strive to foster an understanding of each perspective to serve the best interest of student-athletes. Parents have the right to understand what expectations are placed upon their children. This begins with respect and clear communication to parents from the coach of each program. It is also essential that parents and student-athletes demonstrate respect for coaches. The coach has been appointed to a leadership and decision-making position. Their responsibility is to each participant, team, and the school district. As a result, all coaches are instructed to use their knowledge and experience to make the best athletic and/or coaching decisions possible for the team and student-athletes, regardless of parent or fan pressure. In all instances, an environment of mutual respect and civility should prevail, and the appropriate steps for a solution should be followed.

### **Communication Your Child Can Expect from Coaches**

1. Philosophy of the coach
2. Expectations the coach has for each player on the team
3. Locations and times of all practices and contests
4. Team requirements (i.e., fees, fundraisers, special equipment, off-season conditioning)
5. Procedures should your child be injured during participation
6. Discipline that results in the denial of your child's participation
7. The availability of the coach to speak with you about your child if you should have a concern

### **Communication Coaches Expect from Parents**

1. Concerns expressed directly to the coach regarding participants overall well-being
2. Notification of any schedule conflicts well in advance (planned vacations)
3. Specific concerns about a coach's philosophy and/or expectations

As your child becomes involved in programs at Tennessee Middle School, they will experience some of the most rewarding moments of their lives. It is important to understand that there may also be times when experiences do not go the way you and your child prefer. At these times, respectful discussion with the coach is encouraged.

### **Appropriate Concerns to Discuss with Coaches**

1. The treatment of your child, mentally and physically

2. Ways to help your child improve
3. Concerns about your child's behavior

It is difficult to accept when your child is not playing as much as you hope. Coaches make judgment decisions based on what they believe to be best for the team and all students involved. As reflected in the list above, certain things can be and should be discussed with your child's coach. Other things, such as the following, must be left to the discretion of the coach.

### **Issues not Appropriate to Discuss with Coaches**

1. Playing time
2. Team strategies
3. Game play-calling
4. Other student-athletes

There are situations that may require a conference between the coach and the parent. These are encouraged. It is important that both parties involved have a clear understanding of the other's position. When these conferences are necessary, please follow the steps outlined in the Chain of Communication to help promote a resolution to the issue of concern.

### **Solving Conflicts: Chain of Communication**

When addressing a conflict, the attempt at a resolution should begin with a conversation between the student-athlete and the coach. If the conflict is unable to be resolved, the attempt at a resolution should continue in the following order among the listed parties:

1. Student-Athlete and Coach
2. Student-Athlete, Parent, and Coach
3. Student-Athlete, Parent, Coach, and Athletic Coordinator
4. Student-Athlete, Parent, Coach, Athletic Coordinator, and Principal

The correct procedure for a parent to contact a coach is by email or phone. Parents are urged to contact the coach directly at the email address or phone numbers distributed at the pre-season orientation meeting. Please do not contact the coach at home unless requested to do so. Please do not attempt to confront a coach before or after a contest, practice, or event. These can be emotional times for both the parent and the coach. Meetings of this nature do not promote resolution. If the coach does not respond to your email or phone call, contact the athletic coordinator, and they will contact the coach on your behalf.

### **24-Hour Rule**

Again, do not attempt to confront a coach immediately before or after a contest or practice. These can be emotional times for both the parent and coaching staff. Parents must wait at least 24 hours before contacting the coach. Not following the 24-hour rule may result in suspension or immediate dismissal from the team for the student-athlete.

## **Playing Time**

It is our goal in team selection to identify opportunities for participation and promote individual and team success. Placing each student-athlete at the level where they can contribute physically and gain positive feelings from their efforts is important to the coaching staff. Disappointments are inevitable when teams are selected, and it is important that student-athletes feel the support of teammates, parents, and coaches.

We believe in our coaches. Their job is to manage and direct a specific sport. Their responsibilities include evaluating and selecting students for teams, as well as determining the degree to which each student-athlete will participate. They do this with considerable thought and sensitivity. During the selection process, coaches will evaluate skill level, athleticism, physical conditioning, positional play, trainability, punctuality, and various other attributes.

It is important that student-athletes learn the value of being on a team and the contribution each must make. Team members have a responsibility to themselves, their teammates, and their coaches to learn and perform their role on the team. Teamwork requires the development of many interpersonal skills, such as listening, following directions, accepting constructive criticism, being respectful, and supporting teammates and coaches. Student-athletes have an obligation to participate in practice sessions and games with full commitment and enthusiasm.

### **Playing time will not be discussed with parents.**

Student-athletes are encouraged to speak to their coach if they have any questions regarding playing time and/or self-improvement.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION

For a student-athlete to be eligible they must meet certain criteria set by the TMSAA, Tennessee Middle School, and Bristol Tennessee City Schools. Determination of eligibility is the responsibility of the Tennessee Middle School athletic coordinator. No student-athlete will be permitted to participate unless they have been approved for eligibility by the athletic coordinator.

### A. Tennessee Middle School Requirements:

**NO STUDENT WILL BE ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FIRST DAY OF TRYOUTS, PRACTICE, OR GAMES UNTIL THE FOLLOWING REQUIREMENTS HAVE BEEN MET:**

1. All Online Forms Completed: **All required athletic participation forms are now online using a service called FinalForms.** Go to <https://bristolcity-tn.finalforms.com> to access the forms or to the Tennessee Middle School website under Athletics>Forms.
2. Enrollment: Student must be enrolled and in full attendance at Tennessee Middle School or be an approved homeschool student.

Homeschool Law: Pursuant to Tennessee State Law, homeschool students may participate in interscholastic athletic competitions in public schools. Starting with the 2013-2014 school year, public schools were required to allow homeschool students to participate in interscholastic athletics sanctioned by the TSSAA. This does not mean that homeschool students are automatically placed on a team; it simply means they must be given an opportunity to try out.

### B. TMSAA Eligibility:

1. The executive director of the TMSAA must approve all transfer students before they can participate in any game.
2. A student-athlete may accept a medal, trophy, sweater, jacket, shirt, blazer, or blanket for athletic participation but nothing else of commercial value, and these awards must carry the school's letter or other appropriate award emblem.
3. All expenses for an athletic camp where specified instruction is offered must be paid by the student-athlete or their parents.
4. When a student-athlete is charged tuition to attend school, it must be paid by the parent, legal guardian, or other family member.
5. Any student who repeats sixth, seventh, or eighth grade shall not be eligible until they have reached the next higher grade. A student is considered in a grade after attending classes three or more days.

6. No student shall be eligible to compete in the Middle School Athletic Association during any school year if the student becomes 15 years of age on or before August 1.
7. A student-athlete whose name is listed on the school eligibility report cannot participate in an independent game or meet until the season has closed in the sport. *(This applies to basketball and football only.)*

## EXPECTATIONS OF TENNESSEE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETES

Being a Tennessee Middle School student-athlete is a privilege bestowed upon those students who voluntarily accept and agree to abide by the guidelines established by Tennessee Middle School, Bristol Tennessee City Schools, and the TMSAA. As representatives of Tennessee Middle School, student-athletes will be held to a higher standard than other students and will be expected to serve as role models for the student body. Student-athletes who do not meet these expectations will be subject to disciplinary action that could include suspension from games or removal from teams. These expectations are minimal expectations. Each head coach will formulate rules and regulations for their program that student-athletes will be expected to follow. Tennessee Middle School student-athletes are expected to do the following:

1. **Make a commitment to their academics:** A student-athlete's first responsibility is to their academic program. The educational process should not be compromised by participating in athletics. All student-athletes are expected to attend and participate in all their classes. Coaches will monitor student-athlete's academic progress and work ethic throughout the school year.
2. **Make a commitment to the athletic team/program in which they are participating:** Tennessee Middle School athletic teams/programs take precedence over non-school activities. Student-athletes are expected to attend and participate in all activities that pertain to their sport. Each head coach will establish guidelines and expectations for participation in their program. These guidelines and expectations will be shared with the student-athlete and parent prior to the season.
3. **Be leaders within the school and community:** As highly visible and recognizable representatives of a school, student-athletes are in a position of great influence; therefore, high standards of conduct are essential. Positive personal behavior helps earn the respect of the student body and community.
4. **Promote a team concept that places its main emphasis on the team as a whole:** Student-athletes are expected to promote the team as a whole. They should understand that no individual is more important than the team, and team activities should come before their individual needs. Part of the team concept is that student-athletes understand that all members of an athletic team, varsity and JV, are equal members of the group and should be treated with respect, regardless of age or grade.
5. **Wear the Tennessee Middle School uniform with pride and respect:**

All student-athletes are expected to represent the school as follows:

- a. Look presentable and be well groomed when wearing a school uniform or representing Tennessee Middle School.
- b. Maintain and keep their uniform neat and clean.
- c. Wear their Tennessee Middle School issued uniforms while representing Tennessee Middle School.

- d. Return their uniforms at the end of the season. Student-athletes are responsible for damage to or loss of any part of a uniform. Student-athletes will be expected to pay replacement cost for lost or damaged uniforms.

Student-athletes may not do the following:

- a. Loan uniforms, warm-ups, etc. to anyone who is not a member of their team.
  - b. Alter a uniform without the consent of the head coach of their sport.
6. **Display good sportsmanship:** Student-athletes and parents must be respectful to game officials, visiting teams, spectators, and each other before, during, and after all contests.
  7. **Display proper manners when addressing adults:** When serving as a representative of Tennessee High School, student-athletes should address all adults in a respectful manner, such as Coach, Mr., or Ms.
  8. **Know and follow all TMSAA rules and regulations related to eligibility.**
  9. **Uphold the tradition of “Viking Pride.”**
  10. **Respect all faculty members and fellow classmates.**
  11. **Follow all school and school board rules and regulations.**

## **ATHLETIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Absences from School**

If a student-athlete is absent from school, they may not participate in or attend a practice or game on that day. The student-athlete is required to notify the coach. Extenuating circumstances may be approved by the athletic coordinator or principal. (A death in the family is an example of extenuating circumstance.) Students must be in school at least half the school day to be considered present.

### **Alcohol and Drug Policy**

All student-athletes should become familiar with the Bristol Tennessee City Schools alcohol and drug policy. The policy is available on the Random Drug Testing Form, which is required for participation. Parents should discuss this policy and random drug testing procedure with their children. Student-athletes should be aware of the school board policy that states that the possession of alcohol or drugs on any BRISTOL TENNESSEE CITY SCHOOLS property at any time is considered a Zero Tolerance Offense.

### **Athletic Accidents, Injuries, and Insurance**

Due to the competitive and physical nature of athletics, the potential of accidents and injuries always exists. Tennessee Middle School coaches are committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of student-athletes; however, athletic injuries sometimes do occur, and it is especially important that student-athletes receive proper care.

The Tennessee Middle School Athletic Department purchases a secondary athletic insurance policy that covers all student-athletes while they are participating in interscholastic athletics at Tennessee Middle School. This secondary coverage pays on a claim after the parent/guardians have filed their primary insurance. The secondary insurance will not necessarily pay the complete balance due. Parents must contact the Tennessee High School athletic department secretary to receive the necessary forms needed to file a claim under this policy.

The Tennessee Middle School Athletic Department also purchases a catastrophic insurance policy that covers all student-athletes at Tennessee Middle School while they are participating in interscholastic athletics at Tennessee Middle School. This policy takes effect if a student-athlete suffers an injury that will exceed \$10,000 of medical expenses.

Parents should make the athletic coordinator and/or Tennessee High athletic director aware if they feel that their child has suffered an injury that could meet this limit. The athletic coordinator or athletic director will then write a letter to the insurance company informing them of the injury.

### **Cell Phone Use**

A student-athlete may not use cell phones and cameras inside a locker room for any purpose. This means no texting, no calling, and no pictures. Should an athlete receive a call or text while

in the locker room, they must take the phone (still in backpack, gym bag, etc.) outside the locker room ensuring the door to the locker room is closed. Cameras and cell phones may not be in use or in view in the locker room for any reason. A violation of this rule may result in game suspensions or dismissal from the team.

### **Conflicts with Other Extracurricular Activities**

Student-athletes are encouraged to explore their interests and become involved in a variety of school-related activities. On occasion, conflicts may occur between athletic events and other school-related extracurricular activities. It is very important that players and parents have a copy of their practice and game schedules so that conflicts can be addressed early.

When there is a conflict, the athlete and their parent must notify the coach and the sponsor of the school-related activity at least two weeks in advance.

Please use good judgment when dealing with these situations. In-season sports take priority over non-school activities.

### **Dead Periods/TSSAA Sports Calendar**

1. **Summer Dead Period:** TMSAA policy states that all schools will observe a two-week dead period during the week preceding the Fourth of July and the week of the Fourth of July. During this two-week period, there can be no coaching or any contact or observation by a coach, faculty or non-faculty, with any student-athlete. Bristol Tennessee City Schools facilities are closed to student-athletes during the dead period.
2. **Participation in independent leagues:** Student-athletes should be made aware that they may not participate in independent leagues or games during a TMSAA season. The general rule is “same sport, same season.” For example, if an athlete is playing basketball at Tennessee Middle School, they cannot participate on an AAU basketball team at the same time. Athletes should understand that the penalty for doing so will not only result in them being suspended from games; it will also lead to forfeitures of games in which they have participated. This rule goes into effect when a student-athlete is put on the eligibility list for that sport. *(This applies to basketball and football only.)*
3. **Open facilities:** There are set times during the year that sports can have open facilities. By TSSAA policy, the following criteria must be observed during times of off-season open facilities: A. Must be open to all Tennessee Middle School students. B. Coaches may serve in a supervisory capacity only. There is no teaching, no instructions, no coaching, etc. C. Must occur prior to or at the conclusion of the school day on school district property. D. No practice schedules may be followed.
4. **Weight training/conditioning programs:** Weight training and conditioning programs may occur during certain times of the year. Programs will be coordinated by head coaches, assistant coaches, and other staff members.

### **End-of-Season Surveys**

At Tennessee Middle School, we continuously strive to improve our athletic programs. As part of the evaluation process, we will survey student-athletes at the end of the season. The information we receive is confidential and only shared with the athletic coordinator and head coach of the sport. The results are used as part of the evaluation and continuous improvement process for the head coach and overall program. If a parent would like to view the survey prior to it being administered or opt their child out of participation, please contact the athletic coordinator prior to the end of the season.

### **Harassment & Hazing**

Hazing and harassment will not be tolerated at Tennessee Middle School. Student-athletes should refrain from doing anything that makes another person feel uncomfortable. This would include, but is not limited to, name calling, teasing, and bullying. If you feel as if you or someone you know is being harassed or hazed, inform a coach immediately. If after informing the head coach you do not feel as if the situation is being resolved, inform the athletic coordinator.

### **Internet Usage**

The internet is a worldwide, publicly accessible form of communication. Any communication such as TikTok, Snapchat, Facebook, photo sharing, etc. appearing on the internet is public domain, even if it is marked private. Student-athletes are responsible for their personal websites and social media postings and for information or photos they post on other students' websites or social media platforms. Inappropriate posts include, but are not limited to, language (abbreviated or alluding to), pictures, suggestive poses, references to alcohol, drugs, and tobacco.

1. Student-athletes should not make derogatory comments or posts concerning Tennessee Middle School coaches or fellow teammates on any social media platform or web domain.
2. Student-athletes posted on web pages while conducting inappropriate behavior will be subject to disciplinary measures.
3. Student-athletes will not allow anyone to use their uniform or outfits for any reason.

### **Media Release**

Throughout the school year, Bristol Tennessee City Schools may highlight student-athletes in efforts to promote BRISTOL TENNESSEE CITY SCHOOLS activities and achievements. For example, students may be featured in materials to increase public awareness of our schools and athletic events through newspaper, radio, television, the internet, displays, brochures, or other types of media.

As a result of their voluntary participation in athletics and athletic-related events, student-athletes may be interviewed, photographed, videoed, and/or voice recorded, and their name, image, likeness, and voice may be used in photographs, videos, publications, news media, and

electronic media for publicity aimed at promoting athletics. The contents of the interview, photograph, video, or voice recording may be published, posted, distributed, or aired to the public.

Student-athletes will be under the supervision of a school staff member while being interviewed, videoed, or photographed, unless they are part of a general background or group scene in which they are not specifically identified. During such a session or interview, student-athletes reserve the right to refuse to answer any questions or participate in any discussions that make them feel uncomfortable or embarrassed, and at any time, student-athletes and/or the supervising school agent reserve the right to terminate the interview, photo, or video session.

BRISTOL TENNESSEE CITY SCHOOLS is under no obligation to publish, post, distribute, or air the image, photo, video, and/or voice of any student-athlete.

### **Quitting or Dropping a Sport**

If an athlete quits or is dismissed from a team for disciplinary reasons, they may not participate in another sport for four weeks or until the first sport has completed its season. If an athlete has been released by a coach for a reason other than disciplinary action, they may begin another sport immediately.

### **School Suspensions**

A student-athlete in out-of-school suspension cannot participate in or attend any games, practices, or tryouts during the suspension.

A student who receives an in-school suspension may not participate in games and practices during the suspension period.

### **Tobacco**

The use of or possession of tobacco products by employees or students on school property or during a school-sponsored activity is a violation of Bristol Tennessee Board of Education policy. This policy applies to all school functions, during school hours and after. All school employees and student-athletes are expected to comply with all school and school board policies. Violations of the tobacco policy will be handled in compliance with school board policy. Further discipline will be at the head coach's discretion.

### **Transportation**

All team members should travel to away games on the team bus if a bus is available. Some programs and events may require parent transportation to the event.

Players may ride home with a parent/guardian from the event by signing out on a designated form or notifying the coach using the team communication app with the coach's approval.

A player may not ride home with another parent or adult without prior approval from the principal and/or designee and the player's parent.

### **Uniforms & Equipment**

All uniforms and equipment issued to a student-athlete are property of Tennessee Middle School. Student-athletes are responsible for caring for and maintaining any uniforms and equipment issued to them during a season.

Parents and student-athletes will be responsible for paying for or replacing any lost or damaged uniforms or equipment.

Tennessee Middle School colors are maroon and white. Student-athletes should not wear other clothing or accessory items with their uniforms not maroon or white unless approved by the head coach.

Coaches and student-athletes should keep their dressing rooms, practice areas, and equipment clean and in an orderly fashion. Tennessee Middle School is extremely fortunate to have quality facilities, and student-athletes are encouraged to show respect and care for them properly. Equipment should be stored properly. Any damaged equipment or unsafe conditions should be reported to the coach.

### **Unsportsmanlike Conduct Policy (TMSAA)**

The TMSAA and the administration of Tennessee Middle School believe strongly that the major purpose of athletics at the secondary level is to be a part of the total educational program.

A major part of this purpose is to stress to coaches, players, officials, and fans the vital importance of sportsmanship. Recognizing this principle, unsportsmanlike conduct from any of these groups will not be tolerated. Article 1, Section 8 of the TSSAA bylaws states that member schools are responsible for the conduct of their own fans at every athletic contest, regardless of where it may occur.

All games will be properly supervised to ensure sportsmanlike contests. The following actions will be taken when a student-athlete is ejected for unsportsmanlike conduct:

1. On the ejection of a student-athlete, the school must submit a report on the player's action and any disciplinary action taken by the school. The minimum penalty will be the suspension of the student-athlete from participation in the next contest(s) at the level of competition for the specified number of contests played during a week in a particular sport (one game in football, two contests in all other sports). In addition, the student-athlete is also suspended from participation in the same number of contest(s) at any other level of competition in the same sport.
2. A meeting will also be held with the player, coach, parent, and administrator with a report on the meeting and plans to directly address the matter to be filed with the TMSAA.

3. If a player is ejected for a second time for unsportsmanlike conduct, a more severe punishment shall be imposed.
4. Other non-monetary penalties may be assessed by the TMSAA executive director based on the facts.

If a substitute leaves the bench area in an incident or fans come onto the field or floor, the school will be fined a minimum of \$250. In addition, other non-monetary disciplinary action will occur. Fans that exhibit unsportsmanlike behavior may be asked to leave games and may also be suspended from returning to games.

***Thank you for being part of Bristol Tennessee City Schools  
and Tennessee Middle School athletics!***

***GO VIKINGS!***