

Player/Parent Handbook



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This handbook is to be your guide and help answer questions you may have. We are looking forward to the 2020 season. We hope to be the best we can be which will require hard work, leadership and most importantly, working together as a team.

All athletes interested in playing softball this season will have an equal chance to make a team. Keep in mind that being a member of one of these teams is a privilege and players must recognize the responsibilities, expectations and behaviors that will be required.

Otter Softball - Program Philosophy

The primary goal of the Otter Softball program is to develop student athletes of character and integrity who will serve as a positive member of the school community and the greater society. As a program, our goal is to create an environment where student athletes are able to grow as leaders, competitors and teammates. Our mission is to develop a softball program with the tradition of sustained excellence, both academically and athletically.

As we build a program it must be done from the ground up. The concepts and strategies that serve as a foundation are very important. Players in this program are expected to know and buy into these concepts. These basic beliefs will serve as the groundwork to develop as an individual and as a team.

Foundational Concepts/Strategies

TEAM Comes First. The team is greater than the individual and will always come first. As coaches, we will commit to teach that personal decisions directly affect the team and consequences for personal actions also come with consequences for the team.

Control Your Controllables - APE! Today, there are so many outside factors that can directly affect the student athlete. It's important for the growth and success of the softball program that players control their controllables; that includes their **Attitude, Preparation, and Effort (APE)**.

1. **Attitude.** We believe that attitude is the key to success. Each of us choose to determine our attitude each and every day. As coaches, we will strive to teach proper and positive attitudes and will demand it from each person associated with the softball program. It is impossible to control many things in the game of softball and in life, however, we can control our attitude.
2. **Preparation.** Playing softball requires personal discipline and preparation. In order to play error free defense and to be a smart offensive player, athletes will need to properly prepare. As coaches, we will strive to build discipline through preparation in every player as well as the team.
3. **Effort.** Our goal will not simply be to put a "W" in the scorebook. Our goal will be to play gritty, and to play with discipline while giving the very best effort possible. If we are able to dig deep, be gritty, be resilient, be disciplined, winning will be the natural result. If giving our very best does not result in a win, we should still be able to hold our heads high and feel good about the effort left on the field. As coaches, we will expect and demand the best from our athletes not only on the field of play, but in the classroom and in life.

We will strive to be:

- Focused and determined
- Mentally prepared and mentally tough
- Perfect in our fundamentals
- Gritty and relentless in our pursuit of greatness

Responsibilities & Duties of Otter Softball Coaches

Head Coach. The head coach is the leader of the entire softball program, and, therefore, ultimately responsible for the overall strength of the program. The duties of the head coach are many, but can be categorized to the following:

1. **Character.** The following character traits should be possessed by the head coach.

Honesty	Fair	Organized
Loyalty	Knowledgeable	Positive
Patience	Caring	Resilient
Dependability	Disciplined	Humorous
Consistency	Perspective	Self-Controlled
Openness	Enthusiastic	Poised
Humbleness	Committed	

2. **Professionalism.** There are certain professional qualities that coaches should strive for, they include:
 - a. Good rapport with staff, team, officials, administrators, and parents.
 - b. Sets and works to meet personal as well as program goals.
 - c. Communication with squad, staff, media, administration, and parents.
 - d. Is able to accept criticism in a positive way.

3. **Team Management.** The coach must be able to manage the entire program by showing the following skills:
 - a. Planning of Practice
 - b. Being on Time/Time Management
 - c. Supervision
 - d. Leadership
 - e. Team Discipline/Control

4. **Coaching and Team Performance.** Ultimately, a head coach will be evaluated on the success of the program.

Assistant Coach(es): The Assistant Coaches will be held to the same ethical and professional standards as the head coach. Assistant Coaches will be expected to manage their respected teams and other duties as assigned by the head coach.

Otter Softball - Team Expectations

Varsity. The varsity team represents the highest level of competition here at Fergus Falls High School. Our goal is to win a state softball championship as we incorporate Otter Softball beliefs and philosophies. As a member of the varsity team, you are not guaranteed equal opportunity to participate in every contest. Every team member has a role and that role is very important. While each role may not be equal in playing time, they are all equal in their measure of importance to the team and to our overall performance. Our goal is to establish a varsity team with the 11-13 best players in the program.

Junior Varsity (JV). The junior varsity softball program is established to prepare players for the varsity program. JV games will allow players to gain experience in game situations and improve their skills for Varsity readiness. To achieve this, any player may be asked to play in a JV game. Some players may be used on both the JV and varsity teams. As with the varsity program, each player has a role and some roles will include more playing time than others.

C-Squad. The C-squad softball program is established to develop and enhance players skills and knowledge of the game of softball. Some players may be used on both the C-squad and JV teams. As with any softball program, each player has a role and some roles will include more playing time than others.

Junior High. The Junior High program is established to lay the foundations of softball skills and knowledge of the game. Junior High will be composed of 7th and 8th grade players. If a JH player is requested to be moved up and chooses to do so, they cannot come back to the JH program that same year.

Expectations of an Otter Softball Player

- A team first attitude - unselfish, positive, encouraging, and supportive.
- A coachable attitude - willing to listen, improve, and accept constructive criticism.
- A loyal commitment to Otter Softball and the entire program, supporting all teammates and coaches.
- A commitment to give your very best effort, every day-every play.
- Be self-motivated and self disciplined.
- Follow all school, classroom, and team rules.
- Be a positive role model - you represent Otter Softball, Fergus Falls High School, and Fergus Falls, MN.
- Commitment to strive for the highest level of personal physical conditioning.
- Commitment to off-season programs including: camps, workouts, open gyms and clinics.
- Understand and accept your role on the team.

Expectations of Parents

Parents of athletes in the Otter Softball program are expected to adhere to the following expectations:

1. Be aware of your daughter's needs, feelings, and concerns.
2. Attend as many games as possible so you get a full and complete picture of the program.
3. Understand the point of: Your daughter, other athletes and parents, the coaches, and yourself.
4. Support the "team first, individual second" belief.
5. Demonstrate sportsmanship at all games.
6. Allow your daughter to participate on the team in her own way; don't relive your glory days through her.
7. Show positive support and encouragement for your daughter, for all members of the team, and for the Otter Softball program.
8. Let 24 hours elapse before initiating communication with the 5-step process below. Do not try to resolve a conflict with a coach before or directly after a game as that will likely create more conflict. Encourage your daughter to begin the 3-step communication process:
 - a. Athlete meets with individual coach and/or head coach.
 - b. Athlete and parent meet with individual coach and head coach.
 - c. Athlete, parent, and head coach meet with activity director.
 - d. Most of the time a conflict will be solved after Step 1.

Things parents may not ask about:

1. Playing time.
2. Game strategies.
3. Other players on the team.

Things parents may want to ask about:

1. Does my child work hard and have a positive attitude?
2. How would you evaluate my child in terms of her offensive, defensive and / or team skills?
3. In what area(s) does my child need to improve?
4. Is my child a positive addition to the team?
5. What can I do to help?

In order to run a first-class and successful program, we all need to be supportive and respectful of each other.

Otter Softball Team Rules

It is a privilege to be on the Otter Softball team. Because of that privilege, our players must strive to be the quality young ladies that we are trying to teach them to become. In order to participate in games a player must be in good standing academically, have no disciplinary infractions at FFPS, in the classroom, and on the team; and must have met all team practice expectations during the week.

- Otter Softball rules are team rules. We will not deviate from any school rules. We will be 100% supportive of all administrative decisions.
- Academics. All team members must be in good academic standing in order to be eligible to play on the team. MSHSL states that students must be making satisfactory progress towards the school's requirements for graduation. The school where the student is fully enrolled and regularly attends shall determine satisfactory progress. You are a student first and an athlete second. Your academics are a priority.
- MSHSL Violations. Student athletes must not use or possess tobacco, alcohol or drugs. They also must not violate the racial/religious/sexual harassment/violence/hazing bylaws of the MSHSL.
 - **1st Violation** - the student athlete shall lose eligibility for the next two consecutive contests or two weeks, 14 calendar days, of a season in which the athlete is a participant, whichever is greater.
 - **2nd Violation** -the student athlete shall lose eligibility for the next six consecutive contests or six weeks, whichever is greater, in which the student is a participant.
 - **3rd Violation** - the student athlete shall lose eligibility for the next calendar year.
- School Attendance. Players are required to be in attendance at school the entire day of a game unless it is properly excused. Excused absences include:
 - School related activities
 - Medical appointments
 - One period or less in the school health office
 - Funeral or family medical/legal emergencies
 - Student safety issues
- Players may not miss practice without a legitimate excuse from a parent, coach, administrator or doctor. If you cannot be at practice, you must notify your coach with a valid excuse. Contact information for each member of the coaching staff is located on the first page of this handbook. **Do not leave word with anyone else.** Remember, **if you can't practice, you can't play**. Detention and work are unexcused absences. The ultimate decision is left up to the coaches' discretion.
- Game Day Policies. Athletes will be fully dressed as they enter DeLagoon or the bus for away games.
- We, as a coaching staff, will not tolerate any insubordination or back talk toward coaches. Players will address each member of the coaching staff as "Coach (last name)." We will release any player who does not:
 - Show proper attitude at all times.
 - Pass all of their classes according to FFPS and MSHSL standards.
 - Represent herself, Fergus Falls High School and the City of Fergus Falls with quality and class.

- Players are representatives of Fergus Falls High School. Swearing, throwing equipment, cheating and other unsportsmanlike acts will **NOT** be tolerated. Suspension from one or more contests and/or removal from the team may result from repeated unsportsmanlike acts.
- Cell Phones. Cell phones are prohibited during practice and games. They will be left in your bag and/or car. There will be consequences if cell phones are seen during practice and/or games.
- Social Media. Think before you post ANYTHING on Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, etc....Be SMART!
- Players will receive uniforms prior to the first game. These **MUST** be worn at all scheduled contests. Players are required to wash their uniforms after every game. Players should take care of uniforms because they are passed onto future teams. Players will have to pay to replace uniforms which they abuse or lose.
- Players will also receive practice uniforms (pants) during the first week of the season. **This gear MUST be worn at all practices.** If we intend to practice like we play, we must be prepared to slide/dive at all times. There may be exceptions for indoor practices, but players will be informed of those exceptions. Players will have to pay to replace practice uniforms.
- You are responsible for all your equipment and its maintenance. If any of your gear needs repair, get it taken care of before or after practice.
- Our managers are as important as any player or coach. Treat them with respect at all times.
- Injuries. Todd Grothe is the school's athletic trainer and will take care of any and all injuries. Make sure your coach is aware of any injuries that you may have. It will ultimately be the trainer's decision as to whether or not you can compete at practice or games. If a player has to see a doctor, the trainer and coach must know and have a written release from the doctor in order to resume play.
- **NOTE:** Check the SportsEngine calendar for practice times/location. Listen for afternoon announcements and/or check the website for practice or game changes in the event of inclement weather. **It is your responsibility to find out where and when practice is being held!**

Know your team rules as well as the consequences for breaking those rules.

Rules of Training & Conduct

Attitude. You are an athlete and will be expected to perform as one. This means that when you come to practice, or to a game, you should bring an attitude which is conducive to the progress of the team. You must try to leave behind all the frustrations of the day, or anything else that will distract from your performance on the field. We, as a coaching staff, will maintain a positive attitude toward you. There will be times when you will be confronted with mistakes you have made. We ask that you use this constructive feedback as it is intended, to make you a better player.

Dressing For The Weather. Yes, it will be cold. The season will begin when the snow is still on the ground. We will go outside at every reasonable opportunity. Unless it is raining or extremely cold, we will go outside to practice. You need to collect all of your loose fitting, warm clothing and bring it to school. In addition to your cleats, bring another pair of shoes you can wear indoors. There will be times when we will go outside and then come inside for additional practice. In any case, NEVER wear your cleats into the building.

Travel Expectations. All players will travel with the team on the bus to the game. Cell phones will be collected as players enter the bus, prior to a game. Athletes will have time to continue and complete their homework as assigned by their teachers. As we near and enter the town of the contest, we will have a period of quiet focus time. Athletes need to visualize and prepare mentally before they get off the bus. Cell phones will be available to players during the return trip, approximately 30 minutes before arriving back in Fergus Falls. Our expectations of being quality young ladies will be in effect when we travel. All bus drivers, employees at restaurants, school personnel, etc. will be treated with the utmost respect. The restaurant, locker room, dugouts, and bus will be left in better condition than we found them or extra conditioning will be the result.

Fan Support. The coaching staff encourages you to invite your parents and friends to enjoy our games. However, all spectators will be expected to separate themselves from the players during the game. Players need to be free from distractions in order to concentrate on the matter at hand. It will be the responsibility of the players to remind their parent(s) and/or inform any guest who may be unaware of this policy.

Starting Line-Up. The line-up for each game may vary as the season progresses. There may be changes in personnel as well as unforeseen circumstances that occur during the season. It should be further noted that if a player goes on vacation, she is not guaranteed her "old spot" when she returns. She must earn it back. In short, the best players for a given situation will be put on the field of play for each game, and such decisions are the responsibility of the coaching staff.

Dugout/Game Expectations. Players will remain inside the dugout during all games. **Do not leave to talk to parents, friends, etc.** Only players, coaches, trainers and managers are allowed inside the dugout during games. The dugout should remain clean and in order during the game. The only food (other than sunflower seeds) allowed in the dugout during the game is a healthy snack for energy- fruit, granola bars, etc. No meals- nachos, hamburgers, etc. will be eaten in the dugout during a game. We will eat meals between or after games. All players are expected to be in tune with the game and need to be cheering positively for all teammates. **If we're on offense, we're on the fence!** An occasional team cheer/chant is okay, but only to start a rally or celebrate a big play- it must be positive and in good sportsmanship. Chanting just for the sake of chanting, takes the focus off of the game and is a distraction.

Expectations of Managers. All managers will be required to attend practice. Managers will be asked to do different jobs during practice including: Setting up equipment, taking roll, shagging balls, operating a pitching machine, keeping

score, etc. During games a manager may be asked to: Take accurate and reliable stats for a JV or varsity game, take score for the game, total the stats, stock and keep track of the medical kit, film the game or portions of the game, and help set up and carry equipment. A manager may receive a varsity letter by demonstrating exceptional work as a manager for the varsity team in fulfilling all required duties. A letter will be awarded at the discretion of the coaching staff.

Unwritten Rules

- Be early – meetings, practice, and games.
- At practice, be focused on the task at hand, not social plans or other problems - **BE PRESENT.**
- Hustle everywhere.
- If you are not playing, cheer for those who are.
- Always tell your coaches the truth.
- Lend a hand in practice setup and breakdown.
- Always have your uniform tucked in properly.
- Treat equipment with respect.
- Run when you know you might be late.
- No DRAMA, if you make other players on the team unhappy, FIX IT!
- Turn in your uniform at the end of the season when you are asked to.

Otter Softball - Try-Outs

The Otter Softball program is made up of three (3) teams, Varsity, Junior Varsity and C-Squad. We anticipate as many as 30-36 players in the entire program. Players' abilities will be assessed at tryouts, and on an ongoing basis. **No roster is ever "engraved in stone"**. All players in the softball program are eligible to move between the levels of play during the course of the season. Through the course of tryouts, the entire coaching staff will work with and evaluate all athletes trying out for softball. In our collective opinion, we will select the student/athletes who best meet the criteria listed below.

The selection of all teams will be based on the following criteria:

- Tryout performance/speed.
- Desire and responsibility.
- Coachability.
- Athletic ability and coordination.
- Softball knowledge.
- Team needs.

Testing and evaluating the following softball skills:

- Arm strength and accuracy.
- Fielding skills; ground ball and fly ball work.
- Hitting skills.
- Base running.
- Specialty skills (i.e. pitching, catching, etc.)

Other non-physical skills will also be taken into consideration: attitude, teamwork, leadership, focus and discipline.

Otter Softball - Open Gyms

Open Gym, by definition, is provided to all members of the Fergus Falls student body. Coaches supervising open gyms may not provide group instructions to athletes or lead activities, they may, however, answer athlete's questions. Attendance at open gym is not mandatory and cannot be required.

The Otter Softball coaching staff provides the opportunity for several open gyms throughout the year. This gives staff an opportunity to see players perform skills in a relatively stress-free situation, as well as observe interpersonal skills, drive, and leadership qualities.

VARSITY LETTER CRITERIA

The criteria for earning a varsity letter has been established by the Fergus Falls High School softball coaching staff. The coaching staff believes that earning a varsity letter should require evidence of commitment to team and competence in sport. Nonetheless, we have defined standards for the sake of uniform decision-making. The criteria is set according to standards that the coaching staff believes is high, yet reasonable. The policy is intended to encourage student athletes to persevere toward the goal of earning a varsity letter.

GENERAL POLICIES

1. Varsity athletes who remain as members of the team in good standing throughout the full season are eligible to earn a varsity letter, subject to the provisions below.
2. Senior athletes who have participated in a given program (varsity or junior varsity) for at least three years shall receive a varsity letter.
3. Injured athletes who meet the “playing time” criteria for the contests held up to the time of the injury may receive a letter.
4. Managers who have held the position for at least three seasons in the same sport may earn a letter. Only those who, in the judgment of the coach, have made a significant commitment of time and effort shall be awarded the letter.
5. Any student involved in the athletic program who does not receive a letter will receive a certificate of participation.
6. In cases of extenuating circumstances, exceptions to the standards listed below are permitted with the approval of the coach and the athletic director
7. Team members must have no violations or suspensions under MN State HS League rules & policies.

PLAYING TIME CRITERIA - SOFTBALL (regular season events)

1. Participate in 50% of innings played
2. Two years of varsity service and dressed for all varsity games
3. Pitchers criteria:
 - a. Receive credit for winning/losing one game and pitching minimum of 14 innings
 - b. Pitch minimum of 21 complete innings
 - c. Receive credit for winning/losing 3 games

We have read the Otter Softball Player/Parent Handbook and agree to abide by all rules and expectations.

Athlete Name (Print)

Parent/Guardian Name (Print)

Athlete Signature

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

***This form is due March 10, 2020.**