



South St Paul Girls Fastpitch Association Parent and Player Handbook

The purpose of this document is to answer most of the questions you may have about the upcoming softball season. It contains policies and expectations that affect all players, coaches, parents, and fans as well as how the association functions.

Points of Contact:

- Website: sspfastpitch.com
The website has been established to relay information. In addition to Board information, you can find maps, rosters, upcoming events, fundraisers, volunteer obligations, and registration information.
- Association email: sspgfa@gmail.com
- Volunteer Coordinator email: volunteer.sspgfa@gmail.com
- Facebook: search for South Saint Paul Girls Fastpitch Association
- All Board Members are listed on the website with contact information; feel free to contact anyone listed.

Purpose of SSPGFA:

- 1) SSPGFA has been established to promote fastpitch softball for girls in the South St. Paul community. We are registered as a youth non-profit with the MN Secretary of State and are currently working towards a 501(c)(3) designation.
- 2) We are committed to supporting each individual player in their aspirations for softball, whether it is to strengthen skills already learned or to venture into new positions with new skills to learn. SSPGFA wants to make an environment where all players can have a positive learning experience, learn sportsmanship and teamwork, promote physical and mental development, and encourage good character and citizenship.
- 3) We will provide summer softball teams to play in the TriCounty League and fall ball softball teams to play in the MMFL League. Other teams and leagues may be considered upon Board approval.
- 4) We will provide a winter skills clinic and other fundamental training opportunities for players throughout the year.
- 5) We will perform fundraising for the sole purpose of generating revenue for the SSPGFA program.

Draw Area for SSPGFA:

The draw area for SSPGFA includes any youth girl who is a resident of South St Paul or attends school at one of the public or private schools in South St Paul. Draw Area rules are governed by the TriCounty League and bylaws/handbook shall be amended to reflect league rule changes if so required.

- 1) 8U, 10U, & 12U Divisions are closed per TriCounty League rules. SSPGFA requires waivers from both associations if a player requests to play with another association outside their draw area.
- 2) 14U, 16U, & 18U Divisions are open per TriCounty league rules. SSPGFA Board shall decide after registration whether to accept outside players based on team numbers and/or evaluations.
- 3) In-House Division is not governed by the league and is therefore open. SSPGFA Board shall decide after registration whether to accept outside players based on team numbers and/or evaluations.
- 4) Waiver request shall be in writing and submitted to the Director before evaluations. SSPGFA reserves the right to deny waiver for any reason including players request to play in a higher age bracket, higher division, and/or with a club team. SSPGFA also reserves the right to deny a waiver to a player who ranked higher at evaluations and cut a lower ranking player.
- 5) Once a player is rostered with SSPGFA, SSPGFA reserves the right to deny request to release player from the roster to play for another association.

Field & Practice Locations:

- Harmon Field: 1310 Henry Ave, South St Paul MN
- Kaposia Landing: 800 Bryant Ave, South St Paul MN
- Northview Field: 635 18th Avenue North, South St Paul, MN (Lil Packers Only)
- PAC (Packer Activity Center): 700 2nd Street North, South St Paul MN
- Doug Woog Dryland Facility: 141 6th St S, South St Paul, MN (upstairs past the conference rooms)

League Information:

- Summer teams participate in Tri County League; www.tricountyleaguemn.com
- State tournaments and fall ball are run by MMFL League; www.mmfl.net
- SSPGFA complies and is sanctioned by ASA, USA, USSSA, and NAFA softball associations.

Board Meetings:

- 1) SSPGFA shall meet at least once per month; each date set at the preceding meeting. Meeting dates shall be posted on the SSPGFA website. Additional meetings and/or closed workshops may be scheduled as necessary to effectively conduct the business of the SSPGFA.
- 2) Meetings are open to the public and SSPGFA parents and coaches are encouraged to attend. Contact the Director prior to the meeting if you wish to be added to the agenda.

Board Membership:

- 1) The Board shall consist of both officers and general Board Members. Membership will consist of a minimum of 5 Board Members and a maximum of 12. Any interested party will be considered.
- 2) The following 5 positions will be Officer positions: Director (tie-breaker vote only), Assistant Director, Secretary, Treasurer, and Fundraising Coordinator.
- 3) The following positions will be General Board Member positions: Tournament Director, Equipment Coordinator, Volunteer Coordinator, and Lil Packers Coordinator.
- 4) Elections shall be posted after the September board meeting and will be held at the October meeting each year. Anyone who wishes to be elected as an Officer or General Board Member must attend at least 3 board meetings before submitting a letter requesting admittance to the Board.
- 5) Background Checks will be required for Officer Positions.
- 6) Director and Treasurer positions cannot be held by people in the same household or immediate family due to access to bank accounts.
- 7) Members shall serve without monetary compensation. Officers will get their player's registrations fees waived.
- 8) Any Board Member serving must have a player participating in the association during their term. If not, they must disclose involvement with any other association or organization. Board Members should disengage from any promotion, recruiting, coaching, or involvement in that external program while a member of the association. If the Board Member does not think they can follow this rule, they should resign from the Board. If the Board Member is found in violation of this policy, they will be removed.

SSPGFA Programs & Age Divisions:

- 1) Lil Packers: The purpose of this program is to teach the very basics of softball to younger players; there will be equal playing time with no emphasis on winning. See the Lil Packers FAQ for more information.
 - a) Lil Packers is not a traveling league.
 - b) Lil Packers is for players ages 4 to 7.
- 2) Traveling Program: The purpose of our traveling program is to give our players ages 7-18 a more competitive softball program while teaching the fundamentals of softball, teamwork, and sportsmanship while working towards advancing the team and individual player skills. Every year the Board will decide based on numbers, evaluations, and the skills of the team as a whole what division to place each team.
- 3) All traveling players will be required to have a birth certificate on file with SSPGFA per league rules.
- 4) Traveling Division Expectations:
 - a) 8U, 10U B/C, & 12U C Divisions: These divisions are beginner divisions with an emphasis on basic fundamentals and sportsmanship, winning will not be the main focus. Playing time will be as equal as possible and players will play different positions.
 - b) 10U A, 12U B & 14U B Divisions: These divisions are intermediate divisions where basic and advanced skills are taught along with an emphasis on player accountability and sportsmanship. Players at this age either have learned or are starting to learn specific positions and may only be rotated through a few positions. Playing time may not be 100% equal depending on skill level or position but coaches are still directed to be mindful of equal playing time. Winning will be a consideration during league play and will be emphasized during tournament play.
 - c) 12U A, 14U A, 16U A/B, & 18U Divisions: These divisions are advanced divisions. Players are expected to know their specific positions and will likely only be rotated to 1-2 positions of play. Playing time will reflect a player's position and will largely depend on player accountability, skill level, attitude, and stats. Basic fundamentals along with advanced skills and plays will be taught. Winning will be a consideration during league play and will be emphasized during tournament play.
 - d) All Divisions: Safety is the first and foremost concern. A player will only be allowed to play a position when the coaching staff feels they can safely do so.

Evaluations, Team Formation, and Coaching Staff:

- 1) Evaluations will be required at all age groups to determine teams. Evaluations will be conducted by unbiased evaluators and players will be scored based on hitting, infielding, outfielding, bunting, and overall effort. Pitching and catching evaluations may also be required. See Evaluation FAQ for more information.

Evaluations, Team Formation, and Coaching Staff (Cont.):

- 2) SSPGFA Board and coaching staff handle formation of teams.
 - a) Generally, teams will consist of 11-12 players; exceptions may be made.
 - e) If warranted, some players may be allowed to "play up" a level to help fill out a roster.
 - f) Once a player has moved up; they MAY be moved to their proper age group the following year/season.
 - g) The Board will evaluate all of these situations on a case-by-case basis.
 - h) Decisions by the Board are final.
- 3) SSPGFA will always strive to find the best coaches possible. While our policy does not preclude a parent from being a coach, a strong emphasis will be placed on finding outside, non-parent coaches especially for higher division teams.
 - a) Coaches will be interviewed, approved by the Board, and must pass a criminal background check.
 - b) We will have a coaching reimbursement structure to reimburse coaching related expenses to be evaluated and decided upon annually by the Board.

Traveling League Play:

- 1) Games are double headers starting at 6pm.
- 2) Games are played in both SSP and across the metro area; be prepared to travel as far as Rochester, Baldwin, etc.
- 3) 10U plays Thur in May, Tue/Thur in June; season runs early May to late June with qualifying tournaments in July.
- 4) 12U plays Mon/Wed nights; season runs early May to late June with qualifying tournaments in July.
- 5) 14U plays Tue/Thur nights; season runs mid May to early July with qualifying tournaments in late July.
- 6) 16U/18U plays Mon/Wed nights; season runs early June to early July with qualifying tournaments in late July.

Tournaments:

- 1) Lil Packers do not participate in tournaments.
- 2) Summer traveling teams 8U-18U will participate in multiple tournaments throughout the season.
 - a) All traveling teams will participate in Tri-County State Qualifier and 1-3 addition tournaments depending on team, age level, and division level.
 - b) If teams qualify for State, SSPGFA will pay the entrance fee if there is player availability.
 - c) Tournaments are Fri-Sun and can take up your entire weekend depending on game times. Tournaments are usually in the metro area but may require a hotel stay in some instances; be prepared to travel.
- 3) Nationals: teams must earn a berth for national tournaments.
 - a) Board, coaching staff, and parents will be consulted when determining if teams will attend Nationals and which particular national tournament to attend.
 - b) Player availability, league play, tournament play, injuries, and overall season will be considered when deciding if teams will attend Nationals.
 - c) The financial obligations of National Tournaments will fall solely on the team that qualified. If a team goes forward with their berth, the team will be assessed an upfront fee of \$1500 to be divided per player. This is to cover the immediate and significant upfront costs associated with attending Nationals.
 - i) Teams may fundraise or take donations; all fundraisers and donation requests need to be approved by the Fundraising Coordinator so we remain in compliance with our non-profit status.
 - ii) Money from all fundraisers and donations should be given to the Treasurer and entered on the Nationals spreadsheet.
 - iii) After all expenses are paid, the Treasurer will reimburse each player the money earned less expenses.

Volunteer Requirements: *Not Applicable to Lil Packers*

- 1) All volunteer signups are located on SignUpGenius.com and opportunities will be emailed out periodically.
 - a) Player's family is required to complete a total of 16 volunteer hours and provide a \$300 volunteer fee in the form of a check which will not be cashed unless hours are not fully completed.
 - b) Should checks need to be cashed, you will be notified 3 weeks prior to cashing of the check.
 - c) 16 total hours running January 1st through October 31st. Hours are per family, not per player.
 - d) 4 hours must be completed during our Kaposia Days fundraiser, 4 hours during our Border Buddies Tournament, 4 hours during our weeknight concessions, with the remaining 4 hours at any other event or an event listed previously.
 - e) Board approval will be required to waive Kaposia days hours. Participation in Kaposia days or Tri-County softball tournaments will not be valid waiver excuse.
 - f) I understand if my shift is cancelled due to a rainout that I will need to complete hours at another time.
- 2) Lil Packer Families are not required to do volunteer hours however every volunteer would be welcome.

Registration Fees & Refunds:

Registration fees are to help SSPGFA pay for City of SSP field usage, PAC fees, excess insurance coverage for players and volunteers, coaching background checks and expenses, Tri County and MMFL league fees, umpire fees, official game balls for all games and tournaments, equipment, entry fees for 1-4 tournaments depending on age level, gate fee for state tournament (if team qualifies), and jerseys.

- 1) Half of registration fee will be required in order to attend evaluations. Full registration due when uniforms are handed out unless an alternative payment structure set up with Treasurer. Full refund of registration fees if player does not get placed on a team.
- 2) Non-refundable evaluation fee will apply to any player outside draw area.
- 3) Non-refundable late fee and Board approval will be required for any player who registers after registration deadline.
- 4) Refund due to player quitting: half after teams posted but before first season game; zero refund after first season game.
- 5) Refund due to player injury: less costs after teams posted; zero refund after 50% league games played.
- 6) Requests for scholarships must be submitted in writing to the Director. Requests must include amount of scholarship requested, reason for request, and income verification. Scholarship requests will be reviewed and handled on a case-by-case basis and player names will be kept confidential. Families who receive scholarships will be required to provide additional hours of volunteer work. Board will notify family of scholarship approval or denial in writing along with number of additional volunteer hours should the scholarship be approved. Examples of appropriate reasons for scholarship request: family currently on public assistance, major illness in the family, or job loss.

Player Expectations:

- 1) Players are to represent SSP in a positive, respectful manner at all times. Make Packer Nation Proud, win or lose!
- 2) Treat coaches, teammates, opponents, spectators and umpires respectfully. Demonstrate support for everyone at every practice or game. SSPGFA will not tolerate abusive or otherwise inappropriate language or actions during any SSPGFA sponsored event or events where SSPGFA is a participant.
- 3) Players' first responsibility is to the team. Fastpitch softball is a traveling sport and players should be committed to their team and their teammates. Missing games or practices for reasons other than illness, important family events, school, or religion is strongly discouraged. We expect players to inform their coaches, in a timely manner, if they will miss a game or practice.
- 4) Be on time for practices and games and have their equipment with them in game-ready condition.
- 5) Helmets must be on your head when batting or catching for a pitcher.
- 6) Communicate openly and honestly with their coaches.
- 7) Help carry the team equipment to every practice and every game.
- 8) As representatives of SSP sports, players are expected to clear and clean the bench area when finished playing. Respect the property and equipment at any sports facility, both home and away.
- 9) There will be zero tolerance for use of tobacco, alcohol, and/or drugs. Any player found under the influence, at any time, on or off the field, will be dismissed from the program.
- 10) Immediately inform coaches of any injuries that occur during practices or games. Immediately notify coaches of any other injuries or health concerns that could potentially affect practices or games.
- 11) Have confidence in yourself and your abilities.
- 12) Forgive yourself for mistakes and keep a positive attitude.
- 13) Be a great listener. Give your full attention to your coaches and your teammates when they are talking.
- 14) Remember you are part of a team; the game of softball cannot be played with one player. You win as a team, you lose as a team.

Parent Expectations:

- 1) Parents are also representing SSP and are expected to behave in a positive and respectful manner at all times.
- 2) Support the coaches in their decisions regarding practices, games, player positioning, and amount of playing time.
- 3) Assist your player in fulfilling their commitments to their team. (i.e.: getting them to practice/games on time, picking them up on time, arranging for transportation, etc)
- 4) Provide any required equipment in good condition.
- 5) Be a part of the team. Every team needs volunteers as well as fans cheering in the stands.
- 6) Treat players, coaches, opponents, spectators, and umpires with respect. SSPGFA will not tolerate abusive language or actions at any time.
- 7) Make sure your player knows that win or lose; you love them, appreciate their efforts, and are not disappointed in them. This will allow them to do their best without a fear of failure. Be the person in their life they can look to for constant positive reinforcement.

- 8) Immediately inform coaches of any injuries that occur during practices or games. Immediately notify coaches of any other injuries or health concerns that could potentially affect practices or games.
- 9) Parents are not to coach players during games. (i.e sideline coaching, interfering or intervening in the game or conversing with your player during the game).
- 10) Parents are not to heckle or argue with the umpires; it is the sole responsibility of the coaching staff to address any issues or complaints with the umpires.
- 11) Fulfill family volunteer requirements.

Coaches Expectations:

- 1) All coaches complete Coaches Application, Background Check, Concussion Training, and ACE Training.
- 2) Coach's first responsibility is to the players. Treat all players respectfully and strive to create an environment that is fun while promoting skill development that makes it possible for the team to compete at its highest level.
- 3) Contribute to building a competitive program. We are not a "win at all costs" program; however coaches at the higher divisions may emphasize specific positions for players based on their skills and the needs of the team.
- 4) Communicate through parent meetings, e-mail, and telephone to parents and provide timely information for practices, games, and tournaments.
- 5) Treat parents, opponents, spectators, and umpires respectfully. SSPGFA will not tolerate abusive or otherwise inappropriate language or actions by coaches.

Disciplinary Process:

- 1) The Disciplinary process applies to both players and player's family.
- 2) Minor violations of the handbook and expectations during practices, team events, and games will be dealt with on an individual basis by the head coach. The Board grants the coaches the right to dismiss a player from practice or game for conduct deemed detrimental to the team as interpreted by the coach. If minor violations become a pattern of conduct or becomes more severe, the head coach shall notify the Director.
- 3) Major and/or repeated violations will be handled by the Director with notification to the Board.
 - a) First Warning: verbal warning from the Director
 - b) Second Warning: written warning laying out grievance and consequence should behavior continue.
 - c) Third Warning: Appear before the Board, potential suspension, and/or dismissal from the program.
- 4) Violence or threats towards anyone including players, umpires, parents, opposing teams, and SSPGFA staff are zero tolerance violations and by-pass warning with potential for immediate dismissal.
- 5) Any violation could, depending on its severity, result in a warning, suspension, and/or dismissal from the program. SSPGFA reserves the right to dismiss any person, player, or coach at any time, for any violation of the rules and guidelines.

Conflict Management:

While SSPGFA works diligently to address issues before they become problems, we recognize that parents and players need to know how to proceed should they wish to seek resolution to an unresolved problem. If there is a complaint, the following steps may be taken:

- 1) Whenever possible parents & players are encouraged to work with coaches to resolve their differences.
- 2) Cooling Off Period: Parents and players are required to wait 24 hrs before approaching a coach with their concerns. They also should approach the coach in a setting where other players are not present.
- 3) If the problem remains unresolved after discussing the matter with the coach, contact the SSPGFA Director. The Director will conduct an investigation and if required, will set up an informal meeting with the parents and/or player, the coach, and one other Board Member to be chosen by the Director who would not be a witness or be directly involved with the conflict.
- 4) If the matter cannot be resolved at the informal meeting, a written complaint may be made to the Director. The letter must be signed, contain a return address and phone number. All individuals will be given an opportunity to respond, in writing, and it will then be brought before the Board. It may be requested that the parties involved appear in front of the Board. Written correspondence stating the final decision and action taken by the Board, if any, will be mailed to both parties within 30 days. Decisions by the Board are final.
- 5) All grievance procedures will remain confidential.

Safety:

- 1) All coaches complete Coaches Application, Background Check, Concussion Training, and ACE Training.
- 2) Any known or suspected incidents of sexual harassment, conduct, abuse, or molestation must be reported to law enforcement.
- 3) There will be limited one-on-one interactions between a player and a coach and only in situations that are observable by another adult and within an interruptible distance, except for emergency circumstances.

