



**MERRILL HIGH SCHOOL
GIRLS' SOCCER HANDBOOK**

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Merrill High School girls' soccer program is to further the holistic development of our student-athletes through sport-specific practice and competition.

Our desire is to provide each student-athlete an opportunity to find success through the sport of soccer, while also encouraging academic growth and inspiring social responsibility.

The Merrill High School girls' soccer program will strive to embody core values of integrity, leadership, perseverance, and respect. All coaches and players will work daily to cultivate an environment that promotes encouragement, positive self-esteem and self-confidence, and team unity.

LEVELS OF PLAY

VARSITY

The varsity team is comprised of players that give the program the best opportunity for success on the field, as defined by the coaching staff. This player pool may include individuals who aren't as technically, tactically, or athletically gifted as other players, but bring certain x-factors (work ethic, team chemistry, positive attitude, etc.) to the team that raises the collective group's level and contributes to a positive team environment. Varsity playing time is never guaranteed and players on varsity should not expect equal playing time. Amount of playing time will be determined by a variety of criteria such as skill level, work ethic, knowledge of the game, tactical comprehension, line-up and substitution rules of the game, etc. Classroom participation and performance may also be considered when playing time is concerned.

JUNIOR VARSITY (JV)

The junior varsity (JV) team is focused on player development and intended to help prepare athletes for varsity level play at some point during their high school career. JV players can reasonably expect to take part in every game but playing time may not be equal. Amount of playing time will be determined by a variety of criteria such as skill level, work ethic, knowledge of the game, tactical comprehension, line-up and substitution rules of the game, etc. Classroom participation and performance may also be considered when playing time is concerned.

SPLIT PLAYERS

Depending on team/program numbers and needs, some players may be designated by the coaching staff as "split players". Generally, these players are on the brink of making the varsity team but can benefit from game time and development with the JV squad, as well. Split players can be expected to split time between the varsity and JV teams at any given time over the course of the season. Often, a split player's inclusion on the varsity or JV team for a given game or tournament will be determined with a view of playing time and ability to adapt in mind. A split player should not expect to be given playing time but must work hard to prove they deserve minutes wherever they end up playing.

Parents will be notified as soon as possible if a split player is expected to be playing with JV, varsity, or both for any given contest.

TRYOUTS

Tryouts will be conducted during the first week of practice and will consist of a variety of activities designed to evaluate players' skills, abilities, fitness, knowledge of the game, comprehension of tactics, etc. Teams will be announced during the second week of practice, if not sooner.

Something to keep in mind... being assigned to the JV team is not a punishment. It is not a reflection of personal character or worth. One of the coaching staff's goals is to help every athlete find success on the field. Rarely will an athlete be placed on or chosen for the varsity squad unless there is a reasonable expectation that said athlete will contribute to the team. While playing time is a consideration of contribution, other factors play a role in determining an athlete's overall contribution to the program. Team chemistry, attitude, work ethic, and more are considered carefully when making varsity selections and call-ups.

It's also worth noting that movement between teams is not uncommon. JV players that excel in practice and games may be invited to participate with the varsity squad. Similarly, varsity players that are struggling for minutes may be given an opportunity at the JV level to work on their game, build confidence, find form and log valuable game minutes.

Long story short... bring your best every single day in practice and games and you WILL find success.

UNIFORM INFORMATION

Uniforms will be handed out once teams are announced. It is each player's responsibility to take care of/regularly clean their uniform over the course of the season.

Uniforms and other program-assigned gear must be turned in before or during the end-of-season banquet. If a player is unable to turn in their uniform by the end-of-season banquet, it's their responsibility to communicate with the coaching staff and determine a time/place where they will return their uniform prior to the end of the academic school year.

Athletes who do not turn in their uniform by the end of the academic semester will incur a \$100 fine payable to the MHS Girls' Soccer Booster Club.

EQUIPMENT INFORMATION

All athletes must have a NOCSAE-certified pair of shin guards to participate in practices and games – **NO EXCEPTIONS.**



(NOCSAE certification stamp – this should be on all players' shin guards)

Athletes are required to wear soccer-specific cleats for practice and games. Unlike football, baseball, softball and lacrosse cleats, soccer cleats do not have a toe cleat. Athletes will not be allowed to wear cleats that include an extra toe cleat. Similarly, athletes are not allowed to wear running/tennis shoes for practices (unless specified by the coaching staff for fitness purposes) and games as they do not provide the traction needed for soccer specific movements and can lead to potential injury.

All athletes must have at least one home and one away pair of game socks (one solid blue, one solid white). The booster club will provide each athlete with their first pair of home and away game socks. These socks are part of the uniform and are NOT to be worn for practices. Additional game socks above and beyond the first pairs will be available to purchase from the girls' soccer booster club. Athletes in need of practice socks should talk with the coaching staff.

All athletes must bring game jerseys (home and away), game shorts, and both pairs of game socks (home and away) to each game. Unless stated otherwise, we will wear blue jerseys, blue shorts and blue socks when we are the home team according to regulations imposed by the NFHS and WIAA. Conversely, white jerseys, blue shorts and white socks will be worn when we are the away team.

If you forget any part of your uniform on game day, you will forfeit your opportunity to play. Coaches will not lend extra jerseys, shorts or socks out unless needed for blood/injury-related reasons.

CAPTAINS

The selection process for varsity and JV team captains is at the discretion of their respective coach(es). Varsity team captains will also function as captains for the entire program as it relates to non-game day events such as practices, team functions, etc.

VARSITY LETTERING

All athletes who play in 25% of all varsity competitions (approximately 5 games) and all seniors that complete the season in good standing will receive a varsity letter. Exceptions to these requirements that may prevent an athlete from receiving a varsity letter include:

1. The athlete has more than two unexcused absences.
2. The athlete has violated the Athletic Code of Conduct.
3. Coaching staff's discretion (poor attitude, lack of commitment, etc.).

The coaching staff reserves the right to award varsity letters to players that have played in less than 25% of all varsity games but have made a significant impact in the games they have played in – e.g. registering points via a goal or assist.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. **ALL** scheduled practices and games are **MANDATORY**.
2. Athletes must be on the field with all equipment on and ready to go by the time practices are scheduled to start. Practices are planned down to the minute and it is imperative to start on time. If athletes want to do extra rolling, stretching or ball work, they must take care of that **BEFORE** practice is scheduled to start – this includes taping and training room treatments. If you will be late due to an appointment or for school reasons, please bring a note; if possible, let the coaching staff know beforehand.
3. If athletes miss practice the day before a game, they will forfeit the opportunity to start in said game. If they are not at the two practices leading up to a game, they will not be eligible to play in the first half of said game whether it is excused or not.
4. **SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY**. Athletes will not be allowed to participate in practice or games on days they are absent from school for more than half of the day. School policy states that they may not practice or play in games if gone for more than half a day.
5. If there is a family-, religious- or school-related reason you cannot attend a practice or game, please discuss it with a coach as soon as possible. **Friends, work and out-of-season sports will not be considered as excused absences.**
6. Any absence not discussed with a coach prior to a given practice or game will be considered an unexcused absence until notified otherwise. All absences will be taken into consideration on a case-by-case basis.
7. Unexcused absences will result in ineligibility to play in upcoming games. If a player accrues three unexcused absences, they will be required to sit out the next game. A fourth unexcused absence will require the player to sit out an additional game (on top of the third unexcused absence one-game suspension – i.e. two games total). Five unexcused absences will result in removal from the team roster; the player will still be able to practice but will not be eligible to play in games for the rest of the season until a plan has been developed to make up the missed practices and a sincere re-commitment to the team and program has been put forth.
8. Players that leave the team (for whatever reason) will be removed from the team roster. Players removed from the team roster that want to come back and be part of the team must meet with the coaching staff and team captains to provide their reasons for wanting to rejoin the program. After meeting with coaches and captains, returning players must take part in one week of practice before being added back to a roster and considered for team selection. Any player that leaves the team twice in one season will not be eligible to participate in any games for the remainder of the season. All instances will be taken into consideration on a case-by-case basis.
9. **COMMUNICATION IS IMPORTANT**. The coaching staff understands life can pull athletes in five different directions at once. All we ask is you talk with us as soon as possible regarding absences and conflicts so we can work together to find a solution that puts the team and program first.

PRE-GAME EXPECTATIONS

1. **Pay attention to bus times;** they are final. If athletes are not on the bus by the scheduled bus leave time, they will not play, and the absence will be considered unexcused unless a sufficient explanation is provided (subject to the coaching staff's discernment).
2. Athletes are encouraged to bring healthy snacks and/or money for food on all away trips. Packing extra food will allow them to fuel up before the game, as well as replenish nutrients afterward.
3. **All players are expected to travel with the team using school transportation to and from all away games.**

In order to excuse a player from riding the bus, the player's coach must receive a signed and dated district approved form filled out by the player and the player's parent/guardian BEFORE LEAVING THE CONTEST SITE... NO FORM = RIDING THE BUS.

We **HIGHLY** encourage players and parents to view traveling with the team as a form of team bonding.

4. While on the bus, athletes must be respectful towards their teammates, coaches, and the bus driver. The noise level needs to be kept at a low enough volume that allows others to focus on the upcoming game, make headway on schoolwork, etc. Athletes should refrain from taking pictures on the bus as it poses a hazard for the bus driver.

All garbage must be picked up before exiting the bus. ***If garbage is left on the bus after a game, the team will spend the first and last 15 minutes of practice the next day doing sprints and other fitness-related activities. If garbage is left on the bus a second time at any point throughout the season, the team will spend the entirety of the next day's practice doing sprints and other fitness-related activities.***

Please save you and your teammates the trouble and pick up after yourselves.

5. All athletes will participate in the team warm-up, unless prevented from doing so by a pre-existing injury or condition. Everyone needs to prepare physically and mentally for the game – **NO EXCEPTIONS.**

GAME EXPECTATIONS

1. During games, athletes on the bench are expected to be actively watching. Side conversations not related to the game are discouraged.
2. Athletes on the bench are encouraged to go for a short jog every so often to stay warm and loose; doing so will help prevent unnecessary injuries.
3. All communication from athletes on the field and on the bench should be positive. Speaking to opposing players, coaches or game officials in a negative manner **WILL NOT** be tolerated.

4. All athletes should tuck their jerseys in and wear their uniform with pride. Jewelry of any kind is not allowed to be worn during games per WIAA regulations. All jewelry should be removed prior to pre-game warm-ups.
5. **REMINDER:** Athletes represent their team and coaches, Merrill High School, their family and the community. They should refrain from doing or saying anything that is detrimental or harmful to the program, their teammates or themselves. Athletes are always expected to show respect for their teammates and coaches, as well as the opposing team, coaches and fans even if they choose not to be respectful toward us.

POST-GAME EXPECTATIONS

1. Athletes will **ALWAYS** display good sportsmanship post-game regardless of the outcome—e.g. team handshakes (if applicable), etc.
2. After games, athletes will line up on the sideline as a team and take a jog across the field to thank parents, friends and fans for coming out to the game. They will then return to the bench area for stretching, post-game notes, etc.
3. Athletes may remove their socks, shin guards, and cleats when they return from their post-game jog, but jerseys and shorts should stay on unless appropriate post-game changing areas have been provided.
4. **ALL ATHLETES** are expected to help gather equipment after games—especially after home games. If needed, the coaching staff will assign groups of individuals to help pick up and store equipment on a game-to-game basis.

GAME CONDUCT

1. We're looking for athletes to maintain an even-keeled mentality during games (and practices)—they shouldn't let their highs get too high or lows get too low. Mistakes don't define a player; it's the reaction to a mistake that separates an average soccer player from an exceptional one.
2. Athletes are expected to control their bodies. Excessive fouls **WILL NOT** be tolerated. If the opposing team is committing excessive fouls, we will leave it up to their coaching staff and the game's officials to deal with their players. The Merrill High School girls' soccer program will play the game as it is meant to be played—with respect and class.
3. Athletes are expected to control their language. It is completely unnecessary to swear at any point during the game. If a player is issued a card for swearing (or dissent), they will spend the remainder of the game on the bench.
4. Athletes will not argue calls with the referee—coaches and captains are the only individuals permitted to converse with the official regarding the game. They should not react in a negative way towards an official in any circumstance, but rather treat them how they wish to be treated.

If players have a question on what is called, they should defer to their captain(s) and/or coaches to ask the referee for an explanation or clarification.

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

1. All athletes must maintain an acceptable GPA. The coaching staff will be checking grades and players will be ineligible to play if their grades are not up to set standards. School policy states you need a 1.5 to be eligible and have no more than 2 F's. Any player not in compliance with this rule will not be allowed to compete until grades are improved.

REMINDER: YOU ARE STUDENTS FIRST AND FOREMOST. BEING A PART OF THIS TEAM OR ANY PROGRAM IS A PRIVILEGE TO BE EARNED.

2. Athletes are expected to make smart decisions wherever they are. They should not do anything that could bring disrepute on themselves, their teammates, the girls' soccer program, the school district, their family or the greater Merrill community. If athletes violate the Athletic Code of Conduct via drinking, smoking, disorderly conduct, etc. (refer to the Athletic Code of Conduct for a comprehensive list), playing time is not guaranteed after the school-imposed suspension is served. If the violation is severe enough, the coaching staff reserves the right to remove the athlete in violation from the roster.
3. All athletes must wear appropriate gear to practice; no shin guards = conditioning and fitness. It is also reasonable to expect everyone must be prepared for varying weather conditions. The beginning of the season tends to be cold, while we usually experience warmer weather towards the end of the season. Athletes are expected to make an appropriate judgment when dressing for practice. If they are unable to participate because of inadequate/inappropriate clothing, they will incur an unexcused absence.
4. All injuries need to be reported to a coach **IMMEDIATELY**. Trying to "be tough" or fight through an injury can, and probably will, make it worse.
5. **The coaching staff expects all players to work hard every day.** Playing time is not entirely based on talent. Coaches also take into consideration players that work hard and know the system of play, as well as those who are great team players. ***Work hard and you will find success!***

ROLE OF PARENTS

Parent involvement is an extremely important topic of discussion in high school sports. The role parents play throughout the duration of a given season can drastically change the attitudes and effort of players. Our goal is for the players to be as focused on their team as they can be. The following is a set of guidelines to consider throughout the season to ensure a successful season for your athlete and the program:

1. All coaches have been hired for a reason. The coaching staff puts the teams and program first and makes decisions to maximize the benefits for both. While enthusiasm to help your athletes improve is appreciated, please do not try to coach them differently at home or try to coach from

the stands and sidelines. All outside coaching can potentially destabilize what the team is working on in practice.

2. **Playing time will NOT be equal, especially at the varsity level.** Athletes are positioned on the field for a specific reason. If you are concerned about your athlete's position or playing time, please talk with them first to see what they could be doing better in practice to ensure more playing time. If you still have questions about their playing time, please email or call the head coach to set up an appointment to meet with both you and your athlete. **PARENTS TALKING TO COACHES ABOUT LACK OF PLAYING TIME OR OTHER NEGATIVE MATTERS FOLLOWING A GAME IS NOT ACCEPTABLE.** We ask you think about an issue for a full 24 hours before requesting a meeting. It is important to give yourself and/or the coach(es) time to get outside the confines of competition and reassess an issue or situation when heightened emotions have had a chance to settle down.
3. If any of your concerns are coming straight from your athlete, please direct them to their head coach. We want players to be self-sufficient and responsible. Having them talk with their coach gives them an opportunity to face their problems head on. We believe wholeheartedly in communication, so we expect any problem they might have will be directed to their head coach immediately.
4. If you are dissatisfied with anything in the program, the head coach must be made aware as soon as possible. ***It is entirely inappropriate to meet with the Athletic Director unless you have already voiced your concerns and opinions to the coach/coaching staff.*** The following process represents the appropriate course of communication for all problems and/or issues:
 - a. Athlete meets with their head coach/coaching staff.
 - b. Both the athlete and their parent(s) meet with the head coach/coaching staff.
 - c. Athlete, their parent(s), their head coach/coaching staff meet with the Athletic Director.
 - d. All persons listed above meet with the building Principal.
 - e. All persons listed above meet with the district Superintendent.
5. **The role of parents is to encourage your athletes in a positive manner** whether it be in soccer, school or in making responsible decisions daily.

During games, it is important that you communicate in a positive manner—you would be surprised how easy it is to pick out one particular voice in a crowd of people. We want all our players to grow in confidence. Positive communication goes a long way towards accomplishing this goal.

6. If you have any questions about the coaching staff's decisions and methods, please feel free to ask at an appropriate time and in an appropriate manner—we ask you follow the appropriate order of communication provided above. A lot of different factors go into coaching a high school soccer program and we ask you trust that we have the best interest of your athlete, the teams and the program in mind.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The Merrill High School girls' soccer program and its athletes will adhere to all standards, policies and procedures set forth by the Activities Department and school district regarding social media use.

MANAGERS

Managers are considered to be a part of the team and are expected to be at every practice and game unless prior notice is given to the coaching staff. Managers are expected to help with various practice and game day tasks such as (but not limited to) equipment set-up and take-down, recording stats and filling out the WIAA game report, operating the game clock, etc.

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merrillsoccer.com/mhs-girls-soccer.html

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