Dear Pastors, Principals, Athletic Directors, DREs and Youth Ministers:

First and foremost, I would like to thank you for your continued support of the Diocesan Recreations Association (DRA) and the use of your facilities for our programs. Our program provided soccer, cross-country, football, volleyball, basketball, track, baseball and softball to over 675 student athletes this year.

For the past few years, the DRA has awarded the Joe Sestito-Kathryn Buckerfield Sportsmanship Award and a $500 scholarship to a parish that exhibits exemplary sportsmanship during the current athletic year. Joe and Kathryn were long time coaches and directors in the Diocesan Recreation Program. This year, the winner of the Joe Sestito-Kathryn Buckerfield Sportsmanship Award is St. Pius X Parish.

David Oddi and Mike Matthews have been added to the DRA staff. David is a former AD and has been around the program for many years. He is helping Julius Palazzo with the 4th, 5th and 6th grade boys. Mike Matthews is helping Marty, primarily with basketball and track. Mike is a parishioner at St. Brigid and has been around the DRA programs for many years.

As most of you know, the DRA has partnered with the University of Notre Dame to implement the Play Like A Champion Today training sessions for all head coaches. To date we have trained almost 2250 coaches from the parish programs. In 2014, we began the implementation of the Parent Like A Champion Today training for all parents. At this time, at least one parent of all athletes must take the training prior to their child’s participation in the DRA program. Approximately 35 volunteers have been trained to help implement the Parent Like A Champion Today program in the parishes. Several sessions have already been held, and more are scheduled. We will be conducting a parish audit of Parent Like A Champion in 2019. I will be sending information out about the audit prior to September.

While it has, and will continue to be, the practice of the DRA to track the Play Like A Champion Today coaches’ training and to provide the training free of charge to all head coaches of the sports under the DRA umbrella, the Parent Like a Champion Today expense will need to be covered by the parishes. Cost is $10 per manual. Parishes will also be asked to sign off on the parent participation, so tracking will need to be done at the parish level.

If a parish wishes to have coaches trained for sports that are not under the DRA umbrella, we will continue to train them. However, the cost of the manual, $25, will need to be covered by the parish. Sports under the DRA umbrella include soccer, cross country, football, volleyball, basketball, track, baseball and softball.

We will continue our policy of letting the pastors know when someone has been ejected. This seems to be a best practice and is a deterrent to unsportsmanlike conduct by coaches, parents, fans and athletes. We will be updating the process we use to give the pastors more information about what happened to cause the ejection. We take ejections very seriously and ask the ADs and pastors to follow up with their parishioner when notified of an issue.

Last year we began the process of online submission of parent consent forms. It is important to have a complete transition to this as soon as possible. By going to https://www.dioceseregister.com/login, parents are able to login and complete the parent consent forms, sign off on concussion and sudden cardiac arrest, as required by Ohio Law. We also include the codes of conduct, personal identifiable information sign off. Once the parents have completed their portion of the online process, the ADs can go into the program to verify the children are on the teams from the parish and that at least one parent of each athlete has completed the Parent Like A Champion training. Pastors need to verify they are parishioners. The Safe Environment Directors will need to verify that coaches have PGC and BCI. The ADs, will be able to verify compliance with Play Like A Champion Coach Trainings. Detailed information will be forthcoming. We will also accept the hard copy of the Eligibility Rosters, signed by the pastors, athletic directors and principals. In some cases, this may be easier than the online process.

The DRA is a program formed by the values of the Catholic Church. The important lessons of commitment, sacrifice and making good choices are part of the experience. It is important to root our sporting efforts in the most important gathering of our Catholic community—the Mass—and to ensure that our young people are blessed in their experiences of athletics. We want to set the precedent in today’s youth sports culture that it is necessary to set aside time for God and family. The DRA has been able to greatly reduce the number of DRA games on Sundays. However, it needs to be noted, that there are other sports offered in the parishes, as well as the local communities, that do not fall under the umbrella of the Diocesan Recreation Association. The DRA hopes to be able to provide the opportunity to reserve Sunday for family time, uninterrupted by scheduled sports, at least once or twice a month.
We would like the parishes to hold a “Kick-Off” Mass for the athletes prior to the start of the season. We hope many parishes will be able to designate one of the Masses at the parish the weekend of Sept. 22, 2019, or another designated date, to recognize the summer and fall athletes and coaches. It is hoped that the young athletes, their coaches and their families attend the designated Mass together. Parishes may want to include the athletes and coaches as lectors, gift bearers, cantors, etc.

Scheduling the athletic events is always a challenge. The Athletic Directors need your help in providing them with a complete listing of conflicts with church and school activities. The ADs are asked to check with the parish secretary, the DRE, the school principal, the Youth Ministers, Scouts, etc. to be sure they have a complete list of conflicts for the Sport Information Form that is due several weeks prior to the beginning of the sports season. It is much easier to schedule around the conflicts, than it is to change games after the schedules come out. We are asking that the ADs check with everyone in the parish for such conflicts, and to include them on the conflict forms. If they are added later, we may not be able to honor the request. Please note the time of your Saturday Mass and the last morning Mass on Sunday. We want to be sure to schedule our activities so they do not conflict with the celebration of the Mass. Nothing is scheduled on Sundays until after 2:00pm. Please be sure to include the dates and times of PSR classes, if your young athletes attend PSR. If conflicts are received after the due date and after the schedule has been published, we will try to accommodate the parish or school conflict, but we cannot guarantee it. Once games are set, changes have a tendency to have a snowball effect on the league and affect other teams. Please have all conflicts ready to go by the due date. We do understand there are instances when something comes up at the last minute and will try our best to make things work.

The team league fee is increasing to $60 per team this year. The Athlete Participation fees will be $15, with the exception of the Football Fees. The football fees are $25 per athlete to help offset some of the fees we are being charged for Head’s Up Football. In the interest of safety, we are replacing tackle football with flag football for the 4th graders. Flag football fees are $50 per player. This will include the flag football jerseys, the belts and flags and for every 5 players, a football. The athletes may keep the jerseys, flags and belts at the end of the season. Officials’ fees went up in 2018. There will be no increase in officials’ fees for the upcoming 2019-2020 season.

To help with planning, all meetings for 2019-2020 are currently listed on the DRA calendar found on the website (www.columbuscatholic.org/recreation then click on calendar). We just ask that someone from the parish be present at the meetings and be responsible for disseminating the information to the coaches.

Cross Country was added to the Diocesan Recreation Association for the 2017-2018 season. We had over 170 participants. Last year we had over 200 participants. I am expecting another increase this year. Cross Country runs in August, September and October.

We have a couple of positions we would like to fill. We are in need of a cross-country commissioner and a track commissioner. Interested persons should contact Marty Raines at 614-241-2580 or at mraines@columbuscatholic.org

We need to know who your athletic director will be for the upcoming year. I have included the link to the Athletic Director form which is located on the DRA website. https://goo.gl/forms/UEFb8ck8qf6L4ymuZ

If you are continuing as Athletic Director, please complete the form by July 15, 2019. If you have decided to move on, we thank you for your service as AD and ask your help in getting this information to the proper person. The athletic director/commissioner meeting for fall sports has been scheduled for Saturday, July 27 at 10:00am in the church hall at St. Mary Magdalene, 473 Roys Ave., Columbus. Immediately after the AD meeting, there will be a Play Like A Champion Coach training session for those ADs, Commissioners and coaches needing the training. This session will begin at 12:00 and runs approximately 3 hours. Please register on the DRA website for the training session.

Please check our website, http://www.columbuscatholic.org/recreation for other information and all forms. We have included a calendar on the website that should help you with due dates and meetings.

Whether your parish is participating in the DRA or is one that has other sports affiliations, it is my hope that you will not hesitate to contact the DRA office for any assistance we can provide for you and your parish. I can be reached at mraines@columbuscatholic.org, or at 614-241-2580.

Once again, thank you for your support. If the Diocesan Recreation Association can help you in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Marty Raines
Associate Director
Director of Girls Athletics
Diocesan Recreation Association