

*Mariner Softball  
Handbook*



# Welcome to the Team

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We are honored and excited to welcome you to the Mariner Softball family! This family is composed of dedicated, passionate, and caring members that share a love of softball. You are part of a larger entity, you have teachers that were former players, physicians that were former players, mothers that were former players and now you are part of the continuum to honor the game. This is a humbling game – it will be merciless showing your weaknesses but magnanimous in giving you the chance to excel, heartbreaking when you let the team down but ecstatically uplifting when you are the game-changer. This is physically not an easy game at an entry level but the satisfaction of meeting those challenges is like no other and will be a skill you can carry with you anywhere you go. You will always be welcome in the softball community, and Homer Mariner Softball family, no matter your age. We feel softball is one of the best preparations for life – learning to be a discreetly identified individual on a team sport, learning to support others, learning to fail, fail again, fail better and then succeed, learning to control emotions and handle pressure, learning to support others, learning to be a compassionate warrior. Softball is a brutally honest friend, always willing to hold up a mirror to you, but always willing to be there for you.

# Team Information & Communication

There are many ways that information will be coming to you: Face to Face in practice, the WhatsApp app, Text Messaging, Instagram, and the Team Website: <http://marinerssoftball.net>. We also post information on the Facebook Page, Team Manager, or E-mails but you will only be responsible for tracking WhatsApp and Instagram. If those are not available to you, we will be happy to work out something with direct texting, parental emails or other options. You may also rely on a trusted teammate to inform you but please realize you have the ultimate personal responsibility to ascertain what is going on. There will be an opportunity at the beginning and end of any practice to bring up concerns or questions. You may also directly text or call Bill and Mary Hana with any questions that you have or if you would like to further discuss the handbook. Please note that it says Bill **and** Mary Hana. If you are texting one of us, please include the other in the same text. Any text we get from a player individually, we will also forward it to the other one.

# Crucial Characteristics We Hope To Instill



- Positive self-talk
  - On average, how often do you say negative things to yourself like, “I can’t do this,” “I’m inadequate,” “I don’t fit in,” “I am so embarrassed, no one will want me on their team”. This season we want to help you find who you are, we want to elevate your attributes, but more importantly, we want to help you see and honor those great things in yourself and in those around you.



- Failure is just the beginning
  - One of our goals is to help prepare you for your future. At each practice you are given a choice: one option is that you can go through the motions, never choosing to push yourself outside your comfort zone or, you can choose to make mistakes and put yourself on the line. It is your choice what you choose to do on and off the field but what we want is a team determined to serve one another and a team willing to fail together with teammates willing to embrace and encourage your failure. But that means you have a choice as to what you will do after you fail! We want you to fail, then fail better the next time. And the next time. And the next time. We want you to value process as more important than outcome. The final scoreboard does tell a tale, but it is not the tale that we value most. We play hard, we look at each other and know that we could not have done more for ourselves or for our teammates and the score will be what the score will be. We may lose but we will know we could not have done better. This does require rigorous self-assessment and self-honesty, and we want you to realize you need to be your best, but most supportive, critic.

# Crucial Characteristics Continued...



- Respect for yourself and for others
  - Whether you grew up hearing this or you are hearing this for the first time: You deserve to be respected. We all have our differences, but your goal is to discover a way to make those differences our team's strengths. That means respecting your teammates in the process of pushing themselves is more important than whatever the outcome is. It might be great, it might be terrible, but they put themselves on the line and made a choice to compete. Support them.
- Personal-challenge
  - This year we would like you to think about two secret words to define who you want to be this season. Once you have thought of those two words, look up their definitions and make sure they accurately define what you want to accomplish this season and who you want to be. Write those two words down with a plan for how you will reach that goal. Put that paper in a place you will see them daily. Also, give them to us in a sealed envelope at the beginning of the season and we will open them together at the end.
- Communication
  - In order to effectively develop your skills as an athlete, communication will be crucial. Honest communication in regards to your understanding of the concepts and strategies involved in softball will help to ensure a positive learning experience. As coaches, we will do everything that we can to create a safe, welcoming environment for ongoing feedback and consistent communication among coaches and all other members of the team.



# Team Rules & Unwritten Rules

## 1. Respect yourself and others on and off the field.

a. What you do not only affects you, but it affects the team as a whole. Serve your team by working hard, respecting those around you, helping with gear and making wise decisions when it comes to food and sleep. Being an athlete, it is extra important to stay hydrated and to eat meals that will give you energy and help you recover quickly. Remember, you are representing what we expect Mariner Softball to be in all your daily interactions at school, on the field, in the community.

## 2. Be on Time (or else notify us of the circumstances-directly and as soon as you can)

### Unwritten Rules:

The written rules are usually pretty clear but in any organization, there are often a large collection of unwritten rules no one really knows about. This is a partial list but are really just variations on #1 and #2 above. You may even have unwritten rules for the coaches. Share them with us and, by all means, let us know if we are breaking them. We are part of the team, not just the omniscient adults.

1. Be five minutes early, mentally ready and physically loose
2. Say “Hello” to everyone
3. Hustle Everywhere – Run on and off the field at games and practices
4. Lend a hand in practice set-up and gear storage
5. Keep a ball in your glove and your glove in shape
6. Always have your uniform shirt tucked in.
7. During a game always stand and focus on the game. The dugout bench is only for storing equipment.
8. If you are not playing, cheer for those that are and help perform team functions.
9. Always tell the coaches and your teammates the truth
10. If you disagree with something, talk to the coaches, don’t snivel
11. Try to make someone else happy each day.
12. Treat equipment with respect
13. Always run when on the field
14. Dramas of any sort do not have a place on the practice or game field.
15. Clean the dugout and locker rooms
16. Self impose a curfew on nights before games
17. Support your body with quality nutrition
18. Nobody eats or sits alone
19. Whatever your role on the team, be the best person in that role, ever.
20. The field is a sanctuary from the day



# Team & Community

This year we are continuing to incorporate community service!

Without the support of Homer, the Mariner Softball Team would not function. We will work together as a team to come up with a service project that we can carry forward as a “Thank You” to our town.

## Team Responsibilities

Team members will be responsible for participating in field work, equipment distribution and pick up after practice and games.

Fundraising is a big challenge but it is necessary to keep the program strong, competitive and safe.

## Grades



There are three grade checks during the season. The first occurs right around spring break and is an indicator of where you stand. You can still practice. The last grade check is just before competition starts and if you are not eligible at that time there is very little chance that you will be able to compete for the rest of the season. The last grade check could determine your eligibility for the State Tournament.

Please let us know if there are eligibility concerns so we can help you remain on the team. One of the life-lessons of sport is being able to time-manage. This includes musicals, practices, studying, etc and we will gladly help you with some of these pressures. We expect you to honor your previous commitments – basketball, musical, community roles- and you will not be penalized for missing practice to attend those events. Please, just let us know directly. SAT dates occur during the season so please plan so you do not miss games if you can avoid it.

# Practices

We will move outdoors as soon as weather and field conditions permit. Practice times may be extended when we go outside. There will be an updated schedule on the website. Practices early in the season can be difficult as we are juggling for indoor space with other sports. We will try to keep last minute changes to a minimum but will be sure to provide transportation if plans change at the last minute. Have a bag packed each night so you are set for the next day practice and game.

- No jewelry at practice or games-safety issue for you and others
- Glove (with ball in mitt)
- Hair must be tied back and out of your face
- Comfortable clothes that can get dirty (no jeans)
- Water bottle
- Sweats, appropriate jacket for outdoor practice, shoes. Warmth is critical- always be ready to go outside, at any time.
- Cell Phone put away for Practice. If there is a crisis, give out a coach number



Attendance at practice is mandatory. If you are going to miss practice due to an unavoidable conflict, you must contact both coaches personally, and in advance. Preferably by a direct phone call, acceptably by text with reasoning, never on WhatsApp or by passing on information through other players. I understand that you have a lot of pressures on you for time, studying, tests, etc. Part of maturity and getting ready for college is to learn good time management and to accept responsibility for your decisions. Let us know what you are doing. Those in the musical have already made a commitment to the musical and I expect you to honor that commitment but practice with us every chance you can. As a way of supporting your time management skills, we expect an explanation of why you are having to miss practice. We may be able to use it as a teaching moment to help you learn time balancing.

**In Season unexcused or frequent absences will impact your participation.**

**Consistent unexcused absences are certainly indicative of us not meeting your needs or other pressures on you. Please help us to understand what role softball might have in your life so we can reach a mutual understanding of expectations.**

# Playing Time

Everyone comes to a team with a dream of being a leader, playing consistently and being the “Gamechanger.” Playing time is one of the most difficult decisions we make as coaches and we consider game situation, skill development, practice effort, individual needs and many other variables. Sometimes it may not seem fair to you individually but when you are not playing, please remember that bench support is critical to the support of the team. Whatever role you have at any particular time, we ask you to be the best at that role that anyone has ever been. “The best right fielder”, “The best shortstop”, “The best bench person.” If you feel that you are not getting enough playing time, let’s talk about it after practice so we can hear your perspective and you can hear ours. And please remember that we also may “fail” in the decisions we make and we, as coaches, have to learn from them and “fail better” the next time.

# Fundraising

It takes a lot of money to keep this program going and to keep up our maintenance and supplies. Our expectation is that you will sell at least 25 raffle tickets and we will have times, locations and support to help you do that. Hint: it is much easier to do it earlier in the season and if you are not meeting that goal you are taking away from your teammates. As always, there will be prizes and recognition for those that meet certain levels, times, etc. This year there will be a posted board in the clubhouse of tickets sold by player. We have posted individual rewards previously on the website but this year there will be team rewards for levels of total tickets sold.

During home games we will ask you to participate in selling tickets for split the pot. You can also contribute to the Homer Mariner Softball Foundation through Pick-Click-Give on your PFD. Instructions are on the website. Don’t forget Amazon Smile – indicating Homer Mariner Softball. We may well have another garage sale. It has worked well for us in the past so please collect those great treasures lying forgotten around your house so we can sell them.

# HHS Unified TAD Policy

In order to have a unified and consistent policy at HHS we are going to go with the following school-wide TAD policy for next year:

- First TAD violation will include loss of half the remaining season contests with a minimum of 3 full weeks out of competition, whichever is longer.
- Second TAD violation will result in loss of an entire season.

Reasoning behind this decision:

- The minimum of three weeks out of competition is to deal with end of season issues. We had many parent complaints that athletes were out a couple of weeks and then played at regions. This would also be helpful if a TAD happened 2 weeks before the end of the season. In this case, without the 3 week policy they would only be out one week.
- We don't treat proximity or TAD offenses differently. In both cases all athletes know they are not supposed to knowingly be in a place where there is underage drinking or drug use going on. It is also very hard to tell if students were drinking or using drugs and in most cases students were drinking or using when they initially said they weren't. We do not punish students for picking up friends as long as they don't go into the party or gathering.

What this policy doesn't cover and coaches can include in their handbooks is given below. If a student has a TAD violation during the season coaches can:

- Kick athletes off the varsity team for a first TAD violation. (If no JV, this means they could still practice, but not compete)
- Not start the athlete on any team (C-team, JV & Varsity)
- Determine whether athletes play in the post season



## Drugs & Alcohol

Drug and alcohol policies will follow the current TAD policy of KPBSD. However, the shortness of the season almost guarantees that any infraction will lead to a significant lack of participation in competition. You will be able to continue to support your teammates during practices and from the bench. (See Rule #1). Please be sure you understand the word “proximity” and how strictly it is applied by administration. For yourself, for your team, and for your wellbeing, don't do it.



# Social Media Policy (with thanks to USA Softball)



This policy shall apply to all players, coaches and hopefully be followed by parents as well. One of the goals of our program is to instill the highest standard of sportsmanship and ethical behavior in our players at all times. (magic word is listed [here](#)) We will have a zero tolerance for inappropriate use of social media directed at anyone associated with our program- players, coaches, umpires, parents, sponsors, board members, field workers, concessions workers, etc. Social media will be defined as any program that is accessible to the public. Everyone associated with our program is expected to serve as a positive ambassador of the program during the entire season, whether at the field or not.

Some basic guidelines to remember: what you write is ultimately your responsibility- even if it is a personal secret that is passed on by others, Be aware that postings by others of you doing something outside the expected social bounds may still have repercussions for you personally. You must ensure the safety of others, be transparent and honest in what you write, respect your audience, keep your cool and be careful with all personal information. In short- always be a positive role model. Indiscretions will be dealt with at a level that seems appropriate from personal talks to involvement with the team or administration.

## **Bullying & Hazing (It's a NO)**

Bullying/Hazing will not be tolerated. Our #1 Rule is to Respect People on AND off the field. If you are finding it hard to respect your teammates or you feel disrespected by them please try to discuss it with them. If that does not work come talk to a coach. (If it is physical threat please come talk to us immediately!) Our softball team must be a safe place and we as coaches expect that haven to be guaranteed so you can grow as an individual and enjoy your time on the team. We respect you as individuals and you deserve to be treated with respect. If a person on the team is found to be bullying or hazing, they will have a private meeting with the coaches. Hazing that persists will likely invoke external KPBSD policies.

# Homer High Coach Handbook Excerpt – Team Policy on Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying

Homer High School is dedicated to providing a safe and civil environment that encourages a positive co-curricular experience for all student athletes. Harassment, intimidation, and bullying disrupt an athlete's ability to perform and the coaches' ability to develop their athletes. Bullying may also impact team morale and development of the larger group of athletes on the team.

Student athletes and coaches are prohibited from engaging in any form of harassment, intimidation, or bullying on school property, on school buses, at a bus stop, or at school-sponsored activities or functions. Student athletes who engage in an act of bullying are subject to appropriate interventions and disciplinary actions, up to and including suspension or expulsion from school and/or team. Coaches who engage in an act of bullying are also subject to appropriate disciplinary action up to and including suspension and termination.

To promote an environment free of harassment, intimidation, or bullying, the coach shall discuss this policy with their student athletes and their parents, assuring student athletes that they need not endure any form of harassment, intimidation, or bullying. Harassment, intimidation, or bullying means an intentional act, whether written, oral, electronic or physical, when the act is undertaken with the intent of threatening, intimidating, harassing, or frightening the student, and

1. Physically harms the student or damages the student's property; or
2. Has the effect of substantially interfering with the student's education; or
3. Is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or threatening educational environment; or
4. Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school and/or team activities.

Student athletes, parents, or staff members who have witnessed, or have reliable information that a student athlete has been subjected to harassment, intimidation or bullying, should report the incident immediately to the coach and school administration who shall promptly initiate an investigation.



## Fees & Expenses

The Borough determined fee for the softball program of Homer High is \$150. This can be waived for financial hardship by contacting the administration desk at the school. This must be taken care of before you can participate in practice. It is often adjusted based on family maximum, participation of siblings in other sports, etc.

Above that, it is not unusual to expect another \$300 for hotel fees, travel food, personal uniform purchases, specialized clothing offers, gloves, shoes, etc. It is the policy of the program that no player will ever be turned away for financial reasons. Please talk to us about a waiver of fees or assistance with hotel and food expenses if that is an issue. No detailed explanation is necessary though we may expect extra involvement in fundraising efforts, field maintenance and other volunteer activities. We will provide all uniform needs and can lend/ provide gloves and shoes also, though those items should be personally obtained, if possible. Please fulfill your requirements on the Arbiter system also.

## Travel

When we travel, we expect you to respect everyone you interact with (other teams, spectators, umpires, clerks, bus drivers etc.) because you represent not only Homer High School but also the local community and the sport of Softball. We usually request a partial payment for rooms and plane tickets and you need to be sure that you have appropriate money for food. As always, if you have financial issues that keep you from playing or traveling please talk to the coaches so we can make it work. **NO ONE** will ever be limited from traveling, practicing, eating or playing because of financial reasons- but we need to know. We also expect all individuals to follow COVID protocols while traveling.



## Cell Phone Policy

This year we will be reaching a mutual decision regarding the team culture for cell phones. There are several areas that concern us as coaches that we would like to have the team develop a consensus. The first is team bonding, which comes from spending interactive time together and not having all players retreat into their own world. Bus trips are a good way to interact with others outside your usual circle so we would ask for a policy regarding cell phones on buses on the way to games but also recognizing how music is essential for some to get ready for a competition.

The second issue we have concerns about is obtaining adequate sleep, especially when on a road trip. We would like a discussion on quiet time after which phones are completely off. Emergency contact can come through the coaches. The last issue goes back to perceptions of bullying or hazing. If several people on the bus are texting each other it is easy for others to infer that they are being talked about, playing into the insecurities we all have. The team will develop a criteria on how cell phones will be used on road trips. Obviously, all cell phones will be either off or out of sight / mind during games and practices.

## Varsity Letters

Lettering will be awarded to those that make a significant contribution to the varsity level environment.

# Parents

There are always concerns that come up and they should not fester but also not be dealt with in the heat of the moment. As coaches and parents, we are all modeling behavior for these women to learn from - in happy situations, in conflict, in emotional and even in painful situations. We would request that the standard be a 24 hour waiting period before discussing concerns with us except in dire or safety related emergencies. The most common concern is your daughter's playing time and I wish we could give you an exact formula as to how that is determined - but it will vary game to game and situation to situation. Please avail yourself of the same avenues of information listed above. We welcome your assistance and support in all aspects of this program as we could not do it without you. We will have a dedicated WhatsApp for parents, in addition to the one for players and will try to duplicate information on both platforms. You will also have resources in the website ([marinerssoftball.net](http://marinerssoftball.net)), Team Manager, Facebook Group Page or Instagram.

Parents are always welcome to observe practice but we would ask you to understand these 11 evaluation steps that are part of the players' practice each day and evaluate your daughter by these criteria so we are all on the same page. We appreciate that there is a fine line between being engaged and your daughter feeling that you are hovering. (Courtesy of the Art of Coaching)

Here are things to look for in your player's skill acquisition and drill performance.

1. Do they have good athletic ready position/anticipatory reaction? Are they surprised when reacting to the ball?
2. Do they execute the skill properly with concerted effort to do so?
3. Do they "better the ball"? Does the ball go to the desired target? If they receive an errant ball, do they improve its course?
4. Do they stay involved the whole play?
5. Do they move in a drill when not playing the ball? Or do they watch in an upright posture?
6. Do they possess a demeanor indicative of intensity and giving an all-out effort?
7. Do they respond positively with body language and follow up with an effort to change technique?
8. Do they facilitate the drill by encouraging others and being emotionally involved?
9. Do they show frustration after making mistakes and solicit attention to themselves?
10. Do they handle pressure situations or are they a drill killer?
11. Do they take their best practice performance and translate this into the game situation?  
Are they a driller or a gamer?

# Season-Specific Notes

This year we are facing an abnormal set of circumstances, seeing as we are living in the world of COVID-19. This will mean masking up, keeping our distance, and taking extra precautions during our competitions with other teams. Our schedule will look different this year, as we will have a smaller pool of teams to compete with and less traveling than past years. However, any season is better than no season! We are so excited to get back one of our favorite parts of pre-covid times, and we hope that you understand the need to abide by all protocols to ensure we are able to have a successful season.

## Contact Information

Please send an email to [homermarinerssoftball@gmail.com](mailto:homermarinerssoftball@gmail.com) or text to 399-1042 to let me know you have read this Program guide. Include the magic word for a special present.

Head Coach: Bill Bell, 399-1042, [wmbell51@gmail.com](mailto:wmbell51@gmail.com)

Assistant Coach: Mary Hana Bowe, 399-9537, [mary.bowe@outlook.com](mailto:mary.bowe@outlook.com)

## TIME TO PLAY BALL!

