

LAMORINDA SPORTS

Miramonte baseball's senior captain and third baseman heads to Cornell



Joe Hollerbach

Photos Gint Federas

By Jon Kingdon

Coming off an 18-6-2 record in 2018, the Miramonte baseball team was approaching this past season with great optimism. However, as John Steinbeck once wrote: "The best laid plans of mice and men go awry." With a 7-16 record, it was the first losing season for Miramonte since 2013.

It had to be particularly onerous for Joe Hollerbach, a senior captain of the team, though he found a way to keep the team focused as the losses mounted: "There were a lot of us that were on the team from my junior year that were motivated by the loss to San Marin in the NCS playoffs. Despite this year's struggles, we made the effort to make sure that everyone was working hard. It was a lot of fun being with my teammates and despite our record, we all got better together." This season's top highlight for Hollerbach and Miramonte had to be getting revenge against San Marin in the second week of the season, winning by a score of 4-2.

Hollerbach's love of baseball began at an early age: "My grandfather had played baseball at the University of California and my first experiences with baseball began with my playing catch with him in the garage when I was 4 or 5 years old."

As is the wont of most athletes in Lamorinda, water sports was also part of Hollerbach's athletic experience, having played water polo for Miramonte and on a club team through his sophomore year before focusing entirely on baseball: "It was more of a hobby that I enjoyed doing with my friends."

Playing for Miramonte head coach Kevin Hodges his junior and senior years was a positive for Hollerbach: "He was a super passionate guy that put the players first and has a lot of love for the players. He worked to get everyone better and sacrificed his time so that we could develop as ball players and as people."

Hodges spoke of the character and leadership that Hollerbach brought to the team: "Joe set the tempo, the mood, the tone and the disci-

pline for the team. He was an extension of the coaching staff."

Hollerbach also gives credit for his play to a former Miramonte student, Samuel Liang, with whom he played with at Miramonte and who is now playing for San Jose State: "I got a lot of reps with Samuel and he really helped me to develop as a player."

Hollerbach did some pitching for Miramonte but his primary position for the Matadors was at third base and he batted "in the .380's this year."

Despite the team's disappointing season, Hollerbach was recruited to play baseball by a number of schools, but it was an easy decision for Hollerbach: "Cornell was my first choice. It's a very good school academically and they have a good baseball team where I can see myself getting better, being able to continue to play a sport that I love. After visiting the campus, I was able to see myself fitting in there. The weather may take some getting used to but it will be a new experience and I'm excited about it."

Frank Hager, an assistant coach and the head of recruiting for the Cornell baseball team sees great potential in the 6'3" 200 pound Hollerbach: "We knew about Joe for about a year and a half. He had a good season as a junior and we saw him play in late June last year. He's an athletic, strong kid who has a good arm and plays good defense. We focused on offense this year and believe that Joe will help us with his bat and defense. I see him playing a good third base for us in the years to come. He's a fun, energetic guy that got along with everyone when he made his visit to Cornell. His coaches spoke very highly about his leadership abilities and his character."

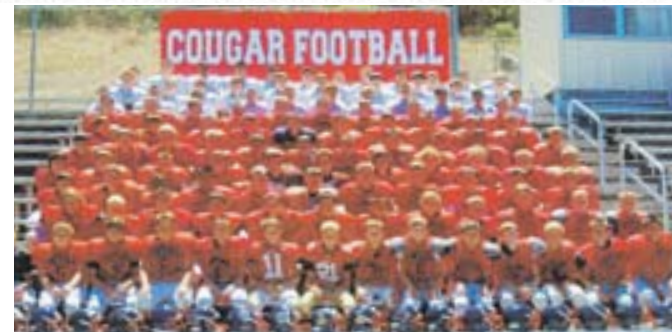
Miramonte was more than a sports vehicle for Hollerbach: "It's a great environment for people wanting to do well academically. Still the students are able to have fun and enjoy their friends and other experiences. My favorite classes were in math and science along with AP statistics and a class in Law and Society."

The future economics major approached baseball as he did his classes: "My favorite part of the game is the mental side of it. It's preparing for every possible situation."

A good rule to follow on the field and in the classroom.



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