



# Junior Sonics Wheelchair Basketball Team Policy

## Addendum

Updated 11/7/2025

Purpose: This document is designed to provide additional clarity for Junior Sonics Wheelchair Basketball team policies and procedures. It does not replace the Seattle Adaptive Sports policies signed during registration. This document was created using SAS policies, the family survey and discussions with other teams and coaches. It is not intended to be a comprehensive to do/not to do list.

The Jr Sonics team has athletes from 4 to 18 years old, with varying amounts of experience playing wheelchair basketball and with varying physical disabilities and varying medical conditions that affect their motor skills in a variety of ways. The expectations below do not have firm cut-offs, but attendance, attitude, effort and growth are important factors to success. In general, older, more experienced athletes will be held to higher expectations.

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### 1. Team Organization

- The Junior Sonics is the youth wheelchair basketball program within Seattle Adaptive Sports.
- The Jr Sonics consists of the following youth groups/teams:
  - Micro: ages 4 to 7
  - Prep: ages 8 to 13 (8.5' hoop)
  - Varsity: ages 14 through senior year of high school (10' hoop)
  - Team placement is based on a combination of factors including age, current skill development and overall team numbers. **Based on coach discretion**, players may be invited to roster on both prep and varsity, to practice with a higher level team or to play up a level.
  - Depending on the number of players, in some years we may further categorize teams into sub groups, for example, we may have a JV or developmental group. These may or may not be separate NWBA teams depending on numbers and any changes will be subject to SAS board approval.
- Team objectives depend on a variety of factors including team size, athlete development level and family goals.  
However:
  - In general, the Prep team competes in the PNW region with a focus on developing skills, teamwork and sportsmanship.

- In general, Varsity athletes can expect to compete in the West Coast region, with possible travel to other regions/Nationals depending on team competitiveness and goals. The Varsity team focus is on further skill and team development with an emphasis on independence and increased competitiveness to support preparing for post-high school experiences.

## 2. Practice Policies

- Team practices are scheduled once a week based on family and coach feedback at the start of each season. Changes to the team practice schedule will be communicated as early as possible. For 2025-2026, the team practice day is Saturday.
- Once-a-week scheduling allows for more advanced, consistent planning and supports team development. Many families travel significant distances and/or participate in other commitments, including other SAS sports.
- Varsity and Prep practice times may overlap depending on scheduling and coach availability.
- Practice is critical for skill and team development. In particular at the Varsity level, consistent attendance is strongly encouraged so that team concepts and strategies can be practiced as a team. Missing practice may affect game time.
- Once-a-week practice is insufficient for skill mastery. Athletes are encouraged to practice skills outside of team practices as it is beneficial for learning individual skills. However, outside practice time should not be viewed as an alternative to or replacement for team practices.
- Athletes are expected to be on time to practice.
  - For prep athletes, this involves being at the gym on time and working to be independent with chair checks and transfers.
  - For varsity athletes, this means being ready to go at the start of practice, with chair checks and warm up complete by the start time.
- All athletes should be prepared for practice with a water bottle, reversible practice jersey and any snacks/medical equipment needed.
- Athletes should approach practice with a positive attitude.
- Athletes should focus on the team and coach during practices. No phones.
- Athletes should wait until dismissed by the coach (post practice cool down wrap up, ball/equipment clean up is complete) to leave.
- Prioritizing practice is the best way for athletes and the team to grow, but things come up.
  - Please RSVP for practices on GroupMe by the Wednesday before each practice. This gives the coaches time to adjust the practice plan as needed.
  - If a late illness or other issue preventing you from attending comes up, please send a quick note in the Junior Sonics chat. Detailed explanations for missed practices are not necessary.
  - For Varsity athletes, please communicate directly with the coach if significant absences are expected (> 25% of practices). Per SafeSport guidelines, parents must be included on any direct communication between athletes and coaches.

## 3. Travel Tournament Policies - Prep

- The Prep Jr Sonics typically attend 2-4 tournaments per season:
  - 2-3 PNW local tournaments (Spokane, Portland, Tacoma)
  - Seattle, if hosting a local tournament
  - Prep team participation in a regional tournament or West Coast Conference Championships is a potential option based on athlete and family goals.
- Travel is done on a family model where each athlete travels with a responsible family member.
- Families are responsible for any and all travel expenses unless agreed upon in advance.

## 4. Travel Tournament Policies - Varsity

### Tournament Selection

- The Varsity Jr Sonics typically attend 4-5 tournaments per season:
  - 2-3 PNW local tournaments (Spokane, Portland, Tacoma)
  - Seattle if hosting a local tournament
  - 1-2 regional tournaments (ie Utah, Arizona, California)
  - Historically, in more competitive years (anticipated top-16 finish), SAS attended a midwest tournament (Turnstone/Fort Wayne, Omaha, Minneapolis, Chicago).
  - West Coast Conference Championship
  - Nationals based on qualification (playing in 10 NWBA-sanctioned games is the minimum requirement to qualify).
    - The top 32-seeded teams in the Junior Division qualify for nationals. Nationals typically consists of two 16-team brackets: the National Championship Tournament and the National Invitational Tournament.
    - Seeding is determined by the Rankings Committee, which meets monthly and includes representatives from each conference.
- Tournament weekend dates are locked in as far in advance as possible with sufficient team commitment required to register for tournaments (minimum of 6-7 players and 1 coach).
- Ideally, the tournament schedule for the season is finalized by the end of September. However, not all dates are published this early. Our goal is to have tournaments planned a minimum of 4 weeks in advance.
- Destinations selected based on: competitive level, location, cost, developmental value.
- Travel can be done on a family model where each athlete travels with a responsible family member, a modified family model, or on a chaperone model. See travel policies for more details. Families are responsible for any and all travel expenses unless agreed upon in advance.

## 5. Tournament Day Expectations

### Arrival

- Gym arrival time will be communicated by coach and typically be 30-60 minutes before game time depending on location/needs
- For PNW regional tournaments, teams meet at the gym at the scheduled time.
- For long-distance Varsity travel, the team meets in the hotel lobby and travels together at scheduled time.
- Team huddles 30 minutes before game after transferring to ball chair to map out:
  - Pregame warm-up instructions (if any)
  - Points of emphasis - game strategy, threat identification, drills or skills worth reinforcing, game and athlete-level goals
  - “Lock-in” mindset
- Equipment check (tire pressure, cushions, strapping) is expected BEFORE huddle
- Complete warm-up as a team once prior game wraps, which will typically be 5-20 minutes before game start
- Teams can typically leave ball chairs at the facility in designated team area overnight

### Athlete Responsibilities

- Arrive ready to play (dressed, hydrated, mentally prepared, on time)
- Respect officials, opponents, coaches, and venue staff
- Give maximum effort regardless of score or playing time

- Support teammates from bench when not playing
- Stay with team throughout tournament (no wandering venue unless cleared to do so by coach)
- Maintain clean bench area
- Demonstrate good sportsmanship at all times
- Accept coaching decisions with maturity
- Control emotions during intense competition
- Shake hands with opponents after each game
- Thank officials and tournament staff
- Failure to adhere to these guidelines may result in reduced playing time

## Parent/Guardian Expectations

- Drop off athletes at designated time and location (for PNW tournament/Prep athletes)
- Watch from spectator area (not bench/court)
- Support all athletes and teams positively
- No coaching from sidelines
- Address playing time and/or game decision concerns with coaches privately after the tournament ends.
- Athletes are encouraged to update coaches during competition on medical conditions and any potential injuries. Parents may support/communicate as needed.
- Assist with equipment loading/unloading as needed
- Pick up athletes promptly after final game or designated time

## Playing Time - Prep

- Coaches focus on player development
- All athletes receive significant, though not necessarily equal playing time

## Playing Time - Varsity

- Coaches determine playing time based on: effort, attitude, practice attendance, skill, game situation
- All athletes receive tournament playing time, but minutes may vary
- Coaches balance team success and player development
- Playing time discussions should occur during practice, not on game day
- Athletes are required to maintain a 2.0 GPA (unweighted) with a passing grade in each class to be eligible for tournament play. Academic records must be submitted to the coach(es) or team manager(s) two weeks before the tournament begins.

## Meal Plans (Travel Tournaments)

- **Breakfast:** Team will choose hotels with breakfast included when feasible
- **Lunch & Dinner:** Coach establishes meal times based on tournament schedule
  - Tournament game times may be fluid, with meal times adjusted accordingly
  - Athletes responsible for paying for their own meals if not provided by the tournament
  - Most tournaments provide lunch for athletes
  - Team will typically organize a dinner, either at a pizza or family style restaurant, or order food to the hotel depending on schedule, location and expected costs. Athletes and families are responsible for their own meal costs.
- **Free time:**
  - To be updated if we have a chaperoned tournament
- **Additional:** SAS or families may provide small snacks/hydration through tournament days

## Between Games

- Players are expected to act as a team both on and off the court for the duration of the tournament. Coaches will set expectations depending on schedule.
- Refuel with provided snacks and hydration.
- Rest/stretch as needed
- **Be a student of the game:**
  - Support other SAS teams (Prep, Varsity, D2, Women's)
  - Watch higher-level games happening at the tournament
  - Meet and connect with other athletes and teams
  - Learn from watching experienced players
- Possible study hall time as needed
- **Phones away/limited use during tournament hours** - focus on basketball, teammates, and the experience
- Light activity permitted (no leaving venue without permission, and then only as a complete group)

## End of Tournament

- Participate in team meeting/debrief
- Clean up bench and team storage area
- Load equipment properly
- Get dismissal from coach before leaving with parent/guardian, particularly in local tournaments

## 6. Safety & Medical Protocols

### Medical Information

- Medical information requested each season
- Allergy/medication information helpful for coaches to have on file
- Emergency contacts (minimum 2) on file
- Medical information on file with the coach for practices and tournaments.

### Medication Management

- Athletes and families are responsible for managing their own medications
- Parents may provide medication instructions to coaches if assistance needed for a chaperoned tournament
- Backup supply recommended for travel tournaments

### Injury Protocol

- Notify coach of any significant injury
- Parent/guardian contacted for injuries requiring attention
- 911 called for serious injuries/medical emergencies
- A responsible adult (Coach/Travel Chaperone/Team Manager) accompanies athlete to a hospital if parent is not present

### Equipment Safety

- Athletes are responsible for maintaining sport wheelchairs in safe condition
- Report equipment issues to coach if assistance needed
- Proper strapping/positioning required during play