



TRAVEL COACHING HANDBOOK

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PRE-SEASON

Introduction:

There are several things that take place prior to the start of the season. This section of the handbook will discuss items coaches need to be aware of for the pre-season.

Coaching Staff & Team Parent

The Head Coach is allowed to select who is on their coaching staff. All coaches must complete the training and background checks. PWYSA will allow for up to 3 official assistant coaches. While you may have more, MN softball would like to limit your total coaches on the bench during a game to no more than four.

As a head coach, we ask that you be prepared with a practice or game plan for each event. Share the plan with your assistant coaches and discuss how you plan to execute against it. Some teams find success with assigning specific tasks to each assistant coach (ie. Pitching coach, hitting coach, defensive coach, etc). This can work in order to limit different messages that players are hearing from others.

We also suggest having a Team Parent. The expectation of this individual would be to help with the following:

- Organizing non-coaching related activities (team parties/get-togethers)
- Communication with families regarding practice and game times / locations
- Managing practice, game and tournament logistics
- Gathering team roster information & signatures
- Updating websites with game results

Coaching Trainings

PWYSA requires head and assistant coaches to complete a variety of trainings to ensure all are ready and qualified to be coaching our players. You must complete the following certifications:

- Background check
- SafeSport training
- Concussion training
- Sexual Abuse Training
- Code of Ethics

You can find directions to complete all this at <https://www.pwysa.com/coachregistration>. Once complete, please send screenshots of your completed certifications to your Travel Director, Andy Stellmacher at Andy.Stellmacher@target.com.

Coaching Clinics

PWYSA puts on two coaching clinics and a Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA) training at the beginning of summer season. Attendance is required for all travel head coaches and assistant coaches. Information

on these clinics will be shared via our website at <https://www.pwysa.com/coachregistration>. You will hear more about these as each summer season approaches.

Coaching Philosophy

PWYSA promotes the game of fastpitch softball as a means to teach girls the value of teamwork and sportsmanship, to enhance self-esteem and to develop softball skills – all in a positive environment.

For our Travel program, our vision is to create a top tier youth travel softball program. Our mission is to develop elite, top tier fastpitch softball players to compete against various age levels. We hope to accomplish this with these core values:

- Strong focus on player development (no less than 50% of your practice time should be here)
- Showcase strong sportsmanship, teamwork, and learn to love the game (make it fun)
- Respect for self and team mates while showing positive attitudes
- Give back to the community that gives players the opportunity to play
- Teaching our higher-level teams to compete to win

Playing Time

In the travel league, there is no requirement that equal playing time at all positions will occur. Over the course of the season, coaches will ensure that each player gets an ample amount of playing time, but not necessarily at the player's or parent's desired position. As the season progresses particularly at 12U "Gold" (Top) and above, players will be positioned so that the team is competitive.

At the younger the age groups, more individual player development and equal playing time is stressed. The older the age group, and higher level of play, the more team development and placing the most competitive team on the field is stressed.

Playing time is at the discretion of the head coach with consideration to developing depth of talent at every position. Other things that could impact playing time include but is not limited to:

- Absences at practices, games, tournaments and team meetings without discussing with coach.
- Lack of effort or negative attitude of the player in practices and games.
- Commitment of the player to improve her skills.
- Skill level of the players on the team.
- Disciplinary action is being taken.
- The player has been suspended.
- The player is injured or sick.
- Shortened games due to time limit or inclement weather.

Equipment Pick-Up

All teams will be issued a team equipment bag at the beginning of the season. This will be coordinated by our PWYSA Equipment Director. The following items will be provided in the bag:

- Two sets of catcher's gear
- Two batting tees

- Two Bow Nets
- One-Two bucket of softballs
- Whiffle Balls
- First Aid Kits
- Box of new game balls
- Pitching Machine (8U)
- One pitching rubber (10 & 12U)
- Scorebook

TeamSnap App

This is the phone app that will allow you to manage and communicate with your teams. You and any others you choose will have admin rights to make adjustments or changes as needed for your team. The main features here are:

- Schedule: view upcoming events, locations and player/coach availability and log game results
 - Players should populate their availability status 24 hours prior to practices or games
- Roster: see player contact information
- Messages: chat or email your team across your team or individuals

Field Assignments

At the start of the season our Operations Director will assign fields for practices. This information can be located on TeamSnap. Once league game schedules are available, these will also be added to TeamSnap. Field availability is very tight across the city so adjustments to the schedule is not easy. Friday nights and weekends are usually the easiest times to find incremental field space if interested.

Coaches will have admin rights to their TeamSnap schedules to make adjustments or edits as needed. This is especially true for tournament weekends or for extra events you may schedule with your team. Please keep all your game scores updated so we can get a true reflection of your teams record.

League/National Associations

Wayzata Travel Fastpitch plays in the Metro Area 8U (www.mnsoftball.com/metro8u) and Big West League for 10U & 12U (www.mnsoftball.com/bigwest). Each league is made up of teams from mostly West and North Metro teams. This league is part of the Minnesota Softball, which is an affiliate of USA Softball (www.mnsoftball.com/). They serve as the governing body who sets league rules, game schedules and organize and run state tournament events.

Tournaments – Invitationals, State & Nationals

Travel teams play in tournaments throughout the summer season. Your Travel Director will select and register your team for tournaments in advance. The cost of these tournaments is built into your team's registration fee. PWYSA hosts the Wayzata Warm Up at the beginning of June for 10 & 12U age divisions. All 10 & 12U travel teams will participate in the Warm Up.

The number of tournaments you play will vary by age group:

- 8U: 3 (2 Invitationals, 1 State Tournament)
- 10U: 5 (3 Invitationals, 1 State Qualifier, 1 State Tournament)
- 12U: 6 (4 Invitationals, 1 State Qualifier, 1 State Tournament)

Here are the different types of tournaments:

- Invitational: tournaments where you can pay to play throughout the season. Your Travel director will sign you up for the number of tournaments listed above in advance. If you and your team want to play in additional tournaments, you're welcome to sign up but the team will need to cover registration and tournament fees. The Wayzata Warm Up is a form of an Invitational.
- State: through our participation in the Metro Area 8U and Big West league, we are able to participate in MN Softball State Tournaments. For 10 & 12U teams, they participate in a State Qualifier tournament, where you must win one game to "qualify" for the State Tournament. In the State Qualifier you will participate against teams from the Big West league. For 8U teams, they are automatically qualified for the State Tournament. For the State Tournament, you are ranked with teams from across the state based on your regular season results, then then placed into different "Tiers" where you compete against teams with similar records.
- Nationals: to qualify for Nationals for any tournament, a team usually needs to place first or second in the level of play (A or B) that they signed up to play in. Some tournaments may only offer 1 berth if it is a smaller tournament, bigger tournaments may offer 3. Occasionally the team that wins a berth may not want it and the berth can be passed down to the next team in line at that tournament. Payment for National Tournaments is NOT included in your registration fee, so the team will need to decide if they want to participate and then pay the fee on their own.

Player Equipment

The following items are required equipment for each player:

- Glove
- Batting Helmet (prefer navy blue)
- Bat
- Fielding Mask (new PWYSA requirement for 8U-12U)
- Game Uniform (Blue Pants, Gold & Grey Jersey, Gold Socks...families should order at registration)
- Water Bottle

The following items are recommended equipment for each player:

- Batting Gloves
- Cleats

Team Rosters

Fill in with MN Softball site information, how to edit, how to print roster, how to add/subtract players, etc

Travel Season Parent Kick-Off Meeting hosted by Travel Director

Your Travel Director will host a Travel Season Kickoff meeting after teams are formed. The goal of this meeting is to inform families of what our travel program is about, what PWYSA expects of families, give them a high-level overview of what they should expect during the season, and allow them to ask questions of the travel program. This meeting will be 60-90 minutes in length and will take place 1-2 weeks after teams are formed.

Team Parent Meeting

It's recommended you set up a separate parent meeting at the beginning of the season. This is a time for coaches to introduce themselves while laying out their expectations for the season. Potential items you can touch on during this time:

- Your background and experience
- Coaching Staff – who are your assistants and team parent...if you need help, ...this is a good time to ask
- Practice expectations – extra time needed for pitchers/catchers; fundamental based, etc
- Game expectations – how early do you want them there before games, league vs. game positions, playing time, etc
- Desired Communication channels – how you will communicate to parents, how you want parents to communicate with you.
 - TeamSnap is a great vehicle to leverage for team chats, emails and tracking player availability for all events

Uniform Hand Out

Uniforms can be worn for multiple seasons as long as they fit the player. Players need to have the following uniform items:

- Gold and Grey Jersey (May change with updated uniform options)
- Blue Pants
- Gold Socks

If a player is new to Travel or they need a new piece of a uniform, they will be able to order this at the time of the tryouts. Once uniforms orders have arrived, they will be distributed to head coaches to hand out to players.

DURING SEASON

Introduction:

The following section covers the topics that will pertain to things that may come up during the softball season.

Practices

Practice time is best used with getting players as many repetitions as possible for the various skills required for softball. Like many activities, keeping players active and engaged is key to their development as a player.

Travel teams begin practicing in March indoors at local school gyms, will move outdoors as soon as fields are open, and will continue through the end of the season in July. Practices are typically scheduled for 90 minutes of general team practice time. Most 10-12U teams will add 30-45 minutes ahead of their scheduled time to focus on pitchers and catchers doing individual work. We want this time to be separate so those players don't miss out on the general portion of practice. Example: if you're practice is scheduled from 6:00-7:30pm, teams have pitchers and catchers work on their specific practice drills from 5:30-6:00pm.

Practice Plans

There are many ways to run a practice to focus on a variety of skills. At a minimum, here is a suggested practice shell that can be leveraged:

- Pitchers/Catchers (10-14U) – 30 Minutes before scheduled time
 - Pitchers need to bring a catcher (parent, sibling, friend)
 - Catchers - select a coach to work specifically with catchers on individual drills
- [Dynamic Warm Up](#) – 10 minutes
- Throwing progressions – 15 minutes
- Individual Station Work – 30-45 minutes (5-10 minutes per station)
 - Break into groups of 2-4 players per station (offense and/or defense)
- Game situations – 15-30 minutes
 - Examples:
 - Fielding and back up positioning, base running, runner on third, etc
 - Have defense (each position) think about what they do on a play
 - Have offense (runners/hitters) think about what they do on a play
 - Run downs/pickle situation
- Something fun– 5 minutes
 - HR contest, relay race, throwing contest

Weather Hotline

On days with rain and if you want to know if your home field practices or games are on as scheduled, call the Plymouth Parks Weather Hotline at 763-509-5205. This is where your PWYSA Operations Director and Travel Director finds out this information.

League Games

League Games are a great time to develop your players in multiple positions so they can experience real game situations. At younger ages, games can be tough to watch with little action or ability to make outs. Over time their skills will develop and they will be able to execute on more and more plays (offense and defense). **Encourage your players to try to make all the plays possible.** This will help them learn what they should do as their skills develop.

- *Work in pitchers when they are ready to pitch against your level of competition*

League Game Logistics:

- League Nights:
 - 8U (Metro Area 8U) – single game on Wednesdays
 - 10U (BigWest)– double headers on Tuesdays in May, double header on Tuesdays & Thursdays in June
 - 12U (BigWest) - double header on Tuesdays & Thursdays in May & June
- Times: 6:15pm first game, 7:30 second game
- Game Length: 65-70 minutes (last inning can't start after that time)
 - Plan to have your team arrive 45-60 minutes before first game to get warmed up
- Location: Roughly half of games are at home, half are away (usually every other game)
- Pre-Game Warm Ups
 - Should begin 45-60 minutes prior to game start time.
 - Treat this time as practice and go through as many stations as you can in that time.
 - Dynamic warm up – 10 minutes
 - Hitting (tee work, soft toss, bunts) – 15 minutes
 - Fielding (throwing progressions, ground balls, fly balls) – 15 minutes
- Umpires: these are provided by the home team. PWYSA partners with Minnesota Elite, who assigns umpires and handles payments. Unfortunately there is a shortage of umpires and, at times, not every game will have an ump. They prioritize games based on the level, with A games first, then B games, then C games.
 - MN Elite will communicate in advance if there will be an umpire at the game
 - If an umpire does not show up, communicate with your Travel Director, who will relay the message to MN Elite
 - If there is not an umpire, both team coaches should work on finding another coach or parent to serve as the umpire for the game.
- **Canceling Games**
 - Contact your opponent
 - Communicate with your opponent on weather related delays or concerns (or any other questions you have).
 - You can see your opponent's head coach information by looking on your MN Softball team page (www.tournaments.mnsoftball.com) or your Travel director will share a list of head coaches contact information.
 - If hosting, you'll need to communicate with your opponents if fields are closed.

- Contact your umpire for home games
 - 10/12U: Jason Smith from MN Elite (MEU) is our umpire coordinator. Text or call him at 612-807-4660.
 - 8U: Brent Nelson is our PWYSA Umpire Coordinator. Text or call him at 612-281-0166.
- **Rescheduling Games**
 - If a game needs to be rescheduled, you'll need to work with the opposing team's head coach to coordinate dates and locations.
 - To reschedule home games, work with your PWYSA Operations Director if incremental field space is needed.
- **Submitting Scores to Team Snap & MN Softball:**
 - Enter your scores into TeamSnap. Coaches and/or your team parent will have admin access to enter scores into the game event on your TeamSnap schedule.
 - Either your team or your Travel Director will enter the score into the MN Softball site (www.tournament.mnsoftball.com). This should be added 24-48 hours after your game.

Tournaments

Tournament games are a great time to put your players in the best positions to team success. You should expect to get an email from the tournament director 1-2 weeks prior to your tournament date. This should have information regarding tournament rules, game locations, brackets, and anything else you need to know about the tournament. A few things to look for:

- **Team Rosters:** you will need a copy of your team roster when checking in for some tournaments, signed by parents verifying all players are legit. Be sure to have these on hand at check in. Your Travel Director will send you this at the beginning of the season once your roster is loaded into MN Softball website.
- **Game Balls:** You may be asked to provide two new game balls when you check in for the tournament. Each team is provided 12 new balls at the beginning of the season.
- **Gate Fees:** Some tournaments, such as the State Tournament will require an additional fee to be paid – a gate fee. Be sure to check prior to attending if any additional fees will need to be paid. PWYSA will cover these fees, but coaches will want to write a check, take a picture of it, and send it to your Travel Director and/or Treasurer (pwysa.treasurer@gmail.com) to be reimbursed.

Player/Parent Issues

If a player or parent has a disagreement with a coach, it is encouraged that they 1st take 24 hours before communicating their issues with the coach. After that time, I encourage the player to be involved in the conversation. If you as a coach have a problem with a parent that you don't feel comfortable handling, please refer your parent to speak directly with the Travel Director about the issue.

POST SEASON

Introduction:

The following items take place after the end of the season.

Player Evaluations

After the season, your Travel Director will send out a player evaluation to head coaches. We ask that all team coaches participate in rating each player on the team on a number of different metrics. This information is leveraged for the future. Feedback to understand the quality of coaching that was provided and what areas PWYSA needs to further support our coaches with training in the future

Coaches Evaluations

After the season, your Travel Director will send out a coach's evaluation to all families. Feedback will be leveraged to understand the quality of coaching that was provided and what areas PWYSA needs to further support our coaches with training in the future

Equipment Return

Our PWYSA Equipment Director will work with you to arrange a time to return your team's equipment. This will probably occur during mid-July/early August

End of Season Parties

You should work with the parents to celebrate your season, regardless of the outcome. End the year on a good note with the team and enjoy! This will be on the team to organize and pay for, but can be a great recap for a long season.

Fall Ball

Fall Ball (www.pwysa.com/falltravel) will kick off shortly after the end of the Summer softball season.

This is a transitional time where players will transition to the ages they will play during the next summer season or often recreation players will give travel a try. This is big for players transitioning from 8U to 10U (kid pitch) and 10U to 12U (larger softball and further pitching distance). I ask for coaches to encourage players to participate.

The timeline is as follows for the Fall Season:

- Registration – beginning to mid July
- Tryouts – mid to end of July
- Teams Formed – end of July
- Practices begin – 2nd week of August
- Games begin – 3rd week of August
- State Tournament – last weekend in Sept

APPENDIX

PWYSA Board Member Information:

- President: Tim Lyons (tlyons73@gmail.com, #763-218-7186)
- Vice President & Rec Director: Jenny Graves (jkelly0518@yahoo.com, #320-267-2408)
- Travel Director: Andy Stellmacher (andy.stellmacher@target.com, #612-839-0499)
- Operations Director: Steve Williams (williamsSj99@gmail.com, #651-724-5986)
- Equipment Director: Sean Porter (sean.porter@experian.com, #763-443-3168)
- Player Dev Director: Meghan Seymour (meghancseymour@gmail.com, #520-820-1531)
- For all other roles, visit www.pwysa.com/board