

# **Pirate Youth Athletics**

## **Cheer/Pom**



## **Parent Handbook**

### **2023**

Welcome to the Pirate Cheer/Pom FAMILY! We couldn't be more excited that you've made the decision and commitment to join us.

We are so glad that you are with us this season. We take the honor of being your PYA Cheer/Pom Board and coaches very seriously. We want to make sure you know what to expect from us and what we expect from you so that the program can run as smoothly as possible for everyone.

If you have any questions, please contact your coaches or the Cheer/Pom Board at [pyacheerpom@gmail.com](mailto:pyacheerpom@gmail.com).

## **Program Summary**

All children will participate in both cheer and pom. We are basically three sports in one- sideline cheer, competitive cheer, and pom. All teams will sideline cheer at the football games and over the course of the season, learn competitive cheer and pom routines to perform at games and competitions.

Practices will start the week of August 7. Practices will be based on the instruction level of the girls, as described below. Practice schedules will be communicated by the head coaches. Games are held on Saturdays and will begin August 26. There will not be a game on Labor Day weekend. Some games will be here at Pinckney High School and some games will be away. Potential away game locations are Howell, Brighton, South Lyon, Hartland, Milford, Lakeland, Ypsilanti, and Saline. Games schedules will be distributed and posted on Sports Engine as soon as they are released by the league. Usually the last two games of the season are not released until immediately prior because they are pre-playoff/playoff games.

## **Program Goals**

This program will work to accomplish the following:

- Emphasize the development of basic skills, appropriate attitudes, values, and team concepts.
- Allow as many athletes as possible to participate/play and share the experience and benefits derived from team membership.
- Be competitive at all levels of the program, as appropriate.
- Incorporate the high school system where appropriate.

### **Instructional Level:**

At this level, athletes are often getting their very first introduction to cheer/pom at the most basic level. Athletes and their parents should expect the following concepts to be emphasized:

- Development of fundamental skills.
- Learning the sports.
- Demonstrating sportsmanship.

- Prioritizing skill and character development over winning. Competitions are not competitive at this level.

### **Freshman Level:**

At this level, athletes become accustomed to more competition. Athletes and their parents should expect the following concepts to be emphasized:

- Continued development of fundamental skills.
- Continue to learn the sports including a higher level of stunting.
- Demonstrating sportsmanship.
- Developing ambition to achieve at the next level of competition. Competitions become competitive at this level.
- Prioritizing skill and character development over winning.

### **Junior Varsity Level:**

Athletes and their parents should expect the following concepts to be emphasized:

- Continued development of fundamental skills.
- Continue to learn the sports including a higher level of stunting.
- Demonstrating sportsmanship.
- Developing ambition to achieve at the next level of competition. Competition difficulty increases at this level.
- Prioritizing skill and character development over winning.

## **Competitions**

All throughout the season, the teams will be learning their competitive cheer and pom routines. It is very important that athletes attend all scheduled practices or they may jeopardize their ability to perform as a team at Piratefest and Cheerfest. This is a team sport and we cannot move forward as a team if we do not have everyone present at practices, especially when learning to stunt because all partners must be present in order for the group to learn and practice. Please understand the commitment you are making to your entire team.

It is mandatory for all team members to participate in Piratefest and Cheerfest. In addition, it is mandatory for all members of all teams to compete in all rounds: Pom Round (all), Cheer Round (Instructional/Freshman), Cheer Rounds 2 & 3 (JV). There may be increased practice hours the two weeks before Cheerfest and those practices are mandatory. Exact dates, times, and locations TBD by the Cheer/Pom Board.

## **Cheer/Pom Board and Coach Responsibilities**

**The VPs, PYA Cheer/Pom Board, and coaches will maintain a professional role and keep that role in proper perspective by:**

- Developing and communicating clear and specific goals for the season.
- Maintaining open and honest communication with athletes, parents, coaches, and board members.
- Developing and demonstrating a good knowledge base of best practices.
- Supporting and collaborating with coaches in the middle school and high school programs.
- Modeling and teaching skills necessary to succeed.
- Supporting athletes' academic expectations, responsibilities, and achievements.
- Promoting and enforcing the PYA and KVC code of conduct.

**The VPs, PYA Cheer/Pom Board, and coaches will be positive role models in personal management, appearance, ethics, and behavior by:**

- Using positive actions/words to motivate and encourage. They can be intense at times, just never at the expense of a young athlete in our program.
- Providing an atmosphere of teamwork and collaboration among coaches and players.
- Becoming an integral part of and developing rapport with the Pinckney community.
- Modeling good sportsmanship at all times.
- Creating and maintaining a safe and healthy environment for athletes.
- Understanding their leadership style and its impact on our athletes.
- Being prepared every day with practice plans.
- Following all PYA, KVC (football league), and LCACC (cheer league) rules.

**The coaches will adhere to program-wide principles for the betterment of the overall program by:**

- Adhering to the designated times for practice:
  - Before Labor Day, Instructional may practice 3 nights/week no earlier than 6:15pm and will be allowed to practice up to 2 hours/night for a total of 6 hours each week. After Labor Day, Instructional may practice 2 nights/week no earlier than 6:15pm and will be allowed to practice up to 1.5 hours/night for a total of 3 hours each week. Practice days and times will be at the discretion of the head coach. Instructional may practice up to 6 hours each week in the two weeks prior to Cheerfest.
  - Before Labor Day, Freshman and JV may practice Monday-Thursday no earlier than 6:15pm and will be allowed to practice up to a total of 15 hours each week. After Labor Day, Freshman and JV may practice 3 nights/week no earlier than 6:15pm and will be allowed to practice up to 2 hours/night for a total of 6 hours each week. Practice days and times will be at the discretion of the head coach.

- No practice schedule may change without prior approval of the PYA Cheer/Pom Board and LCACC board.
- Following the attendance policy:
  - Coaches are expected to be at all practices. If they have to miss a practice for a legitimate reason, they should make sure the other coaches can cover the practice. If only one coach can attend a practice, they will contact the PYA Cheer/Pom Board for assistance.
  - Any cancellations of practices or game performances must be cleared through the PYA Cheer/Pom Board. Team attendance is expected by the league at all games, including the weekend before Cheerfest.
  - Cancellation of any practice or event due to weather will be determined by the PYA Cheer/Pom Board.
- Keeping in constant communication. We have a lot going on throughout the season. Coaches and the PYA Cheer/Pom Board will communicate with parents and each other through Sports Engine and/or social media. It's better to over-communicate than under-communicate.

## **Player Responsibilities**

### **Attendance Policy:**

Players are expected to be at every practice and every game. If a player has to miss a practice or a game for a legitimate excused reason, they will not be penalized. For an absence to be considered excused, the player or parent must first contact their head coach personally either through email, phone call, or text. Then they should RSVP to the practice as “no” in Sports Engine.

If an absence is unexcused, the following procedure is a guideline the coach may follow:

- 1st unexcused - player sits out a half of one game
- 2nd unexcused - player sits out one game
- 3rd unexcused - player sits out 2 games

As previously mentioned, the teams will be learning their competition routines at every practice. It is very important that all athletes attend all scheduled practices and be there on time or they may jeopardize their ability to perform as a team at Piratefest and Cheerfest. This is a team sport and we cannot move forward as a team if we do not have everyone present at practices, especially when stunting because all partners must be present in order for the group to learn and practice. As the girls learn the routine, stunting groups and positions frequently change. However, excessive absences, excused or unexcused, may also force coaches to relocate girls for the good of the team's progress and safety. Missing 25% or more of practices, even due to excused absences, may jeopardize your child's ability to participate in Piratefest and Cheerfest at the discretion of the coaches and the PYA Cheer/Pom Board. Please understand the commitment your child is making to this sport and to her team as a whole.

## **Standards for Participation:**

In order to participate in PYA, all players must have the following completed and turned in before the first practice:

- Physical dated after 1/1/2023
- Player fees paid in full
- Last report card of the 2022-2023 school year (or third marking period report card if handed in at the kickoff meeting)
- Equipment and Volunteer checks
- Copy of birth certificate

These items are due at uniform pick up. No uniform will be released to your child until they are received. If they are not received by the first practice, your child must sit out practices and games until they are turned in. These must be turned in to the Cheer/Pom VPs, not the Coaches or Team Moms.

## **General Practice Information:**

Please bring a water bottle or sports drink. No pop/soda/energy drinks. If we are practicing outdoors, please make sure that your child has bug spray and/or sunscreen. Please make sure that your child has eaten a snack or dinner before arriving at practice. They will not be allowed to eat during practice. Please make sure that your child has used the bathroom before arriving at practice as facilities can be limited and bathroom breaks from multiple children can be very disruptive to practice. In addition, please have your child's shoes double knotted to minimize disruptions and maximize safety. Parents are welcome to watch outdoor practices but are not allowed to interfere with a practice or game. Parents are not allowed to smoke on or near the outdoor practice fields. Indoor practices may be closed to spectators.

## **Required and Optional Clothing and Gear:**

PYA will furnish each child with a shell, a skirt, and poms. Parents are responsible for buying these required additional items to complete the uniform. All items must be acquired before picture day:

- White cheer shoes- These do not need to be the same. They can be purchased at sporting goods stores such as Dunham's or Dick's or online from Omni Cheer or GTM/Champion.
- White mock-neck crop top bodysuit- These can be purchased online from Omni Cheer or GTM/Champion.
- Black boy-cut briefs - These can be purchased online from Omni Cheer or GTM/Champion.
- White no-show socks- These can be purchased anywhere.

Optional spirit wear will be emailed throughout the season. These are items like warm-ups and sweatshirts that you can buy for your child to keep them warm on cold game days or items you can buy for yourself to support your child in the stands. Again, these items are completely optional. Only the items listed above are required.

## **Practice and Game Day Attire:**

- Proper attire for practice is expected such as shorts or pants and t-shirts, tank tops, and/or sweatshirts. All players must wear tennis shoes and have their hair pulled back off of their face and in a ponytail. They may not wear jeans, crocs, sandals, or flip flops. If they wear these items, they will sit and not participate during practice.
- All players are expected to arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the scheduled start of their game in their complete uniform (shell, white crop top, skirt, black boy shorts, white no-show socks, and white cheer shoes) with their hair up in a ponytail with a bow. Uniforms must be kept clean and presentable. At the discretion of the head coach, the following may apply:
  - If the weather is hot at game time, the players may wear a white or black sports bra or tank top under their shell instead of the crop top. The tank must be tucked into their skirt.
  - If the weather is cold, the players may layer black leggings or warm up pants under their skirt, wear Pirates sweatshirts or warm up jackets over their shell, and/or wear black gloves, black headbands, or black hats. ALWAYS wear black boy shorts underneath the pants because the coaches may ask that they remove their extra layers for performing/stunting.
  - Clear rain jackets or rain ponchos may be worn over the uniform if it is raining. Games are called when there is lightning within a certain distance but both football and cheer are expected to play if it is just raining.

## **Practice and Game Day Safety:**

We take the safety of your children seriously. Please adhere to the following rules:

- Do not drop off players until a coach is present.
- Players must be signed in and out of practice by an adult. We will not allow players to walk to cars unattended.
- We will not allow players to sit in cars during water breaks at practice.
- Please come to the fence to pick your child up after a game.
- Players are usually dismissed for a quick break after their halftime performance at games. Please monitor your children on these breaks and get them back to the sideline in a timely manner or they may be asked to sit out part of the third quarter.

## **Commitment:**

Each player MUST:

- Commit to being present at all team activities, including practices, meetings, and games.
- Be dedicated to becoming an excellent team member.
- Strive to continually improve as an athlete.
- Demonstrate pride in team performance and herself as a member of the team.

## **Athlete-Parent-Coach Relationship**

Participation in athletics should be an enjoyable experience for all parties involved be it an athlete, coach, or parent. Often times, participation tends to be emotionally charged and working constructively through these emotions can be an excellent learning experience. In most cases, the competition of athletics is extremely positive. Occasionally, conflicts between coaches, athletes, and parents do arise. These conflicts must be addressed and resolved. They will be handled in a manner so that the benefits of athletic involvement may continue to contribute to the emotional and physical growth of PYA athletes. If at any time an athlete or parent desires to lodge a complaint or discuss a potential conflict, the following protocol should be observed:

1. Discuss the situation with the immediate PYA coaches involved\*
2. If the conflict is not suitably resolved, contact the head coach at that team level
3. If the conflict is not suitably resolved, contact the PYA Cheer/Pom Board at [pyacheerpom@gmail.com](mailto:pyacheerpom@gmail.com)
4. If the conflict is not suitably resolved, contact the PYA President at [pirateyouthathletics@gmail.com](mailto:pirateyouthathletics@gmail.com) or PYA Compliance Officer at [hpyfacompliance@gmail.com](mailto:hpyfacompliance@gmail.com)

\*Timing is everything. Please do not disrupt a practice to voice your concerns and please do not address our high school coaches with any concerns. If you have an issue with a high school coach, please bring it to the attention of your head coach. PYA highly recommends that any parent or player that has an issue during a game, immediately after a game, or at a competition waits twenty-four hours before contacting a coach. Sports can be passionate and can bring a lot of emotion. Waiting to discuss a concern for twenty-four hours will allow for a more rational discussion from all parties. Please always remember that your coaches are volunteers.

## **Policies**

### **Sportsmanship Policy:**

PYA expects that all parties present at games display the highest possible level of sportsmanship. Players, coaches, and spectators should treat opponents, game officials, and opposing spectators with respect at all times. PYA reserves the right to warn, censure, place on probation or suspend any player, coach, or team attendant determined to be acting in a manner contrary to the standards of good sportsmanship. Spectators who do not adhere to standards of good sportsmanship may be asked to leave the contest and/or be prohibited from future contests. Videotaping of other team's routines is strictly prohibited.

### **Bullying & Hazing Policy:**

The purpose of this policy is to maintain a safe environment that is free from hazing for athletes. Hazing activities of any type are inconsistent with the athletic goals of PYA and are prohibited at all

times. Any athlete who commits the following offenses may be suspended or permanently dismissed from the team or activity.

**Bullying:** No person shall willfully attempt to inflict injury on another person, when accompanied by an apparent and present ability to do so or shall intentionally exhibit a display of force such as to give the victim any reason to fear or expect immediate bodily harm: (a) on school grounds at any time; (b) off school grounds; or (c) en route to and/or from PYA activities, games or practices.

**Hazing:** Hazing refers to committing an act against a student or coercing a student to participate in activity for purposes of joining or having affiliation with a group/student organization that could potentially degrade, humiliate, or create a substantial risk of physical and/or emotional harm, regardless of the person's willingness to participate. Hazing includes but is not limited to: Any type of physical brutality such as beating, striking, whipping, branding, electronic shocking or placing any harmful substance on the body. Any type of physical activity such as exposure to weather, restricted confinement, sleep deprivation, or any activity that subjects an athlete to the risk of harm or could adversely affect the mental and/or physical health or safety of the athlete. Any activity that intimidates or threatens an athlete with ostracism, subjects an athlete to extreme mental stress, causes embarrassment, shame or humiliation that adversely affects the dignity of an athlete or discourages a student from remaining in an activity. Any activity that causes or requires an athlete to perform a task that violates any state or federal law and/or school district policies or regulations.

Hazing, regardless of age and/or physical stature can be exceedingly harmful. Hazing is troubling because the developmental stages of adolescence create a situation in which many students are more vulnerable to peer pressure due to the tremendous need for acceptance, making friends and finding approval into one's peer group.

### **Home/Away Games:**

All players and coaches are expected to respect the fields, equipment, structures, etc. where we play our home and away games. Respect the game ahead of yours and do not enter the sidelines until the previous game has concluded. Please make sure to clean up your field area upon completion of your game. Only coaches and players are allowed in to games for free. Family and guests must pay admission and employee passes are not valid because we are not a school sport. All communities rely on admission fees to pay for stadium rental and reduce registration costs.

### **Athletic Equipment Policy:**

Athletes are responsible for and expected to maintain proper care of all uniforms and equipment issued to them. Athletes are also responsible for payment of any lost, stolen, or damaged items. All uniforms and equipment are to be returned at the completion of the season. If they are not returned, the PYA reserves the right to cash the equipment deposit check that is required to be turned in at uniform handout and/or require just compensation for repayment of the uniform.

### **Fundraising / Fees:**

Athletes and coaches are encouraged to take part in all fundraising endeavors. If an athlete has a financial hardship, please see the PYA Cheer/Pom VPs or President to discuss possible options.

### **Volunteering:**

PYA is a volunteer-run program. All of our board members and coaches are volunteers. They are not paid in any way. With our program being run entirely by volunteers, parents are also required to volunteer their time throughout the season. Please see our website for specifics about our volunteer requirements. We cannot properly run out games and events without your much appreciated help.

### **Quitting:**

When you are a member of PYA, you have made a commitment to the team and the coach for the entire season. Quitting should be a last resort after all other options have been exhausted. Athletes should arrange other activities so as not to conflict with practice and games. If an athlete is dismissed or voluntarily leaves the team at any time during the season, it is at the discretion of the head coach to allow them to return.

### **Pirate Strength:**

We encourage and want our athletes to play other sports. We believe it fosters competition, develops critical athletic skills, reduces the risk of overuse injury, and is a vital part of the overall athletic experience.

### **Social Media:**

Be aware of what you post online. Social media venues are very public. What you contribute leaves a digital footprint for all to see. Do not post anything you wouldn't want friends, parents, teachers, or a future employer to see. Never use social media to criticize or badmouth another team, athlete, or coach. If you have an issue, please discuss it privately.

### **League Issues:**

If a coach or parent has a concern with the league (rules, schedule, etc.), they are expected to go directly to the VPs of Cheer/Pom. If that cannot be resolved, they should then contact the President of PYA. At no time should coaches or parents be addressing concerns directly to the LCACC or KVC league.

## Player Health and Injuries:

PYA requires every child to turn in a complete health physical to participate. In addition to this, when a player becomes sick or injured there is certain protocol that is taken to assure their safety and the safety of their teammates.

The following is information from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) that our coaches can use as guidance on when an athlete can return to play after an injury or illness. The answers to many of these questions require input from a doctor. However, understanding the process helps athletes and families work with their doctor in return-to-play decisions and better understand the reasons behind return-to-play decisions.

Question	Explanation or Comment
1) What is the diagnosis?	An accurate diagnosis is crucial in addressing the cause of the symptoms, the best treatment options, time frame for recovery, and expected level of recovery. General labels such as "knee sprain" or "back spasm" do not provide enough information to make a treatment plan or determine how long recovery will take.
2) How does the condition affect performance?	Will the condition get in the way of the athlete's ability to practice and play the sport? For example, does the condition adversely affect endurance, flexibility, strength, or coordination? Will the illness or injury prevent them from participating in sports?
3) What is the risk of the condition getting worse from playing?	Injuries occur to vulnerable structures. As a result of illness or injury, the injured structure may become even more vulnerable. If an athlete returns to play before a full recovery, the injury or illness could get worse. Mild sprains can become severe sprains. A stress fracture can become a complete fracture. A mild concussion can increase the risk of a second brain injury or even death. Exposed wounds could become infected.
4) What is the risk of secondary injury?	When athletes favor or try to protect an injured area, they may expose other body parts to injury and become "secondarily" injured. If an injured athlete can't execute a stunt properly, her teammates may become secondarily injured. Secondary injuries can also occur if there is a communicable disease that can spread through contact with other teammates or competitors.
5) What has been the effect of treatment?	Is there treatment available for the condition? Has treatment been carried out? How effective is the treatment? Are there any negative effects of treatment? Has the treatment been completed? Have the deficits from injury/illness been restored?

6) Is there a high risk for further injury?	All sports have some risk of injury. The risk is higher for contact and collision sports. Serious and long-term injury can also occur from noncontact and endurance sports. These risks should be understood and accepted by the athlete and family before playing any sport. However, if injury or illness increases the risk even more, it may be ill advised to play. When the risk for further injury is disproportionately high, doctors have a responsibility to identify these situations and recommend changes or restrictions of participation.
7) Is there informed consent?	Playing sports may seem to have nothing in common with scheduling a surgical procedure, but both activities require informed consent. The previous questions help define the risk of further injury or other complications associated with return to play. In some cases, the true risk is not known. In other cases, the risk is elevated or unacceptable. Whatever the case, return to play should not take place until all risks are understood and considered to be acceptable by the athlete, family, and doctor.
8) Does the athlete want to play?	Most young athletes who enjoy sports want to return after an injury or illness. If athletes do not want to return, they should not be cleared to participate. Whatever the reason, athletes who do not want to play should not be pressured to return-even if the injury has resolved.
9) Coaches Call	After reviewing all of these things, in the end it is the coach's call on a player returning to practice after an injury or illness. Coaches may request a doctor's note. If the coach feels that the child's wellbeing or health is still at risk or the athlete is exhibiting issues or pain after this complete assessment they will discuss with the parent and make recommendations. That may include the player taking additional time to heal, slowly integrating them back into play and then re-introducing them into full sport contact.

**Stay in the loop with everything PYA**

- PYA website: <https://www.pyathletics.org/>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/PirateYouthAthleticsPinckney/>
- Sports Engine app