

West Metro Prowlers Fastpitch Softball

Waconia Area Athletics Traveling Softball Handbook 2022

Mission: Our mission is to provide a positive experience for Softball players seeking a competitive level of play with a focus on both individual and team skills and development. WAA Traveling Softball is intended to help prepare players for future levels of competitive softball and strengthen the future of Waconia Softball.

Organizational Structure: WAA Traveling Softball is a program within Waconia Area Athletics (WAA) and Waconia Community Education (WCE). WAA Traveling Softball will follow the rules and policies set forth by WAA and WCE, as well as the rules and policies in place within the league in which our teams are competing, currently Big West Softball League.

Waconia Softball Advisory Board: WAA Traveling Softball also has an advisory board that assists with many aspects of the softball program. Advisory Board members attend meetings periodically throughout the year, assist with tryout organization, team organization, and advise on issues and situations that occur during the year. Advisory Board members are volunteers and usually donate between 20 and 40 hours of their time each year. There is an application process to become an Advisory Board member. Applications are sent out by WAA periodically based on need. Applications turned in are reviewed by WAA and the current Softball Advisory Board members. New Board Members are selected based on qualifications such as honesty, trustworthiness, selflessness and experience. WAA is looking for members who want to assist in making decisions that benefit every single player in the program. Advisory Board members should have their creative ideas but also able to find common ground with other board members. Knowledge of the game of softball or other sports, either as a player or coach, is ideal but not a requirement.

Registration and Eligibility: WAA provides a competitive traveling softball opportunity for the West Metro Prowlers ages 13 through 18. Most participants either live in the Waconia School District limits or attend ISD 110 schools, however, 14U+ is OPEN and any girl with an eligible birthyear is welcome to tryout regardless of where they live or attend school. Registration opens in July of the current year for the following summer based on our evaluation process. There are 4 competitive age groups; 14U, 16U, 18U & High School League combination. Girls are evaluated with those in similar birth years and then placed on teams accordingly.

Evaluation Process: WAA Traveling Softball uses an evaluation process to create the most competitive teams possible. The evaluation process is considered to be a 12 month process. The first step of the process is a fall evaluation. Fall evaluations are done outdoors in August. No Advisory Board member is permitted to score

their own child's age group. They are, however, allowed to assist with drill facilitation that their child may be involved in. WAA hires evaluators to score athlete's during tryouts. During fall evaluations, players are scored on ten categories related to softball ability, five defensive and five offensive categories. The player with the highest score may not have fielded the most balls successfully. That player, however, should have the proper mechanics as judged by evaluators to field at a high level and had some success fielding on that day. After fall evaluations, scores are tallied by WAA and stored privately until winter evaluations. WAA acknowledges that a single evaluation may not tell us everything we need to know about each player. Therefore, the next step in the evaluation process is a winter evaluation. Winter evaluations generally take place in January. During the second tryout, players are grouped the same way they were during the fall. Players participate in very similar drills as the first tryout but the winter evaluation is in a gym. Our goal in the winter evaluation is to make sure players were correctly assessed and to score any player that was unable to attend the fall evaluation.

Team Selection Process: The goal of WAA is to place as many players on a team as possible while allowing players to have a productive opportunity. It is not the goal to cut players, but sometimes cuts need to be made to ensure a positive and competitive experience for all. WAA believes it is not in the best interest of every player to always fill the maximum number of players on a team. If cuts are made, it is for the benefit of the players that did not make a team, as well as the players on that team. WAA wants to encourage softball participation for every player that wants to play but we also realize that some players are at different abilities than others. Softball is also a different sport than many others in the sense that there is less playing time to go around. WAA and the Softball Advisory Board believe that having teams with more than 13 players are not conducive to player development. WAA and the Softball Advisory Board believe that the optimum roster size for traveling softball teams is 12. We do realize that not every team or situation is the same. If registration numbers and evaluations dictate, there could be between 10 and 13 players on a team. Having enough players to create multiple teams does not always mean that multiple teams will be created. These are competitive leagues, and there are many aspects to consider when forming teams. The leagues we play in have many different competition levels and WAA must decide if athletes have the ability to compete at those levels

Team Competition Levels: WAA Traveling Softball teams currently play in the Big West Softball League. Big West Softball League has established levels of competition for each age level. It is the job of WAA and the Advisory Board to determine where WAA teams should be placed. These levels are listed as such; A is the highest level that any team from any community can compete. B is the second or middle level of competition at each age level. C is the base level at any age level. Depending on registration and evaluations, WAA is typically able to place 1 to 2 teams within each age group but the Big West level at which they compete is determined by previous years' performance and evaluations. It is the goal of WAA to place teams at the highest level possible in each age level. Each age level is different from year to year.

Core Philosophies:

Aptitude (Softball IQ)

Ability

Effort/Competitiveness

Team Player/Player Participation/Attendance

Sportsmanship

Enjoy the game/fun!

Coach Selection: While we seek a non-parent head coach we cannot guarantee we will get an applicant and may need to rely on a parent volunteer coach. Fees are set to pay a non-parent head coach, however, if this does not work out, a partial refund will be given for the money allotted for that coach. Anyone who is interested in coaching a traveling softball team with WAA Traveling Softball team is to fill out a coaching application. Applications are generally sent via email in December or January before winter evaluations take place. WAA and the Advisory Board review the requests, and coaches are selected after teams are decided. WAA Traveling Softball's current policy is to assign 3 coaches per team. This number is subject to change depending on the situation, at the discretion of WAA and the Advisory Board. Head coaches for each team are selected first. The coaches that applied to be a head coach are considered first for the head coach position. If nobody inquired to be a head coach, then all assistants are considered. Head coaches are selected based on previous coaching experience, knowledge of the game, ability to manage players and parents, positive interactions with WAA, and a willingness to contribute positively to Waconia Traveling Softball and WAA. Assistant coaches are held to similar criteria as head coaches. WAA and the Advisory Board will also consider how well a potential coaching staff would work together. If more than 2 assistant coaches are approved by the Advisory Board, the head coach will in certain circumstances have the opportunity to select the 2 assistant coaches from the approved applicants. If there are only 1 or 2 remaining applicants for that team, they are automatically selected as coaches for the team. All coaching selections are dependent on passing a background check. Coaches are listed once their background check is confirmed.

Scheduling Process: The scheduling process for practices, games, and tournaments is listed below. Each method is unique and complex.

Practices: Practices for traveling softball generally start mid-May in Waconia. This can vary from year to year as the spring break schedule sometimes changes along with how many players are playing school ball. As soon as fields are completely accessible with weather, coaches are responsible for contacting WAA and scheduling practices as they feel necessary. The reasoning for this is coaches know their teams and communicate with their parents the most. They can keep track of their one team better than WAA can keep

track of all teams. If parents have questions about the number of practices, they should contact the coach first to discuss a change in frequency. WAA and the Advisory Board suggest 1 to 2 practices a week during the weeks that games are played. This is a guideline as all coaches are encouraged to structure their practices and meeting times to fit their teams' needs.

Game Schedules: Game schedules vary depending on the age level. All teams must play a minimum of 6 league games to be eligible for state qualifier tournaments. 14U begin play in May and 16U, 18U & HS league teams begin play in the first week of June. The amount of league games is dependent on the number of teams in each region. The regular season could finish up the 3rd week of July unless the team/coaches decides to pursue Nationals.

Regions: Each team is placed in a region based on all the other communities that place a team at that age level and competition level. For example, if there are only eight teams in the region, there will only be one region, and we must play all those teams in that region. If there are 50 teams in the region there would generally be five regions with ten teams, and we would have to play the other nine teams in the region they are placed. Due to Waconia's unique location, regions can vary from year to year. Since travel to the NorthWest metro and South metro are very similar, Waconia can be placed in either location. Sometimes this creates more of a journey for some Waconia teams than others. This is something that is primarily out of the control of WAA.

Game Nights: Games can be played on any day of the week throughout the season. However the Big West league makes an effort to determine nights of the week for each age group. 16U teams play primarily on Monday and Wednesdays. 14U, 18U & HS league teams play primarily on Tuesday and Thursdays. Due to opponent field availability and rescheduling needs, teams must be prepared to play on any night of the week including Friday nights or weekends. Parents can expect about two games a week throughout the season, but as stated before, field availability and rescheduling can affect the number of games in a week. Each game night on the schedule is 2 65-minute games.

Playoffs: Each team is eligible for playoffs once the regular season concludes as long as they completed their 6 league games. 6 league games is equivalent to 3 nights of play since each night is a doubleheader. 3 nights is the minimum, however, we try to schedule 11-14 nights (22-28 games) for Prowlers. Playoffs are the state qualifier tournament followed by the state tournament. State qualifier tournaments are double elimination tournaments. Teams must win at least 1 game in the state qualifier to be eligible for the state tournament. In some cases, teams that do not win a game during the qualifier are still eligible for the State tournament. Seeding in both tournaments is based on standings created by regular season play and performance in the qualifere. Travel for post season tournaments is determined by the Big West league and Minnesota Softball. Therefore post season tournaments are not always local to Waconia. Any post season tournaments are paid out of pocket by each team and are **NOT** covered under registration with WAA

Tournament Schedules: WAA registers each team for two tournaments during the regular season. These tournaments are included in the cost of registration. If teams prefer to play more than two regular-season tournaments, the team/parents are responsible for finding, scheduling, registering and paying for any additional tournaments. WAA in connection with the coaches on each team, attempts to schedule tournaments in relatively close proximity. Due to tournament availability and other restrictions such as cancellations and weather, some tournaments can be much more of a significant drive than others.

Personal Conduct

Players: Each player must sign a code of conduct before each season. The player code of conduct outlines rules and guidelines that WAA and the Advisory Board have set forth for players to follow. Players must follow those rules, or they are subject to the penalties listed on the code of conduct. If there are issues following the player code of conduct, it is up to WAA and the Advisory Board to rule whether or not the code of conduct was broken. If it is determined the player code of conduct has been broken, the player, the parents, and the coach will be notified via email from WAA. Each situation is independent of each other. WAA and the Advisory Board have the right to enforce penalties above what is listed on the code of conduct if they feel it is necessary and justified. Coaches are trained and asked to use their best judgment on how to handle players. These are children, and they make mistakes sometimes. Some situations may allow for coaches to work through the issue with the players, without penalty enforced by WAA. Coaches may also have their own team rules in addition to the code of conduct. If players refuse to sign the code of conduct, they will not be allowed to play until they do so.

Parents: Each parent must sign a code of conduct before each season. The parent code of conduct outlines rules and guidelines that WAA and the Advisory Board have set forth for parents to follow. Parents must follow those rules, or they are subject to the penalties listed on the code of conduct. If there are issues following the parent code of conduct, it is up to WAA and the Advisory Board to rule whether or not the code of conduct was broken. If a parent is found to have violated the parent code of conduct, the specific parent will be notified via email from WAA with the coaches included. Each situation is independent of each other. WAA and the Advisory Board have the right to enforce penalties above what is listed on the code of conduct if they feel it is necessary and justified. There will be no leeway with parents. The game is for the children, and if parents are found unable to follow the code of conduct, they will be penalized. Coaches may also have their own team rules for parents in addition to the code of conduct. If parents refuse to sign the code of conduct, they will not be allowed to attend any team events until they do so.

Coaches: Each coach must sign a code of conduct before each season. The coach code of conduct outlines rules and guidelines that WAA and the Advisory Board have set forth for coaches to follow. Coaches must follow those rules, or they are subject to the penalties listed on the code of conduct. If there are issues following the coach's code of conduct, it is up to WAA and the Advisory Board to rule whether or not the code of conduct was broken. If a coach is found to have violated the coaching code of conduct, the coach will be

notified via email from WAA. Each situation is independent of each other. WAA and the Advisory Board have the right to enforce penalties above what is listed on the code of conduct if they feel it is necessary and justified. There will be some leeway with coaches as they are essential to run our program, and there is a lot of judgment with coaches' situations. The game is for the children, and if coaches are found unable to follow the code of conduct, they will be penalized as appropriate. If coaches refuse to sign the code of conduct, they will be removed from coaching the team.

Uniforms: All players must wear the official team uniform for each contest.

- Jersey (Provided with registration)
- Black Pants (Please purchase on your own.)
- belt (Color to be decided by team members)
- Socks (Color to be decided by team members)

Attendance: It hurts an entire team to have players with other priorities. If a parent (or guardian) knows that their child will miss numerous games or weekend tournaments during the season due to vacations or other commitments, then please consider participating in an area recreation league. This will allow another player who does not have any attendance limitations an opportunity to make the team. When missing a practice or a game, the player is not fulfilling his responsibilities to his team or teammates. If a parent/guardian knows their participant will have in-season conflicts they should reach out to WAA prior to the January evaluation and explain these concerns as team roster sizes may change knowing an additional player can be needed/wanted. WAA understands that life happens and that everyone has busy schedules. Missing practices or games once in a while happens. If attendance is a persistent problem, coaches are to address it with the family first. If the family is not able to rectify the situation or does not make a concerted effort to improve, coaches may bring the issue to WAA. If the problem is not able to be resolved between WAA and the family, then WAA and the Advisory Board will consider having a meeting at the end of the season with the family. If the Advisory Board feels that it is a situation that can not be reasonably improved, they may ask that family to not participate in Traveling Softball, moving forward. Spring/Summer softball can take up a lot of time and can conflict with other required school band/choir concerts, other optional sporting activities and potentially a family vacation, however, players should aim to commit 90-100% of their time to attending all June/July practices, games and tournaments.

Playing Time: Playing time is allotted at the discretion of the coaching staff, under guidelines and recommendations. WAA and the Advisory Board encourage coaches to give each player a minimum of 20% of the defensive innings throughout a season. Teams are encouraged to compete at a high level while still allowing all players fair playing time. Fair playing time does not necessarily mean equal. Fair playing time is what each player deserves according to their abilities and commitment to the team. This is at the discretion of

the coaching staff. While coaches should be doing their best to rotate players into games, there are no guarantees on positions each player will play. Coaches should put players in the best position for the team to succeed. Softball is a team game, and players will have different contributions to the success of their team. Parent questions about playing time should be addressed with coaches politely and positively. Coaches and WAA will not tolerate rude and harassing behavior. Any parent/coach interaction regarding playing time must follow the 24 hour rule. Parents must wait at least 24 hours from the previous game or practice to contact a coach regarding their athlete's playing time. When contacting a coach, WAA recommends that inquiries be made in a face to face manner as these types of conversations tend to be much more positive and productive. Parents are also strongly encouraged by WAA and the Advisory Board to have players talk with coaches first about playing time and positions before parents get involved.

Conduct during games/tournaments: WAA asks that players, coaches, and parents represent Waconia in the highest manner at all events. This includes practices, games, tournaments, and even in between games. Generally, most people are wearing Prowlers/Waconia gear. It is up to all of us to positively represent our community. Showing great sportsmanship and professionalism to other teams (coaches, players and fans) and umpires is the top priority at all times. Any conduct that WAA finds inappropriate will be handled accordingly.

Handling Concerns: WAA understands that there are times when parents do not agree with the approach or methods of a coaching staff. This is usually due to a difference in philosophy. WAA asks parents to be understanding of this and to attempt to help their athletes understand it as well. However, there may be situations that can not be understood and worked out. WAA recommends that these issues should first be addressed between the parents, player and coaching staff. These discussions should take place in person, at least 24 hours after the last team event, and it must be done positively and professionally. Any rude or negative behavior should not be tolerated by the coaching staff. If parents contact WAA first, they will be asked to discuss with coaches before returning the manner to WAA. If the conflict can not be reasonably resolved between the parents and coaching staff, then it should be brought to WAA via email. WAA asks that parents outline the situation, give details on the conversation with the coaches, and submit a reasonable request they would prefer to see as an outcome. WAA, with the help of the Advisory Board, will investigate these inquiries, including talking with the parents and the coaching staff and will help to resolve the issue positively.

Please keep in mind that it is a privilege to play, not a right.

***At any time, WAA reserves the right to change anything in this handbook for the benefit of the program as a whole.**