



Guidelines for Managing Participation in Multiple Sports within a Season

Special Olympics Maryland – Montgomery County (SOMO)

We want our athletes to participate in as many sports as possible. That is our mission as an organization. However, it's also our mission to offer our athletes a quality experience in every sport. Quality includes being part of a team where every teammate is fully engaged as a team member. These two goals can sometimes conflict. This policy aims to strike the right balance.

SOMO applies the following principles to manage athlete participation in multiple sports within a season:

- **Athletes Commit to *Fully Participate* in each sport they sign-up for**
SOMO's policy is that all athletes commit to *fully participate* in each of their sports. Anything less is not fair to their teammates or to our coaches who volunteer so much time and energy for our athletes.
- ***Full Participation* Includes planning to attend all practices and qualifiers for each sport**
Attending every practice and every qualifier is a core part of fully participating in each sport. Naturally, issues will arise that cause some to miss a few events. Still, such issues should be infrequent, and our sports often allow some flexibility within SOMO's eligibility criteria for State games. Participation in another SOMO sport within the same season is not an acceptable reason for planning to miss a practice or qualifier in your sport.
- **Athletes Cannot Sign-up for Sports Whose Schedules Conflict**
In cases where practice or qualifier times for two sports overlap, such overlaps prevent any athlete from fully participating in both sports. Reasonable travel time between venues can be the cause of a schedule conflict. Where sports schedules conflict, SOMO requires athletes to choose one sport. They cannot sign-up for two sports whose schedules conflict. The SOMO web page for each sport regularly lists that sport's limitations on signing up in other sports.
- **Head Coach Flexibility**
It's difficult for a policy to consider all factors across all sports and athlete circumstances. Accordingly, Head Coaches have the authority, on an athlete-by-athlete basis, to accept the impact on their team of an athlete signing up for a conflicting sport. In such cases, Head Coaches should balance the athlete's contribution to their team against the negative impact of expected conflicts, making the decision that best supports their entire team. In many cases, when asking to sign-up for conflicting sports, athletes will need Head Coaches from each sport to approve the conflicting sports sign-ups.