



THE PONY EXPRESS



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MHPB Information 778-MHPB

MHPB Web Site www.MHPB.org

Memorial Day Tournament

By Gregg Hall

Memorial Day weekend is fast approaching. This year will be a little different, as due to lack of Volunteer support, we will not be having our normal in-town event. This year, only Pinto will be playing in town. Their inter-divisional play will start on Thursday, and will be the same format as last year. The rest of the divisions will all be playing out of town this year. The events will be fairly local.

We are looking forward to the Memorial Day Tournaments, as good fun and a great warm up to the Post Season All Star Tournaments. Managers and coaches will be selected this week, and approved by the Board at the next meeting. Shortly after that, the players will be selected and notified by their manager if they make one of the teams. Fees for Memorial Day this year have gone to \$25 per person. This covers the costs of the tournaments, as well as a Jersey. Regular season hats are worn for the Memorial Day Events. Congratulations to those who make the teams, and good luck in your tournaments.

OPENING DAY

By Sally Plafker

Well, Opening Day / Weekend has come and gone, and it was great! We all came together to celebrate the start of a new Morgan Hill Pony Baseball season.

We'd like to thank Pam Mom for organizing the hot dog sale and Friendly Fred's for supplying the food. Pam would also like to thank all the people who helped her out, including Stephanie Cummins, Ellen Perez, Aimee Perry, Judy Thomas, and Tam Bouslog.

Patty Goularte did a great job of decorating and the celebration was fun and organized. The opening day games went without a hitch and I think we all enjoyed watching baseball start up again.

Thanks everyone!

MHPB Introduces “Summerball”

*By Bob Benevento, Winterball Director
(and acting Summerball Program Director)*

In response to a growing demand for competitive baseball during the summer and early fall, Morgan Hill Pony Baseball is preparing for a new “Summerball” program. This summer, the program is being presented on a trial basis. If the demand is great enough and the program successful, the league will consider extending the program in future years as a regular extension of MHPB.

The objective is to provide a competitive baseball program for select teams, where those teams will compete against equally competitive teams in a traveling and/or tournament environment. Since this is a new program, there may be many questions from interested parents. The following document is an extensive synopsis of the program. It should answer most questions. I know it will not answer all! What should be recognized, up front, is that while the program is open to all eligible players in the league, not all kids will be picked to play on a team. Cuts at a young age could be difficult to comprehend. Please be sure you and your child understand the implications of being cut. Also, selection to a team implies commitment. If you are not committed to baseball, traveling most weekends, fast foods, long drives, weekends at dusty environs, and other expenses, then I ask you to carefully consider if this program is for you. After all of this, if you are convinced this is right for your kid and for you, then I look forward to your active participation.

Program Synopsis:

Teams / Age Groups: Teams will be formed in one year age increments, starting with the “9 and under” (9U) category. The age groups will be 9U, 10U, 11U, 12U, 13U, and 14U. The cutoff date for determining “age” will be August 1. To clarify: If a player turns 10 years old on July 31 or earlier in the year, he shall be considered a 10U player in this program. If he turns 10 on August 1 or later in the year, he shall be considered a 9U player for this season. Boys who turn 15 prior to August 1 are not eligible to play in the 14U program. All candidates for the program **MUST provide a copy of his/her birth certificate** at the time of registration. These will be required for participation in tournament play.

The league is planning on fielding a minimum of one and a maximum of two teams per age group for this trial program.

Equipment: All rules as defined in either local MHPB or PONY Baseball will remain in effect for the summer program.

Rules of Play: Other than as noted in the Summerball Program (copies available upon request), the rules of play are those defined by PONY Baseball Inc., the Official Rules of Baseball as published by the Sporting News, and the rules of the governing body in any given tournament where a team plays. Typical rules as published by USSSA and other such organizations are in effect.

Please note; there are **NO MINIMUM PLAY rules**, as normally found in the spring MHPB season.

Season of Play: Play will not start until the conclusion of divisional participation in the PONY Baseball Inc. All-Star Tournament. Play may continue until the end of the calendar year. Players who play in the Summerball program may also play in MHPB Winterball, however they may not pitch in the Winterball program.

Schedules: Games/tournaments are to be scheduled by the manager of each team, not by MHPB.

Sanctioning: Teams may need to be registered with USSSA or other governing bodies to participate in tournament play. The team manager will be responsible for this registration. MHPB will reimburse the manager / team for such registration, at an estimated cost of \$20.00, one registration per team.

Fields: Field dimensions vary in this environment. They do not necessarily conform to PONY Baseball Inc. dimensions. It will be the responsibility of the manager to familiarize himself with playing field dimensions.

Fees: Registration fees for Summerball will be \$150.00 per player. Fees will be used to offset costs of entry fees into four (4) tournaments per team during the course of the season (June – December), insurance and other nominal operating costs. The players / parents on any given team must cover all other tournament entry fees, travel, housing and meal expenses as incurred. Team sponsors may be permitted, however no sponsor identification is permitted on any part of the team uniform except the team cap. The intent is for this to be a self-sustaining program.

Tournaments: The Tournament Director of MHPB will schedule any tournaments hosted by MHPB. It is expected that MHPB will host at least one tournament in each age group during the course of the summer to help defray operating expenses of the Summerball program. Parents of players will be required to assist in operating the tournaments.

Contracts: All players (as well as managers, coaches and parents) will be required to sign a contract with MHPB, stipulating their commitment to the program as well as their behavior while participating in program activities. Failure to sign the contract will be grounds for dismissal or non-participation in the program. Contracts will be presented upon completion of the team formation.

Managers & Coaches: Will be selected and approved by the MHPB Board of Directors. Interested candidates will:

1. Have been participants in good standing in the spring MHPB 2002 season
2. Submit interest in candidacy in writing to the Program Director by May 6. Send via email to: Winterball Director at the MHPB Website. Please note name, email address, home address, telephone number and fax number if available. Or, mail to: Winterball Director c/o Morgan Hill Pony Baseball, PO Box 353, Morgan Hill, CA 95038.



Summerball (continued)

3. Submit a complete written application no later than May 13. Applications will be forwarded to interested candidates who contact the league as noted in article #2.
4. Confirm availability and commitment to manage/coach throughout the season.
5. Confirm interest and willingness to manage/coach even if child is NOT selected to play on the team.
6. Agree to be interviewed by a committee of members of the MHPB Board of Directors. Interviews should be completed by May 30, 2002. Recommendations from the committee will be made to the Board of Directors at the first board meeting in June.

NOTE: Dates noted in items 2 and 3 are flexible due to possible release date of this newsletter. However, all interviews should be completed by May 30. If questions, please leave a message at 778-MHPB.

Player Evaluation:

1. All candidates WILL TRY OUT, no exceptions. Failure to try out is disqualification.
2. All candidates must have participated in MHPB spring program. Exceptions may be made for candidates relocating into the MHPB district boundaries, with MHPB Executive Board approval. i.e. a player living in Gilroy who did not play in MHPB would not be eligible. If a player was living in Hollister (outside MHPB boundaries) and recently relocated into Morgan Hill, he could be considered.
3. Interested players must submit a written application with copy of birth certificate.
4. \$150.00 registration fee must accompany application. Refunds will be issued to players cut from the program.
5. Applications will be accepted between May 11 and May 31, 2002. Applications will be available through the Division Representatives, on the Website and at the Snack Shack.
6. Tryouts will take place over a period of three sessions. Two sessions will be Skill oriented, focusing on criteria such as arm strength, throwing accuracy, pitching, hitting, fielding and running. The third session will be a simulated game environment. Dates and times will be announced. The tryouts will be judged by a committee of three league affiliated adults, none of whom will be managers or coaches in the age group being evaluated or having children playing in that age group.
7. Scoring will be numeric. Rankings will be tabulated highest to lowest. Depending upon the numbers of interested candidates and teams to be formed, first cuts may be made based upon this ranking. The program director and player agent will tabulate all rankings.

Team / Player Selection:

1. Board approved managers & coaches will be assigned teams. If there are two teams there will be a serpentine draft. Order of the draft will be by lottery.

2. There will be no "frozen" positions in the draft. Children of managers/coaches, if qualified and ranked, will be assigned to the team of their parent(s) in bottom roster spots. Pitchers will be identified in advance of the draft.
3. Draft or team selection will take place during the week following the last week of MHPB season play (after City Championships). This draft or selection will not be affected by the MHPB All Star selection process.
4. Teams will consist of typically 12 to 15 players, although rosters may carry up to 18 players.
5. Players may decline an invitation to play for a manager. Options available are:
 - a. a strictly monitored trade, in writing, with sign off by both managers, player's parents, program director and all members of the Executive Board. The players under trade consideration must be considered of equal stature. If agreement by all parties is not attained, there will be no trade. No trades are permitted without the authorization of the entire Executive Board.
 - b. Withdrawal from the program, in which case the player will receive only a 50% refund of fees paid.
 - c. The player can return to the original team.
 - d. All requests must be submitted and completed within one week of draft. No requests for change will be honored after 1 week from the completion of the draft.
6. Players not selected in the draft or selection process will be considered "cut" and eligible for a full refund. By invitation, they may be added to teams at a later date to fill positions as they come available. Fees will be charged. If a player has not gone through the "try out" process, he will not be permitted to participate in the summer program. No late assignments will be made except directly through the League President.

Developing Self-Confidence

By Tom McClung, Player Agent

One of the most important aspects of youth development is growing their self-confidence. It is pretty overwhelming for a player whose skills are not refined to face a pitcher who is more skilled. It can cause great despair when time after time the player is unable to hit. As teammates and parents, we may even drag them down more when we do not give them any signs of approval or forgiveness. On the other hand a lucky hit, or even an error can do wonders as a confidence builder. Clearly self-confidence makes any player better.

Good teammates help instill confidence in the rest of the team. A positive, upbeat personality will always pick up the team. Even if it is not the easiest thing to do, strong leaders on the field (and ultimately in the office) build the confidence of those around them. They simply find ways to do this. Maybe it is a pat on the back, maybe it is a cheer, or maybe just a kind word and a smile, but the bottom line is a show of support. When anyone is told that someone else believes in them, they can not help but try a little harder.



Dr. George Selleck, a sports psychologist, wrote a book entitled *Raising a Good Sport in an In-Your-Face-World*. In his book, Dr. Selleck identifies three things to help raise players self-confidence. The first observation is that no one needs to be perfect. The best major league hitters fail over 60% of the time. No Gold Glove shortstop ever had a season without an error. A player who sulks or whines after a bad inning or an at bat brings down the team. Setbacks are normal. They should be taken in stride. Whenever someone fails, it does not mean they are a failure. Pick up their spirits and send them back in to fight again.

The second observation is that good players do not dwell on the past. As coaches and parents, we know we have to let things pass. If we dwell on past mistakes, we can not enjoy the present and neither can our players. We have to prove to them by our words and our actions that we have forgotten about the failures and only remember our successes.

The third observation is to focus on the positive, not the negative. When we discuss the game, talk about the things that went right, even if the score showed a thorough trouncing. If the focus is on how many times we strike out, we can't remember the hits we had. We want to remember the hits and we want to forget about the strikeouts. Help your players and your children by being optimistic and finding the good things they have done. Even the worst player in the league can do some things better than others. Search that out and show them your notice.

Sportsmanship and self-confidence are lifelong good traits. We should remember (and I will keep reminding you should you forget) we are teaching life lessons to our children. Winning or losing a specific game is not a life lesson. Building self confidence, respect, humility, and support of our teammates are life lessons that will work forever.

See you on the field!

COACHING OR MANAGING IN MORGAN HILL PONY BASEBALL

*By Ralph Villafuerte
Equipment Manager/Baseball Coach*

Coaching or Managing in baseball is a thankless job. When you accept the responsibility of coaching or managing, many things will come to light. First of all, responsibility. You are now responsible for 10 or more kids who are not your own. Of course, you will feel like these kids are yours, but after they go home from practice or games, your feeling ends.

Your job in coaching or managing these kids is to "TEACH" them the game of baseball. Baseball is like life. Things you do during the game, affect the outcome, just like life. Teaching them the basic things of the game is very beneficial to the end of the game. Things happen during a game that also affect the outcome. That is why teaching the basic

elements of the game helps overcome the bad parts of the game. These kids should learn to play as a team and depend on each other. Not every player is as good as the next. Skill level varies in a team with 12 players. You will have the good players and the players that need help. Think of your team as a piece of chain. There are 12 links in this chain. If all you links are strong, then the entire chain is strong. The overall strength of this chain is only as strong as the weakest link. This can relate to the needs of your team. The weakest player deserves the most attention. He or she can make the outcome of the game. During my last year as manager in the Colt division, I had 12 kids on my team. The team consisted of 11 very strong players and 1 player who never played baseball before. I gathered the top 6 of my players and told them the story about the chain being as strong as the weakest link. I also told them that this one kid, who never played before, is the weakest link in this chain. I told them that one of their jobs on this team was to make the weak link stronger. These 6 boys worked with this player and by the middle of the season this kid, who never played before, knew the basics and how to play the game. He also had the first hit of his life. The look on his face was priceless. After his hit and his celebration, I looked at the 6 boys and told them, "That's your doing". They were so proud of what this player did that the look on their faces was priceless too.

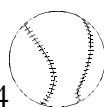
Many of the coaches or managers in MHPB have sons or daughters on the teams. They are usually the stronger players. Of course, you as parents want to make your sons or daughters get better. You as coaches or managers have to distinguish when to work on it. I believe your kids become the stronger players because you take the time to work with them at home. The weaker kids on the team might have not get the help at home. During the practices, you as a coach or manager should concentrate on the weaker players of the team. If you as a parent really want your kid to get better, work with him/her at home or after practice. Baseball is a team sport and the team is all the players on the team.

REMEMBER: THE CHAIN IS ONLY AS STRONG AS ITS WEAKEST LINK

MHPB Rules of Conduct

By Tom McClung

Every year as the season begins, managers, coaches, parents and players are optimistic about their season. Along the way, sometimes things do not work out the way they were envisioned. A strike out, a bad call by an umpire, or unfortunate words in passing cause emotions to rise. That frustration then manifests itself into anger. Anger starts a vicious cycle and baseball is no longer fun. The main character in the movie "For Love of the Game" deals with a lot of different thoughts in the last game of his career, but in the end he concludes baseball is indeed a great game. He is absolutely right.



MHPB has no tolerance for poor sportsmanship. Every manager should sit down with his team and his parents and reinforce the rules of conduct that are expected. Listed below are the rules of conduct for managers, coaches, and players, as well as parents and spectators. Please read the rules and take them to heart. Baseball is not much fun when there is anger and frustration generated by adults and children who are bitten by the competitive bug or who take the game too seriously. No one will remember in the future if the game was won or lost. Every player will only remember if they enjoyed their experience. Help us make it a great one.

The following are the official **Standards Of Conduct for all Morgan Hill Pony Baseball Players:**

Baseball teaches us many things, and it is great fun. We learn teamwork, fair play, competition, self respect, and many other valuable things as we go through life. These things are best learned when player behavior contributes to overall team wellbeing. Over time, the following guidelines have passed the test of time:

1. School work/homework comes first. The best baseball players tend to be good students.
2. Respect yourself – work to improve your skills.
3. Respect each other – help your teammates improve their skills.
4. Respect your parents – they made this season possible for you.
5. Respect the managers, coaches, and umpires – they are volunteering their time for you.
6. Respect the equipment – don't throw it.
7. Be early for both practice and games; come with a positive attitude.
8. No swearing or profanity at practice or at games.
9. Cheer your teams' successes, not the other teams' mistakes.
10. Find the fine and reward in teamwork.

Standards of Conduct for Parents, Relatives, & Spectators

1. I will strive to make positive comments only, being mindful that every player has family members in the stands.
2. I will respect the efforts of Managers, Coaches, and all volunteers, remembering that they have donated their free time for the benefit of our children.
3. I will try to not find too much fault with the umpires and scorekeepers, as I really can't expect them to be as perfect as myself.
4. I will refrain from profanity of any kind, as it is expressly prohibited by MHPB Rules.
5. I will abstain from alcohol and illegal drugs at obligatory MHPB functions.

Correction from the Editor

In the last news letter we printed a listing of parents and players that had helped on the field days. We would like to thank Arlene Williams, for her assistance and apologize for incorrectly reporting her name as Arlene Wilson.

Thank You to our Sponsors:

Since I have some room left over, I would like to add a note of thanks to some of our wonderful sponsors:

- 2 Gene Aviation
- A-1 Muffler & Brakes
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- At Your Home Screen Mobile
- The Bath Doctor
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- MTD Drywall & Framing

As space permits, more thank you columns will come in future newsletters. Let's all remember to patronize these very generous companies.