



Dear Varsity and JV Softball Parents & Players,

First, I want to thank you for all your support throughout the pre-season. I am writing this email to clarify the coaching staff's philosophies about playing time with respect to perceived entitlement towards playing time. I figure that even though this may not apply to all of you, it makes sense to send out a clear statement to everyone so that we are all on the same page and so that we can be the strongest program that we can be.

To start, I would like to remind you about **our** policy about playing time that was shared with our athletes during the pre-season meeting: **there is absolutely no guarantee for playing time at the Varsity or JV level.** Decisions about playing time, which have nothing to do with grade level or number of years on the team, are made strictly by the coaching staff (all of us agree) and are non-negotiable.

I would also ask you to try to understand things from a broader perspective - maybe even from a coach's perspective. Many of you would like to have more playing time. Many of the players would like more playing time. **The reality is that it would be impossible to please everyone in terms of playing time. We have several talented players and 9 starting positions.** Playing time decisions for this year's team is even more of a challenge because of the depth of our team; we have an exciting group of players, all of whom can and do contribute. It is exciting that different players step up and shine; in the long run, this will make us a much more dangerous team.

Although it is my job to make difficult decisions, I would ask that you please respect that decisions about playing time are very challenging for us, and we understand it is a sensitive issue. We do our best to provide opportunities for everyone as often as we feel it is appropriate and productive for the team and the individual. It may help you to understand that playing time decisions are based on a combination of things:

- a player's position
- what the team needs at a given moment in a game
- how a player has been playing in practice that week
- a player's physical abilities to handle a game situation
- a player's emotional/mental abilities to handle a game situation
- how the players have performed earlier games
- ability to apply instructed skill
- **a player's attitude and ability to meet team standards that were outlined through pre-season**
- a player's ability and willingness to play within the team's systems (offenses and defenses)
- how many other players play the same position and bring the same skills

Because of all these complicated factors, and because the team is so deep, we do not believe in having preset substitutions. **We communicate expectations to our players and attempt to help them understand where they fit into the master plan. And we emphasize that all roles are important to the team.**

Players contact us and ask for meetings about their roles and about how to increase the number of minutes they play in a game. We are always happy to communicate with players directly and give them feedback about our expectations and their performance. We also try to remind them that playing time should not be the reason they are playing softball, and that every role on the team is valued and important. Every player is on the team for a reason, and every player has something to offer the team. Every player is equally important to our successes, and everyone is responsible for our losses. On our team, the manager is as important as “the star” player, the head coach is no more important than the assistant coach, etc. The coaches believe that everyone on this team deserves to be here and has something to offer; we recognize that the challenge is getting the players to recognize this as well.

I care about my relationships with all players. I would hate for something like playing time to taint a player's experience on this team. Please trust me that we are always looking out for all players' best interests, and it is in our best interest to have everyone playing well and with confidence.

Our goal has always been to look out for the team as a whole and to create opportunities for success for everyone in the program, and of course this is what we will continue to try to do. I hope that you will be able to look at your experiences with this team and realize that minutes played have no relation to how much each student can grow as a player and as a person. We are seeing growth each day, and we are grateful to work with each and every player on the team.

Thank you for your time and understanding.

Regards,

Tina Hesdon

Tina Hesdon, Head Varsity Softball Coach

