

Prior Lake Lakers Softball Handbook

2023-24 Coaching Staff		
Varsity Head Coach	Erika Schmoll Smyth	softball.plhs@gmail.com
Varsity Assistant Coach	Brooke Otterstatter	softball.plhs@gmail.com
Varsity Assistant Coach	Taylor Elasky	telasky28@gmail.com
JV Head Coach	Jon Tolbert	itolbert@plsas.org
10 th Grade Head Coach	Katie Koren	kkoren@plsas.org
9 th Grade Head Coach	Beth Fuller	bfuller@plsas.org

2023-24 Captains		
Courtney Hennen	952-240-0710	courtneylhen@icloud.com
Jenna Ulin	952-290-3579	jennaulin13@gmail.com
Lauren Thurk	612-790-1921	laurenthurk@gmail.com

Prior Lake Softball Purpose & Mission:

Our purpose is to help navigate student-athletes to unlock their potential in both sport and life in a way that inspires and demonstrates empathy, authenticity, and hard work.

Our mission is to create and maintain a positive softball environment that encourages teamwork & development mentally, physically, and academically.

Philosophy:

Our coaching staff will always prioritize building outstanding people first and foremost. We will be consistent, honest, and build relationships through positive leadership. We will create an open line of communication between staff, athletes, and families. Our staff will also teach the highest level of softball knowledge, fundamentals, and strategies.

Varsity Roster Expectations:

Our Varsity coaching staff will be making final decisions on player placement onto the roster. Our staff will prioritize skill, leadership, and quality of teammate first. If there is an athlete that is viewed of the same caliber as another athlete in all three of those facets, our staff will then prioritize the older athlete for our Varsity team for roster selection.

Varsity Playing Time:

This will be at the entire Varsity coaching staff's discretion and by the following criteria: skill level, in-game & practice performance, work ethic, attitude, and off-field conduct. The players who have earned it will play. **We are playing to win – age/grade does not play a role in playing time.** There is no guarantee of playing time when you are on the Varsity roster and in the dugout. Roster numbers on the Varsity team will vary by game. A select group of players will share time on both JV and Varsity.

All ages of athletes (7th grade – 12th grade) are eligible to be a Varsity player on our roster.

Tryout Expectations:

All athletes must have the following documents in the Activities Office before our first tryout date. Failure to do so will result in the individual not being able to participate in tryouts, practice, or games until the matter has been resolved.

1. Current athletic physical
2. Complete health questionnaire
3. Signed MSHSL eligibility statement
4. Athletic fee paid, or arrangements made.

2024 Softball Tryouts are open to all positions in 8th grade – 12th grade. 7th grade players are welcome to tryout if they are pitchers and/or catchers. We will open up tryouts to all 7th graders if registration shows that we have a need for additional players. Our goal is to limit cuts in our program and having a spot for those who tryout at the older ages.

Section Roster Expectations:

Our Prior Lake Softball staff will be making final decisions on player placement onto the Sections Roster. We are only allowed **18** athletes onto our sections roster. This roster will be determined by performance on your individual team, position need, and presence as a great teammate. Coaching staff at all 4 levels will have input on what players earn a spot on the Sections Roster.

Lettering Policy:

- Letters will be given to all athletes who are on the Sections Roster.
- The coaches reserve the right to award a letter to a player who promotes positive attitude, outstanding dedication to the team, and commitment to work ethic that makes the program better.

Spring Break Policy:

Spring Break is an important time for coaches to get to know players, their positions, potential batting order, and equipment handout. We need athletes to be physically and mentally ready to begin the season. If a Varsity player misses a mandatory practice over Spring Break, that player will sit one game for every practice missed. Any lower-level players that miss 4/4 – 4/5 will not be eligible to participate in the first 1 – 2 Varsity games of the season.

- Junior Varsity, 10th Grade, and 9th Grade will have OPTIONAL practices from Friday, 3/29 – Friday 4/5. There will be no mandatory practices for the lower levels over Spring Break.
- Varsity will have OPTIONAL practices from Friday, 3/29 – Wednesday, 4/3. Varsity will have **MANDATORY** practices on Thursday, 4/4 and Friday, 4/5.

Athletes are excused from Spring Break practices and will not face loss of game eligibility if the absence is due to a Faith and/or Prior Lake High School sanctioned activity. We do require each athlete to let their assigned coach know their availability throughout the week of Spring Break.

Captain Selection:

Captains will be selected for the following season via player input, entire coaching staff input, and an interview process within our Activities Department.

- Captains will not be announced at the end of the year banquet – this banquet is reserved to celebrate our current season and Senior class
- Captains will be announced shortly following the interview process and application review. Applications are open to athletes on JV and Varsity.

Practice Expectations:

- Our coaches are required to come daily with a detailed practice plan that is tailored to your team's specific defensive and offensive needs.
- Practices begin at 3:30 PM – players are expected to begin their dynamic warm-up at exactly 3:30 PM.
- Players are expected to show up ready, prepared, and committed to giving their full effort at each practice.

2024 Practice Schedule:

- Days: Monday – Friday (Non-Game Days)
- Times: 3:30 PM – 5:30 PM
- Location: PLHS Activity Center & Daggit Field/JV
 - Times remain the same on early release dates unless otherwise notified
 - Spring Break we will host morning practices

Practice & Game Uniforms:

Prior Lake will not provide athletes with softball equipment outside of balls, tees, bownets, etc. All softball athletes must provide their own individual softball equipment i.e. bat, glove, catchers gear, fielding mask, metal/rubber cleats, batting gloves, batting helmet, etc. Our coaching staff can assist with any questions when purchasing new softball equipment.

- **Game Uniforms:** Prior Lake will provide all uniform tops. It is an expectation that all uniforms are tucked in and worn as intended during games. **No club or outside program uniform items are allowed to be worn.** The following are necessary game uniform items:
 - Navy & White Socks
 - Navy & White Belts
 - Navy & White Pants
 - Navy & White Undersleeves
 - Navy WristCoaches Wristband
 - White Helmets
- **Practice Uniforms:** There is no club softball or outside Prior Lake apparel allowed to be worn during practices – this includes t-shirts and helmets. Softball bags are OK to be outside of PL. Necessary practice uniform items:
 - PL Gear or PL Colors **ONLY**
 - Navy, Gold/Yellow, White, Gray, etc.

- Black pants are allowed
- Softball pants & socks are required to be worn. Coaches can allow shorts/other clothing for hitting specific practice and will let players know.

Communication & Absences:

All players will be required to communicate with the coaching staff on any injuries, questions, conflicts, and absences:

- 9th, 10th/B, JV, and Varsity will have their own specific team GroupMe with all players and coaches.
- All injuries must be disclosed and discussed with coaching staff and PL Athletic Training Staff. Each player's health is a priority, we want to make sure we are making the appropriate modifications in work outs to do what is best for the athlete and taking care of injuries.
- Players are excused from practices for the following: Faith, Family, and Prior Lake High School Sanctioned Events.
- Unexcused absences will result in game suspensions. Each unexcused absence will incur the following consequences:
 - 1st Offense: 3 inning suspension, meeting with athlete & coaching staff
 - 2nd Offense: 1 game suspension, meeting with athlete, parent/guardian, & coaching staff
 - 3rd Offense: 3 game suspension, meeting with athlete, parent/guardian, Activities Director & coaching staff
 - 4th Offense: Dismissal from program

Rainouts & Changes:

Minnesota Springs are unpredictable! We strongly recommend that parents and players follow Prior Lake Softball on a social media outlets (Twitter (X)/Instagram/Facebook/GameChanger). This is where the first reports will be shared and we will follow up via email. Any game cancellations are typically decided by noon day of. The information will be shared on the message boards at school.

24 Hour Rule & Line of Communication:

It is required that a player and/or parent wait a total of **24 HOURS** from the conclusion of a tournament, doubleheader, or game/competition to contact the coaching staff on issues or questions surrounding playing time. This includes contact in person, but phone, or by email.

Line of Communication: It is required and essential that our line of communication is followed by players, family members, and coaching staff.

1. Athlete and Head Coach
2. Athlete, Full Coaching Staff, and Parents
3. Athlete, Full Coaching Staff, Parents, and Activities Director

Respect:

- It is required that all players respect their parents/family members, coaches, teammates, officials, and the competition. We have ZERO tolerance for any unsportsmanlike behavior or bullying.
- All players are required to help with equipment. If coaches or staff see the same players picking up or helping with equipment each practice or game, we will be implementing an equipment schedule for athletes. Leave facilities better than you found them!
- Players are expected to follow all MSHSL and Prior Lake High School rules & regulations – this includes and is not limited to: drug & alcohol policies, grade requirements, attendance requirements, etc. Failure to do so will result in suspension and/or dismissal from the softball program.

In-Season Transportation

All athletes are required to ride the bus to away games. If there are conflicts with this, the exception must be submitted to the Activities Office and approved.

- Players are expected to ride the bus back to PLHS but are welcome to submit requests to ride home with parents/guardians **ONLY**. Head coaches must be notified and must be approved beforehand.
- Any inappropriate behavior on the buses will be met with disciplinary action including, but not limited to, suspension from team, game, and/or practices.
- Phones are expected to be put away into individual bags before we exit the bus and get to the field. No phones allowed in the dugout.
- Middle school pick-up will be communicated for away games beforehand – we will try our best to get this out as soon as possible. **Middle school athletes are required to use the Activities bus for transportation to the high school for game days.**

Control the Controllables:

Every player, family member, and staff member are expected to maintain a positive attitude and hold each other accountable.

- Teamwork is not a preference; it is a requirement – encourage one another.
- Expect the most from yourself, your teammates, and coaches – hold each other accountable.
- Do your best. When you fail, fail HARD! Learn, adjust, and grow from failure.
- Players are asked to stay in the dugout during games and competitions – only communicate with family members to grab water, snacks, etc.
 - No cell phone use or connected watch use allowed during practices and games.

Social Media:

All players are required to act appropriately on all social media sites. This includes respecting the representation of Prior Lake Softball, your teammates, your opponents, and

officials/umpires. Any negative posts from players' social media sites will be grounds for suspension or removal from our softball program.

- Before I make a post, I pledge to ask myself:
 - Who will see what I posted?
 - Will anyone be offended, embarrassed or hurt by it?
 - Am I proud of what I am posting?
 - How would I feel if someone posted it about me?

Volunteering & Fundraising:

Players and family volunteers are required to participate in various PL Softball Booster club fundraisers. Boosters will provide information on all fundraising activities throughout the year for players and families to sign up for.

2023-24 PLHS Booster Members		
President	Amy Holmes	pruds15@gmail.com
LABC Representative	Brian Hennen	bhennen24@live.com
Treasurer	Jim Erickson	jim.a.erickson1@gmail.com
Apparel Coordinator	Lisa Thurk	thurkjl@gmail.com

Closing:

The best way players and families can get in touch with our staff is through the emails listed on page 1. Please give us 24 hours to respond. Thank you!