

## I. THE PGSL ORGANIZATION

In the following pages we will tell you what the Poway Girls Softball League is all about, who we are, how to contact us, what programs we have and how we interact and support you, your players, and their parents.

### **WHAT IS PGSL?**

Poway Girls Softball League, Inc. (hereinafter referred to as "PGSL" or the "League") is a registered non-profit organization, operated by volunteers, and dedicated to providing both recreational and competitive fast pitch softball programs for Poway girls, age 5 to 16.

The League holds regular and announced board meetings at which any member of the League may come and participate. League decisions are made according to parliamentary procedure where motions are made and seconded; discussion is held; votes are recorded and minutes are taken. We have published by-laws and rules and regulations that are available for review or download at the League's website. The League is comprised of an Executive Board of elected officers, a number of appointed volunteer positions, and directors assigned to each division. Nominations and elections of Executive Board members are held annually at a time announced in advance to all League members.

Essentially PGSL is responsible for:

- Operating the day to day activities of the League
- Maintaining and amending the League's bylaws and rules
- Recruiting and training coaches
- Maintaining a registration database of players and coaches
- Organizing teams
- Coordinating tournaments
- Monitoring League play
- Administering and collecting registration and league fees
- Securing sponsorship and fundraising monies
- Operating concession stands
- Hiring umpires
- Directing the Recreational, All Star and Winterball programs
- Operating player and coaches clinics
- Equipping and dressing teams
- Managing the fiscal operation of the League

### **WHAT IS ASA?**

ASA is the Amateur Softball Association and is a not-for-profit organization based in Oklahoma City, OK and is the national governing body for girls fast-pitch softball pursuant to the Amateur Sports Act of 1978. The ASA has many important responsibilities as the national governing body of softball in the United States, including regulating competition to insure fairness and equal opportunity to the millions of player who annually play the sport. ASA adopted softball's first universally accepted rules of play by organizing consistent and fair competition across the nation. The ASA represents over 250,000 teams and a membership of more than four million.

PGSL is affiliated with ASA and is registered as a class "C" league within District 31 of the Southern California Region 14. As such we adhere to the rules and regulations set forth by ASA for League organization and play (with minor local rules modifications).

## **PGSL ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### ***The Executive Board***

The Executive Board directs the operation of the League's Board of Directors. The specific duties of the Executive Board and the rest of the Board of Directors can be found in the League's bylaws but are generally responsible for:

- Organizing the League
- Assigning Division Directors and other board positions
- Representing the League in meetings with national softball organizations
- Setting overall policy direction
- Managing the budget
- Developing the yearly calendar of events for the organization
- Acting as the final decision body for any issues that can not be resolved by the Division Representatives
- Establishing a code of conduct for players, coaches and fans that is in the best interest of fair play and sportsmanship
- Setting the strategic objectives for the continued development of Poway Girls Softball

### ***The Division Director***

Each Division has a Director responsible for shepherding his or her Division from the formation of teams and allocation of players, through the regular season and playoffs, and during All Star and Winterball play. The specific duties of the Division Directors can be found in the League's bylaws but are generally responsible for:

- Selecting coaches and monitor and review their performance
- Resolving issues involving coach, parent, and player conduct
- Ensure that all players play a fair share of time
- Ensure that League rules are followed
- Resolving disputes and other problems that arise throughout the season
- Assist in developing the season's schedule and reschedule make-up games
- Assist the Board in reviewing game protests
- Relay information from the Board to the Division coaches and vice versa

Any questions by a coach concerning their Division should first be posed to the Division Director. For all intents and purposes, the Division Director is the starting point for all issues concerning their Division. Consult the Quick Reference Page for the names and phone numbers of the various Division Directors.

### ***The Coach***

The Coach is the heart of our League. It is the Coach who has the ultimate responsibility for player and team development. It is the Coach who must act as a role model for his/her players. For four months, a dozen girls' experience with Poway Girls Softball will be shaped and formed by the Coach. The Coach. It is the Coach's demeanor and competency that will determine the experience our players and parents have in PGSL.

The Coach is also an emissary of the League and may be the only League official with which our parents and players come in contact with. The Coach is responsible for carrying out and supporting the policies of the League and serves as the Board's chief method of communication with its members. It's a tough job, and sometimes very difficult, but none in the League is more rewarding. It is a major responsibility and the Board, Division Directors, and other coaches will do whatever we can to assist you. Just ask for help if you need it. Whether it's help in finding assistant coaches, learning new training techniques, or developing players.

Yes, it is a sad comment on today's society, but we must be ever vigilant of those to whom we trust our young players. As a result, each spring season, we ask all our coaches and assistant coaches,

regardless if they have coached previously in the Poway Girls Softball League, to file a coach's application form. This form serves as certification to our players, parents and other coaches, that you have been screened and certified to work with the youth of Poway. A copy of the form can be found on the website.

In addition, PGSL requires that every head coach attend one of the coaches training sessions scheduled at the start of the season. These clinics should be of great help to those who have not coached before and an added source of information for those who have. We are always seeking comments and suggestions from our coaches as to what other information can be provided at these clinics that would be of use to them. A complete description of the coach's duties and responsibilities can be found in the League's Rules and Regulations.

### ***PROGRAMS OFFERED AT PGSL***

Poway Girls Softball League offers a variety of both recreational and competitive fast-pitch softball programs for girls ages 5 through 16. PGSL offers a spring league, popularly known as the recreational or "rec" program, a competitive All-Star program, and a semi-competitive instructional Winterball program. In addition, occasional travel teams may be formed but are not a permanently offered program within PGSL. The primary difference between the recreational program and the others is the greater emphasis on recreation, participation, and fun. All players are guaranteed to play in the recreational program while the others have more limited opportunities.

The basic unit of organization in each program is the Division. We use the both ASA designations as well as our own for our divisions. The recreational program is comprised of six divisions.

#### ***The Recreational Program***

The recreational program is designed to develop our players by gradually adding to and enhancing their skills and by introducing more and more ASA rules of play in each succeeding league. League age is determined as of 12:00 AM, Jan. 1 of the current year. It is not our policy to allow players to play outside of their age brackets, though it is occasionally necessary. A player who is younger than the minimum age may, at the Board's discretion, play in an older Division. Similarly, and also at the Board's discretion, a player may play in a younger League if circumstances warrant. Consult the League's Rules and Regulations for a full discussion of eligibility and player placement.

The descriptions of the divisions are intended to give you a feel for the objectives we have for each division and the level of play we expect. These objectives will be described in detail later in the manual.

#### **T-Ball (6 and under)**

This Division introduces softball to very young girls who have likely never played before and whose skill and coordination are just developing. A ball is hit off a tee for a majority, and possibly all, of the season. Players are taught the very rudiments of how to throw the ball, field a grounder, swing the bat, and which way to run around the bases. The season is 12 to 14 games long. No scores are kept and everyone bats every inning and plays the field. Time permitting, games should be 2 or 3 innings in length.

#### **Rookies (8 and under)**

This Division seeks to explain and demonstrate the sport of softball to its players by introducing more of the sports rules. Players begin to pitch for themselves with the help of coach pitching if necessary. Emphasis is on good fundamental throwing, fielding, and hitting skills and all players are encouraged to develop something of a sound pitching motion. While additional attention is paid to enhancing their fundamental skills, advanced skills are generally not taught here. The season is nominally 12-14 games in which scores and standings are not kept. This is followed by a round robin or elimination tournament. Positions are rotated and everyone bats while run limits and other special rules are imposed commensurate with the skill development and participation we seek. Games are normally 3-4 innings in length.

**Division 1 (10 and under)**

Fundamentals are still the buzzword here but some competitive spirit begins to show among the players in this division. More advanced rules are introduced and pitching development is a big priority. Some finer points of hitting are developed and bunting is introduced as an important part of girls softball. Baserunning skills and team defensive play are introduced, while basic throwing; fielding, and hitting skills are reinforced. The season is nominally 14-16 games plus a single-elimination, post-season tournament. Scores and team standings are kept and everyone bats in the order. Position rotation is used and run limits and a few other limitations to the game are imposed. Games are normally 4-5 innings in length.

**Division 2 (12 and under)**

While advanced skill development, team play, and fun are still the emphasis, the girls become noticeably competitive. Pitching development is still encouraged for anyone interested but willing pitchers and catchers start to decrease in number. Advanced hitting, bunting, and baserunning techniques are taught. Team play is emphasized on defense while a consistent demonstration of fielding fundamentals is now the goal. The full complement of ASA rules is in effect. The season is nominally 16 games plus a single-elimination, post-season tournament. Scores and team standings are kept and everyone bats in the order. Games are normally 5-6 innings in length. All other ASA rules are now in force.

**Division 3 (14 and under)**

This is a more competitively oriented division comprised of many players who may be advancing to high school play or playing for competitive travel teams. The goal is to get these players ready for this level of play. Pitchers have probably been at it for a few years and pitching strategy and throwing more than one pitch is emphasized. Advanced team play and offensive and defensive game strategies are taught and executed. The season is nominally 16 games plus a single-elimination, post-season tournament. Scores and team standings are kept and everyone bats in the order. Games are normally 5-6 innings in length.

**Division 4 (16 and under)**

This division offers an opportunity for those not playing in a high school softball program but still enjoy playing to continue developing their skills. It is similar to Division 3 in terms of playing objectives. Teams are created only when there is enough interest and games are usually scheduled against other leagues or teams outside of Poway.

***The All-Star Program***

The All-Star Program provides an opportunity for the highest skilled fast pitch softball players in Poway to develop and utilize their skills. This program requires a significant commitment by players, parents, and coaches as it consists of weekly practices and weekend tournament play in a variety of venues throughout San Diego and Orange counties. PGSL attempts to field teams in the 14U, 12U, 10U, and 8U brackets. More than one team may be formed depending on the turnout and willingness to play of the girls.

Selection to these teams is through a competitive tryout process. Since these teams will play against the best competition available, the primary emphasis is upon development of players and providing competition. There is no guaranteed play time, though coaches are encouraged to communicate an equitable, clear policy to how playing time will be determined prior to the selection of the team.

Schedules for the tryouts will be posted on the website and/or through the PGSL News. The Division Directors will schedule practices and tournaments. Tournaments will begin at the end of May and may continue through August.

All players who wish to play for an All-Star Team must play in the same year on a Recreational League Team in PGSL and cannot have played for a Travel club at anytime past April 1. There is no fee for participation in this program and PGSL will provide some funds for participation in tournaments. Uniform, travel, and extra tournament costs are the responsibility of the players. In addition, parents will be

required to provide volunteer help at the tournament hosted by PGSL that provides the funding for this program.

### ***The Winterball Program***

The Winterball Program provides an opportunity for the fast pitch softball players in Poway to continue developing their skills in the off-season in a semi-competitive environment against other teams in North San Diego County as part of the North County Winterball League, an association outside of PGSL. This program consists of weekly practices and Sunday doubleheaders at home and at other North County locations. PGSL attempts to field teams in the 14U, 12U, 10U, and 9U brackets. More than one team may be formed depending on the turnout.

Because team entries to the North County Winterball League are limited, selection to these teams is through a competitive tryout process. Again, the primary emphasis is upon development of players in a competitive environment though not at as high a level as in All-Stars. There is no guaranteed playing time, though coaches are encouraged to provide as equitable a distribution of playing time as competition allows.

Schedules for the tryouts will be posted on the website and/or through the PGSL News. The Winterball coaches will schedule practices. Practices and games will begin in August and will continue to Thanksgiving.

There is a fee for participation in this program that will cover entry fees, uniforms, and game balls. Umpires are paid at the game and coaches will have to collect an additional fee from the parents to cover this cost.

### ***WHERE DO WE PLAY GAMES?***

The City of Poway Recreation Department, Poway Unified School District (PUSD), the Poway Youth Sports Association (PYSA), and PGSL have responsibilities to support girls softball in Poway. The City of Poway and the Poway Unified School District created PYSA to help address facility use issues for all youth sports in Poway. The City of Poway and PUSD are responsible for providing and maintaining field and facility space for clinics, practices, games, and tournaments. PGSL maintains infields and other areas surrounding the Midland complex described below.

#### ***Midland Elementary School***

PGSL's main facility is at Midland Elementary School where it has existed throughout its 35-year history. We have a small city-owned building where we maintain a concession stand, a storage area for our playing equipment, and two bathrooms. PGSL also maintains a full-size 50' batting cage at the facility. The Midland facility has four fields that are used for our Opening and Closing Ceremonies, practices, and games for our T-Ball, Rookie, and Division 1 & 2 teams.

#### ***Garden Road Elementary School***

Garden Road Elementary has three backstops that are used during the preseason in the spring for practices only. There are no cut infields and the grass is usually a bit high. The youngest girls, T-Ball and Rookie, use these fields for practice only.

#### ***Lake Poway and Valle Verde Fields***

The city fields at Lake Poway and Valle Verde are used during the spring season for both practices and games. Used predominantly by the older Division 2 & 3 teams, occasionally other teams will play there. Lake Poway is the only lighted field we have access to and is used to play night games before daylight savings time and at the end of the season for make-up games.

### ***Twin Peaks Middle School and Tierra Bonita Elementary School***

When PGSL hosts our annual All Star Tournament we use all four Midland fields as well as four fields at Tierra Bonita Elementary School and two more at Twin Peaks Middle School. These are baseball fields during the regular season and aren't available during the Little League season.

### ***REGISTRATION FEES AND FINANCES***

Registration fees are used to pay for all operating costs of the league, including:

- Equipment (balls, bats, helmets, catcher's gear, bags, etc.)
- Uniforms (jerseys, socks, hats)
- Administrative costs (postage, copying, etc.)
- Field maintenance costs
- Field use fees
- Umpire fees
- Insurance
- Pictures and trophies

Our sponsors, fundraisers, and concession stand proceeds help the League to occasionally repair or replace other high-cost items such as maintenance vehicles, pitching machines, refrigerators, etc. Monies left at the end of the year are used to keep the cost of future registration fees low and to fund the League's Future Field Account that PGSL will use to procure and construct a new site for girls softball in Poway. Summaries of the League's financial reports are available upon request.

It is also our goal to ensure that any girl, regardless of her financial resources, has the opportunity to play softball in Poway. We will fully subsidize those who cannot afford to pay any fee. Should a player not have the means to pay the fees, they may simply note the need for financial assistance on their registration form or contact the player agent.

### ***POWAY GIRLS SOFTBALL WEB SITE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS***

To get the most up-to-date and complete information on games, clinics, events, meetings, schedules and results, we recommend consulting our Internet site at [www.pgsl.org](http://www.pgsl.org). Need extra copies of the league rules, bylaws, registration forms, game schedules and standings, or copies of the coach's manual? Visit the website. We have also provided each coach with the capability to establish his/her own team's home page on the web site. If you are interested in doing this, please contact us and we will provide you with authorized access to create and update your page. This is another excellent way to communicate with your players.

Throughout the year, PGSL will keep coaches, players, parents, and supporters informed by publishing periodic newsletters. The newsletter, the PGSL NEWS, will contain information on teams, sponsors, upcoming events, league standings and other important information. We welcome newsletter and website articles and pictures from players, coaches and parents.

Rather than spending time on the phone, use electronic mail to contact the Board, talk to another coach, inquire about registrations, or any question at all. The fastest way to communicate is through electronic mail. If you check the PGSL Executive Board Section on the Web site, you will find the e-mail addresses of most board members. Also, check the Teams Section and you should find the e-mail addresses of each coach.

Join us in transforming Poway Girls Softball into an efficient electronic organization and help us to save time and money on postage and photocopying. Use the website and email whenever possible.

### ***LEAGUE CALENDAR***

Each year there are a number of key meetings and events. See this year's calendar for specific dates. The following timetable describes the normal sequence of events and meetings for the League.

New Board Takes Office	Early August
Mail-in Registration Begins	Early November
Walk-in Registration	Mid December
Coaches Training	Early January
Tryouts	Mid January
Team Selections, Field Day, Equipment Issue	Late January
Practices Begin	Early February
Players Clinic	Early February
Uniform Issue	Mid February
Picture Day	Late February
Opening Day	Early March
All Star Registrations, Coach Selections	Mid April
All Star Tryouts	Late April
Officer Nominations	Late April
All Star Selections, Practices Begin	Early May
Regular Season Ends	Mid May
Post-Season Tournaments Begin	Mid May
Closing Day, Championships, Equipment Return	Late May
Officer Elections	Closing Day
All Star Tournament Season Begins	Late May
Meeting of the General Membership	Mid June
District Qualifiers	Late June
Poway Summer Heat Classic Tournament	Mid July
State Tournament, All Star Season Ends	Late July
Winterball Registration, Coach Selection	Early August
Winterball Tryouts	Mid August
Winterball Team Selection, Practices Begin	Late August
Winterball Season Begins	Early September
Winterball Season Ends	Early November

Throughout the recreational season we will conduct free pitching, hitting, fielding, and base running clinics. Consult the newsletter and the website for announcement of dates, times, and locations.

### ***SPECIAL EVENTS***

Poway Girls Softball puts on a number of special events where we try to develop a sense of community within our league and provide the girls with opportunities to have fun.

#### ***Opening Day***

Opening Day is the "kick-off" for our Spring Season. Opening Day is usually the first Saturday in March at Midland Elementary School in Poway. This is intended to be a festive occasion and is held in a carnival-like atmosphere where the girls compete in a number of skill and fun events. Vendors, sponsors, city officials are in attendance while a DJ plays music and conducts games for prizes. Lunch and other food and drinks are available throughout the event. All the teams and coaches are introduced and are expected to attend in uniform. Some games will be played that day as well.

#### ***Padres Day***

Scheduled sometime during the regular season this event is one of our chief fundraisers and something everyone looks forward to. The girls are asked to sell tickets to family, friends, and neighbors for a Padre game (participation, buying, or selling is not mandatory). Some of the proceeds go to the League and we all sit in the same section. We've had girls on the field before the game and last year we even saw a no-hitter! Add to that a tailgate party before the game and you have a great day at the ballpark.

### ***Closing Ceremonies***

Our closing ceremonies take place the same day all of our post-season tournament championship games are held. After the games, team trophies and individual awards are handed out to everyone. Our sponsors, vendors, and special guests are again invited to participate while our DJ returns for music and fun. Food and drinks are always available and it all makes for a pleasant end to the season.

### ***The Poway Heat Classic All Star Tournament***

Poway Girls Softball League hosts one of the larger all star tournaments in the county each year in mid-July. Teams of All Stars from all over San Diego and Orange counties come to Poway each year to participate in this event. Last year we had 60 teams and it is this tournament that pays for our All Star Program. This is a fun, competitive weekend where we get a chance to see just how good a job of developing players we have done. PGSL depends upon all of our All Star coaches and parents to pitch in to help organize and run this event.

### ***COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP***

Community sponsors play a critical role in our program. Without their financial support we would not be able to purchase new equipment or improve our facilities and would have to increase our players' fees substantially. Sponsorship comes in different levels and in different contributions. Some contribute money while others provide goods or services that contribute to the League's fundraising activities. We have a number of ways to recognize and thank our sponsors and invite them to come to their team's games and our other events.

As a Coach, please make an effort to go to sponsors and thank them for their continued support. We always need new sponsors to help defray our costs, keep the players fees low, and pay for scholarships for those unable to afford to pay. If you have any "leads" to potential sponsors, please contact the PGSL Sponsorship Committee and they'll take care of the rest.

## II. ORGANIZING AND RUNNING YOUR TEAM

In the following pages, we will give you the basics you need to organize and field a team in PGSL. It won't tell you everything, because, frankly, you, like those who have gone before you, will realize that it is the experience of taking the field and coaching that will make you a coach. Remember one thing. You will make mistakes, we all have. The mark of a good coach is one who keeps an open mind and learns from his/her experiences. Here are some basics you will need to know.

*NOTE: The policies and rules described in the following pages apply to our Recreational Program. Different rules and policies may apply to teams participating in the All Star or Winterball Programs.*

### **DEVELOPING A COACHING PHILOSOPHY**

Whether you're a new or experienced coach, you want to be successful, and we want you to be successful. A coaching philosophy is a belief in the way your program should be run and it is important to have a solid and consistent philosophy. That philosophy will guide you through your most important and difficult decisions and situations, but more importantly it will guide you with a confidence that you are doing the right thing.

In developing your coaching philosophy you should realize that with your position comes the power to influence those you teach. Developing a coaching philosophy shouldn't be done overnight. You should gather different views of coaching, trying different approaches and techniques to see what works for you. You may have to throw out certain beliefs you had or reinforce others. Use your experiences but don't think that your experiences alone are sufficient. Reading literature and attending coaching seminars will be very rewarding.

Everyone's philosophy of coaching is slightly different but all have certain principles in common. In developing a good coaching philosophy you might consider some the following principles:

- ***Be Yourself.***

Everyone has a preconceived notion about what a coach is like. The fact is there is no prototype. Good coaches come in all shapes and sizes and with just about every conceivable personality. If you're funny, be funny, if you're laid back, be laid back, if you're a strict disciplinarian, well...

- ***Practice the Way You Play.***

This concept is borne out season after season after season. If players approach practice in a nonchalant fashion devoid of hustle, that's exactly how they'll play. If, on the other hand, their warm-ups and drills are snappy and focused, their performance in the game will be awesome.

- ***Teamwork, Sportsmanship, and Leadership.***

These are some of the most valuable qualities that youth sports has to offer and most kids have very few other places where they can develop these traits. These develop trust, reliance, honesty, fair play,

- ***Making a Contribution Creates a Sense of Belonging.***

A girl that has just struck out for the ninth or tenth time is not having fun. A girl that sees her teammates running the bases, scoring runs, and making plays while she makes no contribution feels as if she doesn't belong. This is a girl who will quit. It doesn't matter how kind and supportive you or her parents are, you can't fool her, she knows better. But a girl who is helping the team and contributing to its success will feel like she belongs with that team. This girl will return to play another year.

- ***Develop a Winning Attitude.***

The importance of winning is not in the win itself, but in wanting to win and trying to win. A winning attitude is one of the things we are trying to develop in our young players. Our players should have the confidence that they can win and the desire to want to win. They should be able to experience the elation and pride that comes with winning without feeling ashamed of losing.

- ***“Fun” is in the “Fun”amentals.***

What is “fun”? Fun is that thing that everyone wants but no one can define. It’s different for girls and boys, for T-Ballers and High Schoolers, for coaches, parents, and players. Some things we all have in common. It’s fun to overcome a challenge. It’s fun to be a part of a team. It’s fun to contribute. It’s fun to win. The best way to accomplish all of these things is through the fundamentals. You can’t create fun artificially. Give the girls the tools they need to accomplish, to contribute, to win, and they’ll make their own fun.

### ***CONDUCT AND BEHAVIOR***

There is much written in the League’s rules regarding Coach, player, and parent conduct. Suffice to say that coaches are expected to exhibit exemplary behavior at all times and to encourage the same among those associated with their team.

### ***WHAT RULES DO WE USE AND HOW DO I GET THEM?***

This manual includes a copy of the PGSL Rules and Regulations as approved by the Board. The rules cover everything from player eligibility, to tryouts and team selection, to all of our playing rules. They will be reviewed at the Coaches Training session and all questions will be answered at that time. We also use ASA’s playing rules, however the ASA Rulebook for the current year is usually not available until February. Fortunately, these rules don’t change much and you can either use last year’s book or go to ASA’s website at [www.softball.org](http://www.softball.org).

Believe us, you need to read these rules. You will be surprised how knowing the rules will make your life as a coach ultimately more comfortable. Why is it important to know your league’s rules? Avoid surprises! Prepare your team for changes in rules or new rules as they move up to older divisions. Each year, players and coaches are surprised by the new rules encountered in the older divisions. It’s a good idea, too, to bring a copy of your divisions rules to each game. That way, if a question comes up, you can show the umpire the official league rules.

The Board considers rule changes at the end of each season. Changes are considered that will improve the overall quality of play. Please send any proposed rule changes to the PGSL Secretary or President for Board consideration.

### ***TRYOUTS AND PLAYER EVALUATIONS***

The first task a coach has to face is the tryout and player evaluation process. This, of course, only applies to coaches for Divisions 1 through 3 who will have a subsequent draft. Tryouts play an essential role in maintaining parity within the division and therefore coaches *must* attend these sessions. They are held on consecutive Saturdays in January and last the bulk of the day. The tryout will cover grounders and throws in the infield, catches and throws in the outfield, hitting and bunting, and baserunning. Pitchers and catchers will stay to tryout at those positions. More details on tryouts may be found in the rules and regulations but here are a few tips for working the tryouts:

- Show up early and make sure you attend all the sessions that you may have to draft from.
- Be sure to get an up-to-date evaluation sheet.
- Keep your scoring system simple.
- Score a well-known player before tryouts start; rate other players in comparison with that.
- If another person is evaluating for you, agree on a set of scores for a player you both know well.
- Meet the players, joke around a bit, and ask questions.
- Make suggestions to girls who are struggling, see how they respond to coaching.

- The girls feel very good when a coach shows interest in them.

### **TEAM SELECTIONS AND THE DRAFT**

PGSL's primary concern in team selection is parity and fairness; everything else is a secondary consideration. The Player Agent and the Division Directors govern team selection. Specific rules regarding the team selection and draft processes are found in the League's rules but here are a few tips on drafting players:

- If you have questions about players, ask someone.
- Create a rank ordered list by skill and position.
- Get your pitcher and catcher squared away.
- Play close attention to the players at the bottom of the draft.
- Note assistant coaches and team parents.
- Go to the hat!
- Don't destroy team parity through trades.

### **HOW DO I GET EQUIPMENT?**

PGSL has spent a lot of money in recent years upgrading all of our equipment. The Equipment Director will establish a time for everyone to pick up equipment at Midland Fields. Each Head Coach will need to sign an inventory sheet upon accepting the equipment and return all items lent out. If a coach cannot make it at that time other arrangements will be made, please contact the Equipment Director. Please examine your equipment before the season begins, particularly the size of the catcher's gear. If you need a replacement or if something doesn't fit properly then please contact the Equipment Director. Remember, you as the Coach are responsible for care and keeping of the equipment you have been given. If you lose a piece of equipment, and it happens all the time, *do not* replace it, call the Equipment Director. It may not need to be replaced or we may be able to replace it at a lower cost.

*NOTE: We will be requiring a deposit from the Head Coach and only the Head Coach may pick up and return equipment.*

### **WHAT DO I DO ABOUT UNIFORMS?**

PGSL will provide a numbered jersey, socks, and hat / visor for every player as part of their registration fee. Team colors and design are already pre-selected and multiple sizes are provided. The Coach or Team Parent will need to pick up the uniforms at the home of the Activities Committee Chairman before Picture Day in Lat February. It's best to line up your players from largest to smallest and hand out the jerseys from largest to smallest. This should work out fine, however, if someone is left with an *unusually* large or small uniform it should be brought to the attention of the Activities Committee Chairman. The League will pay for names on the jerseys, but the Coach or Team Parent must have this done by our uniform provider. Schedule to have it done either before picture day or during the first month of play when the weekdays are free of games, you need to have your uniforms for pictures (names are not necessary).

### **HOW DO I SIGN UP FOR PRACTICE FIELDS?**

Practice fields are assigned by the Field Director prior to the start of the practice season. We will take your preferences during the training sessions but we do not guarantee anything. Each team will get two practices per week, one during the week and one on Saturday. When the season starts Saturday practices will be suspended but weekday practices will continue. When daylight savings time starts then all practices will cease. If you are scheduled to practice on a city field, Lake Poway or Valle Verde, and you cancel the practice, you must notify the Field Director immediately. We must cancel with the city or face paying a fee for its usage.

*NOTE: Due to insurance considerations, unscheduled practices or scrimmages may not be held without the consent of the Field Director. You must request practice time and a field.*

**NOTE:** *At times there have been scheduling conflicts with practices. Make sure you have your **Field Permit** with you at all times. If there are any problems, please call the Field Director immediately.*

### **HOW DO I GET TO USE THE PITCHING MACHINE?**

PGSL has four electric portable fast-pitch pitching machines, two fairly new JUGS machines and two old disc machines. One JUGS machine will be kept in the batting cage, and the other will be available for use on the playing fields at Midland. The older machines are good for fly ball and outfield drills but do not make good pitching machines. Operation of the machines will require proximity to a power source or the use of a mobile generator (PGSL does not currently have one). Contact the Field Director to schedule use of the batting cage or the other pitching machines and training in their use. Use only yellow JUGS balls in the machine and not real softballs. We will issue the combination to the batting cage to each Head Coach and would ask that you keep this number private, as the pitching machine will be left in the cage for your use. In the cage you will also find a key to the restrooms to be used during practice. There is also a sliding pad that is available for use and can be reserved by contacting the Field Director.

*CAUTION: These are industrial strength machines and require care when handling. We ask that you seek guidance before using them. Under no circumstance should they be left unattended or operated by players. Players shall not be allowed in the batting cage unless they are receiving instruction; the waiting area is outside the cage.*

### **THE TEAM MEETING**

At the first practice, take some time out to have your first team meeting. This is the first chance most of the players have to meet you and each other. A successful first meeting will lay the groundwork for a great team environment. A sample outline is provided below along with some tips:

- Have the meeting during your first break, sit in a circle out in the grass (if it's dry)
- Have only players at the meeting
- Have them introduce themselves and share something about themselves (favorite pet, food, etc.)
- Say something positive about each one as they finish (great pitcher, strong arm, good bat, very fast, etc.)
- Review the player's rules with them and answer any questions they might have
- Tell them what their team color is and have them come up with a name, do this last as you may have to come back to it next practice
- Get them into a tossing drill that requires them to call out each other's names before throwing the ball to them

### **THE PARENT MEETING**

The most important meeting you will have during the year is the Parent Meeting. This is the first chance most of the parent's have to meet you and you want to give them the impression that you are organized, prepared, and enthusiastic. This will go a long way in gaining the support and assistance you need from your parents. A sample meeting outline, here are some tips for a successful meeting:

- Have the meeting in your home or at another location, not at the ballfield after the first practice
- Have only parents at the meeting and have them introduce themselves
- Prepare a team roster, practice schedule, player questionnaire, etc.
- Copy and assemble all your handouts and flyers
- Have a folder ready for each player with all the handouts in them
- Discuss your coaching philosophy and objectives and that of the League
- Go over your participation and positioning guidelines
- Review the team rules and your practice and game routines
- Discuss uniform and equipment issues, answer any questions they have about equipment
- Solicit your parents for assistant coaches, team parents, scorekeepers, and sponsors
- Go over your handouts and flyers
- Answer as many questions as you can

### ***A GOOD TEAM PARENT IS HARD TO FIND***

There's no substitute for a good team parent. There will be a meeting for all team parents at the beginning of the season to go over their duties. We suggest you get more than one so they can share the burden. Among the things a team parent should be responsible for are:

- Taking care of team uniforms
- Procuring a team banner
- Coordinating volunteers for post-game snacks
- Coordinating volunteers for concession stand duty
- Ensuring that an adult female is always present at team functions
- Organizing the end-of-year party and other social events
- Getting everyone set for Picture Day
- Helping with team notifications of schedule changes and team events

The key is communication. Don't let something slip through the cracks because you thought the Team Parent was going to take care of it. Ultimately you are responsible for these things so make sure they are taken care of.

### ***RUNNING A PRACTICE.***

Games are fun, but practices are where the work gets done. You only have a month, or eight practices, before your first game and in order to get your players ready you must be organized. Here are some basic points on coaching practices:

- ***Start the First Practice on Time.***

And every one after that. The players and parents will get the message and will get with the program. Late arrivals will have to make up their stretching, laps, and warm-ups before participating.

- ***Have an Adult Female Present.***

This is a League requirement for *any* team function. It has been ignored quite a bit in the past. Do so at your own risk.

- ***Give Your Players Ample Time to Get Ready.***

It's a good idea to start with stretching exercises. Experts in sports medicine counsel coaches to get their players used to doing stretching before exercising. Exercising without proper preparation can overextend even young muscles.

- ***Have a Script.***

Simply, plan in advance what you are going to do in the first practice. You should have a practice plan prepared for each practice. The practices should have some repeatable structure that the players can get used to but enough variety in the skills and drills so as not get boring.

- ***Spend a Little Time on Everything.***

You should be able to spend time on hitting, catching, throwing, fielding, and baserunning at every practice. In addition you should find time for your pitchers and catchers to get some instruction and throwing time.

- ***Get Your Assistants on the Same Page.***

Don't do it all yourself. If you don't have assistants recruit them. Don't be bashful. They wouldn't be there unless they are interested. Explain to them by example what you want the players to do and what they should look like doing it.

- ***Keep Each Drill Short.***

For the younger girls, T-Ball and Rookies, 10 to 15 minutes is plenty long enough. Older players will need to go 20 to 25 minutes in order to get an explanation and enough repetitions to sink in.

- **Keep Correcting Mistakes.**

Don't let them reinforce bad habits by allowing them to repeat the same mistake over and over. Correct them on the spot, then correct them again, and again, and again. When correcting multiple times don't nag, use a little humor, as long as you don't appear frustrated the players won't be either.

- **Tell Them When They've Done It Right.**

Now that you've corrected them over and over again, let them know when they finally get it right. Save your praise for a job well done or an accomplishment that was a long time coming, and then really let them know it.

- **Keep Them Moving.**

Standing around invites disorganization. If you have assistants, have multiple drills (stations) going and have the girls rotate to the next station or drill on your call. Don't be hesitant to suspend the drill and call for running laps or calisthenics.

- **Give Your Players Periodic Breaks**

Particularly in hot weather, be sensitive to the impact of the sun and heat on your players. You may need to schedule a brief water break. Use these breaks to discuss defensive or offensive strategies or review the coach's signs.

- **Finish With Some Fun.**

Things shouldn't be all work. There are several games the girls always love to play that serve as useful drills. Relay races, split-squad games, hit-the-bucket, etc. are great ways to end a practice.

## **COACHING A GAME**

Games should be fun and exciting. This is what the players and parents look forward to and it is the games they will remember, all of it, good or bad. This is a time you really want to be organized, calm, patient, and in good spirits. Some tips below might help you to have a more enjoyable game.

- **Review Bench and Field Behavior Before the First Game.**

Emphasize good sportsmanship, fair play, respect for the Umpires, and respect for the opposing team. Review what is and is not an appropriate cheer, an appropriate cheer being that which is positive and directed at our own players only. Remind them to stay in the dugout during the game.

- **Establish a Pre-Game Ritual.**

Set a time before the game that you want the players there and enforce it. Plan out a pre-game routine that you will follow game after game. This puts the girls at ease and let's them know what to expect on game day. It will allow you, the players, and your coaches to relax and not seem rushed.

- **Set Your Lineup In Advance.**

This sounds pretty basic but lots of Coaches do it just before the game. If you have an Assistant Coach work the game make sure they have your lineup in advance. Ask your players to signal who will not be at the game, by raising their hands. Also, ask if any player thinks they may be late arriving. Get your scorekeeper the book and lineup as early as possible. That's one less thing you have to worry about.

- **Include In Your Warm-up Things You Need to Work On.**

You don't have many practices during the season, so after your warm-ups include in your routine some time to work on or talk about something you need to improvement on from the last game.

- **Let the Players Relax Before the Game.**

Once you've finished your pre-game routine, make sure there are five or ten minutes left for the team to relax in the dugout, go to the restroom, and relax. Pitchers should be warming up during this time so that they are peaking when the game begins.

- **Get a Bench Coach.**

Ask for a parent to act as a "bench coach" to keep order on the bench and remind players who is to bat and who is on deck while you are coaching. Keep your players in the dugout during the entire game and not off visiting with friends and family between innings.

- **Instruction During the Game Is Important.**

Because practices are limited, use the games to teach your players. Shouting defensive instructions to the players on the field is fine. Shouting criticism or corrections at a specific player is not. Players usually know when they've made a mistake, take the player aside in between innings and discretely correct them.

- **Don't Lose Your Cool.**

Remember that your first game is also your players. The parents will be watching how you conduct yourself as much as they will watch their players perform.

- **Know the Rules!**

Sounds like another pretty basic thing, but you would be surprised how much more relaxed, calm, and confident you are when you have command of the situation and know what the umpires are doing.

- **Send Them Home Feeling Good.**

In your post-game talk (and you should always have one, don't let anyone runoff early) focus on all of the good things they accomplished. Point specific players out and remark on their game. Small awards such as stickers, pizza or ice cream coupons for good play are a real hit.

- **Save the Criticism for Next Time.**

Don't direct criticism at a particular player, especially during the post-game talk in front of the parents. Take time to go over the game later, decide what problem areas you want to address, and hit them with it at the next practice or pre-game.

### **THREE RULES THAT WILL CONFUSE YOU!**

#### **The Infield Fly Rule**

In PGSL, the Infield Fly Rule applies in Divisions 2 and 3 only. Its purpose is to prevent infielders from intentionally dropping a pop-up to get a double play. Consult the ASA Rule Book for the gory details, but here are some things to remember about the rule,

- It must be called by the umpire
- It only applies when there are less than two outs
- It only applies when there are runners on first and second bases, or bases loaded
- When called by the umpire the batter is automatically out
- The ball is not dead
- An infield fly is treated as a regular fly ball
- Base runners are not forced to run, but they must tag up before advancing and are then at risk of being thrown out

#### **The Dropped Third Strike**

In PGSL, the Dropped Third Strike applies in Divisions 2 and 3 only. A batter has the ability to reach first base if a pitched ball resulting in a third strike touches the ground before reaching the catcher or is

“dropped” by the catcher. Once this occurs, the catcher must either tag or throw out the batter. Should the runner reach first base without being tagged or thrown out the runner is considered safe and no out is recorded. Here are some things to remember about the rule,

- If there are less than two outs, first base must be unoccupied for the batter to proceed
- If there are less than two outs and first base is occupied, the batter is called out on strikes
- If there are two outs, the batter may proceed in any case
- If there are two outs and first base (or more) is occupied a force play is in effect

Coaches should continually remind their catchers of this rule during game situations where the count is at two strikes and first base is unoccupied or there are two outs.

### ***Ball in the Pitcher’s Circle***

Any base runner can advance to any base they wish to, however, they cannot stop after rounding a base and then give any indication that they will again advance, while the ball is in the control of the pitcher within the pitcher's circle without being declared as out. Here are some things to remember,

- The pitcher must have control of the ball within the pitcher’s circle
- The runner must be off the base
- If the runner stops after rounding they must immediately return to the base they came from
- Any fake, feint, or attempt to proceed will be called out
- A hesitation on the part of the runner is sufficient to be called out
- If the pitcher makes a play the runner is free to go. A play is defined as any movement of the hand or arm towards the runner or fielder. It is a judgment call by the umpire

### ***WHAT ABOUT EQUAL PLAYING TIME?***

This is a recreational program and therefore, everyone must play in every game. Each division has rules governing player rotation and playing time. Review these rules and ensure that your game plan abides by them. You may be asked to provide documentation of your compliance with these rules so you’re your lineup sheets and scorebooks. Remember that we are trying to develop players. Give players the opportunity during the regular season to play different positions. You might be surprised what you find out by doing this.

### ***PARENTS! HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH THEM?***

It is a rare coach indeed who doesn’t encounter a disgruntled parent or player some time during the season. As a volunteer the last thing you may feel like doing is having an argument with someone who obviously doesn’t appreciate the sacrifice you are making for his or her child. So don’t, the aggravation will be all yours. Believe it or not, despite their apparent boldness, they are probably more nervous than you are. If you listen to them patiently while they say everything they have to say, show them you understand their concerns and appreciate their candor, they will feel like they have accomplished what they wanted. Most just want to air out their concerns, it makes them feel better. Remember, you need to work with these people for the rest of the season and you don’t want a small problem festering and turning into a big problem.

If the problem persists and you feel you can’t handle it without getting into a protracted argument or if the problem is one of parental misconduct, please contact your Division Director immediately.

### ***PLAYERS! HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH THEM?***

Whenever an adult interacts with a child the potential for hurting someone’s feelings is ever present. Let your parents know that if this should occur, to let you know so that you can remedy the situation yourself. It may be a case of miscommunication or a mistake on your part. Either way, since you have to coach this player for the remainder of the season, it is best that you make your peace with the player yourself.

Disruptions of practice is a problem that needs to be addressed immediately, generally a friendly reminder or two is enough. It is fairly uncommon in girls softball to have a player that is truly a discipline problem, however, if this is the case, and a simple discussion has not addressed the problem, go to the

parents first. Benching a player is an option, however, the parents should be made aware of any problem warranting a benching before this punishment is used.

### ***UMPIRES! HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH THEM?***

Carefully and with respect is the short answer. On all occasions, PGSL believes the Umpire has complete authority once a game begins. At no time will PGSL Representatives or League Officials intervene at the request of a player, coach, or parent to approach an Umpire about an on the field ruling. Coaches must remind players, parents, and team supporters that the Umpire must be treated at all times with the respect and courtesy due them.

Should a coach wish to discuss an on-field ruling, the coach should request time from the Umpire. Once granted, the coach should approach the Umpire and ask for clarification on the ruling. Please do not waste the umpire and player's time unless you know the rules and have a copy of them with you.

PGSL hires and trains Youth Umpires, typically girls from the High School team, to officiate the Rookie and Division 1 games. Coaches should bear in mind that these are Youth Umpires who are doing their best to call a fair game. Coaches are asked to not allow any player, parent, or fan to berate, openly criticize, or otherwise harass any of our Youth Umpires. The Youth Umpires have been instructed to report any incident to the Director of Umpires. Coaches, who permit unsportsmanlike behavior toward a Youth Umpire, will face reprimand, suspension, and even forfeiture of the game in which these incidents occurred.

### ***PROTESTING A GAME***

Coaches have the option to follow the Protest procedures outlined in the League's rules for the ruling of an Umpire during a game. Only rule interpretations can be the grounds for protests. Judgment calls such as balls and strikes, safe and out calls are *not* subject to protest.

Coaches will calmly and professionally inform the Umpire that the game is being played under protest. The Coach shall then contact the Division Director. The Director will then submit the issue to the Protest Committee that will make a ruling on the protest according to League rules.

### ***WHO DETERMINES POSTPONEMENT DUE TO WEATHER?***

Games at Midland Fields are cancelled by the Field Director or other designated Board Member only. Once games are under way the Umpire has sole authority for canceling games. Coaches may not cancel games on their own even if both agree to do so. The result may be a forfeit of the game.

City fields are controlled by Poway Parks and Recreation and they may or may not post the closure at the field. There is a City Field Hotline that can be called for up-to-date field status. This is covered in the League's rules.

### ***MAKING UP GAMES***

Cancelled or postponed games may or may not be made up based on opportunity, field availability, and necessity. Makeup games are scheduled by the Field Director and will be communicated to the coaches through the Division Director.

### ***TIPS ON PLAYER SAFETY***

Each coach has a duty to safeguard the health and safety of his or her players. Plan your practices and games with safety in mind. Here are few tips to keep in mind.

- Players should stretch before exercising and bring water to drink.
- Remind players in the field to always be aware of where the ball is. Once hit by a softball, they will quickly realize there is nothing *soft* about the ball.
- Base runners and batters must wear protective helmets at all times.

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- The player on-deck should be in the on-deck circle with helmet and bat. There should be no other player holding or swinging a bat.
- All players other than those fielding, on base, at bat or on-deck should be seated on the team bench. Discourage wandering over to the other team's bench or sitting in the spectator bleachers.
- Catchers must wear all of their protective gear whenever they are catching, not only in a game, but while they are warming a pitcher up on the sidelines.
- Players must be taught not to throw a bat after a hit ball. An umpire will give the player a first warning, and the second instance, the umpire will most likely *eject* the player from the game.
- When warming up, players should face each other in pairs, and each pair should be parallel to all other pairs warming up. This will avoid errant throws from striking other players.
- Players should be taught to slide and *not* to try to run standing up into a catcher or base fielder. Such contact will usually result in the player being called out, regardless if they are safe or not.
- Pitchers should warm up for at least 10 - 15 minutes before entering a game, regardless of the urgency to get them into the game.
- Do not overwork pitchers. Be aware of pitcher complaints of elbow, shoulder, or arm soreness. It is not a good practice to have the pitcher throw if experiencing any pain.
- Only Coaches are allowed to stand in the base line coach's box without a helmet.

### ***WHAT TO DO IN THE EVENT OF PLAYER INJURY?***

Despite our best efforts to promote safety, injuries can and will occur. Normally, the injuries bear watching but are not serious. Each Coach should have a First Aid Kit. If there is not one in your team equipment bag, call the PGSL Equipment Director.

Injuries to pay particular note to are head and limb injuries. Any player who sustains head trauma should be taken out of the ball game and sat down. Take nothing for granted; consider having the parent take the player to an Emergency Room for evaluation. In case of severe injuries, such as head trauma, it is recommended that 911 be called for emergency assistance. Do not move the player. Let trained medical personnel take over.

We follow the guidance provided through the "ASA Blood Rule". Specifically, any player, coach, or umpire who is bleeding or who has blood on their uniform should be prohibited from further participation in a game until such time as appropriate treatment can be administered. Medical attention should be provided utilizing the medical kit provided to each coach. Simply, use the rubber gloves, gauze, ointment and bandages to clean and stop the bleeding. Once administered, it will be the judgment of the umpire as to when the player may re-enter the game.

Once the player has been taken care of, the Coach should fill out an injury report in accordance with League rules.

### ***POST-SEASON TOURNAMENT***

Division tournaments are held at the end of the regular season. They are highly competitive, and the highlight of the season. However, we strongly urge that the fair play, good sportsmanship, and respect for the umpires demonstrated during the regular season continue during the playoffs. Participation rules used during the regular season will still be in effect. It is therefore essential that you as a Coach and your assistants serve as the role models. It is your responsibility to make sure your players and supporters understand the principles we are playing by in PGSL. Teams are bracketed or matched according to regular season records. The Division Director will assign team placement and establish pairings for the playoffs.

### ***RETURNING EQUIPMENT***

At the end of your season the Equipment Director will schedule a general equipment drop-off day for all equipment. If you are unable to make this date you should contact the PGSL Equipment Director to arrange for drop off of the equipment. Again, equipment drop-off can be made by the Head Coach only. Coaches are responsible for all equipment, bats, and balls. Before returning equipment, Coaches should

inventory all equipment and make note of equipment missing or in need of repair or replacement. Upon a satisfactory check of your equipment your deposit check will be returned to you.

### ***CONCLUSION OF THE SEASON***

The end of the season is a bittersweet time. You and your players have experienced a highly active, intense and most likely rewarding time together. In the older divisions, your last time together may have been in a play-off game where your team was eliminated. Regardless, there needs to be a closure to the season.

Closing ceremonies is one more opportunity to share some fun with your players; however, you should ask a parent to volunteer to organize the end-of-the-season gathering. Some teams have picnics, others go to a local pizzeria and others just get together for a while at the end of the last game to talk about the season. Our advice is to have some sort of gathering. The parents and players may want to show their appreciation to you and your assistants for all the time and effort you have given.

During the course of the season players and parents lose track of just how far the team has come. It is important at this time that you recognize your players as a team and individually for their progress during the season. You may create awards, award prizes, or simply remark on their achievements and contribution to the team. This last point is extremely important and will make a lasting impression on both the player and her parents. A good scorebook is invaluable in your ability to find something great to say about each and every one of your players.

### ***LEAGUE SURVEYS***

PGSL will be conducting League-wide surveys of everything from the quality of concession stand food to the newsletter, and yes, the quality of the coaching. The results will of course be kept confidential and we will make the results available to any coach who is interested in feedback. These surveys are intended to find ways to improve the League, not to place blame or blackball coaches.

### **III. TEACHING THE FUNDAMENTALS**

In the following pages we will discuss skill development in girls softball. It is a lengthy subject and will not be covered in extreme detail here but will direct you to resources where you can expand your knowledge of coaching techniques, drills, materials, and

#### **COACHING CLINICS**

There are a number of coaching clinics available offered by a number of local colleges and other private organizations. USD and SDSU have ongoing programs that offer clinics early in the season before their own seasons get under way. ASA offers Level I and Level II coaching clinics on an annual basis. Contact your Division Director to find out when the next ASA clinic will be held, generally the Level I clinic is offered in January or February.

#### **COACHING MATERIALS**

There's certainly no shortage of books and videos dedicated to fastpitch softball. There is one suggestion we will make regarding a fantastic book on the fundamentals and that is Judi Garman's, *Softball Skills & Drills*. This is an easy-to-read, well-organized book of instruction on just coaching skills. It is available through Amazon.com for around \$13. Videotapes are abundant but expensive, ask around to see if some has a copy you can borrow or ask the local library if they can get a copy you can preview before purchasing. The League will be trying to build a library of materials but we are not there yet.

#### **COACHING WEBSITES**

Another abundant source of information are the websites. Rather than list a lot of them here you can start with the host of our League website Eteamz.com. Between them and Myteam.com you should be able to find ton's of information on every aspect of the game. Also, a quick search on "softball" or "fastpitch softball" will yield an exhaustive supply of sites, many of them very helpful.

#### **UMPIRE CLINICS**

We always need an umpire now and again to fill in during an emergency. The problem is that there is some training required in order to perform this function according to PGSL and ASA rules (yes, it's an insurance thing). These clinics are also great if you want a better understanding of the rules from the umpire's perspective. There is usually a rules course in February in Escondido. If you are interested in this training contact the Director of Umpires.

#### **SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

PGSL will be conducting hitting, bunting, fielding, and baserunning skills clinics throughout the season. The first will be put on in early February and will be run by the Poway High School Varsity program. This is one of the strongest programs in the county and many of these girls have played in PGSL. We encourage all of our players and coaches to attend. There is a nominal fee for players; coaches and parents are free with a paid child. In addition, PGSL will try to conduct some of our own Sunday skills clinics using the expertise of our wonderful coaching staff. That's you. If each coach will put in one Sunday a season we will have ample help and be able to reinforce the basics and address some of the more advanced skills such as sliding, offensive and defensive strategies, drag bunting and slap hitting, infield plays, plays at the plate, techniques for catchers. We'll try to devise a menu based on your schedules and specialties.

#### **PITCHING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

Good pitching leads to good hitting. Good hitting leads to good defense. Unfortunately it doesn't work the other way around and so the quality of a league rests largely in its pitchers. Because pitchers are so highly valued they tend to disappear frequently from the ranks of the recreational leagues. This places the burden producing more and more pitchers on the recreational leagues.

***What Is It?***

PGSL recognizes that to create a strong program we must place an extra emphasis upon the development of pitchers and catchers. Therefore, PGSL initiated the Pitching Development Program (PDP). It provides an opportunity to train and develop both pitchers and catchers using some of the best instructors available in the area.

***Will the PDP teach me to be a pitcher?***

At first glance, pitching appears to be a complicated, hard to understand skill. It frustrates both coaches and players. But if it understood it is really a very simple and effective pitching style. The question often asked by parents and players is; "If I go to pitching clinics will you teach me how to pitch?" The answer is NO. What we can teach you is the basic mechanics to become a pitcher. We can show you drills that will help you develop your mechanics. We will identify flaws in your current delivery and suggest ways to correct these flaws. Finally we can recommend a regimen to apply these drills. But only the player herself can learn to be a pitcher. To become a pitcher requires a combination of dedication, attitude, and ego. The tide of a game will ebb and flow on the capabilities of the pitcher. In fastpitch softball, the pitcher controls the game more than any other player in any other team sport.

***How much work is involved in becoming a pitcher?***

As a coach you must advise your players that if they want to be a pitcher they will have work harder and longer than any other player on the team. There are simply no shortcuts. It is estimated that tournament quality pitchers throw an average of a hundred balls a day, seven hundred a week and twenty five thousand pitches a year. Coaches are advised to tell pitchers to come early or stay late after practice to work on their skills. There just is not enough time in a regular practice to work on pitching. Some coaches have alternative practice schedules for pitchers. Others just have the pitchers come an hour before practice to work on their delivery. Whatever way you do it, you must communicate to those players who want to be pitchers that it takes work.

***How young should we start developing pitchers?***

As early as you want. OK, let's back up a bit. Serious pitching workouts are obviously not for the very young but there are some things that coaches can do to foster development of pitchers even in T-Ball and Rookies. The key is getting the girls used to throwing underhand and to develop a natural underhand movement. This is surprisingly easy; when you're warming up or performing drills for overhand throwing, take extra time to have everyone throw some balls underhand as well. Twenty or so a practice would be great. Players with a knack for the underhand throw should become apparent sometime during Rookies and you can work with them and there will be a lot more to choose from. In the meantime, those who will not pitch are gaining a valuable skill as well, an accurate underhand toss. Division 1 and 2 is not too late to work these drills into your routine, you would be surprised at who you find.

***Should I allow any player who wants to pitch to try to become a pitcher?***

Sure, but remember the player must make the commitment to develop their skills first. What we strongly recommend against is allowing a player to pitch in a game who has not had any training. We all fall victim at times to the player who sees the glory others get from pitching and wears us down asking to pitch to the point where we finally give in and let her pitch. Believe us, she will not enjoy it. Either of two things will happen. One the umpire will continually declare her pitch illegal or secondly, she will not be able to find the strike zone. In either case, no one gains. It is better to tell any player who asks to pitch, "Sure you can pitch, but first you have to demonstrate to me as the Coach that you are willing to understand the basics of how to become a pitcher."

***What clinics Does PGSL offer to develop pitchers?***

The PDP consists of a series of clinics conducted throughout the season. Currently all levels of pitching can be accommodated from beginners to advanced. Contact the Coaching and Training Committee for more details or check the website for dates, times, and locations.

### ***How do players get into these clinics?***

The Beginners Clinic is open to all PGSL registered players. Admission to the Intermediate and Advanced Clinics is based on the recommendation of the Coach and the evaluation of the PGSL Pitching Instructors.

### ***What if my pitcher has a pitching coach?***

That's great! More time for you to spend with other hopefuls. You may want to talk with your pitcher about what she is learning, what kind of instruction she is getting, and talk to parents as well. Having invested in a pitching coach they are probably knowledgeable about what their daughter is learning. If you see something you really question, talk to the player and parents first before attempting a correction. Like anything else, the more you learn about pitching the more comfortable and confident you will be discussing it.

### ***What is a legal pitch?***

To deliver a "legal" pitch, the player must perform a pitch in following manner:

- Pitcher must stand with both feet positioned on the pitching rubber. Not having both feet in contact with the ball is illegal.
- With both feet on the rubber, the pitcher must come to a full stop with arms separated and the softball visible in one hand, for at least one second, before beginning their pitching motion. Failure to properly "present" the ball is illegal.
- Once the ball is presented the pitcher can begin up to a 360-degree circular motion.
- The pitcher may make only one full circle of the arm with the ball. Any more, is considered a "double pump" and is illegal.
- As the pitcher delivers the ball, the pivot foot must remain in contact with the ground. Any skip or hop that results in the foot leaving the ground, called a "Crow Hop", is illegal.
- The pitchers arm swing must be in a vertical plane. Side arm throws are illegal.

The penalty for an illegal pitch is usually a warning, then a "ball" being called on the batter.

### ***The Mental and Emotional Aspects of Pitching***

To pitch your players must have the proper ego. It is highly unlikely that your player will have very much success in her first outing as a pitcher. In fact, the norm is that it takes practice, practice and more practice under game conditions before your player becomes a competent pitcher. Your player will throw more wild pitches, hit more batters, and walk more batters than they will throw strikes. Understand that, and make sure that your player and their teammates understand that as well.

When you are ready to let your player pitch, do it in moderation. Watch her closely. If she begins to become upset from too many walks or wild pitches, or just is too wild, call time and try to calm her down. Use your new pitchers sparingly and if at all possible in situations where the game decision is not at stake. This would be during the middle innings, or when you have a huge lead or huge run deficit, or in a scrimmage game.

If you have a player who becomes easily flustered and upset over walking batters and throwing wild pitches, then she's probably not ready to pitch. In fact, she may never be a pitcher until she can control her emotions. Explain that it will take time and practice to learn to pitch and to build the confidence that she can, indeed, become an effective pitcher.

You as the Coach must have patience. Give your potential pitchers every opportunity to learn to pitch. But do it at your pace. Don't let a player pitch that has not pitched before or is not ready from in your opinion. The absolute worse thing you can do is to embarrass a potential pitcher.

### ***Providing the Right Amount of Guidance at the Right Time***

When an experienced pitcher begins to have control problems, the one common refrain heard from coaches is, "Just throw strikes!" Well, don't you think that is what your player is trying to do? It's just not

happening. She doesn't know why. Your job as the coach is to give her the consulting advice she desperately needs. The worse advice you can give as a coach is to have your pitcher slow down her delivery and aim the ball. Yes, she will probably throw more strikes, but you will do irreparable damage to her delivery. Instead, encourage her to continue to throw hard, but to remember the fundamentals of how to position and deliver the pitch.

Try to refrain from calling out advice after every pitch. Develop some hand signals that cover some of the basic correcting advice you would normally give verbally. This avoids drawing too much attention to what may already be an embarrassing situation to your pitcher.

At the end of a half inning, take your pitcher aside and talk to her privately, in a non-emotional, restrained voice. If it's during an inning, ask for time from the umpire and go out to talk to your pitcher. Most likely she is doing something fundamentally wrong. Suggest she reflect back on her training, specifically, how to stand, how to leap, how to pivot, how to rotate her arm and release the ball.

Sometimes, your pitcher will be doing everything right, but she can't get a strike called. A basic rule to remember is that the strike zone, regardless of what the rulebook states, is **"WHATEVER THE UMPIRE WANTS IT TO BE"**. Given that, advise your pitcher where you think the umpire is calling strikes and suggest that she try throwing the ball toward that location.

The bottom line is that she is already under enough pressure. Your job is to calm and guide her. If that doesn't work, take her out as pitcher. Remember there's always another day to pitch, but not always another pitcher if your player loses her confidence.

Finally, you should try to get to know as much as your pitcher does about pitching. Make an effort to attend the pre-season pitching clinics, secure a pitching video or book, ask questions of the PGSL pitching instructor as to how best to teach the motion. Don't feel ashamed of not knowing how to do this, not many do. It takes time and effort.