

AMHERST THUNDER FASTPITCH SOFTBALL

Player/Parent Handbook



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MESSAGE FROM THE THUNDER COORDINATOR

Amherst Thunder’s softball program serves as an integral part of the Amherst Girls Softball League. Our young women will learn respect for themselves and others, leadership, discipline, teamwork, and sportsmanship. It is the goal of Amherst Thunder Softball that life-long lessons will remain with the athlete long after her playing days are over and that life-long friendships will be developed and nurtured.

It is critical to the success of any athletics program that everyone understand the role they play. All of us: coaches, parents, board members, and of course, athletes, need to understand and embrace our role. When this happens, programs and teams will find success.

Amherst Thunder defines success in more than just a win –loss record. It is defined by how much the athlete has improved, has grown, and has enjoyed her experience. Success is also defined through developing our Core Covenants, **Teamwork, Honor, Unselfishness, No Fear, Driven, Enthusiasm,** and **Respect**, which are displayed during practices and competitions by our Amherst Thunder athletes.

Thank you for the role you play in helping to make our softball program a successful one. Thank you to the coaches for sharing their time and talents, to the parents and fans for supporting our athletes in their efforts, and most importantly, to the girls for choosing Amherst Thunder Softball. Go Thunder!

Sincerely,

Shawn Bell
Amherst Thunder Coordinator

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Amherst Thunder travel softball is to help young women develop discipline, work ethic, and leadership skills; learn to have respect for themselves, their teammates, parents, and coaches; not only in competition, but in life.

Amherst Thunder’s focus is on the growth and improvement of our girls through the spirit of teamwork and honor for the game. They will learn the skills, tactics, and strategies of softball and improve as a player, while learning “life lessons” that have value beyond the playing field.

These goals will be accomplished by providing a structured program for our players in all aspects of the game. The Thunder program is committed to creating a positive culture, in which coaches, parents, fans, officials and athletes work together to achieve our mission.



AMHERST THUNDER SOFTBALL PROGRAM

Fees for the Amherst Thunder Travel Softball program will vary depending on age level, league participation, number of tournaments, and winter training fees. Budget for the Amherst Thunder teams are managed on an individual team basis. The budget is based on a 12 player roster, travel league registration (Metro or NFL), tournament registrations, full uniforms (including team batting helmet and equipment bag), insurance, misc. team equipment, winter training at Softball Central, and age level specifics below. Player fees and payments are defined in the player contracts. Once all team expenses are paid, any remaining funds will be allocated to a team year-end party, or equally divided and returned to parents as determined by the head coach. The following competitive softball teams are offered:

10U Level

Players are required to be Amherst residents or pay Amherst school taxes to be eligible to play and must register for Amherst Girls Softball League house program by 3/1. Exceptions will only be granted by board approval.

12U Level

Players are required to be Amherst residents or pay Amherst school taxes to be eligible to play and must register for Amherst Girls Softball League house program by 3/1. Exceptions will only be granted by board approval.

14U, 16U, and 18U Levels

Residency requirements as defined by the travel league association in which the team registers. This may allow for a certain number of exceptions to the Amherst residency requirement.

Role/Expectations of the Athlete

Participating on an Amherst Thunder team is a privilege and requires a great deal of dedication. We expect all athletes to comply with the following expectations. Failure to do so may result in reduced playing time and/or dismissal from the team.

- To demonstrate appropriate sportsmanship and appropriate behavior at all times to other teammates, opponents, officials, parents, coaches, spectators, and themselves. This includes the use of social media platforms.
- Strive to be the best that I can be and make every attempt to be physically, mentally and morally fit for success.
- Remember that you are part of a team. The team is the star, not the individual.
- To attend all practices, games, and tournaments unless previous arrangements have been made with the coach. Missing a practice/game, may result in restricted playing time in the next game.
- Respect the opponents and teammates and accept winning or defeat with dignity at all times.



- Will not engage in disrespectful behavior toward another player, umpire, or another coach during practices, competitions, or social media. This includes but is not limited to: taunting, trash-talking, and other forms of intimidation.
- Participate in activities, such as fundraisers, to support the association.
- Arrive on time and be ready to go, whenever time is involved, and prepared with my uniform and equipment.
- Listen to my coaches and obey what they are instructing me to do. I will also accept criticism in a constructive way, understanding that my coach is trying to improve me and not for personal reasons.
- Cell phones will not be permitted during practices or games. Please leave them in your bag.
- Understand that positions and playing time is not guaranteed, rather is based on the coaches' decisions that best support the team. I will support the coaches and my teammates with a positive attitude, regardless of how lineup decisions affect me individually.
- May not play on another travel team without the expressed written consent of the coach

Role/Expectations of the Parent

Our parents are an integral part of our athletic program. The support of parents and spectators lends itself to the success of our athletes. Athletics is another arena in which our young women are able to create a positive self-image. With the support of our parents, coaches can perform to the best of their ability and ultimately guide athletes to succeed, not only in athletics, but also in the real world. We expect our parents to act in a manner that encourages and supports the team atmosphere, not only individual performance. Parents are to be an exemplary role model for good sportsmanship and team play. We expect all parents of Amherst Thunder athletes to comply with the following expectations.

- Treat all players, coaches, parents, spectators and umpires with respect. I will never talk down to a player, umpire or another coach. This includes the use of social media platforms.
- Do not use foul language, physical aggression or uncooperative behavior or body language towards a player, umpire or another coach.
- Promote the positive aspects of the game and encourage good sportsmanship at all times, assuring my daughter adheres to the rules of the game.
- Have zero tolerance for disruptive behavior and disrespect during all games, with anyone in the park and I will remember that I am a role model for my child, as well as others. I will not threaten anyone, physically or verbally, especially a child.
- Be supportive of my daughter, her coach and the rules of the league. I understand that if my daughter disobeys the rules, disciplinary action may be taken. That action, as the coach and board sees fit, may be removal from a game, suspension or expulsion from the association.
- Do not engage in arguments with coaches, players, umpires or another parent. The Amherst Thunder organization has a zero-tolerance policy specific to parent arguments.



- Understand that the coaches contribute significant time and effort into coaching my daughter and her team. I understand coaches are instructed to coach the players, not the parents. If your daughter has a question, please have her address it with the coaching staff. During games and practices the girls belong to the coaches, please don't coach your daughter from the stands.
- Participate in activities, such as fundraisers, to support the association, as outlined by the coach in the summer/fall team meeting.
- Understand that all fees must be paid as per the player contract or agreed upon schedule. Failure to pay on time may result in suspended participation of my child.
- Understand that positions and playing time is not guaranteed, rather is based on the coaches' decisions that best support the team. I will support the coaches and players with a positive attitude, regardless of how lineup decisions affect me individually.

Role/Expectations of the Coach

We at Amherst Thunder strongly believe that our Core Covenants, **Teamwork, Honor, Unselfishness, No Fear, Driven, Enthusiasm,** and **Respect** are the main components of our softball program. Coaches are expected to develop the character of our athletes, so they may find success in softball and throughout their lives.

The coach of the team is responsible for teaching the athletes physical skills, mentally preparing the team for competition, and maintaining a positive and caring attitude toward the athletes. Amherst Thunder Softball can also teach life skills such as hard work, discipline, commitment, sportsmanship, respect, and honesty. Coaches are in a position to develop moral excellence and to build self-esteem in each athlete.

Communicating Issues/Concerns

If non-emergency issues or concerns arise, we encourage our athletes to communicate with the coach and/or team captain(s). It is advisable to wait a day (the 24 hour rule) to calm down and think things through before contacting a coach. Do not confront a coach before or immediately after a competition or practice.

After the 24 hour period, the athlete is first expected to meet with the coach to bring forth concerns. If the concern remains unresolved, the parents may then meet with the coach. If the concern is still not resolved, the parent or athlete should contact the Amherst Thunder Coordinator.

The appropriate concerns to discuss with coaches are expectations during practices and games, ways to improve, and if appropriate, academic softball opportunities. Inappropriate issues to discuss with coaches are playing time, team strategy, play calling, other athletes, and personal opinions about the coach. Our coaches are professionals. They make decisions based on what is best for the team and all athletes involved.



PHOTO/VIDEO CONSENT

My daughter has permission to play for the Amherst Thunder Travel Softball/Amherst Girls Softball League. By signing the player contract, I consent that photographs and/or video of my child, may be taken or used by Amherst Thunder Travel Softball/Amherst Girls' Softball League for the purpose of public relations, marketing or promotion of the organization, including publication on the team's website and social media accounts.

I further understand and agree that said material shall become property of Amherst Thunder Travel Softball/Amherst Girls' Softball League and its assigns or successors, and I hereby release and discharge Amherst Thunder Travel Softball/Amherst Girls' Softball League and its representatives from any and all claims that may arise by reason of said photographs and/or videotapes. I understand that, although Amherst Thunder Travel Softball/Amherst Girls' Softball League will endeavor to use my child's photographs/video or likeness in accordance with standards of good judgment, Amherst Thunder Travel Softball/Amherst Girls' Softball League cannot warranty or guarantee that any further dissemination of my child's photograph/video or likeness will be subject to Amherst Thunder Travel Softball/Amherst Girls' Softball League's supervision or control.

Accordingly, I release Amherst Thunder Travel Softball/Amherst Girls' Softball League from any and all liability related to the release of said information. I also release all claims against Amherst Thunder Travel Softball/Amherst Girls' Softball League with respect to copyright ownership and publication including claim for compensation related to use of the materials.

College

Continuing your athletic participation in college is a wonderful aspiration. Please keep in mind that less than 1% of high school athletes receive a full athletic scholarship. Your coach and school counselor can assist you, but ultimately, it is your responsibility to be prepared academically and to know what steps are necessary to be NCAA/NAIA academically eligible.

This includes, but is not limited to: required Core Courses (9-12), Grade point average, SAT/ACT tests, NCAA Clearinghouse, and special conditions. The NCAA puts out a "Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete" that will lead you through a number of important topics.

Listed below are places to contact that may prove to be helpful in your pursuit of being a collegiate student-athlete.

- NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) www.ncaa.org
- NCAA Eligibility Center www.eligibilitycenter.org
- NAIA (National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics) www.naia.org