

Chris Malec

Varsity Head Coach / Program Director

Santa Margarita alumnus Chris Malec (01') enters his fifth season as the head coach of Eagles Baseball. Malec was appointed head coach in December 2017. He has a career record of 59-49 in four seasons with the Eagles. In 2019, Malec's second season at the helm, the Eagles went 26-11 and won the CIF Southern Section Division 2 championship. Malec was chosen Division 2 Coach of the Year and a "Coach of Character" by the Orange County Athletic Director's Assn.

Before coming to Santa Margarita, Malec was Associate Head Coach / Associate Faculty at Saddleback College from 2012-15. He primarily worked as the infield coach and hitting coach in addition to running the Gauchos' offense. While at Saddleback, 41 of Malec's players moved on to play at four-year universities. The three starting shortstops he coached all matriculated to four-year schools and, eventually, professional baseball -- Josh Fuentes with the Colorado Rockies, Colby Schultz with the Kansas City Royals and Luke Jarvis with the Miami Marlins. The Gauchos made the playoffs in three of Malec's four seasons, advancing to Super Regionals twice.

In 2014, while coaching at Saddleback College, Malec founded the Saddleback Cowboys Baseball Club, a developmental youth (ages 11-17) baseball program. The Cowboys have grown into a nationally recognized organization, both for their tournament success and ability to assist players in moving to the next level. More than **60** former Cowboys have gone on to play at four-year universities and the program has placed in the top four at the USA National Team Championships numerous times at different age-group levels.

As a player at Santa Margarita, Malec earned All-Serra League honors three consecutive seasons and was selected to the All-Orange County team. He then attended UC Santa Barbara, where he became a Freshman All-American. By the time Malec finished his college career, he was a three-time All-Big West Conference selection. He had also been chosen by Baseball America as a Summer All-American for his performance with the Yarmouth-Dennis Red Sox in the prestigious Cape Cod League, where he was an All Star.

During his senior season at Santa Barbara, Malec gained national media attention when he was diagnosed with cancer. After missing four weeks while undergoing surgery and chemotherapy treatments, Malec returned to action against Long Beach State and hit a grand slam in the first at-bat of his first start. He continued treatments through the season while continuing to play. The cancer has been in remission since the summer of 2005.

Malec began his professional career in 2005, after being drafted in the 16th round of the Major League Baseball draft by the New York Yankees. During his minor-league career, his teams won three league championships, he was a 2008 Eastern League (Double-A) All Star and he reached as high as the Triple-A level, one step from the major leagues. Malec had more career walks than strikeouts when he retired from professional baseball.

after the 2010 season, one reason he was once recognized by Baseball America as the minor leaguer with “The Best Plate Discipline.”

Malec resides in Santa Margarita with his wife Caitlin, a teacher at Santa Margarita Catholic High School, and their children, Tomás (7), Colin (5), Emilia (18 Months).

Malec in the media:

- “Malec’s Dreams Become a Reality” ESPN
http://www.espn.com/mlb/columns/story?columnist=crasnick_jerry&id=2084487
- “Malec’s Return Inspires Gauchos” ESPN
<http://www.espn.com.au/collegesports/news/story?id=2056624>
- Jim Rome Show - Featured Guest June 2005
- New York Times “Beating Cancer Bonds Two Ballplayers”
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/27/sports/baseball/27curtis.html>
- “UCSB Celebrate Chris Malec Day “
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=McDVgCgN9Ag> ;
<http://www.ucsbgauchos.com/sports/m-basebl/2014-15/releases/2015012660r72r>
- Santa Barbara News Press “Malec’s Return Sparks UCSB” -
<http://newspress.com/Top/Article/article.jsp?Section=ARCHIVESW&ID=564449271475208209&Archive=true>

Willie Kuhl

Varsity Associate Head Coach / Program Pitching Coordinator

Coach Kuhl is entering his fourth season as varsity pitching coach. In his debut season at Santa Margarita, he helped guide the Eagles to the 2019 CIF Southern Section Division 2 championship. The Eagles posted a 2.31 earned-run average in 2019 and had a 1.83 ERA in the pandemic-shortened 2020 season. In 2019, Eagles pitcher Alex Schrier was first-team all-Trinity League and Spencer Edwards and Matthew McClure were second-team selections. McClure was second-team All-CIF.

Kuhl began his coaching career in 2016 at his alma mater, Mission Viejo High, before becoming pitching coach at Fullerton College from 2017-18. In his two seasons at Fullerton, he guided the careers of four all-conference pitchers and had several earn scholarships to four-year universities. In 2018, the Hornets pitching staff finished in the top three of the Orange Empire Conference in ERA and (fewest) walks allowed. In his second season, Hornets ’pitchers lowered their ERA and averages for hits and walks per nine innings while increasing their strikeouts per nine innings.

As a player, Kuhl in 2011 helped Mission Viejo High win its first CIF Southern Section Division 2 championship. He got the win in the title game, giving him 22 in his career, which at the time established a school record. Kuhl then pitched four years for Cal State Fullerton, helping the Titans reach the NCAA playoffs each season, advance to a pair of Super Regionals, and make a College World Series appearance in 2015.

Kuhl’s 87 career appearances ranks ninth in the Titans ’storied history, and his 1.37 ERA in 2014 led the team. In his career, Kuhl posted a 6-6 record with two saves, 137 strikeouts in 110 innings (11.01 strikeouts per nine innings) and a 3.13 ERA.

Kuhl teaches IB Business Management at Santa Margarita. He and his wife JD reside in Lake Forest.

Ryan Crowe

Varsity assistant / Program Catching Coordinator

Coach Crowe is entering his second season with the SMCHS baseball program. In 2020, before joining the Eagles, he was an assistant at BIOLA, a perennially nationally ranked Division II program.

Crowe, has also been a member of the football coaching staff at San Juan Hills High, his alma mater, for the past six seasons. He helped build that program into one that one a 2019 Southern Section championship.

A two-sport athlete, Crowe graduated from San Juan Hills in 2012 after leading the baseball team to its first playoff appearance in program history.

Coach Crowe started his college playing career at Santa Barbara City College before winning a Gold Glove at Westmont College as a catcher and receiving NAIA All-American honors. He finished his college career at Hope International, winning a Golden State Athletic Conference championship in 2019.

Michael Fuchs

Varsity assistant

Coach Fuchs is in his first season with the Eagles after one season (2020) coaching at Corona High and one (2019) at Beckman High. He began his coaching career after signing with the Angels as a free agent and spending one season in the minor leagues.

Coach Fuchs is a 2014 graduate of Beckman, where he was a first-team all-league infielder for a team that won the Pacific Coast League title. He then played two seasons at Golden West College, earning two national Gold Glove awards for his play at third base. He then spent two seasons at Vanguard University, winning a national Gold Glove award at third base in 2017 and one at shortstop in 2018.

Coach Fuchs holds a Bachelors ' degree in liberal students from Los Angeles Pacific University and a Master's degree in coaching and exercise science from Concordia University in Irvine. He is a contract substitute teacher at SMCHS.

Jeff LaRue

Varsity assistant

Coach LaRue is a 1999 graduate of Santa Margarita Catholic High School and was a two-year varsity letterwinner, playing second base and shortstop. As a senior, he was first-team All-Sea View League, first-team All-Orange County and was MVP of the all-senior South Orange County All-Star Game.

Coach LaRue played two seasons for Saddleback College and was later inducted into the school's Athletic Hall of Fame. From Saddleback, he moved on to Washington State University, where he was second-team All-Pac-10 as a junior.

After graduating, Coach LaRue played professional baseball for five years, including a season with the Angels 'High-A team in Rancho Cucamonga. In 2008, he played his final season of pro ball for the Orange County Flyers. His hit in the final at-bat of his pro career clinched a championship for the team.

Coach LaRue also worked in law enforcement for six years, with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and the Newport Beach Police Department. He now holds private hitting and fielding lessons for youth players ages 9-18. He resides in Aliso Viejo with his wife Leanne, daughter Hayley (18) and son Jaxon (9).

Michael Willett

Junior Varsity Head Coach

Coach Willett is entering his 13th year of coaching baseball at SMCHS, where he has multiple Trinity League championships to his credit at the junior varsity and freshman levels. Willett has coached at every level in the Eagles 'program, and his leadership has been instrumental in preparing the younger players for success at the varsity level.

Willett has coached youth, club and high school baseball in Orange County for 29 years and has been a member of the American Baseball Coaching Association for 21 years. Several of Willett's former players have gone on to play baseball at the college and professional levels.

Willett played baseball at Mt. San Antonio College as well as football and baseball at Pomona High. He earned his Bachelors 'degree in Business from the University of Redlands.

Willett and his wife, Beth, will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary this year. They have resided in Mission Viejo for 36 years and have been a part of the Santa Margarita Eagles family for more than two decades. Their three children and their son-in-law are SMCHS graduates: Megan and Jordan in the Class of 2003, Kyle '07 and Troy '10.

Mike Hiserman

Freshman Head Coach

Coach Hiserman is entering his second season with the SMCHS baseball program, his first leading the freshman teams. He has coached high-level youth and club teams in Ventura and Orange Counties and completed a 38-year career with the Los Angeles Times, where he won several writing and editing awards and rose to Sports Editor.

This year, Hiserman joined the SMCHS staff as Associate Director of College Relations, an advisory role to all Eagles student-athletes who are seeking to compete in college. The program he has established is one of only a handful of its type at high schools across the country.

As an athlete, Hiserman played football and baseball at Kennedy High in La Palma. His sons, Stephen and Matthew, graduated from Capistrano Valley High. Stephen is a veteran of the Los Angeles Fire Department. Matt played on four South Coast League

championship teams at Capo before pitching for one season for Santa Clara and three for the University of San Francisco. He was then an assistant for one season at CSUN and was pitching coach for four at USF.

Hiserman and wife Ronnie celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary in 2021. They reside in Mission Viejo.

Patrick Visconti

Freshman Associate Head Coach

Coach Visconti is in his fourth year of coaching baseball at Santa Margarita, where he serves as an Assistant Principal in charge of Mission Integration. He is a 2006 graduate of SMCHS and an alumnus of the baseball program.

Visconti had a few opportunities to play Division I baseball but decided to pursue a career in education/ministry. He credits his love for the game and excitement for coaching to his experience playing alongside several future pros, and from coaching in the Challenger Baseball League, an organization for players 5-20 with developmental disabilities.

Visconti earned his Bachelors 'degree from the University of San Francisco and has a Masters Degree in Theological Studies from Loyola Marymount.

Before returning to Santa Margarita, Visconti was the Campus Minister for Regional Service at LMU. Before that, he taught for six years at Servite High.

Visconti returned to Santa Margarita in 2017 as the Director of Campus Ministry, overseeing an office that runs 10+ retreats for students a year, offers multiple liturgies, including all-school masses, and provides a service-learning program that is uniquely built for each grade level.

As Assistant Principal, he assists the school's mission as a Catholic institution by sitting on the Administrative Board several committees, including Threat Assessment, Mental Health and Wellness, and Curriculum Council. In these roles he works to ensure the charism and mission of the school are present throughout the campus.

Visconti and his wife, Maria, who is also a 2006 SMCHS graduate, reside in Rancho Santa Margarita with their son Rocco, 5, and daughter, Stella, 3.

Mike Lutterloh

Freshman Assistant Coach

Coach Lutterloh is entering his first season with the SMCHS baseball program. He has coached at the varsity level for the last eight years in the SMCHS softball program. Before and during that, Lutterloh was the head coach of Firecrackers-Lutterloh, a travel softball team that earned national rankings as high as 6th in Triple Crown, ASA, and PGF. All of Lutterloh's former travel players went on to play at the collegiate level at some of the most prestigious athletic and academic universities in the country, including Harvard, Penn, Duke, Georgetown, Notre Dame, Cal and Oregon,

and he helped dozens more sign or commit to play collegiate softball while coaching his teams.

Lutterloh played baseball at El Toro High and earned second-team All-South Coast League as a senior. He played college baseball at Cal State Los Angeles for legendary Coach John Herbold and was nominated for the U.S. Olympic team his freshman year. Lutterloh played in the NYCBL New York Collegiate Baseball League in Up-State New York for two summer seasons, and was invited to play in the Houston Astros minor league system.

Lutterloh and his wife, Kindra, will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary this year. They have resided in Rancho Santa Margarita for 25 years and have been part of the Eagle family for eight years. All four of their children have graduated from or are attending SMCHS: Makenna (2017) played softball for and graduated from Duke; Abby (2020) is a sophomore volleyball player at Georgetown; PJ is a junior at SM and Jake is a freshman.