

## ***Cole Division Standards***

The Cole Division is designed to introduce young athletes to Fastpitch softball. The focus is on learning the fundamentals, encouraging team play, and providing the opportunity to play all positions. The following standards have been established to help achieve those goals.

Age Requirement: K- 1<sup>st</sup> grade.

This league is intended for girls who are beginners at softball and want to learn the basics of fastpitch softball. This is an In-Town league and all games are played at Nelson Park. This league is designed to be very low-key with an emphasis on learning instead of competing. Each girl will receive a participation trophy at the end of the season. The 11" training softball (soft cover) is used in this division with the coaches pitching to the batters. Each player must play every position at least once during the season unless the coach feels that there is a significant safety issue for a child.

Our goal is for every player to improve upon the basic skills of the game throughout the season. In other words, we want each player to end the season a better player than when the year began. We would like players to develop the following skills:

*(Note: Skills are listed from basic to "advanced". As players progress from year to year, they should be stepping up the skill ladder. So kindergarteners should be developing the more basic skills while 2<sup>nd</sup> graders should be working on the advanced fundamentals.)*

- Batting:** Correct stance - where to stand - proper fastpitch softball swing,  
Make contact with pitched ball.  
Differentiate between a ball and a strike – learn to swing at good pitches.  
Make good contact – drive the ball.
- Catching:** Proper glove position when catching ball  
Catch ball thrown directly at glove.  
Move glove to catch a thrown ball.  
Move body to catch a thrown ball.
- Fielding:** Proper glove position for fielding a ground ball – bend at knees – feet apart – ball in front  
Field a hit/thrown grounder directly at player.  
Move feet to field a hit/thrown ground ball near player.  
Run and field a grounder away from player.
- Throwing:** Proper form and motion – how to hold the ball correctly - proper lead foot - stepping at the location you want to throw to - following through with throwing arm.  
Accurate short tosses.  
Longer throws with increasing accuracy.
- Running:** Leave the batter's box on contact  
Run through first base on 'single'  
3 step lead

When to run  
Wide turn at first on “double”, etc.  
Sliding

The Game: Hustle on and off the field  
Where to stand on the field for each position - the responsibilities of each position  
What is an out?  
Throwing to first.  
Moving to a hit ball  
Backing up the play (outfielders)  
Getting outs at bases other than first  
Anticipating what to do if ball is hit to player  
When to step on base for out – when to tag runner for out.  
Anticipating what to do if ball is hit to another player - Who covers second

### ***Cole Division Rules***

#### General Rules

Coaches and parents are looked upon as role models. Coaches and parents are expected to conduct themselves properly and promote good sportsmanship at all times. Profanity or arguing by any coach, parent or player will not be tolerated.

Grafton Girls Softball provides uniforms, bats, balls and helmets. Players must provide their own gloves and can use their own bats and helmets. It is strongly recommended that players wear their hat under the helmet. Players may want to purchase their own helmet.

Players must wear their uniforms (including hats) correctly at all times (not backwards, sideways or inside-out). Players must be in uniform in order to play in any game. The league will provide a uniform which includes a hat, shirt, socks and pants. Players should not write on or alter uniform during the season. Players may keep the uniform shirt, cap and socks. Pants must be returned at the end of the year.

Jewelry is not allowed during games or practices.

Games will be played on Tuesdays and Thursdays at Nelson Park. The season will consist of 10 -12 games. The score will not be kept during games and therefore wins and losses are irrelevant.

#### Game Rules

*Note: In developing these rules, we have tried to modify the game to accommodate the skills of the 5-8 year old player. As much as possible we have tried to avoid creating rules that are unique to the Cole Division. As players move on to the older divisions, we want them to build upon what they have learned here and not have to learn a whole new set of rules. We don't want players to face a situation where "what worked" or "what was right" in Cole Division is now "wrong" or "doesn't work" at the Intermediate level.*

The ideal number of players per team is 6. The maximum number is 7.

For a given number of players, the positions will be:

7 players – 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, Short, 3<sup>rd</sup>, Pitcher, Left-Center field, Right-Center field

6 players – 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, Short, 3<sup>rd</sup>, Pitcher, Center field

5 players – 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, Short, 3<sup>rd</sup>, Pitcher

4 players – 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, Short, 3<sup>rd</sup>

All players will play every inning. All players will be on field for defense; all players will have a turn at bat each inning. Late arriving players may be added to the field or batting order at any time.

Every player should play every position at least once during the season unless there is **significant concern** for a child's safety. Batting orders are to change each game so that all players bat at least once in each slot of the batting order over the course of the season.

Players should “play the position”. Outfielders should play behind the infield and should not cover 2<sup>nd</sup> base. The fielding team should not form a “defensive wall” along the infield. It is important that the players learn the proper responsibilities for each position.

Pitching to be done by coach or designated equivalent with a player at pitching position ready for defensive plays. Coaches should pitch from the pitcher's circle. The ball should be pitched, not lobbed as in slow pitch softball. It is very hard for players to hit an arcing pitch. The pitcher will have multiple balls (3/4) to keep the play moving.

A ball should not be pitched until the batter is in the proper stance and ready to hit.

A coach, parent or older sibling may serve as catcher. Catcher should not throw balls back to the pitcher until the pitcher's supply is exhausted. The catcher will not field balls hit in play. The catcher may receive throws to the plate from the fielding team.

Balls and strikes will not be called. Batter will swing until a hit is made. Coaches will decide how many swings will be allowed until a T is used. 5 “strikes” is a good rule of thumb. Coaches are encouraged to be vocal and provide feedback about swinging at balls in the strike zone. Remember, the T is a teaching tool, not a punishment.

Coaches of hitting teams will advise the opposition when a very strong hitter is up (to prevent injuries).

Only the batter and one on-deck hitter (in the on-deck circle) will have bats in their hands. All other players are to be seated on the bench or designated area. This is the area of greatest injury because coaches are pitching and coaching bases at this time and cannot be watching every player. Team parents are encouraged to volunteer their assistance in managing the players on the bench.

Bunting is not allowed. The skill can be taught at the coach's discretion.

Bases are set 45 feet apart.

Stealing is not allowed. 3 step leads should be taught. Player may take a lead after the ball leaves the pitcher's hand.

Sliding is optional. Sliding skill should be taught and players may slide at their own discretion.

Infield fly rule is not in effect at this level of play.

A half inning will end when all players have batted regardless if three outs are achieved.

Outs will be called on fielding plays and the batter/runner will return to the bench. Runners are safe on close plays. Over-running the base will not result in an out unless an active attempt to advance to the following base is performed. The players will be instructed that running over the base (except first base) may result in an out as they advance in softball.

No advance on passed balls to any base.

Extra base hits can be earned on balls hit into the outfield (beyond the arc of the infield). We want the players to learn proper base running and not ingrain a “station-to-station” mentality. On the other hand, we do not want base runners to take advantage of the fielding team’s inexperience. As a general guideline, runners should advance until an outfielder retrieves the ball. (When there are fewer than 2 outfielders, coaches should use sound judgment.)

The last player to bat in an inning should not be allowed to “run the bases” as if a home run were hit. Running the bases can be taught and perfected during practices prior to game. We are teaching the rules of softball. Players on base will advance to the appropriate base and also not “run the remaining bases” during the last at bat. Coaches will inform the opposing team after the last batter has hit.

Coaches and assistants are encouraged to be on the field for defense and instruct their team on field positions, field stances, play anticipation and general defensive techniques to achieve outs. Coaches will constantly check the position of fielders for proper position (outfielders have a tendency to creep into the infield) and make sure their attention is focused on the play for safety reasons. When batting, coaches and assistants are encouraged to act as base coaches and instruct their team on base running, taking leads and when to advance to the next base. Since this is an instructional league, coaches are encouraged to offer advice, praise and encouragement to opposing players when appropriate.

In an effort to speed up the pace of play, particularly in the area of in-between innings, coaches must prepare line-ups prior to game time.

Game day starts at 6:00PM. A 30 minute practice will be followed by a 3 inning game starting at 6:30. Time permitting more innings may be played. However, the game should end by 7:30pm.

Rainouts are left to the discretion of both coaches. Given the fickle New England weather, decisions to cancel games should be made as close to game time as possible. Make-up game dates will be decided on by both coaches. (It is not necessary to make up games.) The league commissioner is to be informed of a cancellation or scheduled make-up game (to make sure that a field is open.)

Games may be terminated due to rain or darkness upon discussion and agreement of the Head Coaches.