

Bismarck Youth Fastpitch Softball
Association Handbook



Revised March 1, 2022

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Introduction

Welcome to Bismarck Youth Fastpitch Softball Association (BYFSA)! BYFSA strives to provide positive supervised recreational and competitive softball to meet the needs of girls within the Bismarck and surrounding communities, regardless of high school boundary. Please read below to learn more about both our league program and our traveling program.

Mission

Our mission is to promote a positive competitive attitude; instilling self-confidence and nurturing the principles of teamwork, character, respect (for both our teammates and opponents) and integrity in both victory and defeat. The emphasis is on developing the fundamentals of softball knowledge and skill, teamwork, self-confidence, and having fun.

About Fastpitch Softball

Fastpitch refers to the throwing style used to pitch the softball. Fastpitch softball, characterized by a hard, flat pitch delivered with a windmill throwing motion, differs from slowpitch softball (slow looping throwing motion) which is common to adult softball leagues and recreational softball. Fastpitch is generally the most competitive form of the game and is the style of softball played at the High School and college level. All BYFSA softball is fastpitch softball.

Programs

BYFSA offers two types of programs: league and travel.

League Program

BYFSA league teams focus on fun and skill development. The league program stresses skills that the girls will need to be successful in fastpitch softball. League teams compete against other BYFSA and Mandan girl's fastpitch teams.

Age Groups

Summer league is broken down into four primary age groups (6U, 8U, 10U and 11Up), based upon the player's age as of December 31 in the year preceding the summer season. BYFSA League and USA Softball rules do not allow a player to "play down" to a younger age group for any reason. BYFSA policy does not allow a player to "play up" to an older age group in the 6U, and 10U divisions. 8U players that are 9 years old as of December 31 cutoff date may play 10U if they are rostered on a 10U competitive travel team.

League teams are divided by age and are made to group players with other players from their same schools and neighborhoods, where possible. Friend requests are also considered for league teams.

There are no tryouts for our league program - all that is required is a desire to play and have fun! We try to create teams based upon parent requests and the schools the girls attend. In addition, we try to make sure that each team has the same number of younger and older players. We try to limit the number of girls on a team to 12 so they all can stay involved.

Equipment

Each player must provide her own glove (team bats are provided). Players are responsible for providing any additional safety equipment that they choose to use. Properly fitted and correctly sized equipment is very important to a player's success, especially in terms of gloves and shoes. Players are encouraged to wear softball shoes with molded rubber cleats and masks.

BYFSA supplies all catcher's gear, practice and game balls, and other equipment necessary for games and practices. Any damage caused by negligence or intentional abuse will be reimbursed by the player, coach and/or parents. Failure to do so may result in denial of any further sport participation in any program by the player, coach or any other member of his/her family.

Game and Practice Schedule

The league season runs from the end of May to the middle of July.

Player attendance at practices and games is important. Please make an effort to attend all practices and games.

6U: 5-6 year olds practice and play on Mondays for 1.5 hours. This age level is being introduced to the sport and getting comfortable with bat, glove and ball. It is highly recommended that parents are involved in practices at this level. The first 45 minutes will be used for instruction/practice and the last 45 minutes will be used for scrimmage to begin building an understanding of game situations. This season will run for 4 weeks.

8U: 7-8 year olds will have one practice/game per week on Tuesdays. This age level is being introduced to the sport and getting comfortable with bat, glove and ball. It is highly recommended that parents are involved in practices at this level. The first 45 minutes will be used for instruction/practice and will be followed by a game. Games are 5 innings or 60 minutes (whichever comes first). Additional practice nights are determined by the team coaches.

10U: 9-10 year olds will have one practice/game per week on Mondays. This age level continues to build on the foundation learned in 8U league. The first 45 minutes will be used for instruction/practice and will be followed by a game. Games are 7 innings or 90 minutes (whichever comes first). Additional practice nights are determined by the team coaches.

11Up: Girls aged 11 and up will have one practice/game per week on Wednesdays. This age level continues to build on the skills learned in 10U and is a more competitive league. The first 45 minutes will be used for instruction/practice and will be followed by a game. Games are 7 innings or 90 minutes (whichever comes first). Additional practice nights are determined by the team coaches.

League Program Cost

6U: \$50 early bird/\$60

8U: \$75 early bird/\$100

10U: \$125 early bird/\$150

11Up: \$125 early bird/\$150

The registration fee covers all expenses – administration fees, team equipment (shared bats, balls, catcher's gear), and uniform t-shirts. Players should plan to provide their own gloves and tennis shoes, and optionally their own masks, bats, cleats, sliding pads, and pants, compression shorts, etc.

Travel Program

Traveling softball is the most competitive level of play in BYFSA softball. While more emphasis is placed on competing and striving to win, winning is not the only focus of traveling softball. Winning at the constant expense of specific individuals will not be allowed.

The primary emphasis of traveling softball is skill development, teamwork, cooperation, sportsmanship and respect for others. Recognizing that individuals will have different skill levels and needs, the program will seek to maximize the potential of every player. Each participant will be treated fairly and know that they are an important part of the team and that their contribution is valued.

Traveling teams complete in a minimum of three weekend tournaments as determined by the travel team coordinator. They will also play in the State tournament. Teams may advance to a regional or national tournament.

10U and 12U age groups are required to register and participate in league. 14U and 16U are not required to participate in league.

Age Groups

Traveling fastpitch softball is broken down into four primary age groups (10U, 12U, 14U, 16U), based upon the player's age as of December 31 in the year preceding the summer season. A player who is 10 years old on December 31 would play at the 10U level in the following season. A player who is 11 or 12 years old on December 31 would play at the 12U level in the following season and so on. BYFSA League and USA Softball of North Dakota rules do not allow a player to "play down" to a younger age group for any reason.

Tryouts

BYFSA conducts tryouts for all age levels. Tryouts are held in March.

A player must participate in all scheduled tryout sessions unless an excused absence is granted prior to the start of that session by the BYFSA Board. A player who is absent without being excused may be disqualified. Extenuating and unusual circumstances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

All equipment (bats, gloves, etc.) used for the tryouts must adhere to the rules used to regulate equipment during the league season.

Each player will be identified by a number assigned at the tryout sessions. A player must not wear clothing from a prior year's traveling team, or use anything (bags, etc.) identifying her as a previous traveling player, or wear any article of clothing with her name imprinted on it.

Every player's softball skills will be evaluated by impartial evaluators selected by the BYFSA Board. The evaluators are known to possess the knowledge necessary to evaluate a player's skill at a particular level. Outside evaluators are not related to any of the tryout participants they evaluate.

Scores will be the primary basis (but not the only basis) used to select the players for each traveling team. No player will be placed on a team over a more deserving candidate because she has previously played on a certain level team.

Team Formation

BYFSA will make every attempt to offer one or more traveling teams for girls aged 10 and under (10U), 12 and under (12U), 14 and under (14U), and 16 and under (16U). Provided there are enough participants, BYFSA attempts to offer opportunities for play at various skill levels within each age group. If at all possible, at least one team at the highest skill or A level will be fielded at each level. The number of participants and their skill level (based on their tryout results) will determine how many additional teams can be fielded and at what level, A or B.

“A” level teams play the strongest opponents and frequently qualify for a regional or national tournament. “B” level teams will play a schedule against similar B teams during tournaments. Note that BYFSA tries to register B level teams in tournaments with other B level teams; however, BYFSA has no control over the exact format of each tournament and B level teams may end up playing A level teams during a tournament.

Coach Selection

The coach selection committee reviews candidates as early as possible.

Uniforms

BYFSA provides a jersey to all travel team players which includes shirt, pants, belt and socks.

Equipment

Each player must provide her own glove. Properly fitted and correctly sized gloves and bats are very important to a player’s success. Players are encouraged to wear softball shoes with hard rubber cleats. Other equipment that should be purchased include a mask, sliding pad, compression shorts, cleats, and a helmet with faceguard and chin strap.

BYFSA supplies all catcher’s gear, practice and game balls, and other equipment necessary for games and practices. Any negligent or intentional damage to BYFSA equipment or facilities will be reimbursed by the player, coach and/or parents. Failure to do so may result in denial of any further sport participation in any BYFSA program by the player, coach or any other member of his/her family.

BYFSA encourages infielders to wear facemasks and strongly recommends that all players wear masks as well at all levels. **Please note some coaches will require masks of all players.** Masks will be provided by the players.

Bats must be fitted to the individual player. Parents should consult coaches and/or specific league rules before purchasing bats. Bats must be USA Softball Certified.

Practice Schedule

To compete at a high level with ever-improving competition, practices will be scheduled and attendance is expected. It is up to the head coach, along with the availability of practice facilities, to determine the number of practices needed for a team. Please consult the head coach of a particular team for information about practice expectations.

Commitment

Traveling fastpitch softball requires a significant time commitment from players, coaches and parents throughout the season. Every player is important to her team and is expected to attend all practices, league games, and tournament games. Unexcused absences may result in a reduction in playing time.

We expect softball to take priority over other sports during the season, and absences due to participation in other sports will be considered unexcused. Ultimately, decisions regarding reduction in playing time are made by the coach.

BYFSA has established a reputation and tradition of excellence. As we strive to achieve the highest level of play possible in our summer traveling program, we ask all participants to plan to be available for all practices and the likelihood of post-season play.

If a player determines that she cannot participate at a minimum 80% of the time for practices, games and post-season play, the player or parent must indicate this limitation on their registration as availability may affect to which team the player is assigned. In addition, participation below the 80% level may adversely affect playing time (see below).

BYFSA expects players and coaches to complete the entire travel season. Early terminations may affect future position offerings and team assignments.

Playing Time

Equal playing time is not guaranteed, particularly at 12U levels and above. However, over the course of the season, each participant will get a fair and ample amount of playing time. Each coach is responsible for ensuring this happens. At a minimum, each participant will not sit out two full, consecutive tournament games. Note that the rules for most weekend tournaments allow each team to bat the entire roster and substitute freely.

Coaches have the authority to limit playing time due to any or all of the following:

- Disciplinary action
- Player is sick or injured
- Player has absences from games and/or practices
- Games are shortened due to inclement weather, darkness or time limit

If a player is going to be gone from any game or practice, either she or a family member must personally notify the coach ahead of time. Failure to do so may result in a loss of playing time.

BYFSA realizes there may be other sport conflicts during the summer traveling softball season. We ask that if there is a conflict that softball be given a high priority. This includes practices, league games, season tournaments, and postseason tournaments.

Travel Team Program Cost

The player fee to participate is \$200.

For all traveling programs, the registration fee covers administration fees, league fees and officiating costs, weekend tournament fees, gate fees and the State qualifier fee. BYFSA pays the gate fees for the State Tournament and Nationals (should a team qualify).

BYFSA does not pay for player or family travel.

Additional Fees

Individual traveling teams may decide to participate in one or more additional tournaments. The costs for entering additional tournaments will be equally distributed among all players and will be approximately \$10-\$30 per player per tournament. Additional money may be required as determined by the coaches and parents to cover the costs of batting cage time or other training time. All tournament fees are due at that time.

Once a player has been placed on a team, there will be no refunds except for players who suffer a long-term injury or illness. Any refund requests will be handled on a case-by-case basis and may be prorated by the number of games played. Refund requests must be approved by the BYFSA Board President.

Suspensions

The BYFSA Board reserves the right to suspend any coach, parent, or player who violates the BYFSA Code of Ethics or Program rules. Suspensions will be documented and communicated to the BYFSA Board. Suspension of a coach may lead to progressive discipline.

An umpire may suspend any player, parent, or coach who acts in an unsportsmanlike manner. Subsequent violations may result in the player, parent, or coach being removed from the program. All violations must be reported to the BYFSA Board.

Player Removal

A player may be removed from a team for the following specific reasons:

- Disregard of the player's responsibilities, including lack of attendance at practices and/or games.
- Continued play in such a manner as to endanger others and/or self.
- Displaying an uncaring attitude and hurting the team's competitiveness and enjoyment of the sport.
- Failure to work within a team environment (placing self-interest before the teams).
- Repeated unsportsmanlike behavior.

Before requesting the removal of a player, the coach must discuss the situation with the Board President or USA Softball JO Commissioner and the player's parent(s) and attempt to correct the situation. The discussion should include an objective description of the behavior and of the intended discipline. Continued problems may result in progressive discipline up to and including removal.

Team Banners

If a Sparks travel team wishes to have a sun banner created, the following guidelines:

- Banner can be sponsored by a parent or parent's business and they may place the business logo(s) on the banner.
- Banner must include official BYFSA logo.
- Parents cannot contact businesses they don't own or aren't employed by for banner sponsorship.
- The company printing the banner may have their logo on the banner in return for a discount/sponsorship.
- Banner proof must be approved by BYFSA Travel Coordinators.

Pre-Season Development

Pitching and Catching clinics as well as McQuade Winter and Spring camps are available during the pre-season. Up to date information can be found on the BYFSA website at <https://www.bismarckfastpitch.com/camps-and-clinics>.

Evaluation/Suggestions

Parents are asked to complete an evaluation survey at the end of each season detailing their experience with the BYFSA Program and their coaches. This is your most significant opportunity to express your opinions and to help us make improvements. Contents of evaluations are confidential and are only viewed by the BYFSA Board members. Please take advantage of this opportunity. Surveys are emailed out to the BYFSA family at the end of each season. If you do not receive a survey link, please contact the BYFSA Board President.

Behavior

The highest standards of sportsmanship will be expected from the players, parents, coaches, umpires, and spectators. All participants in the BYFSA Program are reminded that we represent the Bismarck Community in addition to the BYFSA Program.

Conduct that will not be tolerated includes verbal abuse, profanity, physical aggression on or off the field, and other acts. Umpires may use their discretion whether to issue a warning or to immediately eject the violator (coach, player, or spectator) from the game. The umpires and/or coaches are responsible for reporting all incidents to the BYFSA Board. Subsequent violations may result in suspension from play and/or attendance.

If a parent or player has a problem with the performance of an umpire, he/she should direct his/her concerns to the team's coach. The coach represents the BYFSA Program and shall be the only person communicating with the umpires. One of the objectives of the program is to teach respect for the officials and the proper procedure for dealing with any problems with the umpires.

Unless actively participating in the game, all players shall remain in the bench area out of the field of play.

It is mandatory that each batter, on deck player, runner, player in a coach's box, or person on the field wear a batting helmet.

Spectators are restricted to the areas that are "out of play" and away from the benches.

Inclement Weather

In case of inclement weather, the coach will determine if there will be a practice.

At games, the coaches and umpires are responsible for determining whether the game will be started. Once play begins, the umpire is responsible for determining whether play should be halted.

In all cases, unless you receive a call from your team's coach, you should appear at the site of the game or practice as scheduled.

Games and practices will be suspended when lightning is visible.

If you (parent/guardian) are not able to be present during an event, be sure that your child knows another parent who will be present and with whom she can take shelter if bad weather suddenly threatens.

Notification of game cancellations will be posted to the BYFSA Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/bismarckfastpitch>) and parent notifications via text and email will be sent out.

Blood Policy

A player or coach who is bleeding or who has an open wound shall be prohibited from participating in the game until appropriate treatment has been administered. If medical care or treatment cannot be administered in a reasonable amount of time, the individual will have to leave the game. (The length of time considered reasonable shall be in the umpire's judgment.) Once the bleeding has been stopped, the player or coach may reenter the game. If there is a substantial amount of blood on the uniform, it must be changed before that individual may participate.

Drug and Alcohol Policy

BYFSA mandates that all players/coaches/parents participating in a youth sport activity (practice/scrimmage/game) should refrain from the use of alcohol and/or a controlled substance.

It shall be a violation of this policy for a player/coach, while participating in a BYFSA youth activity, to use a beverage containing alcohol, or use or consume, have in possession, buy, sell, or give away any controlled substance.

Once a violation has been brought to the BYFSA Board's attention and a decision has been made, the player/coach will be informed of his/her ineligibility by a written letter from the BYFSA Board President.

- First Violation: Upon notification by the BYFSA Board, the player/coach shall lose eligibility for the next two consecutive games or two weeks of a sport season in which the player/coach is participating, whichever is greater. No exception is permitted.
- Second Violation: The player/coach shall lose eligibility in the BYFSA Program for that sport season. No exception is permitted.
- Accumulative Penalties: Penalties shall be accumulative beginning with and continuing throughout the player's/coach's participation in any and all BYFSA activities.

Tobacco Policy

BYFSA does not permit the use of tobacco by players under the legal tobacco age. It shall be a violation of this policy for a player participating in the BYFSA Program to use tobacco.

Once a violation has been brought to the BYFSA Board's attention, the player will be informed of his/her ineligibility. Ineligibilities will be the same as for the drug and alcohol policy.

BYFSA mandates that coaches refrain from the use of tobacco in any form during a youth sport activity (practice/scrimmage/game). Reminder, no tobacco is allowed on any Bismarck Parks & Rec property.

Zero Tolerance Policy

BYFSA is a recreational youth fastpitch softball organization run by volunteers. This organization is designed to provide a safe and fun place for kids to play fastpitch softball while building sportsmanship and camaraderie. In keeping with the spirit in which this organization was founded, BYFSA requires that all participants including players, coaches, parents, spectators and officials, behave with courtesy and respect and assist us by providing a safe, encouraging and positive atmosphere during practices, games, scrimmages and other events. As such, BYFSA has a zero tolerance policy in regards to unsportsmanlike conduct, foul language, verbal or physical abuse or harassment towards another player, parent, coach, official, or board member. Any individual who is displaying inappropriate behavior will be asked to leave the game immediately. When a board member has been informed that an individual has been inappropriate, he/she may be asked to appear before the board for an explanation. The Board shall impose such penalty as they feel is warranted. A coach cannot, under any condition, dispute an official call on the field in an argumentative fashion. Arguing with an official or with another coach, player or parent will not be tolerated and is grounds for removal from the game, and possibly from the program. An official's call is final and is not eligible for protest. Decisions of BYFSA Board are final and no protests will be entertained.

Coaches' Responsibilities and Rights

Coaches' Responsibilities include:

- Comply with and enforce all BYFSA Program policies and rules, including without limitation, attending online concussion training session.
- Know all and comply with all league and tournament rules.
- Adhere to the BYFSA drug, alcohol, and tobacco policies.
- Treat all players in an equitable and fair manner.
- Demonstrate good sportsmanship, self-control, and proper behavior.
- Ensure the good sportsmanship and proper behavior of team players, assistant coaches, parents, and spectators.
- Attend all league meetings and functions.
- Arrange to have an alternate attend any required functions (e.g., coaches' meetings, etc.) that he/she is unable to attend.
- Ensure that all players receive appropriate playing time.
- Teach the players to have fun and enjoy competition.
- Help the players to develop a healthy, competitive attitude toward winning and losing.
- Assess individual player's strengths and weaknesses and create a developmental plan to help each player improve in the areas of concern.
- Encourage and compliment players; use only constructive criticism.
- Care for the equipment that is issued to them. If any equipment is lost or damaged, coaches should report the problem to the Summer League Coordinator. Return all issued equipment in good, clean condition.
- Attend any coaches' clinic arranged by the BYFSA Board.
- Conduct a pre-season parents' meeting. At this meeting, the coach should set the tone and expectations for the season, distribute team schedule, roster, team rules, and collect any additional fees that are due.
- Conduct a mid-season player meeting, including evaluations of each player.
- Participate in team photographs.
- Schedule field time for practices and any make-up (home) games with the other coaches.
- Report any problems with fields to the BYFSA Board.
- Recruit parent volunteers, team manager, communication coordinator, and social director as necessary.

Coaches' Rights Include:

- To be treated with respect by players, parents, volunteers, umpires, league, officials, the BYFSA Board.
- To be made fully aware of the rules and policies under which they must function.
- To have access to necessary safety equipment and practice fields.
- To expect full cooperation from parents when they are asked to assist.

Parent Conduct

Parents of BYFSA players are subject to all guidelines set forth by the BYFSA Code of Conduct. Additionally, BYFSA asks all program parents and players to respect the competitive environment of softball by adhering to the following two rules:

1. During all games, parents are asked to respect the bench area as the coaches' and players' domain. Unless there is an emergency, parents should never enter the bench area without permission from one of the team coaches.
2. During all games, players are asked NOT to leave the bench area to visit with friends or family. In the event of a special circumstance or emergency, make the coach aware of the situation first.

These two simple rules will enhance your players' learning experience and help prepare our student-athletes for future, competitive endeavors.

Parents' Responsibilities and Rights

Your child's participation in the BYFSA Program will require a significant contribution of your time and effort. Parents can contribute many things to support their child, team, and the program.

Parents' Responsibilities include:

- Let your child know you love him/her, win or lose, whether he/she plays well or not.
- Compliment and encourage. Let the coaches handle coaching and criticism. Coordinate your efforts to help your child's development with the recommendations of the coaches.
- Support your coaches. Remember that they are responsible for many children in addition to yours.
- Don't compare your child to other players. Be honest with yourself and your child about his/her abilities.
- Treat each player on the team as you would your own.
- Keep negative comments to yourself. Express concerns only to the coach and in a straightforward, fair, and objective manner.
- Teach your child to have fun and enjoy competition. Don't tell him/her that winning does not count because it does, and she knows it. Instead, help him/her to develop a healthy competitive attitude toward winning and losing.
- Follow the "Parents' Code of Conduct" supported and distributed by BYFSA.
- Demonstrate good sportsmanship and proper behavior. Don't criticize officials, coaches, or other parents or players.
- Ensure the good sportsmanship and proper behavior of your child and your guests.
- Get your child to, and pick them up from, practices and games on time.
- Inform the coach in advance whenever your child will miss or be late for a practice or a game.
- Provide a copy of your child's birth certificate to the head coach at the first parent/coach pre-season meeting.
- You may be asked to share your time and talents to ensure your team's practices, games and tournaments are successful.
- Complete the Post Season Parent Survey. Feedback is important for the continual improvement of the program.

Parents' Rights include:

- Have yourself and your child be treated fairly and with respect.
- Have your child practice and play in a safe and healthy environment.
- Have your child coached by effective and qualified adult leadership.
- Have your child engage in practice and playing activities that increase his/her skills and enjoyment of the sport.
- To be fully informed by the coaches with respect to schedules, team philosophies, team rules, and your child's strengths and weaknesses.
- Have access to timely/appropriate information and/or mediation, with disputes handled by the Board should you be unable to resolve them with a coach.

Players' Responsibilities and Rights

Players on a traveling team should take pride in herself, her team, and in her community. She must follow the directions of the coaches, and must be willing to accept constructive criticism.

Players' Responsibilities include:

- Have pride and confidence in yourself, your teammates, and your coaches.
- Be attentive and work hard in practice and games. Make your best efforts to perform the tasks as directed by the coaches.
- Be a competitor, perform up to your full ability, and contribute to team unity. Compliment teammates and let the coaches handle criticism.
- Show respect toward your coaches, teammates, and parents.
- Show respect toward opposing players, coaches, umpires, and spectators.
- Keep your (personal and team) equipment clean and in good repair.
- Maintain a responsible attitude toward your health. Be aware of, and adhere to, the BYFSA policies on drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.
- Remember that softball is a game and keep it in perspective with family, school, and/or church activities and responsibilities.
- Demonstrate good sportsmanship and proper behavior.
- Remind your parents that you need to be at practices and games on time.
- Inform the coach whenever you will miss or be late for a practice or a game.
- Remember to bring all your equipment and water bottle to all games and practices.
- Pick up your trash and dispose of it in trash containers after each game or practice.

Players' Rights include:

- To participate at a level that matches your maturity and ability.
- To play as a child, not as an adult.
- To participate in a safe, healthy environment.
- To be treated fairly, with dignity, and with respect.
- To have fun in sports.
- To have an equal opportunity to develop your abilities and strive for success.
- To have good coaching; to be taught the fundamentals and strong character development.

Complaint and Handling Process

The BYFSA program requires the following procedure for addressing program complaints:

- The person lodging a complaint is required to first address it with the coach of the team. If a coach is unable to resolve the situation, the coach must notify the BYFSA Board President. If the Board President is unable to resolve the dispute, he or she will bring the matter before the BYFSA Board.
- The Board is then asked to "rule" on the matter or help resolve the dispute.

BYFSA Board

The BYFSA Board meets at 6:30 pm on the first Monday of each month at the Bismarck Moose Club. Meetings are open to the public for the first 15 minutes (or as long as guests are presenting to the board).

All positions are elected to the BYFSA Board. Board member openings are voted on at the October board meeting and officially seated in November.