MENAHGA

GIRLS BASKETBALL

OFFICIAL HANDBOOK

2026-2027 SEASON

ELITE ATTITUDE • ELITE EFFORT • ELITE FUN

Head Coach: Coach Cody Pulju
Assistant Coach: Coach Rylan Aho
Assistant Coach: Coach Taija Pinoniemi
Jr. High Coaches: Coach Hahn, Coach Jasmer

Introduction

This handbook outlines the philosophies and expectations of the Menahga Braves Girls Basketball program. Being on the team comes with responsibilities. You are expected to follow the standards set by the coaches and school while representing Menahga High School with pride.
The season will challenge you and requires loyalty, discipline, teamwork, and commitment. How much you contribute to the team's tradition is up to you.
As a member of the team, your actions are noticed by students, teachers, and the community. Always set a positive example on and off the court.

Coaches Philosophy

The vision of the Menahga Girls Basketball program is to use the game of basketball to teach life lessons through both positive and challenging experiences. There is so much a student athlete can learn from the game, and those lessons can shape them for the rest of their lives.
Our program will teach athletes that hard work, dedication, trust, and teamwork can carry them through any difficult situation they face in life.
We want every athlete to understand that success is not measured by wins and losses. What truly matters is the effort, dedication, and heart we give to build a stronger team and to come together for something bigger than ourselves.
Our goal is for the Menahga Girls Basketball program to be recognized as a program of class by the community, parents, coaches, players, and administration.

Practice Expectations:

Practice will go from 3:30-5:30 after the first 2 weeks.
Players are expected to be dressed, taped (If needed) and warming up ***before 3:30***

Game Day:

Game Day Expectations

- Dress up or wear team travel suits as decided
- Stay hydrated; carry a water bottle
- Be ready by: C Team 4:40, JV 5:30, Varsity 6:20

Cell Phones

- Home: Keep in locker/backpack; ask coach if needed
- Away: Phones may be collected; use only to contact family
- No social media on the bus or in the locker room

Communication:

We will do our best as coaches to communicate information to players and parents as soon as possible. Many times, dates, and details are outlined in the schedule, but if there are changes, the coaches will let the players know about those changes as soon as possible through the GBB GroupMe.

Join here:

All direct player/coach communication should be done through GroupMe

Academic Eligibility

*** All academic eligibility rules will follow the MHS Handbook ****

Attendance Policy:

Attendance at practice and games is mandatory, and only extenuating circumstances will be counted as an excused absence. **Other school activities are excused.**

No Secrecy:

If parents wish to discuss their daughter, **she will be present**. If an issue needs to be discussed, a ***parent and the player*** need to be present. This is nonnegotiable.

Riding the Bus Home After Games:

If a player is going to ride home with a parent of another player, there must be written permission from both sets of parents. ***It is strongly encouraged that all athletes ride the bus.***

Club Sports During the Basketball Season

During the winter basketball season, participation in other organized sports is **strongly discouraged**. Full commitment ensures players stay focused, avoid scheduling conflicts, maintain health and performance, and contribute to the team's overall success.

24 Hour Rule:

Do not contact a coach about any basketball concerns after a game. This includes in person conversations, phone calls, emails, and text messages. Wait a full 24 hours to discuss basketball concerns with a coach.

Chain of Command:

Players and parents are expected to follow the proper chain of command when dealing with a problem or concern:

*Player talks to the coach at their level (JH, C, JV, V)
*Player talks to the varsity coach
*Player and parent talks to the varsity coach
*Player and parent talks to the coach and athletic director

Non-Debatable Issues:

Playing time, game strategy, scouting, and other personnel matters are decisions from the coaches, and these issues are not debatable.

Playing Time:

One of the most challenging responsibilities for a coach is determining playing time. All our players work hard to improve their skills and hope to earn time on the court to help the team win. As players move up through each level, the level of competition increases, and some may find it difficult to keep pace. We do not guarantee playing time. Instead, we believe it should be earned through hard work and consistent effort. Even though we do not promise minutes in games, we do make three commitments to every player:

1. We will not give up on any player. Whether someone plays the entire game or does not step on the court at all, we will continue to work to help that player improve.
2. We will be honest in our assessment of each player's skills. Coaches will identify individual strengths and weaknesses, and we will work to improve areas of need while helping strengths grow.
3. We will communicate as clearly as possible. It is our responsibility to explain roles and provide information.

According to the ISD #821 *Menahga High School Coaches Handbook:*

Playing Policies:

- Junior High Teams – At this level all participants will receive playing time. However, *equal* playing time is **not** a guarantee. Ultimately, it is based on the participant's attitude, work ethic, attendance/participation, and skill level.

- C-Team – At this level each player will have an opportunity to play but playing time will ***not*** be equal. Players with better skills will be first to participate. Players need to work on improving their skills. Ultimately, it is based on the participant's attitude, work ethic, attendance/participation, and skill level.

- Junior Varsity and Varsity – At this level, playing time is ***not*** guaranteed. All participants need to earn their starting spots. Players with the best skills will be the first to participate. Younger players will play in front of older players if their skills are better. Ultimately, it is based on the participants' attitude, work ethic, attendance/participation, and skill level.

Team Moral

There will be days during the season when disagreements arise. As a member of this team, you are expected to support what is best for the group. If you have a concern about anything related to the team, bring it directly to the coach so it can be addressed.
Only individuals invited by the coach, or those directly connected to the school or the team, are allowed in the locker room before or after games.
After each game, leave the floor immediately. Save conversations with friends until later. We will have a team discussion right after every game.

Captains:

Captains are team leaders. They should have played meaningful varsity minutes the previous year, be respected by teammates, work hard, and take part in all team activities. The coach may remove a captain who does not meet expectations.

Captain Responsibilities

Lead by example and help younger players learn plays and drills.
Share information from coaches on and off the court.
Assist with elementary and junior high programs.
Organize or help with team-building activities.
Bring concerns to the coaches when needed.
Captains must hold teammates accountable and support them. If someone is not meeting expectations, address it. If someone needs help, step up. Protect and support the team.

Team Managers:

Managers must be approved by the coaching staff prior to the start of the season. We may add more managers for playoffs. These managers will be **athletes from the Menahga Girls Basketball Program.**

Joining Late

Players may not join the team any later than **21 days** from the start date.

Team Rules:

- Get along with teammates on and off the court
- School comes first; be an elite student–athlete, in that order
- Have a positive attitude
- Show positive body language (no eye rolls or shoulder shrugs)
- No drama; address any issues that could affect the team immediately
- Follow all Minnesota State High School League and school conduct policies
- Be on time; if you are not early, you are late
- Players on the bench should bring energy and cheer for teammates
- When a player comes out of the game, everyone on the bench stands; the player must high-five every coach and teammate before sitting
- Place your hand on your heart and respect the flag during the national anthem

Failure to follow team rules will result in consequences determined by the coaching staff
Failure to follow MHS or MSHSL league rules will result in consequences determined by the Menahga High School Administration

MENAHGA LADY BRAVES

PLAYER/PARENT CONTRACT

2026-2027

I accept the invitation to join the Menahga Lady Braves basketball program and agree to follow all team rules.

As a member, I agree to:

- Always give my best in practice and games.
- Put the team's goals ahead of personal goals.
- Encourage and support teammates; avoid negative behavior.
- Accept my role and work to improve.
- Be honest with coaches and teammates.
- Communicate concerns maturely and at the proper time.
- Avoid actions that harm myself, teammates, the program, or the school.
- Be on time (ten minutes early is on time).
- Follow all team rules and procedures in the handbook.

I agree that I am aware of all these rules and understand that there will be consequences if I do not follow them.

Players Name: _____ Date: _____

Parents Name: _____ Date: _____