

## Making Bell Pads for Moreton Bay Fig Morris

Bell pads for Moreton Bay Fig Morris are traditional leather bell pads that are decorated with ribbons in the team colors; blue, yellow, green and red. Before you begin take a look around and see how people have decorated their bell pads. This manual will focus on the bell pads that Jim and I have, make adjustments for what you want to make as necessary.

### Materials

Specific materials such as leather and bells can be purchased from the team's bagman.

### Bell Pads

- Leather  
Obtain the leather from the general team supply, currently at the Thayer's. The cost for leather for one set of bell pads is \$4.00.
- Straps  
Jim and I use nylon webbing (4 lengths of 18") with velcro (4x5" loops, 4x2" hooks). Other people use leather straps with buckles, nylon dog collars, or leather shoelaces.
- Bells  
We use sleigh bells purchased from morris sites. Our bagman has the team supply.
- Shoelaces  
Get a set of shoelaces that are about 45" long. Check the calculation before you buy them. I am using bootlaces which are sturdy but may be too big.
- Ribbons  
Before you buy ribbons, check to see what people have and what you want. Jim and I have 20 ribbons (10



Jim's Bell Pads have symmetry to the pattern of colors



Marieke's bell pads have pseudorandomly distributed colors



Close up of the unique ribbon on Marieke's bell pads.



Close up of the unique ribbon on Jim's bell pads.

## Making Bell Pads

on each pad) that are 1" wide and 9" long. These ribbons are in the basic team colors (green, blue, yellow, and red). We have a unique ribbon about 3.5" long and narrower than 1" on each pad. Mine is rainbow, Jim's is green on the outside and red down the middle.

### Tools

- Scrap Paper
- Scissors
- Sewing Machine.
- Leather Needle for Sewing Machine
- Tool for cutting bell slits – (borrow).

### Sizing the Bell Pads

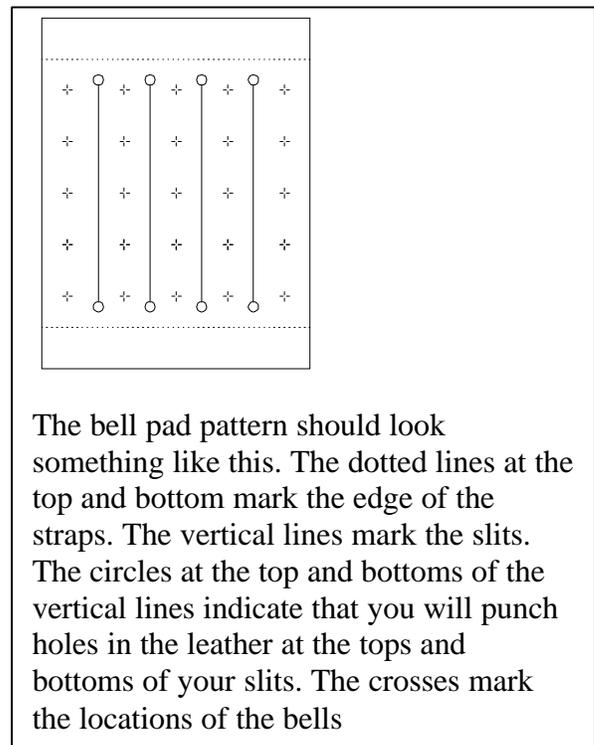
Bell pads should be long enough to hold columns of 5 well spaced bells and fit to your lower leg. My bell pads are 8.5" long and 6.5" wide, Jim's are 10" long and 6.5" wide. On my bell pads the bells are 1.25" apart this allows  $0.625" = (8.5 - 2 \times 1" - 4 \times 1.25") / 2$  between the strap and the first bell. The bells should be far enough apart to not touch each other when shaken.

### Making a Pattern.

Making a model bell pad and testing it out, is easy and will save leather.

**Note: Don't worry about making the straps for the model.**

- Make a model bell pad out of the scrap paper to see how it fits your leg. The top strap should be just below your knee, and the bottom strap should be between your calf and ankle.
- Cut the slits in the bell pad pattern. My slits divide the pad into 5 sections approximately 1.25" wide. The slits end 1.25" from the edge.
- Mark where the bells will go. On my bell pads, the top bell is a little over 0.5" from the top strap and the bells are spaced 1.25" apart. Side to side they are in the middle of each column of leather.



## **Cutting out the Bell Pads**

### *Cutting the overall shape.*

- Lay the pattern on the leather to make the most use of the leather.
- Mark the leather for cutting the outline of the bell pad.
- Cut out two bell pad rectangles from the leather. I used my regular sewing scissors.

### *Cutting the slits*

- Punch holes where you want the ends of the slits to be.  
Making round ends at the ends of the slits will help prevent the leather from tearing. I used the punch for our automatic sprinkler system to make these holes.
- Cut the slits.  
Use sewing scissors to cut from one hole to the other.

### *Cutting holes for the bells.*

- Mark the locations of the bells on the back of the leather.
- Cut vertical slits for each bell.  
I bought a special tool from Tandy Leather for this. The person who sold me the tool says that they use vertical slits for the Budweiser Clydesdales (larger bells) so the bells will sound their best.

## **Sewing the Bell Pads**

### *Sewing on the straps.*

- Prepare the straps that hold the bell pad onto your leg.  
For the Velcro closure that Jim and I use
  - 1) Sew 5” of Velcro loops to one end of each of the 18” nylon straps.
  - 2) Sew 2” of Velcro hooks to the opposite end, opposite side of each strap.
- Attach the leather needle to your sewing machine.
- Sew on the straps to hold the bell pad onto your leg.  
For the Velcro closure sew on the straps so the Velcro hooks will face your leg.  
For a leather string closure, fold the top of the bell pad over to make a casing.

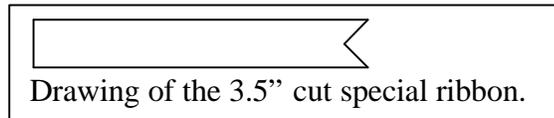
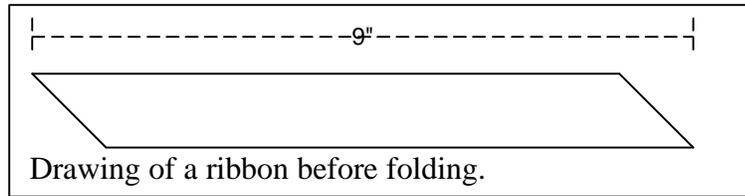
### *Sewing on the ribbons*

Several of us have two rows of ribbons in the team colors on our bell pads. The middle ribbon in the upper row has a uniquely colored ribbon over it. I have my ribbons above the first and second rows of bells. Jim has his ribbons above the first and third rows of bells. Kate has hers above the first and fourth rows of bells.

- Plan the layout of the ribbons.  
Plan the color of the middle top ribbon that goes with your unique ribbon.  
Plan the colors of the other ribbons. Mine are random so that no adjacent ribbons either side to side or up and down are the same color.

## Making Bell Pads

- Prepare the ribbons.  
Cut 9" lengths of ribbons with one inch long diagonals at each end. The diagonals should be parallel to each other.  
Cut 3.5" of the special ribbon and make a notch in one end or cut 7" of the special ribbon in the same fashion as the 9" ribbons.



- Sew the ribbons onto the fronts of the bell pads using the leather needle.  
Sew the lowest row of ribbons on first.  
Fold each ribbon in half to get a V at the loose ends.  
Sew the fold above the desired bell slit.  
Include the special ribbon when sewing the top middle ribbon.

## Attaching the Bells.

Now that you have done the hard work you can attach your bells and go dance.

### Starting

- Stick a the loop of a bell through a corner slit in the pad so the bell is on the same side of the pad as the ribbons.

**Note: Some people pull loops of strings to the front of the bell pad when attaching bells to prevent wear. However, other people think that this has too much potential to look sloppy.**



- Thread enough of your shoelace through the loop so that you can tie it off on the next column of bells.

### Continuing

- Push the loop of the next bell through the leather.  
The next bell is one bell up or down the column. If you have just finished a column, the next bell is over a column.

## Making Bell Pads

- Thread the end of the shoelace through the loop in the bell.

### *Finishing*

- Tie off the loose ends of the

**Note: If you tie off at the last bell, the leather may tear.**

shoelace to the next column of bells over. Two half hitches will suffice.



Tie off that starts the lacing of Jim's bell pad and the patch from the tear where it was originally done at the first bell.



Tie off that finishes the lacing of Jim's bell pad