

POLICY HANDBOOK FOR P.L.A.Y. TRAVEL FASTPITCH SOFTBALL



AGE LEVELS: 8U – 16U

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P.L.A.Y. OBJECTIVE AND PERSPECTIVE

The P.L.A.Y. Traveling Fastpitch Softball program is designed to provide girls over the age of 6, that reside in or go to school within the boundaries of the Prior Lake/Savage School District 719, with the opportunity to play competitive fastpitch softball. Each year the organization has the ability to be sanctioned under national organizations such as the American Softball Association (ASA), which governs Junior Olympic softball, the North American Fastpitch Association (NAFA), USA Softball and the United States Specialty Sports Association (USSSA).

P.L.A.Y. fastpitch softball competes in the Big West League which covers the North, West, and South cities in the Twin Cities Metro Area. Whenever possible, teams are divided into geographic divisions. The objectives of the program are to instill the ideals of good sportsmanship, integrity, respect, and teamwork, so they may continue to develop these skills into adulthood and encourage girls to return each year. Emphasis will be placed on both individual and team play in order to best prepare the players to compete in high school and beyond. We will strive to create a program that will allow an individual to will perform at her best while also focusing on achieving success at tournaments.

The importance of winning varies between the different age levels and classifications. At the 8U, 10U, and 12U levels the primary objectives are learning the fundamentals and developing a love of the game. The value of winning increases for older teams and as the season progresses. There currently are three different classification levels – A, B, and C. A level teams are the most competitive and have a greater focus on team success. B level teams strive to win, however, fun and fundamentals remain the primary focus. C level teams are for players new to fastpitch and are still learning their skills. Their entire focus is placed on learning fundamentals and the rules of the game.

P.L.A.Y. Travel Softball Players should be prepared to make softball their most important sports commitment during the spring softball season. If a softball game or practice conflicts with a game, practice or tryout for any other sport or other non-academic activity, softball should be given the first priority. Players should make all possible efforts to attend all practices/games and provide their coaches with as much advance notice as possible if the player has to miss a practice, game or tournament.

MISSION

The mission of P.L.A.Y. Fastpitch Softball is to create a healthy, competitive environment where young women can build their skills as athletes and people. We strive to afford opportunities to develop and enhance softball skills to compete at the high school level and beyond. Our program promotes the importance of sportsmanship, teamwork, leadership and integrity. We believe learning both success and failure through competition will benefit each player.

PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

All players must reside in or go to school within the boundaries of the Prior Lake/Savage School District 719. A “waived player” from another community may be eligible to participate, but only if she does not

take the place of a Prior Lake player. Some exceptions to this policy may apply, depending on the numbers of players and registration cut off dates. In order for a player from another community to be placed on a P.L.A.Y. team (1) the player must provide a waiver from the association where the player resides, if applicable; (2) the P.L.A.Y. Travel Softball Board must approve the exception; and (3) P.L.A.Y. executive board must approve the exception. If such player is approved by the Executive Board, they will not be eligible to play on an A team until their second year of participation in the P.L.A.Y. Fastpitch Softball program.

AGE LEVEL ELIGIBILITY

The age level at which a player may participate is in accordance with the rules set by the Minnesota Softball Federation (MSF) AND ASA. The birth date cutoff is January 1 of the same calendar year for summer traveling softball. The player cannot be younger than 6 years of age as of January 1 of the year of participation. **NO EXCEPTION.** The team (age level) for which a player is eligible is the same as the player's age on January 1 of that year for spring Softball. The fall softball team placement is based on the player's age as of January 1 of the following calendar year. Players are encouraged to play at their MSF age level; however, players may elect to tryout at an older age level team (See [Requesting to Tryout to a Higher Age Level](#) below). Rostered players cannot play at a younger age level. All players must provide a copy of their Birth Certificate and complete a Prior Lake Fastpitch Registration Form before participating in league or tournament games.

PLAYING SESSIONS

There are two softball sessions contained within the full softball season - a summer session and a fall session. Each of these two sessions has a separate sign up period and separate fees. The length of these sessions varies depending on the number of tournaments played, national and/or state tournaments, and coaches' discretion.

P.L.A.Y. Fastpitch Travel Softball does not sanction nor sponsor winter indoor softball or other play outside the summer and fall sessions, other than Winter Dome Training. However, it is allowable for summer and fall softball players to participate in winter softball on their own.

REGISTRATION

The parent or guardian of any player who wishes to participate in P.L.A.Y. Fastpitch Travel Softball must register their daughter through the P.L.A.Y. website. Within this registration process, parents will be required to complete and e-sign a registration form, code of conduct form, and other necessary registration forms through the on-line registration process.

LATE REGISTRATION

Each session has a registration deadline announced through the P.L.A.Y. website and the website's email and other social media communications. Any individual missing the scheduled registration will be considered a late registrant. Late registrants will be charged an extra fee. The P.L.A.Y. Fastpitch Travel Softball Board will determine any applicable late registration fee on an annual basis. Late registrations may not be accepted. Acceptance is at the discretion of the P.L.A.Y. Fastpitch Travel Softball Board.

PLAYER TRYOUTS

All P.L.A.Y. Fastpitch players must participate in tryouts. Tryouts are held annually in late February or early March for the upcoming summer season. Each player is to be evaluated to determine the player's skill and ability level. The P.L.A.Y. Fastpitch Travel Softball program's primary goal of evaluations is to evaluate each player impartially and objectively so that they may be placed on a team with players of similar ability, who in turn play against other traveling teams with comparable skill levels. This is the best way to maximize each player's opportunity to develop her skills and confidence. The P.L.A.Y. Fastpitch Travel Softball Board wants to avoid having players become frustrated by playing above their skill level or become bored by playing below their skill level. Players mature and develop at different times, so it's important to re-assess their skill development every year to ensure that the players remain properly placed. The P.L.A.Y. Fastpitch Travel Softball program will have independent 3rd party non-affiliated evaluators rate the tryout participants on a variety of skill stations and may include game situations. The Evaluation Committee and the independent evaluators will determine evaluation criteria for tryouts. Every effort will be made to make the evaluations as fair and consistent as possible. Tryouts are closed for observation. The P.L.A.Y. Fastpitch Travel Softball Board, in its sole discretion, will determine how many evaluators and assistants will be in attendance at the tryouts. No parents are permitted to observe tryouts unless specifically authorized by the P.L.A.Y. Fastpitch Travel Softball Board. It is required that all players, regardless of whether they have played for P.L.A.Y. previously, that wish to participate in the traveling program, attend tryouts every year. Failure to do so could affect team placement. If a player cannot tryout due to an injury or other medical indication, a physician's note is required and the Travel Director will need to be notified, in writing, prior to the player's assigned tryout date. Once medically cleared, another physician's note (submitted to the Travel Director) is required prior to resuming activity through P.L.A.Y.

Participants that wish to be either a pitcher or catcher must so indicate at time of registration prior to tryouts. Pitchers and catchers will have additional skill sets evaluated at tryouts. As with the other skills, the evaluator(s) which assigns the score for a given pitching or catching skill will be the same for all the players within the age group being compared and ranked.

A player must submit a completed registration form, with at least the minimum required payment, before attending tryouts.

Players are not allowed to wear any clothing that contains their name or indicates in any way that they played on a traveling softball team or any other club team. All such attire would need to be replaced prior to the player being allowed to participate in tryouts. Players are only to be known by the tryout number assigned to them during check-in. The players will keep this number until all of the tryouts are completed at their age level. This number is used by the evaluators to record the results and will be used by Evaluation Committee when reviewing the results.

EVALUATION COMMITTEE

An "Evaluation Committee" is to be established and will be comprised of four P.L.A.Y. Fastpitch Travel Softball Board members. The Committee will include the Vice President of Softball, the Travel Director, the Player Development Coordinator and one additional board members as determined by the P.L.A.Y. Fastpitch Travel Softball Board. The Evaluation Committee will ensure the integrity and confidentiality of the evaluation scores as well as assist in the selection of coaches, team placement as necessary and number of travel teams and level of play. If a member of the Evaluation Committee is also a head coach,

their power associated with being on the Evaluation Committee is temporarily suspended when it comes to picking their specific team. (i.e. they are a head coach only and not a member of the Evaluation Committee).

TEAM SELECTION PROCESS

The team formation process is one of the most important functions of the Prior Lake Fastpitch program. "A", "B" and/or "C" teams are put together at 8U, 10U, 12U and 14U age levels, participation permitting. The Evaluation Committee will evaluate the pool of available players for each age group to determine the number of teams and competitive levels. The final decision on number of teams at each competitive level rests solely with the Evaluation Committee. All girls that attend tryouts will receive an 'overall' evaluation score which will be based on their tryout score and prior season's coach's evaluation, if any. Players may also choose to have an additional evaluation score based on their tryouts for pitching and catching. Just because a player tries out for pitching and/or catching, does not guarantee they will be a pitcher or catcher on their team. The top 18 rated players based on their overall score will be available to be chosen for the top team. Of these top 18 overall ranked players, the top four (4) overall ranked participants from each age group will be "locked" on the highest-level team based on the overall evaluation score. Head coaches have the right to fill out the remainder of their roster from the pool of players ranked 5-18 based upon the overall evaluation scores. THE COACH NEEDS TO BE PREPARED TO AND WILL JUSTIFY THEIR SELECTIONS TO THE EVALUATION COMMITTEE. Once the selections are made by the top team, the next highest-level team rosters are created from the next 18 remaining players. Again, the top four (4) rated available players become locked on the 2nd highest team and the head coach fills out the roster from the pool of players ranked down to number 30. The 3rd rated team will select players in the same format from the available pool of the top eighteen remaining players. Again, the top four (4) rated players that are available to the third coach become locked on the third ranked team. The remaining teams follow the same pattern. The Evaluation Committee can make changes to the pool of eligible players based on anticipated roster sizes in order to accommodate the appropriate formation of all level of teams. If the Evaluation Committee determines there will be two or more teams in an age group at the same level then the coaches of these teams will work together with the available pool of players to determine the best possible teams. If the coaches cannot come to an agreement, the Evaluation Committee will determine the rosters.

At tryout check-in, each pitcher and catcher will be required to complete a form indicating their preferred team placement. Each pitcher or catcher will need to choose one of the following, sign the form, have their parents sign the form and turn it in prior to the start of tryouts.

The two choices are:

- a) If I do not rank in the top two pitchers or catchers (based upon pitching or catching evaluation score), but I otherwise qualify for the upper team, I would prefer to be placed on the upper team, even though I may receive little to no pitching or catching time.

- b) If I do not rank in the top two pitchers or catchers (based upon pitching or catching evaluation score), but I otherwise qualify for the upper team, I would prefer to be placed on the lower team and potentially receive more pitching or catching time.

The Evaluation Committee has the right to make any changes necessary to pitchers'/catchers' team assignments so as to ensure an adequate distribution of the pitcher and catcher positions.

The Evaluation Committee reserves the right to make any changes necessary to the team and player selection process, including moving any player(s) from any age group or level to another age group or level. Additionally, the Evaluation Committee reserves the right to make discretionary selections available to each team outside of the designated pool of overall ranked players if a sound softball reason exists for having a discretionary choice. One example would be if the #1 rated overall pitcher or catcher (based on pitching/catching evaluation score) holds a significant advantage over the next rated pitcher/catcher (based on pitching/catching evaluation score) but did not rank in the Top 18 overall.

Players will be notified of team placement by a posting on the website which will be coordinated so all players are notified at the same time.

Tryout performance is confidential, all player information made available to coaches shall be held in confidence by the head coach. Players unable to tryout due to medical indications only, will be placed on a similar level team as they were the previous year. Players new to the program who are unable to tryout will be placed on the lowest level team for their age group. If cuts become necessary, it is possible a player new to the program who could not try out may be cut.

TEAM PLACEMENT APPEALS

A player may request a summary of her overall evaluation and other pertinent information. This request must be made in writing and sent to the Director of Travel Softball. Any player not satisfied with their team placement may appeal, in writing, to the Director or Travel Softball and will be reviewed by the Evaluation Committee. It is expected that girls that are a part of the P.L.A.Y. Travel Softball program welcome the opportunity to be competitive and to broaden their development opportunities by potentially playing on a more advanced team if their evaluation scores dictate, they are eligible. Evaluation scores and coaching input will be relied upon when reviewing team placement appeals. Submission of a written appeal does not guarantee that it will be approved.

If a decision has to be made which has a direct effect on the child and/or team involving the child of any board member or Evaluation Committee member, input and consultation will be sought from other board members or committee members not directly impacted.

A player/parent who has a conflict with a specific coach should submit the request to the Director of Travel Softball. The request will be given the appropriate consideration, however, there is no guarantee the request will be granted. Such request may result in the player being placed on a lower level team (C vs B) than their tryout scores defined. Never will a player be moved up a playing level based on this request.

REQUESTING TO TRYOUT TO A HIGHER AGE LEVEL

All players must register & try out at their current age level (the youngest age group they qualify for). The Travel Softball Board reserves the right to move any players up to the next age level to cover any specialized needs in accordance with program objectives.

To be considered for "playing up" to a higher age level, all of the following must apply:

1. Player must be in the final year of their age group or grade level to be considered
2. Player must submit a formal written request to the Travel Director prior to tryouts.

3. Player must obtain written endorsement from a prior coach or a Travel Softball Board member that they have the skills to compete at the higher age level.
4. The Board must approve the request by a simple majority of the members voting, excluding any Board member parent of the player.
5. If the player's position is anything other than a pitcher, and upon meeting the above listed criteria, the player must meet all three of the following requirements:
 - a) Must finish ranked in the top 50% in evaluation points/ranking of the higher age level tryout final totals.
 - b) Must finish in the top 3 in evaluation points/ranking of their normal age level tryout final totals.
 - c) If trying out for a catcher position, player must finish ranked in the top 2 catchers (at the higher age level).
6. If the player's position is "Pitcher", the player must meet the requirements in 1-5 above, tryout for both age levels, and meet the following two requirements:
 - a) Player must finish ranked in the top two pitchers at the higher age level.
 - b) Player must agree that if selected, she may, depending on ability (at the coaches' discretion) have limited playing time at other defensive positions.
7. Exceptions to the above can be made on a case by case basis as approved by a majority vote of the Travel Softball Board members, excluding any Board member parent of the player.
8. All players electing to play up, but who choose not to participate, will not be refunded any fees paid. ASA Softball rules do not allow a player to "play down" for any reason.

UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT

UNIFORMS

Uniforms are ordered online directly with our distributor. A website will be set up each year and players will be required to go online to order their uniform. From year to year uniforms may not change and prior season's uniforms may be reused if the uniform still fits. If a new uniform is needed, samples will be available for sizing purposes. Our mandatory uniform package consists of Jersey(s), pants, belt(s), sock(s) and helmet (see Batting Helmet requirements below). Players will be able to pick their jersey number from a list of available numbers and keep it for a minimum of three years. They can change their number each year if they wish, if the number is available, however, it will require purchasing a new jersey. It is imperative that all players purchase the required uniform needs when instructed to do so. Most jerseys are special orders and can take up to 8-12 weeks to receive.

BATTING HELMETS

Players are responsible for furnishing their own batting helmet. The helmets must be either solid navy or a combination of navy and white. The ASA requires all batting helmets to have an attached face guard and be non-reflective.

CLEATS

Player are responsible for furnishing their own cleats. Metal cleats are not permitted for 8U-12U. All cleats must be molded rubber. Cleats are required for outdoor practice. Competition tennis shoes must be worn at indoor practices.

BATS

Players will be expected to provide their own bat. Be aware that all bats must conform to the ASA bat performance standards. (Legal bats listed at www.asasoftball.com).

FACE MASK

These are not required but strongly encouraged for all players. These can be purchased at any sporting goods store. Face masks must be navy, white or black.

OPTIONAL ITEMS. Sliding Shorts – Padded compression shorts can be worn under uniform pants if desired.

COACHING REQUIREMENTS

The Prior Lake Fastpitch Softball program is only as good as our coaches. No other single factor has a greater impact on our young players. For that reason, we strive to recruit and select the best coaches we can. In selecting coaches, the Travel Softball Board is guided by its mission of creating an atmosphere where each player can learn the game, develop and improve her individual skills, and have fun while participating in a team sport. If you are interested in becoming a coach there are specific coaching requirements that need to be fulfilled prior to being selected.

1. Coaching Application
2. Background Check
3. Concussion Certification
4. Completion of the Safe Sport Training
5. Attend an IMPACT meeting at least once in the previous calendar year

These are all found on the P.L.A.Y. website under coaching requirements.

COACHING QUALIFICATIONS

There is no perfect process for identifying coaches. However, the Softball Board strongly believes that the process should be open to all interested parents. We make our coaching selections solely based off of those who volunteer. We also want to set up our program so that we not only bring in new coaches, but also distribute the best coaches across the entire program.

For those interested in being a head coach:

1. At least one-year experience as an assistant coach in fastpitch. Exceptions may apply.
2. Attend Prior Lake Fastpitch coach's orientation.
3. No prior record of dismissal from another youth association due to any form of abuse.
4. Pledges to keep the rules and regulations of Prior Lake Fastpitch.

For those interested in being an assistant coach:

1. Attend Prior Lake Fastpitch coach's orientation.
2. No prior record of dismissal from another youth association due to any form of abuse.
3. Pledges to keep the rules and regulations of Prior Lake Fastpitch.

COACH SELECTION PROCESS

After tryouts are completed and teams are formed, the Evaluation Committee will select Head Coaches for each team on a yearly basis. No player will be placed at a level of play different than their tryout scores define based on a parent volunteering to coach. The Evaluation Committee will review the applications received from those interested in coaching. No coach will be considered without an application. Everyone must complete a background check at the time of submitting the application. Feedback is captured and considered from multiple sources outlined below:

1. Approved background check
2. Coaches clinic or other coaches training completed
3. Participation in open gyms
4. Any P.L.A.Y. sports board member feedback
5. Participant feedback
6. Parent feedback

Candidates who have coached before are reviewed for feedback from previous seasons. Experience suggests that almost every coach is the subject of a complaint by somebody. Therefore, the board tries to understand both the overall pattern of feedback from multiple sources, AND the coach's suitability for the age level. Those Head Coach candidates who have not previously coached for P.L.A.Y. are interviewed informally by one or more of the Evaluation Committee. The board considers both the interview and any other coaching experience or involvement in youth organizations. Immediately after tryouts are completed and teams are formed, the Evaluation Committee will review the volunteer coach list and determine the Head Coach for each team. The Head coaches will be notified and may be asked to assist with the selection of the assistant coaches.

REASONS TO DISMISS A COACH

In some cases, there may be reason to remove a coach from their position. Situations will be reviewed on a case by case basis. Some issues would lead to immediate dismissal, while others may warrant a warning.

1. Failure to follow ASA/JO rules concerning conduct during games/tournaments that lead to the coach and/or team being disqualified.
2. Sexual, physical, and/or verbal abuse of any umpire, parent/spectator or player while conducting the duties of a coach in any capacity.
3. Violating specific P.L.A.Y. and/or Board policies or rules.
4. Inability to control players during a practice or games.
5. Failure to teach skills and strategies of softball relative to the age and classification A, B, C level of play.
6. Regular and consistent missing of games or tournaments.
7. Not scheduling or conducting a reasonable amount of practices.
8. Knowingly putting a player at risk in a game and/or practice.
9. The P.L.A.Y. Travel Softball Board reserves the right to make changes at the coaching level, including dismissal, at its sole discretion for any violation of the Coaches Commitment
10. A formal complaint in writing is made to the Traveling Softball Director with a time period of one week to remedy the complaint. An immediate suspension occurs for the accusation of sexual or physical abuse pending an investigation of the complaint.
11. Coach is given the opportunity to state his/her side of the complaint in person to the softball board. If a Board member's daughter is on the coach's team, then the Board member can only act as a witness and has no formal vote in the matter.

12. The Board may give a coach a time of probation during which he/she must work under the observation of another qualified head coach or another competent appointed person.

A top priority for P.L.A.Y. Softball is that each coach and player be treated with dignity and respect. This includes using positive reinforcement and working out issues in private conversations. Any player who feels she is not being treated appropriately should discuss the issue with her coach. If for any reason the player is uncomfortable raising the issue with her coach, she should address her concerns to a member of the Softball Board. The coach should strive to compliment in public and constructively criticize in private.

Coaches must understand and consider each player's level of skill development, and refrain from labeling players as "starters", bench players", "best player on the team", since such labels inhibit the growth of all players. For example, being labeled may cause above average players to take their skills for granted and diminish the drive to learn more while below average players may tend to give up. Coaches must also understand the impact of non-verbal communication. Patterns of actions are powerful forms of communication.

REGISTRATION REFUNDS

Registration refunds are made to players if Prior Lake Fastpitch cannot field a team due to unavailability of coaches, insufficient number of player registrations, and/or if cuts are required. No refunds are made once a player has been placed on a team.

ALLOCATION OF REGISTRATION FEES

Registration fees are used by P.L.A.Y. Softball to cover the costs and expenses of the program. P.L.A.Y. covers the fees to join the Big West League, up to three entry fees for tournaments, umpire fees, tryout costs, team equipment, and P.L.A.Y. administrative fees such as participant and team insurance, as well as administrative office and staff costs.

FUNDRAISING/VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS

P.L.A.Y. is a non-profit organization. Fundraising and/or volunteer requirements may vary from year to year, depending on the program's needs and planned events. If the budget projects a surplus, it is possible that no fundraising and no volunteer hours will be required. Each year's expectations and requirements will be clearly stated and defined on the website, under the Softball Tryout Tab at least 30 days prior to scheduled tryout dates. On the years that fundraising is a requirement, a volunteer deposit check of a pre-determined amount will be communicated and collected from all at the time of tryouts. If your check has not been received your player may not be placed on a team after tryouts. One check per family. The deposit check is securely held at the P.L.A.Y. office site until the end of the season. At that time, if your volunteer and/or fundraising requirements have been met, the check will be destroyed. If not, the check is cashed and funds are placed in the traveling softball fund.

MINIMUM STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE

The primary objectives of the P.L.A.Y. Fastpitch Softball program are to create a fun, competitive environment that encourages girls to return each year, and one way to accomplish this is to focus on

teaching the fundamentals of fastpitch softball. Since coaches cannot always properly cover all the needed skills, the Minimum Standards of Performance (MSP) provides a guide on the most important skills the highest number of players at each age level should have mastered. Practice time at every practice should be committed to these areas as well as during the “off” season to insure the highest success rate. Resources will be made available through the Softball Board for the Coaches to help teach these skills.

8U & 10U MINIMUM STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE

The MSPs for the 8U and 10u teams should be:

1. Proper overhand throwing
2. Proper catching mechanics
3. Basic base running skills
4. Basic hitting and bunting skills
5. Fundamentals of sliding
6. Basic softball rules

12U MINIMUM STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE

The MSPs for the 12U teams should be:

1. Proper overhand throwing. Focusing on wrist snap, hand, and elbow position and ball rotation
2. Proper catching mechanics. Focusing on elbow and hand positions for target, using two hands when and why, and catching fly balls
3. Basic base running skills. Focusing on body and hand position
4. Basic hitting and bunting skills. Focusing on understanding and further development of a basic swing and further development of bunting skills
5. Fundamentals of sliding

14U & ABOVE MINIMUM STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE

The MSPs for the 14U teams should be:

1. Refine throwing mechanics for position play. Focusing on wrist snap, hand, and elbow position and ball rotation
2. Develop catching skills that position the body properly. Focusing on elbow and hand positions for target, proper footing for positions, using two hands when and why, and catching fly balls
3. Advanced base running skills. Focusing on body and hand position, when to lead off, rounding bases, pivoting, stealing
4. Refine hitting and bunting skills. Focusing on understanding and further development of swing and placement of bunts, drag bunts
5. Refine sliding skills

PLAYING TIME

The following chart is the minimum expectations a player can expect to play during league and tournament play. A player’s playing time would be affected by their attendance. If a player frequently misses practices or games, their playing time will be reduced.

To ensure that all players meet this requirement, coaches will need to record game statistics and attendance. Game statistics should show innings played, at bats by game, and a running total for the entire season as it progresses. A coach may be asked, by the Travel Softball Board, to provide their statistics to verify compliance to this policy. P.L.A.Y. Softball’s goal is development no matter the level of play. Learning how to record and manage playing time is imperative as a head coach.

Age	LEAGUE GAME DEFENSE	LEAGUE GAME BATTING LINEUP	TOURNAMENT PLAY DEFENSE	TOURNAMENT PLAY BATTING LINEUP
8U	No player will sit twice before every player has sat once. Rotating players evenly through all positions.	Continuous batting lineup, start the next game where the last game left off.	No player will sit twice before every player has sat once. Rotating players evenly through all positions.	Continuous batting lineup, start the next game where the last game left off.
10U	No player will sit twice before every player has sat once. Excluding the active pitcher & catcher for that game.	Continuous batting lineup, start the next game where the last game left off.	A: Coach's discretion B & C: No player will sit twice before every player has sat once. Excluding the active pitcher & catcher for that game.	Coach's Discretion
12U	No player will sit twice before every player has sat once. Excluding the active pitcher & catcher for that game.	Continuous batting lineup, start the next game where the last game left off.	A: Coach's discretion B & C: No player will sit twice before every player has sat once. Excluding the active pitcher & catcher for that game.	Coach's Discretion
14U	No player will sit twice before every player has sat once. Excluding the active pitcher & catcher for that game.	Continuous batting lineup, start the next game where the last game left off.	A: Coach's discretion B & C: No player will sit twice before every player has sat once. Excluding the active pitcher & catcher for that game.	Coach's Discretion

PRACTICE TIME

Practice is critical. Prior Lake Fastpitch teams have an aggressive approach to practice: the minimum recommended schedule is eight 90-minute outdoor practices (pre-season) and two nights/week on the field for 10Us and three nights/week on the field for 12Us and older. Practices are organized to accomplish specific objectives and coaches have the flexibility to adjust these requirements while school is still in session.

FIELDING POSITION

A player may choose to pursue a starting spot at any position on the field (coaches may not pigeon-hole players). Every effort is made to develop the skills necessary for every player to play at her preferred position. This applies only to players who have shown a firm commitment to the team by attending the vast majority of practices and games. The following process is used to develop and determine players at each position:

1. At the first practice: ask players where they want to play and explain the skills necessary at each position.
2. During pre-season practices: evaluate the players at each position against the required skill set, tell each player which skills that the player needs to practice, and work with each player on weaknesses.
3. By mid-season: Player will generally be placed in positions based on her skills and those of her teammates (by now each player should have enough exposure to every position to have a general idea of the responsibility and skills required to play—except for pitcher, catcher or any position for which a safety concern exists). If a player would still like playing time a specific position she should communicate with the coach. The coach will explain which skills need improvement and how to improve them. An assessment of each player's abilities to play her preferred position and balancing the needs of the team determines the starting players at each position. In most cases, the highest skilled players play where they prefer, although some players may be asked to play in a non-preferred position for the overall good of the team. For any 8U teams' players must rotate as evenly as possible through all positions, switching between infield and outfield positions, no player should sit twice before every other player has sat once, unless an injury occurs.

DEVELOPMENT OF PITCHERS AND CATCHERS

Most people involved in fastpitch understand that pitching and catching are key positions for fielding a team at any age level and the most successful teams has more than one solid pitcher and catcher. Although there are many different opinions as to what is required to develop a pitcher or catcher, most agree on the importance of commitment from the player, parent, and coach. Players and parents should understand that becoming a pitcher or catcher requires additional time and effort. Most "A" level pitchers and catchers work on their skills throughout the year, attending clinics, and working with pitching coaches of their choice during the off-season. Although game time is important in developing pitchers and catchers, most pitcher's and catcher's skills are made during the off-season and non-game time. Depending on the age, players and parents should realize that it might take up to two years to develop a skilled pitcher or catcher. Also, parents should be aware that being a parent of a pitcher or catcher is significantly different than that of a player in other positions. In addition, coaches should realize they could help a pitcher and catcher develop if they take time to learn the fundamentals to pitching and catching and correcting problems early. Although it might be considered advanced, coaches can take a lot of pressure off a pitcher and catcher by learning the skill of "calling the pitch". Prior Lake Fastpitch recognizes this additional time and effort and will assist players, parents, and coaches in achieving their goals.

To assist players, parents and coaches, P.L.A.Y. Softball will:

1. Make every effort to engage an experienced pitching/catching coach during the winter to work with interested players.

2. Make every effort to communicate to players, parents, and coaches any additional pitching/catching clinics that might be available.
3. Make every effort to have additional pitching/catching clinics for players during the summer season.
4. Make resources available to players, parents, and coaches on the fundamentals of catching and pitching and correcting pitching problems.

P.L.A.Y. Softball is also asking players, parents and coaches to make a commitment to the organization in the following manner:

1. Players interested in becoming a pitcher or catcher will attend Prior Lake Fastpitch-sponsored catching or pitching clinics, both in the winter and during the summer when offered.
2. Coaches will attend and participate in at least 50% of the Prior Lake Fastpitch-sponsored clinics, both in the winter and during the summer when offered.
3. Players and parents will continue to work on developing skills during the season and off-season by practicing their skills at home or at a field. (Parents of pitchers must understand that they will be providing assistance as a catcher.)
4. Players, parents and coaches will study material on the fundamentals of pitching and correcting pitching problems.

PITCHING AND CATCHING TIME GUIDELINES

Although the following guidelines are written primarily for the 10U and 12U levels, they can also apply to the 14U level. It is never too late to give a player an opportunity to become a pitcher or catcher and our coaches should know what to do.

P.L.A.Y. Softball requires coaches to provide game time opportunities for all developing pitchers and catchers using the following guidelines:

1. Coaches will allow developing pitchers/catchers to pitch/catcher in league games at their discretion. If there is more than one developing pitcher/catcher, they should split the game with another developing pitcher/catcher. A coach should use his/her discretion during the game if it becomes detrimental to the pitcher's/catcher's well-being and the team loses their attentiveness.
2. If there is more than one experienced pitcher/catcher on a team, they should split one game of the double-header league games.
3. Coaches are required to keep track of the number of innings a player has pitched/caught.
4. If a coach cannot provide enough game pitching/catcher opportunities as stated above, or if a player wants to pitch/catch, but not in a game, then the coach should allow that player to pitch/catch in a scrimmage or batting practice.
5. Game pitching/catching opportunity during a tournament is at the discretion of the coach. However, coaches should allow less experienced pitchers/catchers to pitch/catch against less experienced teams.
6. Experienced pitchers/catchers should pitch/catch against more experienced teams.
7. Game pitching/catching opportunity during state qualifiers and beyond is at the discretion of the coach.

TRAVEL EXPECTATIONS

All travel fastpitch teams will be required to travel to different communities to participate in league games and tournaments. Generally speaking, league games are played in neighboring cities, however, tournaments may be scheduled further away.

Parents and players having conflicts in schedules or transportation should make arrangements with other parents or players to ensure participation. We require a commitment of 100% for the travel program. Each team depends on all players attending every game and every practice.

HOME PLAYING FIELDS

P.L.A.Y. Softball travel fastpitch teams play their home games at the Ponds Athletic Complex, with the exception of the 8U team(s), which would play at Twin Oaks or Carriage Hills. If needed, based on number of teams, games may need to be scheduled on other fields in the Prior Lake Savage areas. We ask for your cooperation in assisting to keep these fields clean. Please observe the rules for park use. Pitching and hitting into fences is not allowed.

LENGTH OF SEASON

8U, 10U and 12U teams have more access to the practice facilities in March or April, as many players are also playing for their high school teams. Practices for the older levels are limited until the high school season ends.

Weather permitting, Big West League games typically begin the second week of May for the 8U, 10U and 12U levels. Games begin the third week of May for the 14U teams. The Big West League establishes all game schedules.

League Championship/State Qualifier tournaments are typically scheduled for late June/early July. State tournaments usually follow two weeks later. National Tournaments are typically the last half of July. This could include significant travel, time, and expense. It is the responsibility of the players/parents to cover the cost associated with travel for a national tournament.

Over the past few years, many teams have been fortunate enough to qualify for the National Tournaments. Occasionally, those teams have found themselves with not enough players to attend, a situation which might have been anticipated with some contingency planning. Teams can qualify for a National Tournament in a variety of ways. All applicants understand at the time of tryouts that they and/or their parents/guardians are willing and able to attend the tournament should they make an "A" team and then qualify for a sanctioned tournament in any manner.

If a player cannot attend a national tournament for which her team has qualified, she should notify her coach as soon as possible. The coach has the option to fill the vacated player's spot with players from inside the fastpitch program.

If a 10U or "B" team qualified for a National Tournament, the team's coaches, with input from parents, determine if the team will attend. If at least eight players from the qualifying team would like to participate, the coach has the sole discretion to invite additional players from inside the fastpitch program from a team that is not participating the tournament. If all the teams within the program have qualified, the coach may look outside the program to fill the need for additional players only after getting clearance from the Travel Director or the Evaluation Committee.

If a team earns a berth to a National Tournament as part of the fall program, the berth earned (typically for the following summer season) must be used in the next season by the same coach and have at least five players rostered that earned the berth in the previous fall otherwise the bid will expire and go unused.

FALL SEASON

Fall League game rules allow players an opportunity to learn new aspects of the game in a less intense environment. In most instances, these rules include: a five-run limit per inning, the entire line-up must bat, and unlimited substitutions are allowed. It is the ideal time for young players moving up to the next age level to see what it is like, or for established players to try new positions. Prior Lake Fastpitch has established the following Fall League regulations to encourage a fun, learning experience for all players:

Registration for Fall League is generally open in late June or early July. It is up to a seven (7) -week season. Games schedules are posted weekly. Competition is based off of each team's previous week's record. Travel distance may be significant, depending on host sites for field availability.

In all ages, the goal is to allow everyone to play. Based on the number of registrants there may need to be evaluations or tryouts to form the teams. If registration numbers do not support allowing all registrants to play, tryouts will be used to determine who will make a team. This is also on a per age group basis, 8u and 10u might need tryouts where 12U and 14U don't. This will be communicated to parents when registration closes.

A player's age on January 1 of the following year determines the age level classification at which a player is eligible to participate. No players will be allowed to play up an age level during fall ball unless there is a need to fill teams.