Great FASTPITCH SOFTBALL Questions

Answered by Gary Leland’s Fastpitch TV Facebook Family
20 Great Fastpitch Softball Questions Answered

By Gary Leland and The Fastpitch TV Facebook Family
Table of Contents

Preface

How do I pick the right team for my daughter?

What should I look for in a private hitting coach?

Should I create a Code of Conduct for my players and parents to sign?

What should a parent do if the coach plays “daddy ball”?

What are the chances of a player getting a scholarship without ever having played travel ball?

How should a player handle a teammate who says hurtful things to her?

What should happen to parents and coaches who physically attack an umpire over a bad call?

What are the downsides, if any, to a girl playing up an age group in fastpitch softball?

Did the umpire make the correct call?

What are the consequences of throwing an illegal pitch in high school?

What is the best way to build arm strength?

How often should I practice pitching?

Does hitting weighted balls before a game throw your timing off?

How do I keep my daughter from dropping her shoulder when she hits?

How do I keep my daughter from throwing side arm?

How important is it for my daughter to exhale as she releases a pitch?

At what age should players be allowed to wear steel cleats and are there any advantages?

Should my team always take on a 3-0 count?
Should my catcher back up first base on an infield play?
Should I introduce play call wristbands to my 12U team?
Preface

I first became involved with softball at the YMCA in Arlington, Texas. My two daughters ages eight and nine wanted to add yet another sport to their already busy schedule. We played ten games in our first season and won the YMCA championship.

When the season ended the coach asked all the parents for a volunteer. She felt she needed someone to take over the team who knew more about the game. I reluctantly volunteered after no one else did. Little did I know that moment would change my life forever.

I quickly moved my team from slowpitch to fastpitch. We then transitioned from a recreational to a select league.

By the time the team was 14 and under we claimed our first win in the Texas USSSA State Tournament. The following year we repeated by winning the Texas USSSA 15 and Under State Tournament. After two consecutive state wins we then placed 5th and 4th in different national events.

I now operate a full time business dedicated to fastpitch softball. I currently publish “The Fastpitch Softball Magazine” a magazine exclusively featuring fastpitch softball. I own and operate a retail softball store in Texas Softballjunk.com, and yes it has a website. I even have a website Fastpitch.TV that has numerous free training videos to view and blogs.

I am a past USSSA State director for Fastpitch Softball in Texas.

I have also invented and created many training aids specifically for fastpitch softball.

It’s amazing how after all of these years, I still have a passion for the game.

This book is a compilation of questions and answers from the Fastpitch.TV Facebook community. I hope you find these questions and answers useful in the development of your players. If you want to join the Fastpitch TV community go to www.Facebook.com/Fastpitchtv
**Question #1**

“Any advice on how to pick a good travel team and/or questions to ask the coach when going to tryouts?”

**Roy** I would want to know based your skill level how they practice and what they are teaching. What tournaments do they expect to go to? What is the chemistry like on the team? What do other players say about the team?

**Joy** As a coach, I suggest that you ask yourself one major question before you and your daughter go (this will help you when you talk to coach and returning parents): Are YOU ready to make the commitment? Is your daughter ready to make commitment? Because joining a travel program means commitment from both of you. It means you are saying to the coach that you will be at every practice and every tournament and that they can count on you to be there.

**Michael** What are your goals for your daughter? Once you know those, then it makes the questions easier. What type of schedule are they going to have for both practice and games? How many overnight tournaments will they play, if any? How many players are there on the team? Where do you see my daughter fitting with this team? What is the makeup (age wise) of the girls on the team? What are the team goals? Ask the parents already on the team about how well skills were developed and if the coach is clear in expectations and communication. Do the girls get along? Ultimately, you will know if it's the right fit for your daughter. Don't try to fit a square peg in a round hole. Best of luck.

**Jessica** Our daughter tried out last year. Before tryouts we decided to go to a local tournament and watch the teams, especially the coaches and how they interacted with the girls, how they corrected the girls’ mistakes, how the girls interacted with each other, and if they were having fun! We are die hard sports fans. Understand this will be your whole summer for your whole family! We split up since we have other kids. Also, know they practice all year and we did extra hitting lessons. Expect to be at a training facility 3-4 days a week all year long. With that said, we have met wonderful families, she has great friends, they play hard, she has learned commitment, work ethic, team work, how to pick someone up when they are down, and she has learned drive! She has a wonderful coach! It’s all worth it to us!!

**Stephanie** I think it depends on your goals or more so your daughter's goals. What do want to get out of being on a travel team? I chose a tougher coaching staff this year for my daughter because her skills are progressing to the next level. She needed coaches that can help take her higher. They are sincere, focused, and disciplined. Our other option was more about friendships, but we were not looking for that this year. It depends on what you want out of the experience.
Alyssa Make sure the team does not have attitudes.

Ashley I would suggest you figure out through talking to the parents of kids on the team and even the coaches, what the team goals are. Are they more concerned with winning tournaments and the hardware or do they want the kids who play for them to play at the next level? The teams that are all about hardware should be avoided if your daughter has collegiate dreams. I only say this because the teams who strive for trophies are the ones who play tournaments they know they can win (because it is below their skill level). They don’t challenge the team or make them dig deep to win. There are teams that both win tournaments consistently and also are in challenging the girls by having them play teams who are equal to or even more skilled, but those are few and far between. Just keep in mind (as others have mentioned) that this is a year round commitment. It can get tiring for the entire family, so be prepared. It will all pay off in the end.
Question #2

With so many people calling themselves hitting coaches, what should we be looking at for our daughters?

**Mike** I don’t have a direct answer, but I do have some advice. Watch baseball and softball on TV. Notice that each player does not look exactly the same. My personal belief is there are core techniques, then after that they really vary player to player. I personally want a coach that can enhance my daughters hitting style. The other criteria I looked for is a coach that didn’t brag about how far his girls could hit. I found one that bragged about his girls could put the ball where they wanted to. He worked on power hitting, bunting, slapping, place hitting, and explained when/why they were to be used. (quick example, 2 outs bottom of the last inning of a tie game and a runner on third, I would not want a power hit for an attempt at a home run)

Talk to SEVERAL coaches. A good coach should give you a "sample" class so he can tell you what he can do for your child. Just my 2 cents.

**Rich** To me it’s about who is more interested in helping a player with batting issues and not about the money at all.

**Myra** Credentials!!!!!!!!!! Show me what makes you worthy of my hard earned money.

**Clarissa** My daughter takes lessons from a once Team USA softball player. Look for someone who is accomplished at the sport.

**Andrew** I have been teaching hitting for about 10 years. At first I was just a little league coach who grew and learned. My daughter was a dominate pitcher. She could chew batters up and spit them out. I called pitches, studied swings, and found out early on which kids (swings) worked against her, and which swings didn't. Starting with my own little league kids (my kid included) to kids on the travel team, I used what I knew would help the kids improve against the pitchers; the amount of confidence in the kids went through the roof. As my daughter moved on up through high school, I started doing it for money. I felt guilty at first, but it was a way to pay for the travel expenses of my daughter. It exploded into me having hundreds of kids.

The swing I teach has evolved over time, and I don't require each kid to do everything the exact same way at first, but the things that make each kid fail are the bad habits associated with poorly executed drills and laziness. The one thing I tell parents who bring me their kids is, "Your kid will not develop bad habits with me and I will do my best to build confidence in your kid." I don't make promises of home runs and leading the team in batting average. I have both girls and boys and I will say this: Girls have to swing more than boys. Girls also need to know
why - you have to make them believers in what you are teaching them. Some girls are a tough sell.

In finding the hitting coach who is best for your kids, ask around and ask questions, like these:

1. What drills do they do?

   Are there a lot of gimmicks in their teachings? 90% of the time I was able to make a kid better with tee work and soft toss. If I had to use a prop or gimmick to eliminate a bad habit, I would wait until the 5th or 6th lesson. A good hitting coach has to be able to communicate to the kid how to fix themselves. Sometimes it takes longer, but the fix lasts longer. Also do they have a plan? I have a 5 step program laid out for kids ages 8-9 through college. I don't take kids younger than 8-9. They have to love this game first, only then will they put in the time and effort needed to build into a strong player!

2. Are they at tournaments and games?

   A coach who will take the time and spend the money to come watch your kid play loves and cares about what they do. I spend about 25% of what I make to go to tournaments, and even college games of my college kids.

3. Are they a coach or a teacher (it's hard to be both)?

   Just because a coach is coaching at a high level doesn't mean they are a good teacher, and it probably means they don't have the time necessary to help improve your kid. I coached a high school team last year, and improved the kids on that team a lot, but it cost me valuable time with my kids and I lost a few.

4. Do they have a steady place to teach?

   This question hits home because I am currently trying to build a facility. I have always tried to keep my costs down (I know what travel ball costs). I struggle with renting an expensive facility or building a small one because I will have to pass that cost on to my parents.

Find someone who gets the kids confident at the plate - confident kids hit!!! Not cocky, confident!!!

My last recommendation is that you make time for your kid’s lessons. If you can't go once a week for at least the first 6-8 weeks, then your child won't improve and grasp the concepts, no matter how good the teacher is. They will improve on a much larger scale if they focus in the beginning at a more concentrated effort.

Thanks for reading, and good luck parents!!
**Alex** I want to see a coach so few times I might not even remember their name. They should want to show kids how to coach themselves so they don't need hitting coaches.

**Sandy** I think any lesson should be one on one. I think it’s not an in-and-out thing. If a girl is struggling, the coach stops and helps. Too many are about how many kids they can get in and out - all about the money.

**Lynn** My daughter takes semi-privates from a current D1 coach.

**Larry** Don't get me wrong, a coach is important (I've been coaching for over 30 years) but it's more about putting in the work. The big danger is paralysis by analysis. Eventually, it all boils down to "see the ball, hit the ball". Beware of the coach who makes a correction on every swing.
Question #3

“Should I have a Code of Conduct for my players and parents to sign?”

Denise We did that with our 12U team, both for the girls and parents. It is very important that the girls think of each girl on the team as important. They don't have to be best friends but they do have to respect each other!

Stephen We have player, parent, and coach codes of conduct. We have a pretty carefully assembled team and we try to weed "those" issues out before we make an offer. It all starts at the top with a clear mission. We have a zero tolerance policy and reserve the right to drop anyone from the club for violating the code. We've never had an issue and we have a 95% return rate of our players.

Kenneth Get in touch with Coach Schramm at George Washington University. She has an excellent "team first" philosophy with rules that govern her program. First class act.

Corey You should have a 24 hour rule after incidents unless there is a game that day. Weekend tourneys have a Tuesday rule. Parents are the key to this actually happening. My coaches pick the girls and I pick the parents. I don't care if I have a stud at third base if their parents are idiots.

Eric My parents all receive a code of conduct. My players know (or learn quickly), that anything that happens off the field stays there. Once you step through the gate, it's done. The bench is hard and doesn't care. We are one team, united. Last season we had one young lady several players didn't like much. Those players got over it. They played and practiced with heart and never let their personal feelings come onto the field with them.

Catch it soon and address it immediately. Don’t be afraid to pull the trigger and bench the player if necessary. Play as a team or sit the bench by yourself.

Ron No vampires in the dugout. Boot them.

Stephen P I have done just that in the past and there were penalties for breach of the code. The girls answered to their teammates and not the coaching staff. Another way I have handled it is with a team meeting at the beginning of the year where I make it clear that there is NO DRAMA on this team. Any kind of drama will not be tolerated and can cause you to be removed from the team. I have to say that in over 20 years of coaching fastpitch, I have never had any problems. Best of luck!
**Gary** That's has to come from within the players. A mandated code set forth by the coaching staff will be hollow. What you need is a leader (preferably a senior) to take control of the team and hold her teammates accountable. She can present a code of conduct, but my feeling is that’s really more of an unwritten code type of thing. If you have to write it out for them, you've probably recruited the wrong kids and making them sign a piece of paper is not going to change who they are. There's more to a team than the talent alone.

**Patrick** This was the first year I was an assistant softball coach, Also the first year I had boyfriends around (15U). The head coach handled issues very well. First offense we had an issue with a girl the coach would take a walk with the girl and discuss it. The second time it was a meeting with the parents, still in private. The third time, they were kicked off of the team. During all stars, we had 4 girls "snap chatting" behind other players backs. Topics were rated X. The head coach got all the parents with players together and very bluntly explained what happened. After a 20 minute lecture, his last words were, “If it happens again you’re off the team and out of the league”. The coach knew how to monitor snap chatting.

**Roy** I think over many years it has been proven that one bad apple can destroy the whole barrel. If the problem is just between two or three girls, I would set them straight on the rules and expectations. If they don't agree or follow the rules, then the player or players involved will not play. If it is a trend with most of the girls then establish your policy and punish as needed. Do they already understand this is not acceptable? If not then you should address the issue before actions are taken.

**William** I was a coach on for a 16U softball team in Texas and each year we had a code of conduct for each girl and her parents to read through and sign before they were fully accepted on the team. This showed us who was really committed to the team. Also after signing the agreement, if they failed to live by the team rules then there were consequences. After three strikes, they were dismissed from the team.

**Pamela** I think it is necessary. My grand-daughter was on a travel team and they had one. Her team was respectful to each other in public, like when we went for lunch or dinner. She was a pick-up player for another team and I am not sure they had one. When we went to dinner after a tournament was over with said team, we were more than taken aback by the behavior of the girls, the parents and the especially the coaches. I would include a clause about parents and coaches not partaking in alcohol consumption at the games and/or at a gathering in public with their players in uniform, especially knowing they will be driving their children home. I have witnessed both situations(parents drinking in the parking lot and at dinner) and think it is highly inappropriate.
**Denise** Our league has a Code of Conduct that the girls must sign, one for the coaches to sign, and one for the parents to sign. I wish this behavior was just something people did naturally, but I guess some people need to see it written down.

**Keith** I would get rid of the main cause. Being a good teammate is part of the experience.

**Stephanie** I wish more coaches, teachers, and even bosses would stand up to bullying and ugliness and have zero tolerance policies! One coach had his girls actually write their own rules and sign this way he was only implementing their rules.

**Kimberly** A code of conduct is good, but if the coaches and their families talking behind the girl's back, then it's really not much of a contract. I'd like to find a team that the coaches don't have any family members as players. I’m tired of Daddy Ball.

**Tanya** A contract is only effective if it's enforced. Don't put something in front of them that won't be held up!

**Joy** Absolutely!!!! It gives coaches and option to release the player from the team due to infraction(s).

**Debra** We have a code of conduct for my daughters dance team! Yes for softball too! Girls can be so mean!!! It's a great warning for consequences that need to be in place if you have a teenage girl!!!

**Mileen** To have a good team that is going to last, that team has to bond as one. Bonding can take some time with girls that don’t know each other, but that time can be shortened with a code of conduct. Make sure they understand that everything that has nothing to do with softball is left at home or anywhere other than the field. The quicker that happens, then the quicker you have a "Team".

**Crystal** Unfortunately, girls tend to be mean. This just a fact of life. By all means make a code of conduct for the girls, but I would have them come up with the rules. Having them make the rules gives them no excuses for breaking any of them. You have to hold each and every girl accountable for her actions. It doesn’t matter how nice the girl normally is or how talented she is. If she breaks the rules, she has to pay the price. The sooner these girls figure out that it’s not all about them individually, the sooner they can act like a team.

**Ruth** Our girls have to sign one every year. Unfortunately there are still some who will break the rules. They are like a family and even in the best of families we still have back biting.

**Monica** Great idea. We are having that same problem right now.
Nikki I did this with my High School team and it worked great. I also stressed my "no drama" rule from the first day of tryouts and if that's what they are going to bring, I didn't want them on my team.

Gerhard I coached girls softball for several years. When there was a problem it ended right away, no more problems.

Wendy Great idea. They are ambassadors for your school and/or organization and should act accordingly.

Michelle Do it!

Debbie Absolutely necessary.

JoAnn A splendid idea! We have the same for my daughter’s high school, recreation team, and Travel tournament team. The parents also have one to sign.

Brian We have that in our league for parents. If they break the code of conduct, their daughter could be removed from the league. It will work for the girls. You just need to make the consequences reasonable and enforceable.

Robert I tried this in my little league this year. The catch was, if you don't sign then you don't play. It has been a much better season this year.

Sandy Absolutely, conflict can hurt the team.

Linda I think it is a great idea!

Frank I've told my girls since they were 10u (now 16u) that they spend more time with each other than their own families, so we need to pull in as one.

Randy We did the same for our team.

Victoria I think it can be a good thing and bad thing! A team should love each other either way. They shouldn't need that there, but then again its young teens were talking about - that's what they do now.

Leigh It is more than just a signature; consequences for their actions. Anybody can sign their name. Even adults don't read the fine print sometimes! You must have accountability for actions!

Delfiina I think this is an outstanding idea. The girls should know better. You know as well as I do, if there is not conformity within a team, there is no team. The girls must respect each other. Unfortunately this comes with time and wisdom. Sometimes, people never grow up. Good luck.
Debbie Our school football team does this and if the boys don’t abide by it they are benched for a specific amount of games. Usually first offense is one game and then more each time until they follow the rules. It works well here.

Shelly Is there some kind of form you follow or do you just put what you want into one?

Sandra This happens on high school ball teams I don't think whatever they put in play, there will always be some talk and I hate to say that but it is true.

Jeanette I wished we had that on my daughter’s original softball team. We were on a team that had horrible coach drama so we left them and moved on to a pick-up team for the World Series. Now we are on to a team I like so far. The girls all seem to get along great with each other and there is no chatting behind their backs yet.

Dale Great Idea.

Randy Great idea! My daughter's coach flat out told the girls she would not tolerate any drama whatsoever. They didn't have any & it was an awesome season!

Eloy It's a must.

William Time to clean out the garbage!!!

Amanda Our softball organization has a player conduct code. It is worth putting it into place.

Niki We have that with our team. The girls and the parents sign it. GREAT idea to hold them accountable—it avoids the "I didn't know" excuse.

D’Anna They should have to sign one because in softball you’re a family. You shouldn't fight. You fight to win, not with each other. If they don’t sign tell them they aren’t on the team.
Question #4

“What should parents do about a coach that only looks out for his own child and her friend? I know not everybody is going to get the same playing time, but it's not even close and the coach has canceled tournaments so his child can go play on another team.”

Andy  It’s a sad thing but daddy ball happens all the time, you will see it all levels. It's a hard call on what to do. I guess if everyone sees this happening as a group, meet with the coach and have him/her address the concerns.

Matt  If you could take certain parents and coaches out of the game, softball and baseball would be fun.

Becky  Having a daughter who pitches, I have watched the coach’s daughter/friends start a game and put the team in a hole. The coach would then put my daughter in to stop the bleeding. You could see how frustrated she was all of the time and that was hard as a parent. Even though the game is very competitive, the girls should still be having fun and it was impossible to feel that when you are constantly losing. Not just losing, but losing big! Don’t put up with it for too long. I would start shopping for a new team for your daughter.

Joe  This is a serious problem that not only exists at lower levels but in high school also. A person makes one mistake and is taken out of the game immediately, but others make numerous mistakes and stay in game. I don't have an answer. Wish I did.

Sam  We left.

Deanne  It’s a sad truth that daddy/mommy coaches play unfair. Even coaches from high school do it when coaching little league or travel ball. They will favor a player they know over one they don't, even if that "stranger" proves to be skillful. This is a team sport and players need to be utilized to the best of their ability. They need to be put in a position that help the team, not the position they want to play.

Dan  It’s time to have an open discussion. If it doesn't go the right way, put another person in the coaching position.

Dennis  Make a new team - minus the coach and his daughter. It's obvious she has other opportunities to play elsewhere!
**Frank** We believe the game and the team, belongs to the girls. If the majority of girls and parents feel the same way, replace the coach. If not, find another team.

**Joy** Your coach is not working for anyone but his daughter, which is evident by one thing you said. When a coach cancels a tournament for his entire team just for her to play somewhere else, then he is not a coach. If he excused her and followed through with the girls who could be there and played his tournament, then my view would be different.

The next question is - is the team a standalone team or organization? If it’s a standalone team, go elsewhere. If it’s an organization, approach the board with your concern.

**Tony** You don't excuse someone for abandoning the team and playing elsewhere. Commitment is to one team. You have other wants; I don't want you as a coach.

**Amy** I have played for several teams in my life (my family moved every couple of years for the Military) and have had three kinds of coaches: one with a daughter on the team (and played daddy ball), one with a daughter on the team (but treated her like everyone else), and one with no kids on the team. The coach who played daddy ball wasn’t my coach for very long. I am an outspoken person who will tell others exactly how I feel, so that is exactly what I did. The coach’s daughter felt as if it was “her” team instead of “our” team. She berated girls constantly and saw no repercussions for her actions. I had heard enough when she yelled at me from third base to get back behind the plate when I went out to the circle to calm my pitcher down. It was a timed pool game and we were already down double digits with less than ten minutes left. Needless to say this game was long over, so I elected to stop the game and my pitcher catch her breath. Apparently that wasn’t a good idea to the coach’s daughter. She yelled at me in front of everyone and I waited until after the game to tell her which way was up. Her dad didn’t like that very much and started to pick on me in a way. He would focus on the negatives. Even when I had a game where I went 2-3 with 2 doubles, a few RBIs, and a pop out, he would focus on the pop out. I left his team in favor of picking up after that (I was a catcher, so picking up was easy).

The other two coaches were great to play for. They were both interested in developing and helping everyone on the team, not just their favorites (or daughter). Go find a new team! There are so many out there, all with different make-ups and coaching styles. There is one out there that will agree with your daughter. Good luck.
Question #5

What are the chances of getting a scholarship without ever having played travel ball?

Scott C A girl can absolutely play in college without being recruited at travel ball tournaments or showcase camps. ABSOLUTELY. Is it important to play Travel Ball, of course, better competition, more games, great experience and a chance of being seen.

Julie My son won't play high school ball because of the lack of competent coaching at the high school level and due to the prevalence of scouts at showcases. HS ball is rec ball with letter jackets. It's become a social experience, not a competitive one.

Jeremy My daughter now plays college ball. While we were traveling state to state playing ASA, USSSA, USFA, Dixie Youth and High school, doing camps/clinics and showcases. The only statistics colleges wanted was travel ball cause that’s where the best of the best play. This is what we were told by 20 or more college coaches. In my opinion as being a 15yr softball coach it’s highly unlikely to get recruited playing just High School Ball but possible if she’s that good. If her high school team wins state that surely helps too. When you are really good word gets out.

Joey I've heard college coaches say that as well. Don't even bother with school ball. The majority go to travel showcases and camps.

Cheri You would be missing out on so much game experience and learning how to play in competitive situations with the girls you will face in college. It is all a process of development, not money. I don't regret a dime and enjoy all aspects of the journey.

Jim M But the money you spend from 10 years of travel ball - Fees, lessons, travel, bats, equipment, uniforms, etc. would put 2 kids through college.

Joe N WOW, never thought about it that way. Pitching lessons, tournament teams, travel, hotels, equipment, are EXPENSIVE. Also more FUN than rec. ball (we play that in addition to tournament ball).

Brandon Jim M, yes you spend a lot of money but you also gain tons of lifelong friends and have numerous great memories with your daughter.

Jim M And I wouldn't trade it for a million dollars. I just get frustrated when folks put so much emphasis on scholarship money and talk about picking a Division 1 program for their 7th grader. Do you go to college to play sports or do you get to play sports while you're in college?
Ron I coach an NAIA school that won their conference championship last year. I do recruit heavily in travel ball because of the number of quality players I can watch in a short period of time. I, however, am a big advocate of playing high school ball. I have 3 starters from Iowa on scholarship that did not play much if any travel ball. They are all studs: 2 were all conference last year and 1 is a freshman. If you really want to get exposed to a college coach there are other ways besides travel ball.

Shaina I completely agree Ron! There are other ways to get noticed. Probably the best and most underrated way to accomplish this is to go to the camps at schools you wish to attend. This gives the coach a chance to see how coachable you are, what skills you already possess, if they think you will be the right fit for the team dynamic, etc. It is difficult for them to see this by watching a travel ball game. The games are for showing them how you perform under pressure or against stiff competition. If you have a school you want to play softball for, find their camp and go. They can’t notice you if they have never seen or heard of you.

Ashley No! I've never seen it. All the athleticism in the world cannot make up for the skills learned through years of playing competitive travel softball.

Eric If travel ball isn't an option then I would suggest college camps. Just make sure that the camps are small sized and that the actual coaches are there. If the player has talent that is a way to expose it to them. The player also can talk to them without restrictions while on their campus. Short videos via YouTube links are another way for the coaches to make an assessment of the player’s skill level.

Eddy Good to hear this. We have encountered so much ridiculous drama on the high school team, my daughter questions trying out this year. However she does enjoys playing and working hard so more than likely she'll try out anyway.

Teresa My daughter was recruited to play softball more than any other sport she played. She had choices and ended up playing volleyball and softball at a Community College. We did not play travel ball but we also live in Iowa where softball high school season is summer. My daughter now plays Division II volleyball and they want her to play softball as well, both on scholarships. In the end college, is about an education first and athletics second. So pick a college that works for your daughter’s education first.

Glenn Out west we have USA preps, camps and tournaments. You can attend with your travel team or as an individual. Taylor has realistic conversations with half dozen college coaches, she's had ongoing contact with 3 of them. Granted, very few Division I schools, but Division II and III are ok by us, we want her go to college, get an education, diploma and play a little ball.
Shawn It can be done. Don’t waste money on NCSA or BeRecruited. Utilize that money to go to the softball camps of the schools she would like to attend or play for. BE REALISTIC. While at those camps, showcase yourself, draw their interest and above all things stand out. Showcase your skills and showcase your desire and drive. Listen to what is being taught and make the adjustment. Build the relationship with the coaching staff and players. It CAN be done.

Scott C Shawn - how do you tell people to not waste money on BeRecruited? Thank goodness you weren’t around when I was helping my daughter. A $75 investment in BeRecruited, allowed her current college coach to find her. She is a freshman receiving about 75% scholarship. That $75 has saved us $1,000s! Go to the camps where you want to play? What do you think that costs? Our daughter had offers from over 6 schools, all were more than 1,000 miles away. Nonsense.

Shawn Don’t like what I have to say, don’t read it. I have had my interaction with both organizations. I am happy for you and your daughter. But a onetime fee? Really? Any way if you don’t like what I have to say, don’t read it. We were asked an opinion question. This is my opinion.

David Don't expect to just show up at an "exposure" tournament and be seen. The coaches/recruiters are there to see the handful of kids who CONTACTED THEM IN ADVANCE and then move on to the next recruiting site. Time and money are scarce. They can't waste any of either. Like Scott said, the opportunities below D1 are there, and I've been told the offers are comparable.

Ty Most of the recruiters double as coaches; therefore, they are very busy. They get hundreds of videos in the mail and most end up in the trash because they don't have time to watch them. Their budgets are too tight to travel to 1 high school to watch 1 or 2 prospects. Travel ball provides their biggest and best opportunity to find players. It's not impossible, but not likely.

Phil I had a D-1 coach tell me to have my daughter not play high school ball.

Gary Very unlikely do to the fact you see more playing time in 2 to 3 weekends than you will see all season in school ball and that translates to better ball skills and knowledge. Plus in a lot of places, the coaching is subpar in school. My daughter got lucky and has a very good school ball coach and our school ball goes on in the fall so it doesn't interfere with summer ball.

Amy Not likely! High school coaches don't draw in the exposure needed!

Brandon I would say it would be difficult unless there is so much talent. Exposure tournaments are crawling with college coaches looking to recruit
Lori My daughter and I sat and talked to many D1 and D2 college coaches. The better teams and bigger schools must see you at travel ball tournaments or at their own college camps, no options. Now they recruit girls before they play high school ball and by the time they get to play in high school, their graduating class is already recruited. You can have a chance in smaller local colleges because they have picked up some of our girls from high school playoffs but if your team is not that good then they will not be seen! Every college coach we spoke with and played in front of had said the same thing: they look at the player through eyes of travel ball, then they want to see them at their camp as well. It costs money but you must play in front of the coaches. You have to get on their radar between 7th and 9th grade! We played on a gold team and most college coaches only wanted to see players that were good enough to play with girls at that level because they know they are the best of the best in their areas. My daughter got signed by a very big D2 school and there would have been no chance without our travel gold team! That's a fact, not an opinion!

Tim Would agree with all and would not ever give up my travel family. For one, there are not as many scholarships out there for softball compared to football or basketball.

Bigg Not likely. Academics are the way to go!

John Slim and none

Marshall It can be done, but it's tough. My daughter plays school ball and select ball, and I only see scouts at select ball tourneys.

Alyssa This is my exact situation! I'm a senior in high school and I want to play in college but I'm afraid since I haven't played for long I'm afraid I won't have a chance.

Joe N What chance does a player have of playing High School Softball without playing travel softball?

Joe R Get a good skills DVD & some pictures that showcasing your player and send them out to the colleges she would like to go to. Then make a few extra and send them to a few other colleges. Every little bit helps.

Sharon There are a lot of college coaches at the big show case tournaments.

Bobbie I live in a small town where the tryouts for middle school and high school are based on your last name and who your political affiliations are with. The county recreational league stops at age 13. My daughter wants to continue playing but it is hard to find close travel teams. Do college clinics actually account for anything? We are desperate. Thanks!
**Kimberly** I would think that girls could try out at a community college and get scholarships even if they have never played select ball.

**Bob** My daughter doesn't want to go out for school. She plays travel ball but is a freshmen and doesn't want to play school ball. Will that hinder her chances of getting a scholarship?

**Ty** If travel ball is not an option, you may want to explore some local community colleges. It's a good way to have school paid for while still having the option for playing at a bigger school later.

**Amy** I am glad this question was asked...many don't believe me when we say this is the case.

**Shannon** Due to college and high school ball playing at same time it is highly unlikely.

**Tony** It’s all about exposure - if the person in question plays in a state where travel ball is not highly prevalent, there is a small chance of getting exposure at the high school level. The chances are still very low.

**Shawna** Sadly, not likely.

**Joey** I think it might be possible, but that is where the girls get seen is at travel ball.

**Robert** My daughter plays both. She’s a freshman starter on a high school team that went deep into the playoffs last year and also starts on her travel ball 18U team. We do the Florida and Alabama and Colorado and Arizona and California, and Tennessee tournament's. The traveling 1000's of miles is the price we parents are willing to pay to afford the opportunity of getting that funded education. Not just being a dad, but my girl can ball. No one wants to believe she's just a freshman. That's hard work and determination. We take no credit. She's putting in the work, so I think that if you don't play travel ball you need to get your name out there some kind of way. There are a bunch of different tools out there nowadays to help with that. Spend wisely, good luck and God Bless.
Question #6

“When a player makes a mistake another player will say hurtful things like, ‘glad you’re upset, you’re the reason we are losing this game’, how should a player handle this, especially when none of her teammates will stand up for her and help?”

Jim As a coach, the player saying things like that would be GONE. There is no player that is worth having on a team that will bring a team or player down. You win and lose as a team and my team knows that.

Jerry As the coach, I would set the girl as a lesson (the one making the remark). No team needs a cancer like this running her mouth.

Patrick The player who makes the comment would be benched and will have to apologize to the player in front of the entire team. If it happens again she is off the team.

Mike This is on the coaches to create the correct culture. That kind of attitude creates a bunch of individual clans, not a team. That's a bench worthy comment, at the LEAST.

Dawn We had a similar situation, unfortunately it was the coach's wife (who point blank blamed an 11yr old for losing the game) as well as the coach's daughter (who made multiple mistakes in tournaments and never got corrected, but always did the correcting). My daughter wasn't the target but it stayed with her and she didn't even want to try out for that team this year. Now, we are on a team with total positive energy, constructive feedback and girls who are appreciated for their talents.

Linda We had a similar experience for my daughter! Coaches make a huge difference.

Cindy There is no “I” in team. Every player has bad days. Brush off the mistake and make up for it at the plate.

Todd As a coach, if I heard it from the player, I set an example and bench her, regardless of who she is.

Laura Let's start with teaching our kids respect, teamwork, and camaraderie. Not ONE of these players has the right to criticize, blame, and/or point fingers. Even in the MLB, they say "we win as a team, we lose as a team" no matter what errors happened. Teach your children, and start YOUNG.

Renae If not taken care of by coach, it’s not a team I’d want my daughter on!
**Michelle** It’s not acceptable by other teammates. No one like that would be on any team I coached, period. Secondly, it’s not the responsibility of the kids to have to deal or "stand up" to other teammates. Thirdly, just like I teach my girls in school, the person who puts you down is a bully and ignore them. If they keep doing it, let someone know. Coaches should handle the situation by that point and teach them to ignore these types of behaviors. I would reassure them there is indeed no way a person can single handedly lose or win a team sport!! The “no I in TEAM” concept goes a long way. Although it’s not right for the girls to have to deal with it, it’s an important life lesson. They will deal with these types of people throughout their lives. We have to teach our children to turn the other cheek & ignore it. They can't let others' actions decide the rest of your game or how you're going to bounce back and shake it off. Just my opinion though.

**Renee** Address is it with the coach and let him/her handle it. If it continues, find another team because the one you are on is made up of individuals.

**Jeff** There is no place on any team for that kind of behavior. This player would be doing one of 2 things on my team. 1. Serving a 3 tournament suspension plus a LOT of running at practice, and a full team apology. 2. Packing her bags and be dismissed from the team immediately.

**Eric** That doesn't fly, period. Teammates back each other up. I have no tolerance for negativity. I will bench a player, then remove them from a team if necessary. When it comes to youth athletics, you have to teach them early about respect. This can be done at home, with the coaching staff, and in the dugout. No player should be put down and potentially lose heart for the game.

Address it immediately. Warn all the players that it won't ever be tolerated. Explain the repercussions of the bad action and enforce your rules, even if it's a key player.

I accept zero negativity from my players. Head up. Believe in yourself and your team. Back each other up. Bad days happen, it's how you each step up and overcome them that really matters. Perfect practice makes practice perfect. Don't practice until you get it right, practice until you can't get it wrong. And above all, be a role model to your team, your fans, and your family.

**Debbie** No bad mouthing any player because everyone will make a mistake- old school players say "shake it off" and move on!!

**Brigette** I am a board member for our league as well a team parent. We have 0 tolerance for any negativity or disharmony. I don't care if they are the best player on the team. We have even kicked coaches/ parents off the field for poor behavior.
**Keysha** Kids that make statements like this should be benched at a minimum or removed from the team! Reputable coaches should not want kids like this representing their teams!!

**Lara** This reflects poorly on the coaching staff. As a coach I will NEVER allow this!! It’s a team effort!!

**Doug** Lead by example. Our family is blessed with great hitting and pitching coaches. During the hour lesson you never hear a negative thing. It's fix this, “much better”; try this, ”very good”. It is the most productive time. You only have control of two things your attitude and effort. Lead by example, be positive and encourage everyone. It will take some time but it will make a difference and it maybe just in you.

**Jim** “There is no victory without Integrity”

**Cara** What they need to say to negative people is: “Keep doing what you do best and I'll worry about my own mistakes”.

**Carrie** Bench the kids who are talking crap. It is unsportsmanlike conduct and they need to learn a lesson.

**Angie** It is unacceptable for peer criticism on any level.

**Tony** I would bench her and let the team know why she is benched. If one more negative word is spoken by this player during the tournament, send her packing. We give zero tolerance for those actions.

**Misti** WOW!! I can't believe that this is allowed. You win as a team and lose as a team, period!

**Victoria** My 8th grade year, my whole team was rude and if I made a mistake they would say mean things which made me worse as a player. The coach didn't do anything! I believe the coach should tell the girls to respect your teammates. If they don’t stop, the coach should punish them in some way. The person who is being put down should show them what she is made of.

**Reba** That's no teammate that would say something so hurtful. The proper thing to say is "shake it off, we've got this".

**Choney** I coach softball and basketball. I always tell my players before any season starts and every game, “we’re one team, one family. We play as a team and always back each other, like family - one family, one team, because there's no I on a team”
Becky The coaches need to make sure the team knows that you play as a team. Win or lose, it's a team effort!!! One person’s mistake doesn't win or lose the game.

Jackie Same as bullying.

Brian As a player, when someone else makes an error, just go and say to her "don't worry, we'll pick you up". Then go do it!

Lee The coach needs to sort that out.

Jody The coach allows that crap? Win as a team, lose as a team. Shame on the coach and parents for letting that happen.

Toni Bench her for a few games and tell the team and her parents why she is benched. If she does it again, dismiss her from the team. Have a zero tolerance rule in place. Everyone now knows what happens when they do this.

Nancy The only person on a team taking personal responsibility for loss should be the coach!

Doug First, coaches don't let this go on. It happens when we are not watching or are busy coaching. This player needs to tell the coach. If nothing is done, then it’s time to move on and tell the coach why. It is about the team. It’s not whether you get knocked down, its how you get back up!! Learn to make your team better!!

Sandy They only say what they hear! Coach needs to kick the negative player to the curb.

Jessica That sort of attitude would not be allowed on any of my teams. We win and we lose as a team. Anyone who would talk down to a teammate would not be on the team. Attitude is EVERYTHING.

Gerhard When I used to coach, I never let this happen.

John This happened on my daughter’s team last year and nothing was ever done about it! Sad, but one of the reasons we moved on.

Pam On my granddaughter’s team there is no TALKING like that. The coach will pull you to the side and discuss it. If it happens again you’re gone, off the team.

Sharon Sit her butt on the bench for the rest of the season.

Bonny Sugar coating doesn't make good ball players.

Karen Time to find another team. Your daughter doesn't need garbage like that!
April It does not happen if the coach will not allow it.

Karissa It takes an entire team to win or lose a game.

Sarah As a player, she should tell the coach and he should handle it. This is how we do it on my team. And the person that was not being encouraging had to do punishments.

Rachael Bench her!

Joe The COACH should be the team leader and never allow inappropriate language. The player should be lectured on good sportsmanship.

Leroy I think coach needs to get involved. If they don’t then that’s not the team you want to be on.

Jeanette That is one of the main reasons we left our team of 5 years. We are much happier where we are at now. Try a change!

Roy It would depend on the skill level of the team. Is she truly a weak link on the team or is this appearing to be a personal attack? If she is the weak player you should consider finding a team more suitable to her playing ability. If it is personal where is your coach? He should be teaching team success and failures and building chemistry, thus uniting the team

Angie Shouldn’t matter weak or not, the negative comments are unacceptable.

Brooklyn I am sorry for who ever got treated like that and I would shake it off and save all my anger to hit the ball with!

Johnny Forfeit the game & make them run!

Todd Bench the virus

Nicole Wow! I am sorry for whoever is being treated this way and disgusted that any coaching staff would allow this to happen.
Question #7

“What should happen to teams, coaches and parents who physically attack an umpire during a game with 9 and 10 year old girls on the field over a call they disagreed with?

I personally witnessed this behavior this weekend at a tournament and was appalled. The teams and coaches were allowed to continue to play. I feel there were safety concerns that were not addressed. I want other opinions.”

Ron H I guess I would first want to know the nature and extent of the "attack". You said it was physical so I assume that there was some kind of contact made with the umpire. Assuming this, there still seems to be some variables that may come into play. My first thought is that if physical contact occurred why was the game allowed to continue? Contact would and should indicate that a safety issue exists and I'm surprised the umpire allowed the game to go on. My thought would be that due to safety concerns, not to mention the emotional toll on the players, the game should have been called and a ruling made on the outcome. After that it gets foggy for a few reasons. One is who is "in charge" of the fields and facility during the tournament? In other words, was the tournament Director responsible or the operator of the property? This really only matters in the case of what punitive action could be handed out. If parents were involved, and if in fact physical contact was made, then I would consider removing them from the property via law enforcement. This could be for the remainder of the day, tournament or whatever period of time is deemed appropriate. Whoever is putting on the tournament could consider banning them from future events as well, although this would be difficult to police as identification may be a problem. Regardless I can't see allowing them to stay in the property at that point.

As for coaches and teams, my feeling is that they are synonymous. The coach is a representative and extension of the team and/or organization. If it were only one coach you may consider banning him and allowing another coach to continue with any other games to play and eventually make a judgment on that coach’s status with future events. If it were multiple coaches then I’d say the team is done for this tournament and then consider future disqualifications as well. We all realize that in the heat of things there can be disagreements and sometimes heated exchanges. However, physical contact with another person should not be tolerated. It is not only a legal issue but there are young girls watching this display of ignorance.
**Bev** The teams/coaches/parents should be ejected, after ONE warning! Precedence needs to be set and rules followed or umpires lose control and it can spiral out of control! Any parent condoning this as well as coaches should be banned from participating or watching indefinitely!!! It is all about the kids and they shouldn't have to pay for coaches or parents actions as this is something out of a child's control!!!! Softball is about the kids on the field and that is all that matters. Everyone is human and missed calls are part of the game. Call time, express your case, and then it's FINAL!!! I believe if the adults let the kids play and didn't talk negatively around their daughter, the majority if issues wouldn't exist!!! Have Fun! Life is too short; kids grow up and move out. Enjoy the time you have with them!!!!!

**Beverly** Banned from game and must leave the fields immediately for the rest of the tournament.

**Linda** Team parents need to find a team with true leadership that is able to instill great character and assist in advancing these up and coming athletes to the next level ASAP. My daughter is very fortunate with her travel and school teams, though we experienced a few with terrible character along the way.

**Davey** I actually think it's a felony to attack a umpire.

**Tim W** Bad calls are as much of a part of the game as hitting and pitching and fielding. Umpires make mistakes and some let their personal feelings enter the game at times. It’s not right but it happens. It's up to the adults to teach our youth that you’re going to face adversity in all aspects of life. How you deal with it will determine the type of person you will become.

**Justin** There is just no place for it! Softball is a sport that teaches life skills and this sort of behavior builds long term losers. At the end of the day what goes around comes around. It is ugly but as long as we instill in the kids how the game should be played, they will win.

**LaVaughn** My granddaughter plays this awesome sport and I can promise you if this happened in a game her team was in, their coach would have taken them off the field -- never to return to this park or this tournament. Someone had to be at fault

**JR** I've been around this game for 15 years and my daughter is a softball player and has a full ride. Now a days, the kids that are coming up have the worst attitudes and the parents have so much to do with it. Change the parents and the kids will follow.

**Sean** Arrested if they physically assaulted them. No question.

**Johnny R** They should have ejected the coaches first, then the parents. They should have forfeited any game played from that point on or been kicked out of the tournament in general.
Jimmy R ASA Fastpitch rules "used" to state any "striking of an Umpire" bans the offender from ever playing in that organization again.

Rick This is why you have parents and coaches sign contracts for your organization. By holding individuals responsible, you let everybody involved know that this type of behavior is not going to fly. If you choose to ignore the rule, you and your child will be held accountable. This coach, parent, and child would be off my team and a warning would go out to those who dare get them involved in any other organization. There is no place for this in youth sports and it is steadily becoming an epidemic.

Ken While I do not approve of that behavior in front of the kids, what's the rest of the story? I have witnessed umpires that intentionally call games unfairly for one reason or another. Maybe both parties need to be removed.

Tim There is never an acceptable reason to make physical contact with an umpire, unless it is in self-defense. This is a poor example for the girls. If I was the sanctioning body for this tournament, this coach would be banned from coaching or attending another game in this association for a minimum of a year and made to submit (at his cost) to completion of an anger management class as a pre-requisite to return. I would also send a letter to other sanctioning bodies alerting them to this misconduct. I would not punish his players; it's not their fault.

Betty They can only call what they see from where they stand not where the bleachers or lawn chairs are placed. Why should parents who don't know how to show good sportsmanship even get to stay around to watch the game be played. I have seen that it can be done in a very good way.

William I feel the parents should be given a choice: either they should be banned from the games or their girls should be taken off the team. It's sad for the girls, but there should be consequences.

Tammy S First the umpire has the right to "throw someone out of the park." That, for me, would be the first order of business. If it was really ugly, then yes, call the police. You know, we all get into the games, but come on people, let's show some maturity and responsibility. The kids will "listen" to our actions more than our words. Let's be the example we want to see in our kids.

Casey S If it was a "physical" attack as in hands on the umpire, all involved should be banned from the league, arrested, and the coach should never be allowed to coach again. I've been around ball all my life and my kids play ball. With this being said, do I get mad at umpires for bad calls? Yes, who doesn't! Would I EVER put my hands on one? HECK NO! The words "ASSULT CHARGES" come to mind and no one is worth that.
Gary Physical attack?? They should be arrested and prosecuted, just like they would ANYWHERE else if they acted this way.

David N Arrests made, team forfeits tournament and banned for one year.

JR Nothing will ever happen because of the money that's made from the tournament. They don't care about the girls or anybody else is about the money.

Johnny F Bad sportsmanship! End the game right away and leave, you don’t have to take that as an umpire.

Angela Seriously what is wrong with people??

Jeanelle There is not enough detail in this post for me to decide. I will say this: you don't punish children for the actions of their parents. Call 911 if people are laying hands on each other but the kids on that field didn't do a thing wrong.

Jennifer They should be ejected from the game.

Karen T Eject coaches and parents. If possibly there are 2 mature parents not involved they can coach kids for rest of game. Probably best to call the game immediately.

David S Ejecting is fine and a great tool as an umpire, but I’ve seen firsthand where an umpire makes the right call, the parent didn't like it and told the umpire about it, so the umpire ejects the parent. After the game the parent and his friends were waiting for the umpire in the parking lot. It is ridiculous and irresponsible to show your child that this is how you handle disagreements.

Casey Eject, no question

Bob S Every coach, fan and umpire needs to read the Matheny Manifesto. It's a great read.

Tina Zero tolerance in Australia

Mike H In Australia, much like Tina said, zero tolerance. Rule Book in Rule 5 sec 4 sets out the game is forfeited. The offending team staff is ejected as well and a fair amount of time is spent in the judiciary.

Thomas Police need to be called. Charges should be pressed. Perhaps even a life time ban for the family.

Joe D Teach the game and sportsmanship at that level. The trouble is they KEEP SCORE!!

Daniel Arrested, thrown in jail and banned from coaching or watching for life.
Sharon Ejection from the game, both coaches and parents

Dennis H This just goes to prove the statement" you can't fix stupid". One of the reasons I dislike coaching. There are many good reasons I like it, but this is a downer!

Karen C In Kentucky it's against the law and offenders would be arrested. Coaches should be banned for life from coaching. Parents should be barred from watching their children participate in any activity for one year, including school, non sport functions. Also, force the offending adults to be trained as officials and make them work some games for free. It's not as easy as it looks.

Kim They should have been ejected and the game forfeited. I feel so bad for these umpires. I don't always agree with their calls, but I would never treat them like that. They are human as well and make mistakes. They are there trying to make a living. I don't know about y'all but I make mistakes at my job. People are just so disrespectful these days.

Roy B Bar the parents from future games.

Troy Would have to hear both sides of the story, what was the physical contact? Was someone punched or did someone get poked with a finger in the chest? I don’t think any contact should occur, but I would want the whole story. It’s tough to make a conclusion on the information we have been given.

Kathy Ejected!

Karen The team and their lousy coaches should have been tossed!!!

Charles H In Oklahoma it’s a felony to touch an umpire regardless of who is in the wrong.

Charles G Should have been ejected and possibly banned from the park.

Michael The tournament or organizations director along with the offenders should be held accountable here. Perhaps the police should have been called. Good luck getting another umpire.

Aaron I would tell the coach to get some perspective. They are 10! There are no college recruiters watching. I can guarantee the girls affected would have moved on and just played the game- instead they probably mimicked their coach’s reaction and opinion. It kills me when I see this. I just want to go and knock some sense into the coach or parent. It's a game- treat it like one. Sheesh! Not rocket science.

Alvaro Depends on the situation, so far this year in our league this has not happened. Parents and coaches were warned prior to starting the season, that a loss of control of behavior over
decisions made by umpires on the field would not be tolerated. Parents would be escorted out of the tournament complex; a second offense would ban you for the season. Managers would also be held liable for the action of the parents. Same goes for the coaches.

**Barbara** Yes, that behavior is appalling!! It is supposed to be fun for kids, not stressful because of their parents’ behavior!!!!!

**Dena** To get physical over a call is ridiculous. If my child was on that team I would take her aside and explain to her that is unacceptable and we are better than that. We would no longer be on that team. At the end of the day, it's just a game!

**Rodney A** Whatever happened to teaching our young people to play with class and sportsmanship? This game is meant to be played for the love of it. If we can't teach our kids how to overcome adversity on the field, then we shouldn't be allowed in any ball park in America.

**Stephen** Arrested

**Jacy** Authorities should be called and they should be escorted off the field.

**Samantha** Ban them for sure.

**Vicki** I agree with most everyone, but may go farther as to ban the parents of that team from attending games in that league for the rest of the year!

**Rodney W** Ejected from park!!

**Linda** Bad attitudes equals no play for the kids. The parents and coach should be asked to leave.

**Stephanie** I know some neighborhoods are rougher than others, but I am not sure what the purpose of that is. Because the umpire is making bad calls and you don't like it? Clearly the adults involved are out of line and should be banned for the rest of the season. In some parts of the country, they would be pulled into court, fined, and sued. I would never want my daughters playing on a team that would behave in such a way, and I wouldn't want to play against them either. I would propose a ban for the season, so no one else gets any stupid ideas that that behavior is even remotely acceptable.

**Ron O** Those involved should be prosecuted for assault and banned from any activities for the organization.

**Joe N** You are too vague, and it sounds like a RIOT. Regardless, physical attack should be addressed appropriately. Ejection, suspension, police contact, et.al. I would not want my daughter to ever see an incident like that.
Marie Holy moly! Police should have been called and those involved escorted off the fields and banned from future tournament play.
Question #8

What are the downsides, if any, to a girl playing up an age group in fastpitch softball?

**Ari** None if she can handle it. If she is ready and has the ability to be there, then there are no downsides. I have almost always played up.

**Brittany** I always played up and loved it. As long as it's a good competitive fit, it’s fine.

**Keith** No downside if the talent is there. We had a 9 year old playing 12U last season and she is doing a great job!

**Jeff** It depends on talent and if the PLAYER wants to. Don't force her. As an umpire, we see too many good players move up to early and become discouraged. Let them progress at their own pace.

**Susan** I agree with the above comments. I have an 11 year old on a 14U team because she has been with this group of girls for 6 years now. She learns more by playing with them. Plus she is a very quick and talented player. We asked her too and she said she didn't want to play 12U, so we tried 14U and she handles her own very well.

**Renee** The only downside is she will not have as much in common with the girls she is playing with. A 14 year old and a 17 year old should not be doing the same stuff.

**Jodi** Honestly as a travel and high school coach, unless she's head and shoulders above everyone else keep her in her age group. Let her succeed and develop. When she dominates then, talk about moving up.

**Jamie** My daughter was 10 last year and picked up with her sisters 16U team. She got 10 at bats got only 3 hits, but put the ball in play every at bat. I wouldn't let her stay at that level but it did wonders for her confidence! If they can handle it go for it!

**Warren** Keep them down and build self confidence, in most cases. There are some exceptions out there.

**Kevin** If it is a good team with a great coach, she can learn so much. Don't play up on a bad team just to say she did.

**Kym** Mine just turned 8 and plays 10U. She loves it and performs well.
**Victor** My daughter plays up in every sport she plays (softball, soccer, and volleyball). She excels and her confidence is off the charts.

**Angela** My 11 year old played up last year. The girl just can't play down.

**Paula** My daughter plays up. She is 9 and playing 12U. She was playing 10U, but is doing so much better at the 12U level. It also has to do with the quality of coaches. Her new coaches saw what she is capable of doing and take time to coach her. Really glad we swapped her!!!!!

**John D** What about bonding? Isn't that important anymore?

**Paula** Bonding? As far as older girls not accepting younger?

**John D** Yes, Paula.

**Paula** Actually my daughter has bonded better with this team. It all depends on the girls and their parents.

**Angela** My 11 year old plays up because the pitching is faster and she hits the balls better.

**Shane** I have a now 14 year old playing in 18U. She has always played up. The previous comment about maturity levels is correct, in her case off the field. On the field, she can play with anyone, anytime, anywhere.

**Keith H** My daughter played up all the time and made lifelong friends. They looked out for her and taught her a lot.

**Mark M** What I ran into with my daughter by skipping 16U and playing with 18U is the team ages out. Either you have to find another team or hope the current team rebuilds with skilled players

**Kerry** My daughter almost always played up. She skipped 16U altogether and went from 14U to an elite 18U team.

**Christopher** If she can handle it and will get enough playing time to continue developing, do it.

**Ari** My daughter is 8 years old and this last Friday she played with a 14U team against an 18U team (city league). She was so happy playing, she was stealing bases and all the girls were nice to her.

**Ryan** Base the team on her talent and not age. If you can't tell a difference in skill level/playing time, then it's a good fit. If she is a Division 1 prospect and softball is her passion, do it!

**Jill** None
Scott If she can play at the highest level she will be on the college radar sooner.

Kent She has to be ready for it skill wise, catching, throwing, and hitting. You don't want to get her discouraged or hold her back. Judge by the teams you have faced, not the one she has been on. How does she do against better teams etc. Good luck.

Kelly Mine played up most of her life and ended up playing 16U for 3 years before moving to 18U! There is nowhere to go if you are 14-15-16. Play 18U already!

Jeremy In my opinion, not much of anything is bad or negative about playing up. Typically she will be playing with better and more talented players. Also, it will be a faster-paced game. Keep in mind, experience is the best learning tool.

Lorie Our 11 year old has played up since she was 8. Initially, she played up because we wanted both our girls on the same team. Now, it's because both of our girls compete better. They know they have to be able to keep up with the faster level of play. I’m happy to say they both excel when they feel challenged.

Don The downside would be that she could get very discouraged if she can’t hit the faster pitch, and can’t field or throw the ball as far or as fast as the older girls. If she can keep up, it’s a great experience. If not, it could be devastating. Sometimes staying in your own age range and playing is better than sitting on the bench in an upper age bracket. At least she would play in her own age group.

Kurtis Well, it all depends on the age. From speaking with quite a few coaches, 14U and 16U get looked at the most recruiting wise. If they are on a top 18U team, the chances are the majority of the girls have given a verbal commitment, thus it reasons not as many college coaches will be watching. I believe girls should play up if they have the skill and are mature enough to handle the challenge.

Anthony There is no downside to it. If the kid can handle it let them. Mine has played up every year. It only makes them better.

Andy We see teams "playing up" this time of year and it can be difficult for a team that is dominant at 12U to get hammered by 14U teams. I'm not sure it's a positive experience for them. I guess it depends on the coach and how they handle it.

Lisa My 13 year old plays on 17U. She is not treated any differently by the girls. If anything, they respect her talent and that she plays as well, if not better than, most on her team.
Question #9

“I have a question on a play I’ve never seen happen before and wanted to get your take on the umpire’s decision. This was a college game that occurred last night.

Here’s what happened:

Bases were loaded, 1 out. Batter hits fly ball to center field, which would have been out number 2. Runner on third base was tagging up, but left early. The center fielder throws it home to try and get girl out, but she is called safe. The catcher then tries to throw the runner who was tagging up from first out at second. The second baseman misses ball and runners on second and third score. We appeal tag at third and the umpire calls her out, but the home plate umpire says the two runs score since the play was still in progress after the early tag. Is that the correct call?”

Scott Absolutely not. If the center fielder caught the ball and the runner advances off of 3rd base illegally and is called out, that’s the inning. You know this brings up a problem with this I’ve always had. Why didn’t the umpire just make the call when she left early, just like they do when a runner is coming off the bag early on a pitch? If she leaves early, the ump calls her out. I'm an old man, been around the game a long time and have never understood this appeal play.

Shannon I would have thought the second out was made by the CF catching the ball and the third out was made by the girl leaving early. The rest of the actions are canceled.

Ron It is correct. The preceding runner rule does not apply since the runner at third was the 2nd out. She is not officially out until the appeal is ruled; therefore, play was still in progress. Had she been the third out then the runs would not have counted.

Dennis H Correct call, I believe - check the rule book. The appeal didn't happen until after the rest of the play was finished. I would read the NCAA rule book to be sure, but I do believe it is the correct call. It doesn't matter what we think is correct, it's what the rule book and case book states.

Dennis L As soon as the runner who left third early was tagged, she was out. It doesn’t matter if she touched home or not. She never returned to legally leave the base. Inning over.
**Dennis H** I’m not buying this explanation, Ron. The umpire will never announce a player leaving early from a tag up situation. The runner can score if she leaves early and no appeal is made. That run would count. It's maybe the umpire’s job to watch for runner leaving early, but defensive team has to make the live appeal, i.e. throw to the base or the dead ball appeal. No way will or should an umpire ever call a tagging up player leaving early out unless defense makes the appeal play.

**Dennis L** Home plate umpire has the call of catch or no catch AND the tag up on third. Therefore the home plate umpire knows the runner cannot score until she tags up. If she was never tagged, she was out the minute she left the field of play. She cannot be called safe if she left early.

**Dennis H** Maybe we all need to read the rule book again. I will too, but I'm with Bryan on this from my memory of the rules, which is why the timing of the appeal is critical to the outcome. Had at anytime during the live play the ball would have been thrown to 3rd base and the base been touched, that would have been the point of number of runs scored stopped. If it was appealed during a dead ball, every run before the appeal is counted. I will definitely look this up and if I'm wrong will readily admit it!!!!

**Dennis H** I’m still not buying this explanation, Ron. An umpire will never announce a player leaving early from a tag up situation. Example: runner on 2nd base, fly ball to the outfield, the runner never tags up, the run scores. For some reason, no appeal made. Should the umpire call him out? I don't think so!!

**Ron** In this situation, the girl leaving 3rd is not automatically out. It must be appealed or a tag/force applied. If the umpire saw her leave early and she was tagged at home then the player from 3rd is out regardless if she safely touches home because she needed to go back and touch 3rd base first. The Umpire should be aware of it and announce it as soon as the tag or force is made. If they did not tag her, then play continues and runners can advance at their own risk. As soon as the player from 2nd occupies 3rd and the play is dead, another out would occur since the runner from third never retouched and two players cannot occupy the same base (ghost player due to improper tag-up) or due to the fact that the player from 3rd has left the field of play. If the runner from 2nd passes third base this would be another way to charge this out as that runner would have technically passed a runner (ghost player on 3rd) in front of her. Anyway you look at this, even without appeal, the 3rd out was recorded before any runs could have been scored. A protest should be filed based upon the information provided in the original question.

**Dennis H** My understanding is the runner at third would have been the 3rd out, but I still believe the correct call was made. But if she was tagged sliding home, even if safe at home, is the
situation different? Mr. Leek you have added another element to the discussion. What if she was never tagged? The umpires didn't miss the call, they called the out when it was appealed as they should have. The question is whether the runs count or not. It didn't say in the article whether this is a dead ball or live ball appeal.

Jeff It is my understanding the original 3rd base runner is considered a force out and all plays after the illegal tag-up are nullified

Jim The umpires made the correct call!

Scott S In this case the first run does not count but any subsequent runs before the appeal do count. The umpire is correct; if the runners from first and second score before the appeal occurs, then both runs count.

Jerry It's the correct call guys. If you think about it then it'll make sense to you as well. Just say for instance a ball hit in fair territory becomes lodged under the fence. What should fielder do? He should raise his hand and umpires will rule it a ground rule double; however, if they go for the ball then it is considered live and all runners can continue to advance. There is no going back to the dead ball play. Tagging up early is perfectly legal if the defense doesn't appeal or throw to the base that they left from. If it was clear she left early, why would you continue to play and not just call time and appeal the play immediately or have thrown the ball to third for the last out and no runs scored.

Kerry The catch is out number 2, the appeal at 3rd should be the 3rd out, so no runs score. The runners were not forced to advance, they advanced on their own.

Sammy Yes it is, it is called the invisible man. We just had a debate about this at our umpire meeting.

Dale Calling the girl out at third because she left early should void everything else. Once he makes that call, the play after that is dead. Bad call.

Bryan Correct Call - 1) Tag-Up Appeals are considered a time play, not a force-out. If the appeal is the third out, all runs scored by runners in advance of the appealed runner and scored before the legal appeal would count. - That is the rule.

Bo Correct call. The inning ended when the appeal was made at 3rd, not when she left early. Her run does not count, but the others do since they scored before the 3rd out was made. It doesn't seem fair, but it follows the rule.

Shannon Safe.
**Rabbit** All these guys must have called my games. They don't agree on anything. Just joking. Great bunch of guys.

**Butch** Yes that is correct call, better known to us umpires as (timing play).

**David** I agree with Dennis, the umpire cannot make a call because the runner is assumed to have touched the base until an appeal is made by player or coach. Then the umpire can rule the runner at third out.

**Johnny** No It's not, the third out would supersede any other runs from scoring. That would be like the runner passing the other girl in the base path and scoring before her. It’s still an out! The other coach can appeal before the next pitch, then everyone would have to go back to their original spots from when the fly ball was hit.

**John M** The runner at third cannot score due to that run being the one in question which would be the first appeal. If you appeal 2nd base or another base before third base the runs all count.

**Tom** This is the correct call. The appeal out is a time play. You can actually appeal that call immediately. For instance, a catcher can call for that appeal while the play is going on. You don't have to wait for a dead ball to appeal it. The out would then be recorded, thus the runs wouldn't score. If you wait until after, the runs would count. Doesn't seem fair but it is right.

**Kevin** 3 outs inning over no runs scored.

**Dale** Yes

**Samantha** I go with Kerry, he is the senior umpire in my district.

**Joe** The runner on third would have been the 3rd out. The two runners that scored were behind her, there's no way the runs count. What was the final score? That would be a protest-able call.

**Vicki** Girl at 3rd out, umpires should not consider what happened after that since they missed the call. The runners on 1st and 2nd would not have advanced!

**Mike** Terrible call.

**Samantha** Now that I re-read that, I am confused. Did they throw the ball to third to get her out?

**Chris** I agree with Jason. The lead runner left illegally which is out number 3.

**Jacy** If she left early from 3rd, then that runner should be out. Her run shouldn't count even though she was called safe. It should be out #3. What's the correct answer here?
**Kelvin**  Next time after the catch, throw the ball to third and step on the base. The runner that left early is out. This just happened to our team in a tournament over the weekend.

**Jason**  Wrong no run scores because she was the lead runner and the third out.

**Chris**  It seems this may be one of those times where you should risk letting that one runner advance to second (no throw, which would have negated the two runs scored), in hopes of getting the proper call on the runner who left early. At least play gets stopped that way at whatever might be the most "opportune" time.

**Jennifer**  So basically they just should have appealed the tag at 3rd to begin with. I would say none of the runs should count.
Question #10

“Illegal pitches -- what are the consequences? High school ball. Our pitcher had like 4-5 illegal pitches in a row yesterday, and each time, he advanced the runner, even if it wasn't Ball 4. This caused runs to come in. Did he blow it? We lost the game by 1.”

**John K** This is a problem as old as the game, as well as who interprets the rule. I believe the punishment is too severe with runners moving up a base. Calling a ball should suffice. I believe at certain levels or age groups they allow it because some girls are developing and they are more lenient.

**Roger** The penalty for an illegal pitch is a ball count on the batter and if there's a base runner(s) on then they advance one base.

**Rikki** Thanks. I found articles that said that they DO advance, and I saw some that said they don't. Where do I find the actual rules that high school ball follow? It would be a good thing to have on hand!

**Jennifer** An illegal pitch advances any runner on base by one base and is a ball on the batter. That's the rules!

**Bill L** The most common are leaping, crow hop or replanting the pivot foot, double touch, and quick pitch. There is no specific language in the high school rule book about "presenting". The hands must be separated when the pitcher steps on the rubber.

**Rikki** Our illegal pitches were for finger licking and presentation.

**Vicki** Unfortunately it depends on how the umpire interprets the rules and what league you are playing in. I've seen it called many different ways!

**Chandra** Feet not on the rubber is when I see the most called. I have had "not presenting the ball prior to the pitch" as well but it's usually the feet.

**Robert V** John, I'm an umpire in Southern California, a hot bed for softball. I call illegal pitches without hesitation if they happen. Also the situation this status is talking about is high school level. If they don't have the ability to correct themselves it's not our problem. We're there to officiate, not coach.

**Bryan** An illegal pitch gives the batter a ball and advances the base runners 1 base for each offense.
**Brad** In my opinion, some of the problem is that illegal pitches are seldom called in 10U and 12U, so a pitcher never knows what it is she is doing wrong, or even that she is doing something wrong. I believe an umpire that doesn’t call illegal pitches is actually doing a disservice to pitchers. As a coach, any time I see a pitcher with an illegal movement I bring it up to the umpire. Most often I will be told the violation is "not that bad", but the muscle memory is being forged stronger with each pitch. Additionally, if a pitcher’s 6 inch replant is not that bad, does my base runner only need to be within 6 inches of the base to be safe?

**Shannon** There is a diplomatic way of handling this situation. I'm an umpire of 5 years and counting. I officiate over 300 games a year and I wouldn't have drawn all of that attention on myself like that. I would've gone to the coach between innings and explained that if it wasn't corrected or improving then I would call the illegal pitches. Never have I called an illegal pitch to give a team a run, let the kids earn it. What an arrogant umpire you had. He over officiated your game and that’s unfortunate for your team.

**Dennis** Just read the rules and follow them. The umpire’s job is to call the illegal pitch and explain it to the coach if the coach asks - that's it. From there it is up to the coach and pitcher to fix it. High school pitching rules are different than ASA and NCAA. Read them and you will be able to coach your pitchers properly!!

**Marc** Right call.

**Tony** I have pitched Men’s Fastpitch leagues for many years and ultimately dislike when opposing coaches are permitted to disrupt the flow of the game when they are behind (calling the phantom illegal pitches). Not surprisingly, when they are in ahead, you don’t hear a peep! I can deal with this, but do feel for the juniors learning this skill as it's a poor choice of tactic sometimes employed at many levels of the game.

**Dillon** The ump didn't blow it, the pitcher did! He made the right call.

**Jeff** We had a situation last year where we notified by an umpire that a team’s pitcher was crow hopping and we won. When we played this team the next time, they tried to get our pitchers pitches called as illegal even though she was doing everything right. The umpire then caught their pitcher crow hopping again. We won. Again.

**Vicki** Chandra, check rules. In college, both feet must be on the rubber. I've seen ASA let them use 1 foot, but nowhere else. It’s a bad habit!
**Rusty** I saw that happen in the Alabama/Florida softball game this past Saturday. Not the same outcome, but the sportscasters were talking about the severity of an illegal pitch. Hate that for your pitcher.

**Rikki** Naturally because her illegal pitches brought in 3 runs and we only lost by 1, she took it really personally. If he had issued a warning or explanation with the 1st illegal pitch, the repeat illegal pitches wouldn't have happened. They definitely affected the outcome of the game.

**Johnny R** Rikki, next time tell her if she licks her finger to wipe them before she goes to pitch; however, she can lick her fingers and then rub the ball with both hands before she steps on the rubber. If she wipes the sweat off her face, she must dry her hand prior to stepping on the rubber as well.

**Mike B** Focus on the reason an illegal pitch is called. The umpire was correct in both the ruling and the penalty. Personally I like to call it early, first inning or relief pitcher. I will make the call and the award then ask the coach/ manager to come out to the circle and explain what I saw. The number of times I call it depends on the level of play. High School Varsity, early in the season, most likely once for each infraction, foreign substance, leaping, replant etc. Later in the season, every illegal pitch.

**Rikki** The fact that you take the time to explain is so important. I wish everyone did it like that.

**Jerry** Certain things, if part of normal motion, is not an illegal pitch. Yes, you do have certain umpires that will look to favor another team and that is sad.

**Bill L** One other issue, is the illegal pitch infraction VERY obvious? The base umpire has several things to watch for in addition to the pitcher’s feet. If the umpire has to focus attention to illegal pitches, it is likely he/ she is missing 2 or 3 other things, like the runner leaving early, batter checks her swing, catcher catching 3rd strike etc.

**Rikki** I think what truly bothered me is that she appeared to make the same mistake - that's just her motion, her flow, that's never been corrected - but he only really called it when the other school was in a position to score. Conspiracy theory, you know.

**Bill L** Rikki, Google National Federation of High School sports. There should be a site for obtaining a high school rule book.

**Randy** Rikki, I'm in Southern California and have had the privilege to coach from minors to seniors and on a travel ball team. In all my years I have never had an ump fail to give an explanation of the illegal pitch, usually it was between batters and/or between innings. What
happened to your player in that game I feel was a disservice. While I understand it is not the umpires job to coach, I would hope he/she loved the sport enough to teach these young athletes.

**Rikki** I agree. She knows now, though!

**Roger H** Rikki, I have seen that call at a state playoff game and the official called the same in the state of Alabama. Not sure as to reasoning of the call or rule, but I have seen it firsthand.

**Taryn** I am a pitcher and I play all around the nation, and I think what the blue did was exactly correct. He was implementing a rule, that's his job. It is the pitchers responsibility to correct herself after an illegal pitch.

**Rikki** I just didn't know the rule - that's why I asked. Now I do! Thanks!

**Shannon** ASA rule is a ball on the batter and all base runners advance 1 base after an illegal pitch.

**Katrina** In Australia, a ball is called on the batter. I’ve never seen an umpire give a base to runners. I agree that it should be clarified to the coach, then up to the pitcher to adjust accordingly.

**Johnny R** The rule was implemented so that pitching mechanics would alleviate illegal pitches. You need to talk to the pitching coach, but the umpire should've explained it to you and to the pitcher exactly what she is doing wrong on the first infraction.

**Rikki** Johnny, that's my issue. If he had issued a warning or explanation with each of the 1st illegal pitch, the repeat illegal pitches wouldn't have happened. They definitely affected the outcome of the game.

**Johnny F** You know he won’t get any more games with that school. Instead of correcting her, he penalized her. His call caused the outcome of the game which is totally wrong.

**Steve** I hate the rule as it relates to pitchers hopping or leaping. There is zero advantaged gained if the leap does not result in a landing and re-drive from that new point. In fact, it actually decreases pitcher's velocity. I have seen umpires not call it if the toe is pointed to ground, attempting to maintain contact. When toe is up or bottom of foot parallel with ground, I have seen it called more often. I wish this rule would be amended so it only gets called if she is planting and re-driving. I also agree with others above. Because it is currently the rule, pitchers/coaches should be correcting the bad mechanics in the early stages.

**Bill** Many pitchers who throw illegal pitches could be just as effective if they threw legally. They bring it upon themselves.
Karen Pitchers should have been switched in my opinion.

Russell Each umpire has their own interpretation.

Jerry The players in high school should know the rule. It is up to the player and her coach to explain and why would or should the umpire give a warning of an illegal pitch? You get warnings in 10U/12U ball, not high school. Not sure why the umpire would be to blame. If she allowed 3 runs to come in because of illegal pitches, that again is on her and her coach, PERIOD!!

Rikki You would think they would know the rules, but her licking her fingers then touching the ball has never been brought up before - and it's something she recently started doing ... now she knows, but there was no way to know before the IP calls.

Bill L Rikki, I would question why, if the rule was not known/understood, did the coach not ask the umpire? The umpire assumes the rules are known

Rikki I agree.

Randy I also remember a couple years ago watching college games the umps were calling illegal pitches left and right! Me and my wife couldn't believe it because it was new, the previous seasons we didn't hear a thing! Then that one season they went nuts. So far the last couple of seasons haven't seen or heard much about it in college games.

Rikki Thanks, all. It was actually my question, and I appreciate the responses. In the first inning, illegal pitches were called twice because she licked her hand then touched the ball - supposed to wipe it on her pants first. No warning, no explanation. Coach corrected her when she realized what happened. Both times, the pitch was a ball and the runners advanced, which gave them a run. Second inning, illegal pitch was called twice because she didn't touch her glove somehow - he didn't agree with her presentation. She actually did this several times, but he only called it twice -- and only when there was a runner on 3rd, so 2 runs scored there. No warning, no explanation. Pitcher did ask him after the 2nd illegal pitch was called what exactly was acceptable since she had never had illegal pitch calls before. No issues after that. While researching, I found articles that supported both ways - that runners DO and DO NOT advance - which is why I thought I would come to the experts! Thanks. A good lesson for pitchers to learn.

Randy B I'm with you Jimmy! I played about 30 years also never had it called. But the Nations, would call it in some of the first round games. Then you never saw it called much after that.

Randy T I agree with Bill L. I also believe some girls get so amped up they don't realize their foot is off the ground. But if she is a repeat offender then I put blame on her pitching coach for
not correcting the problem! I also blame her high school or club ball coach for not catching it as well.

**Rikki** She is not a repeat offender. This is the first time she's ever had illegal pitch called on her in her 5 years of pitching.

**Mike W** My daughter plays 14U ASA and most umpires continue to warn over and over again about illegal pitch, but very few ever call it. What’s the point in having a rule if it’s not going to be enforced?

**Kristie** I believe in Texas for 2014 (TASO HS Championship rules) they have changed the rule. An illegal pitch will only result in a ball to the batter. Also, a pitcher is allowed to step back with their drag foot before pushing off the rubber.

**Bill L** It's a good idea for a coach to bring illegal pitches to the umpires’ attention, nicely. They will watch a little closer.
Question #11

"What kind of at home exercising would you recommend for an 11 year old pitcher to build arm strength? I don't want to build her and lose her mobility but would like to build some forearm/wrist strength"

**Crystle** If you are looking to increase spin, fill a 5 gallon bucket with rice and have her dig to the bottom with just her fingers. Great activity while studying or watching TV. If you are thinking arm strength will help with speed, then my best advice would be to read up on pitching mechanics. The last thing you want your pitcher to do is muscle the ball. Long, loose, and relaxed with a good arm whip will give you the speed. Unless a girl is taking steroids, she will NEVER bulk up like a man. They do not carry enough testosterone to make it possible. The idea that injuries will occur if they lift before they mature is a myth. There are only 6 documented injuries in medical literature relating to weight lifting and none were proven to be because of the lifting, it was more due to improper technique. I will say again, proper mechanics will contribute more than any workout.

**Misty** The Jennie Finch windmill.

**Rachel** Stay away from weights - she is way too young. The only "weights" should be grippers and/or anything less than 5 pounds, performing wrist/forearm rotations. However, the best thing that helped me was the Spintech Tight Spin Trainer (http://fastpitch.tv/tightspin1). You can adjust the tension and it really helps build spin. You need fast wrist action and this helps build that. At her age, the strength will start to build naturally with practice.

**Renee** In addition to her normal pitching routine and conditioning at practice, I would start her on a rotator cuff band program: simple dumbbell wrist curls with one or two pound weights both forward and backward. That way you are conditioning the muscles around the shoulder which will help prevent injuries in the long run and keep her from gaining too much muscle mass too soon. I am a current pitching coach and former DII pitcher.

**Samantha** I have been told not to worry about arm strength, but worry more about the legs because you want them to be able to push off the rubber hard with those legs.

**Mark** Specialized strength training for athletes of this age is unnecessary. They need to be doing body weight training, calisthenics, gymnastics, light bounds and jumping as well as a ton of mobility work. Specialized training to build arm strength should come after a solid base of fitness is built in my opinion.
Caveo I pitched for over ten years. You don't lose your mobility by working out. My pitching coach who pitched on the Canadian Olympic team always had me lift weights. You just do it for lean muscle, not bulk. In order to be a great pitcher you must be strong in general, with emphasis on the legs and core. Don't forget becoming mentally strong as well!

Robert A pitcher should never lift weights where she is pushing weight away from her body. Stretch bands where she is pulling toward her body are good. Planks and knee drills where she pitches while kneeling are useful to building strength. The kneeling drills will take the body out the pitch and forces her to just use her arm, which will help build arm strength and speed. I learned this from Dr. Sherry Werner. She's a pitching instructor and has a PhD in sports medicine and studies softball bio mechanics.

Bill The Finch Windmill. It is amazing.

Jim My daughter Lark is 11 and we are now in week 4 of building strength in the smaller muscles(labrum and rotator cuff) and I have totally shut her down from throwing. My sister in law is an awesome PT who gave me some great things to do that are out-of-the-box exercises and we have seen some great results.

Kimberly The bands are perfect for this. They come in various sizes of resistance so you can build her up slowly. Just secure it under her foot and roll with just the wrist first then from the elbow. The bands are available at any sporting goods store and recommended by trainers and physical therapists.

John I also have a 12U pitcher and coach a competitive team. I believe she is too young for actual weight training at 11, all you will do is burn her out. Girls shouldn’t lift weights until they have matured. She will grow stronger as she gets older if she has a good foundation/mechanics. Then I would focus on core and leg strength/balance and driving off of the rubber. The rest will fall into place.

Dennis Agree with Mark!!! There are so many body weight exercises that will help her overall body strength, and that’s what is best for her at this age. As she gets older she can start with appropriate weight exercises. I also agree with the band pulls.

Jerry Planking is best for your core and great for softball pitchers according to the experts.

Katie Use bands....DO NOT USE A WEIGHTED BALL!! A weighted ball ended my pitching career my first year of college. They're also responsible for ending some of my friend's careers.

Brad Backstroke in the pool!
**Michael** No one has addressed technique! She is only 12 and strength will come in time, it is technique that separates a good player from a great player. I know Fastpitch.tv has many drills and technique videos available for free. Like the old saying goes, does not matter how much steroids you take, you still need to know how to put the bat on the ball.

**Marc** Weighted ball, but it must be used with care. Do this heavy and light weight program 3 days per week for 6 weeks with the heavy ball, and then 6 weeks with the light ball. Perform 50 w/ regular ball at 70 % warm up, 30 w/ heavy at 100% and 10 w/ regular ball at 100%. After 6 weeks do the same but now with a lighter ball. Within 4 weeks, her speed will increase. My daughter played for Angelo State and was ranked 18th in the nation in wins, with 176 strike outs and was voted all conference pitcher of the year. Her championship ring is on my wall.

**Robert K** I'm a 14U coach and my daughter is a pitcher. We use weighted balls and squeeze grips.

**Dave** Upper body is about maintaining technique in a fluid motion. The strength comes from the legs. A good flexibility routine would do her good as well. Good luck!

**Bill D** Long toss. Builds legs, arms, and stresses correct mechanics.

**Ann Marie** Squats and lifts

**Steven** Core and leg work is what I do with my 10yr old. Build the foundation first and then add some band work

**Richard** Bucket of rice

**Marcy** My 13 year old pitcher has a simple daily workout routine. Wrist curls with weights, pushups, crunches, squats, lunges, chair sits, chair dips, and jumping jacks. She is able to do all this in about 20 minutes.

**Steve** Avoid weights! Long toss will help build arm strength as long as proper mechanics are used at all times. Be sure she is using her whole body and moving into the throw so she does not try to muscle it the entire distance (which can lead to injuries).

**Myles** Build the rotator cuff muscles, more pull, less push. Keep mobility with plenty of stretching. Over developed chest muscles lead to poor posture in pitchers, which can cause problems.

**Connie** They use to tell me more reps, not more weight.
**Matt** My daughter uses stretch bands one end closed in door or tied in basement and does arm pulls. Foam softball and does wrist flips in house against basement wall or technically any wall.

**Mark** Wrist/forearm curls....lunges...squats

**Allen** Any type of rolling motion with a light dumb bell works the forearm. Reverse dumb bell curls are good too.

**Rick** Wow thanks everyone. She's got great mechanics and takes lessons. Lots of great ideas here. My biggest fear was "bulking" her and keeping her long and lean to keep that arm whip/speed. Her biggest weakness which is probably most girls that age (I'd guess) is wrist and forearm strength. She has a good mound push and leap.

**Eddie** Build the core from legs up. Simple weight at end of rope builds wrist and forearm. Rather have a limber arm and a strong core if she is going to pitch full time.
Question # 12

“How often should my daughter practice pitching? We have been practicing daily for 1/2 hour, and take the day off prior to a game.”

**Renee** It depends on age and number of pitches. I practiced 1.5 hours a day, 6 days a week.

**Joe** Every day, at least 45 minutes. Take a day off before a tournament. It is ok to miss an extra day once in a while too just to rest your body. Remember that it still needs to be a fun thing as well as hard at times. When it gets hard you get through it with will power. Remind your daughter that it’s the HARD that makes it GREAT.

**Shane** Every other day

**Steve** Constructive practice and video for her to review with a check list 4 times a week.

**Holli** 1 hour, u3 days a week. The other days she has team practice (2hrs twice a week) and pitching/hitting lessons (once a week). Mondays are her free day. We do softball 6 days a week

**Emily** I pitch 3 days a week (Monday, Wednesday, Friday) just doing drills for an hour. Don't forget to ice your arm!!

**Donnie** We didn’t have a clock on it, but it averaged 22-24 minutes a day. What we focused on was perfect pitches, perfect placement, if we didn’t get it, we would keep working till we did. But there were days when it wasn’t there - so we moved on and worked on other stuff.

**Monica** Since I'm a cleanup pitcher (I'm a fast pitcher) I practice 2 hours every day  I love pitching, but I've hurt my shoulder 3 times.

**Jeffrey** Two hours a day is too much!

**Issac** My daughter's pitching coach says that she can get away with "pitching" once a week but she must do her drills 5 days a week. We take 1 day off per week. Games count as doing drills. She is 11 and this is her 2nd season pitching.

**Kelly** At least 5 days a week, for at least 1 hour. This will help especially if she is pitching many games. She will need it!

**Dale** I agree with both Todd's 4 days in season & take the day off before she's scheduled to pitch.

**Todd** 4 days in season, 2-3 days in the offseason.
**Iesha** I think that's a good rate, my daughter plays other sports as well so she takes off a little more now.

**Todd** 2-3 days a week, day off before tournament

**Sydnee** Sounds about right!
Question #13

“Does hitting weighted balls before a game throw your timing off? Should they be used in fastpitch at all?”

Greg What's the difference? Whether it's a weighted ball, a softball, or baseball, it's all about timing and seeing the ball. The weighted ball helps improve power with the swing and follow through.

Rachelle Does it mess up their bats? I always worry about that.

Lisa See the ball. Hit the ball. The weight plays no part in hitting the ball.

Kemp I agree with Greg. They are a tool that produce obvious results with some hitters. There is no question for me that they have their place.

David Don't swing weighted bats before an at bat. It will make the bat speed slower!

Russell My daughter says it helps her to explode through the ball during the game.

Joe They do help with strength & driving through the ball. As far as bat damage is concerned, you buy a throw-away bat (a cheap bat with the same weight & length) to use with the weighted balls. That way your regular bat is used only in games or with real balls.

David Weighted anything before a game is not productive at all. It will slow you down. It’s been proven.

Trisha Our girls use them before games because it helps them power through the ball. We don't play much of a short game and have had many opposing coaches compliment how well we hit the ball.

Eric I will vouch for the fact that they do mess up 2 piece bats. I’m sure they can’t be good with some other bats as well, which is why we are careful on which bats we use. But I do LOVE them for training.

Aaron We use a Thunderstick.

Myles They get results for sure.

Bryan I agree it helps, but they can be hard on two piece bats

Bob We use them at practice and before games as a warm up. The girls say it helps power through with their swing.
Paul We use them to warm up with, except for our slappers. We don't let them hit them at all.

Emil Good to go with me. It gets them driving through the ball. We accompany those with some net side toss and drop ball drills for timing if no cages are available

Keith For training purposes yes, but before a game- not so sure on that one. Doing this may make a player tense.

Richard I agree! When my girls practice with weighted balls they just seem to help. When their timing is on, it’s on. Sometimes girls just go through a short spell when timing is off but it comes back with work.
Question #14

“How do I teach my player to stop dropping her shoulder when she bats?”

**Steve** Take a tee and put it behind the tee that she is hitting off of, but set it up at the height of a high strike. If she drops her shoulder, she will hit the tee behind her which will help her learn how to keep hands and shoulders from dropping. She needs to create positive muscle memory to correct it permanently.

**Melissa** The drill Steve talked about does work well. My daughter’s travel ball coach got her out of dropping her hands with this drill.

**Roy** Some hitters have a tendency to drop the head at the same time. See if she can hold her head still during the swing. This is just one reason it happens.

**Tim** Check and make sure she is not breaking down too far on the back leg while swinging. This will cause the back shoulder to drop. Another piece to watch is her back foot. If she over rotates it, then she is probably breaking her back leg down too far.

**Jon** What type of swing is she being taught? Rotational? When is she dropping her shoulder? It’s really hard to diagnose without a full knowledge of the player.

**John** Tell her to drop her front shoulder down

**Kirstin** Have the player hit off of the tee continually. Consistency is key!

**Yvonne** This is not a conventional answer, but I moved my daughter to the other side of the plate and had her bat an entire practice that way. It fixed the shoulder drop on her dominant side.

**Dazzlyn** Tim is correct! That is what I was doing, but I fixed my back leg and it fixed it!!

**Ron** Hit off of a flat 2×4 sitting on top of 2 old tees.

**Summer** Definitely use a tee behind to prevent it from happening!

**Patrick** Practice on the tee!!

**Gary** Remember the back shoulder is attached to the front shoulder.

**Christie** I do that and I don’t know why but I want to stop it! Can someone please help me??
**Alex** Don't learn to hit down on the ball. Look at some swings on YouTube. I think you'll see the hands and shoulder drop to follow the elbow into your side. The question to ask is when is this "dropping" happening? It shouldn't happen before the front foot heel is planted. If the dropping of the hands or shoulder happens before that, then you will lose power and probably be late due to bat lag issues.

**Jeffery** HIGH TEE! Set it up for a high strike. If she drops her hands or shoulder, she will hit the tee instead of the ball.
Question #15

"My daughter has a wicked arm but tends to side arm. What can she do to improve?"

Renee A true "overhand" motion requires the arm to be at a 45 degree angle. Throwing the ball completely over the top makes the ball sink. True sidearm throwing should be avoided at all costs. The side arm motion that the 3rd baseman uses requires the arm to be in the same 45 degree position but the fielder will bend at the waist giving the appearance of a side arm motion. The ball is the whipped through across the body by the back hip much like a swing of the bat.

Phillip Side arm isn't necessarily bad if she is accurate with it. Some people confuse a side arm throw with pulling the elbow in. As long as the elbow is up and away from the body, it should be ok. Pulling the elbow into the side can injure the shoulder or elbow by putting too much strain on the muscles and ligaments. If I see one of my girls pulling the elbow in and side arming during warm-ups and practice, I will stand close to their throwing side. This forces their arm up over the top because they do not want to hit their coach or parents.

Cyndi Mine does it too! I am curious about what can be done to help her improve as well!

Danielle I have thrown side arm my whole life. I am a high school player and nothing has happened. I have been known that I have an arm that can take somebody's head off and I am accurate.

John Have her stand with a fence or wall right behind her. She needs to be close enough that when she brings her arm back to throw properly, the ball will be touching the fence. From the position (with the ball touching the fence), have her step and throw. The trick is, the ball goes straight from touching the fence to the target – no extra moves. It helped me beat a side arm issue, but I have to do it almost every day to get rid of years of bad mechanics.

Becki A barbaric way (what I was told is done to high school baseball players who side arm) is making them throw with their throwing arm next to a chain link fence. This forces their arm higher, and injures the hand if they falter. I don't agree with this method, however. My daughter is a catcher and has a bad side arm habit. Private lessons with a college coach, t-drills, and rigorous throwing drills help her throw correctly. If we don't do them daily the old bad side arm comes back. It's muscle memory and the only way to fix it is rewrite the muscles memories.

Roberto Side arm throwing will eventually injure her arm. Going back to fundamentals will help improve her throw. They also sell a brace for the elbow (the Throw Max) that corrects side arm throwing.
I learned and taught my daughter the T drill, which forces the player to focus on keeping her elbow level to shoulder during follow through and ball to the wall with ball close to the ear. My daughter is a catcher and she has been throwing the ball hard and straight with this technique. She has been doing these since she was 8 years of age and to this day still warms up doing these drills.

**Dennis** Lots of guessing here without seeing any video of the player actually throwing. Don't even have a clue how old she is.

**Mia** Have her throw a volleyball overhand with lots of reps until it is muscle memory. As they get older, there are times they should throw sidearm when fielding a ball and making a play.

**Jimmy** Good question. My daughter throws overhand like she was taught when young and now I see the three quarter - side arm girls throw harder and farther. Maybe its size or genetics but I couldn't find many tutorials on this subject.

**Deborah** My daughter side arms & we were told it's okay. If you watch some of the college girls do it too.
Question #16

"My daughter is 11 years old and is a pitcher. I noticed during her lessons that she was holding her breath through her delivery and pitch. How important is exhaling as she releases?"

**Scott** Have her exhale as she releases, specifically as she snaps the throw. Here is why:

There is no scientific, chemical reason why you should be exhaling; it is all about the mechanics. When we exhale, it recruits the muscles of the core. The abdominals, the obliques, and the lower back muscles can all be involved in a vigorous exhale, the kind that is recommended during a strenuous movement. The reason this type of breath is recommended is simply for the recruitment of those muscles to support your spine during the exertion. Another factor is that when we are exerting it can increase the pressure inside your body. It is instinctive for people to hold their breath during an exertion because this further increases the internal pressure and therefore increases the muscular support during the movement. However, it is very easy to create too much pressure this way. So it is for this reason that we are advised to exhale on exertion.

**Martin** Grunting actually gives some good batters a chance to time the pitchers. I see it as a batter advantage.

**Maurice** When we exhale it relaxes our muscles; therefore, relaxed muscles create a faster reaction. The faster the reaction, the faster the pitch. Also it helps with arm, wrist and finger control

**Keith** Exhaling can give the feel of power through her pitch. It really doesn't make any difference or directly help the pitch. She should do whatever she is comfortable with and works for her. She just needs to relax and pitch her game!

**Zachary** She will gain more power and control if she explodes her breath leading up to her release.

**Ellen** My daughter holds her breath her entire at bat!

**Matt** My daughter did the same thing! Make her grunt on release, it works great.

**Jennifer** Our pitching coach says, it's important to exhale during the release.

**Lori** My daughter is 12 has pitched since age 9. Having two different pitching coaches with completely different styles has made it difficult at first, but had actually worked out for her because she found a way that works for her. She is the most successful pitcher on her team. Her
first coach taught her to grunt when releasing. It was very intimidating but she found it had little to no effect on the pitch. She was taught to use her legs to create speed. Her new coach had not made her breathing an issue because it will come naturally. Good athletes are always ready and willing to tweak little things to make things better, especially pitchers. If they are focused on their breathing/grunting, they’re probably not focusing on their technique, in my opinion.

**Janet** My daughter also holds her breath while pitching and batting. It gave her more explosion at the release when pitching and a more violent swing at the plate.

**Steve** Breathing is important.

**Rommel** Grunting does not give batters any advantage. If you’re a batter and you’re trying to time a pitch from a pitchers grunt instead from her release point, good luck! I know a freshman pitcher from University of Arizona that grunts loud and there are not many successful batter against her.

**Dennis** She's 11. I would be ensuring she is being taught properly and learning basic mechanics first. Every kid is different with breathing. As she gets older, more mature, and with more proper practice, she will establish a pattern that works for her! I wouldn’t worry about it.

**Jessica** Breathing is extremely important. Tell her not to hesitate when she releases - it will help her accuracy.

**Mike** Thanks everyone! You all have been very helpful!

**Brent** I like to hear exhalation. The explosion and grunt is awesome and intimidating and creates more power.
Question #17

“At what age should players be allowed to wear steel cleats and are there any advantages?”

Larissa Never.

Cheri I wish never. Our daughter suffered 27 stitches ripping up her shin from a high school player. They're made for high performance athletes and I’m still not convinced they're an advantage at all. The plastic versions can grab the dirt as well and still can cause injury, just less severe. Reinstate the ban.

Jeff Never.

Larissa Gut says no, but I have never worn steel before so I don't know the difference by experience.

John V Anyone know of any advantage besides the way they sound on concrete???

Eric B High school

Anthony 14U

Ken B Metals afford more grip, which is good when you want it for faster running or pitching or more powerful hitting. They could be bad when you might prefer your shoe to give before your knee or ankle does - ask Buster Posey.

Eric B They dig better into dirt, they are better in a pickle, they don't slide in the dirt as much, and it’s easier to plant your back foot for batting. Those are the only advantages I know.

Larissa Were they banned solely on how much damage they can cause?

John D Would you say it makes it easier to tear a knee or ankle up??

Chris G Never in softball

Stephen Funny John D, first time I took my 7 and 9 year olds to watch a showcase, that was their first question: "why do the their cleats make that noise".

Eric B Not really, the only bad thing about them is the fact they can be a weapon.

John H Love the noise, hate the shoe

Rick Never. My daughter broke her ankle when the metal cleat stuck in the dirt.
**Eric B** They are awesome in the outfield when on the run for a ball, very hard to slip and easy to stop quickly. They are also pretty good for pitchers because they help plant the foot a little deeper for some extra speed.

**Ali** I do feel they are helpful when pitching and for traction when running. In reality, if they just weren't allowed then it would be an even playing field because neither team would be able to use them. So why allow them?

**Eric B** You can shave them down so they aren't so long, whenever I get a new pair I go slide around the concrete for a couple hours to shorten them

**John D** So they kind of give an unfair advantage?

**Victor** Back to the original question: 14U is a good time to start "if" you are going to use them at all. At this age some of the sanctions allow for them to be used. My daughter is a pitcher and depending on the infield surface, she will make a determination on wearing them or her plastics.

**Eric B** It's an unfair but legal advantage. Kind of like the team with better bats than the other team I guess.

**Brannon** The biggest concern around metal cleats is sliding. With that said, I don't think there is a certain age but more so when they have actually learned and perfected their sliding technique. However, there are still risks even then.

**Eric B** I've watched people shatter ankles and knees with plastics as well. 2 relatives don't play anymore due to slipping off the bag rounding a base and tearing there knee up. Metal most definitely grabs the bags better as well.

**Victor** I have seen that as well Eric. There are pros and cons to both.

**Mario** When they get in high school it should be allowed. I've seen girls hurt themselves because they don't know how to slide right and the cleat get stuck in the ground. By 16U and up, they should know how to use them correctly. They are dangerous for some kids.

**Amanda** Yes they should! I loved mine in college, but I messed a shortstops leg up pretty bad

**Ken B** You can injure yourself in metals or plastics. Metals afford higher performance, but that extra dig can multiply injury if you are not solid with your technique. They can also harm others. They are definitely for the more mature and experienced players.

**Sonia** Never.

**Loretta** High school.
It depends on the sanctioning body, some allow at 14u, but most are at 16U. There are advantages and disadvantages; I've seen players injured wearing metal and plastic spikes. The shoe doesn't matter when you slide; if misplace your foot and it sticks, it won't matter which you have on because you’re probably going to be hurt. I have seen broken ankles and legs with both. We prefer plastic and with the new technology, they provide just as much traction as metal.

We prefer plastic. My daughter is currently recovering from a ruptured ACL and the orthopedic surgeon said that metal could have been a factor in her injury.

I don't see the advantage to be honest.

Never!!!

I really don't care for them and don't want to buy them for my girl who plays 16U. My girl suffered a knee injury from another player jumping into her knee purposely. If this girl would have had metal cleats on the damage would have been much worse.

Never.

Never. Being cleated is not fun!

Never. It hurts both sides, hurts ankles with quick stops and I have seen too many cuts stitches from taking a cleat.

I have seen two girls break their legs sliding this last year. Both of them were wearing rubber/plastic cleats.

14U.

They should ban them.

My daughter's been hurt more by rubber cleats vs metal. My daughter gets better traction batting and stealing with the rubber cleats.

Never.

I do not think the cleats are the problem. I believe it’s the girls not knowing how to slide into a base properly.
Brandon M Hit the nail on the head, Linda. Now I do agree that metal cleats are more dangerous for the fielder when you play against dirty teams with dirty players.

Charles They should be banned.

Jodi P I played D1 and major travel ball. I never wore metal, but had my shins beat up by players sliding in cleats up.

Kaylee High school.

Jeff M I would agree with 12’s or 14’s. I have only ever witnessed one injury due cleats. When our high school association finally allowed them, the first game the shortstop put her knee down and got cut. They have to learn.

Erica Never.

Kathy I used to say never, my daughter that played through college never wore them, but my 15 year old daughters coach required them. We have had no problems so far!

Carey Never.

Matt Here in Virginia I don't think you can wear them in travel until 14U. My daughter will never wear them if I have anything to do with it.

Kevin Never.

Tera To each their own, unless it’s mandatory. We won't be having metal.

Phil 14U and they like wearing them.

Tera Phil, I think they like the “clicky” sound they make. It is attention getting for sure!

John D Good to hear!! But is the advantage worth the risk? Remember the one sliding can also be mentally ruined from a bad accident!! I'm just not convinced yet that it’s worth wearing metal with all of the risks.

Kaylee John D, if the player knows how to play their position then it won't lead to an accident.

John D So you can train to avoid accidents???. Really?? Then why do pro athletes have career ending accidents playing their position?? Accidents happen. you can't control the other person and their actions. It may not be your fault, but that doesn’t mean an accident can’t happen?

Kaylee All the girls I've ever played with in high school and college know better than to put their knee in front of the base. You keep looking at all the stuff that could happen or the stuff that
happened to a few girls, well there are plenty of us that are still in one piece and never had an accident on the field.

**John D** I agree but I'll ask again, and its and honest question: is the advantage worth the chance even if it’s just one time? I'm a father of two very talented & beautiful girls and I'd like to keep it that way.

**Ken B** Is it worth the risk? You'll have to perform you own calculus on that point. Some, like me, will decide yes. Some will decide no. There is no one-size-fits-all answer and the only way to be 100% safe is to stay home in bed.

**Kaylee** I wore metal cleats for most of my high school career and for college. Yes, I would take the risk again.

**Stacie** That’s a tough one. As a player I always thought it was unfair that boys could wear them and we couldn't. I love them but I also know they increase risk for injury. I also heard Crystal Bustos say it's easier to hit in shoes that don't grab the ground so much. I hated sliding everywhere on defense or when taking leads/changing direction (which happens a lot in softball in my experience). The metal helps get rid of the sliding and makes changing direction a bit easier. But I also know many high school aged players don't have the best conditioning/strength to wear it. Also, they need to know how to get out of the base path on defense to avoid getting cleated.

**Karla** 16 years old or high school level.

**Linda L** The cleats are not the things that cause the "accidents"; it’s the person wearing the cleats. If the person wearing the cleats does not know how to slide correctly, then they shouldn't be playing ball.

**Dana** From personal experience: I grew up wearing steel cleats, starting in Pony league at the age of 13. Everyone knew back then that at the lower levels you needed to learn to slide, because if you didn't learn the correct method you would get injured wearing steel. Coaches put emphasis on teaching kids how to slide correctly. This is not so true today because a number of these coaches never wore steel cleats when they played, so sliding correctly was never a point of emphasis. We NEVER intentionally went after a middle infielder with the intent to cleat them. If they were in the way of the bag and got a cleat cut that was either because they were out of position or didn't know how to field the position correctly. Yes we would go after a fielder to break up a double play, but that’s a part of the game; however, every player learned and knew how to slide past the base just touching it like they do in the MLB today. The biggest advantage goes to an outfielder, in my opinion. When my steel was banned I would be out in center field.
feeling like I was on ice skates with plastic. If the grass had any dew on it at all my cleats would slide, not grab like the steel did.

Jeff M Most of the injuries that we have dealt with or heard of are a result of improper training, not footwear. Girls have shoulder issues which come from weak back muscles. Knee injuries come from accidents or not training legs properly. I've seen more girls deal with those issues than being hit in the face or cleated.

Dana Jeff we could open a whole other bag of worms on a discussion about what causes shoulder issues. In the case of the knee the ACL on a female is not the same size as a male. They are more susceptible to ACL injuries because of that. So yes they do need to strengthen both the hamstrings and quads to help support the knee better. You will see more soccer girls with torn ACLs than any other sport.

Stacie Linda: the person wearing the cleats is FAR better off sliding in with their front foot a little "too high" rather than in the ground. I've seen MANY broken ankles because that front foot catches in the dirt.
**Question #18**

**Should a batter always take a pitch when the count is 3-0?**

**John**  It depends on the situation and even more so upon the skill level of the batter.

**Jason**  Agreed. Anytime someone says "ALWAYS", I tend to disagree.

**Kenneth**  It depends on the situation. Most often, yes, but with runners in scoring position, the batter gets the green light. With only a runner at first, take a pitch to try to stay out of the double play.

**Roy**  I think it would depend on your situation, but for most hitters yes. For instance, if I had runners let's say on second third with one or two outs and the hitter was number 3,4, or 5 in the line-up I would give the hitter the green light.

**Isabella**  As a player myself, I would take the swing. If I missed, I still have 2 strikes left.

**Richard**  Most of the time, I'd say yes, especially if the pitcher is struggling. Sometimes you give a hitter with runners on base the green light. They will probably see something to hit if the pitcher can find the zone.

**Mike**  Most of the time sure, but not always. Sometimes, you have to gamble and go big! I can think of a few situations where I'd green light it.

**Kris**  There are too many scenarios to consider: you have to always look 2 or 3 batters ahead, how many outs, the score, etc. Maybe the next batter is weak and you already have 2 outs with runners in scoring position. Maybe the catcher is strong and if she does get walked, she's stranded without a solid hitter behind her. Usually that 3-0 pitch will be the most beautiful and right down the pipe pitch she'll see. If she's a slugger, let her rip and send that baby deep! It really depends.

**Francisco**  I only do it if this girl is a power hitter and have her make her own call on it. Rule of thumb for most coaches is that the next pitch has to be dead down the middle perfect.

**Jennifer**  I always tell my girls if it's YOUR perfect pitch you go for it.

**Mark**  Hit your pitch! If it's not your pitch, take it even if it's a strike. The batter still gets 2 more strikes.

**Dillon**  With a good hitter and runners in scoring position, I say go for it!
**Eric** On a 3-0 count we have a saying on our team(s): It has to be perfect. So I say let the hitter make that call. It's her count. Add an out or 2 or put a runner at first and we might make a different decision.

**Bo** Kids only get so many cuts in game settings. Let them swing, let them learn, and use the results as an opportunity to help them become better hitters. Every coach wants kids that pound the ball let them do it. It's easy to teach a kid to take a pitch as strategy becomes relevant later in their careers.

**Darian** It depends on the hitter, the situation, and who is on deck. Bases loaded is sometimes a bad situation when you have a slapper or contact hitter in the lineup. If the batter is a proven hitter, swing away!

**Skylar** As a pitcher you know that you have some wiggle room to test the strike zone in a 3-0 count. Pitchers know it's not that big of a deal if she doesn’t throw a perfect strike and that basically anything she throws close to the zone the batter will most likely take a swing. The batter probably shouldn't swing unless it's a pretty pitch!

**Jeremy** I agree! It depends on the situation and the skill level of the batter. Good hitters with runners in scoring position get the green light

**Alan** No

**Jesse** If you are in a 3-0 situation, remember that you as the hitter are in the drivers seat. You are controlling the at bat. If it’s your pitch and it’s relatively early in the game, take a swing. If it’s not, then take it. If the pitch you take is a strike, no big deal because now you are in a hitters count (3-1). The pitcher is still way behind in the count and usually does not want to walk the batter, so you have a good chance of seeing something close to the zone.

**Doug** Statistics say yes.

**Hannah** Not always. If it's in their wheelhouse and they have the ability to drive the ball, they should go for it!

**Tim** No.

**Clint** Take the pitch and crowd the plate.

**Tracy** 95% of the time yes, take the pitch. The remaining 5% of the time is situational. Maybe give the green light to a hitter in a slump, they could surprise you.

**Joy** Sure they should!
Question #19

Are coaches looking for or want the catchers to run down first on infield hits?

Scott  The right fielder should be backing up first on an infield hit. There is no reason for the catcher to run down to first on an infield hit, there are WAY too many infield hits in softball. I don’t care how in shape she is, you will wear her out fast!

Renee  Some do, some don’t, and it usually depends on the level of play. I personally don’t want the catcher to be pulled out of position unless they have to be. But I’m open to change if someone can prove how it is beneficial. Just seems like a lot of unnecessary work for the catcher.

Brad  Agree if nobody is on base, otherwise stay home

Kristine  I know a lot of catchers that do, including me, if no one is on base.

Katie  No. I've been a coach for 25 years and I've never seen anything beneficial or productive about making my catchers run up and down the first base line. This is especially so with my travel ball team. We may play several games in one day and the last thing I want to do is cause my catcher more fatigue.

Scott  With no one on base, our catchers head towards the fence behind first. They don't need to sprint, just head in that direction. Right field has the majority of the backup but every so often a ball bounces funny and if catcher is heading that way, it is a very easy play. If ANYONE is on she stays home

Jake  If no one is on base, yes. They don’t have to go all the way to first either. We have made outs because the catcher was backing up 1st.

Jesse  Would it not be the same with the right fielder covering?

Jake  Not when the ball is hit to second. The angle of the throw is towards the infield. It's not for every infield hit.

Stephen  As a former baseball catcher I was always taught to do that. I adjusted my thinking for softball given the dimensions of the infield and outfield. I now train my baseball catchers the same way I learned, but train my softball catchers to stay home and we allow the right fielder to back up those plays instead.
Joe In my opinion, a catcher is considered an infielder with the responsibility to hustle down the line with no one on base. Think about a bad throw from second base that could end up in a dugout if the catcher isn't there. Catching is a tough job! It takes a special player to handle the hard work and conditioning involved to get the job done!!

Victoria I have played catcher for years, I backup first base when there is no play at home. I do the same when I play right field, I backup first base. I have made several outs at 2nd base backing up first. My team is universal and pitcher backs up third and home. It’s a TEAM effort.

Doug I seen it done in baseball, but they do not play a schedule like girls do. Being from the south with temperatures in the 90s and humidity, I think it would be impossible when playing four or five games a day or seven games in two days.

Nick The comedian in me wants to reply, “It depends on how good the first baseman and short stop are”. Seems like a good habit with no one on, but not with runners on.

Mike Love your comment Renee: "But I’m open to change if someone can prove how it is beneficial". Your attitude is why you are one of my favorite writers.

Steve I agree with Stephen. The infield is a lot shorter and I tell my catcher to save all the energy she has, especially in tournament play because several times games are played back to back. My right fielder can handle that backup.

Joe The catcher is one of the most physically challenging positions to play on the field. Throwing the ball constantly, enduring the heat of summer, collisions at the plate, et.al. Make it easier for her, not harder.

Karl With our teams, we DO run the catcher down the line and it has resulted in many outs that we would not have gotten otherwise.

Andrea If it’s an infield hit, your outfielders need to be covering behind the bases in case of a bad throw. No catcher should cover first. You should have your second baseman switch over to first, shortstop to second base, third base remains at third. We rarely ever had our catcher take over first. Put it this way, if the ball is hit to first base, second base runs to first for the out, and shortstop runs to cover second base. If its hit towards second baseman then first baseman takes first, short stop takes second base. If it is hit towards short stop everyone stays at their designated base. If third gets it then short goes to third and everyone else to their designated base.

Lucy I was a catcher my entire career and don’t recall every sprinting down to first base. I would drift towards the first base dugout just in case an overthrow bounced in that direction, but I was never too far out of position. It has always been the right fielder’s responsibility to back up the
throw because for most plays they have the best angle to stop an overthrow from going too far. Coming in on the ball is always easier than chasing it.

**Russell** My daughter plays 12U and has been taught to back up first only if there is no one on base. She loves the run down first base line. She challenges herself to beat the throw. She also ends up at the fence behind first base.

**Amanda** It depends. I usually have my right fielder back up, but if I have a fast and athletic catcher I have her do it. My high school and college coach always had us catchers back up.

**Kevin** When no one is on base and especially if ball is hit to second baseman, because normally it's the only time a ball will come in the direction of the catcher.

**Bobby** If there is no one on base, yes.

**Patrick** Nope. I did it for years as a baseball catcher. My dad used to give me a dollar for each runner I beat. Thirty years later, my knees are still killing me. No need for it now, my girls make their throws.

**Jim** In tournament play where a catcher can play 4-8 games in two days in summer heat, I say NO. We have the right fielder back up first. But in HS play I would send her up the line.

**Jeffery** No, this started in baseball many years ago. The sport is different. For one, field dimensions are very different, and softball is a bit faster paced. You will wear out your catcher for very little benefit. Go against the norm and put a pure athlete at first!
Question #20

“I'm thinking about going to wristbands for my 12U team next year and wondered if anyone would be willing to share how they use them, and what they use?”

Bill We use the wrist bands but I give my numbers quietly so they don't become a distraction. Calling out numbers from third base makes you look kind of idiotic and condescending like you are bellowing out a riddle for everyone to solve - and only YOU know the answer.

KC NCAA Division 1 champion Florida Gators use them! So all of these negative comments and poor coaching remarks apply to them as well? The game is evolving. Don't trash what you've never truly done. If it's good enough for the best maybe it's good enough for us.

Sam Are you at the Gators level? Oklahoma doesn't use them. It's not necessary. There isn't a playbook. Bunt, hit and run, take the pitch, or swing away. If you need a wristband for that, then by all means use them. If you can't teach the girls that and the several variations of that without a cheat sheet, maybe you should complicate things as much as possible.

Greg I used them for a season and there were glitches for being the first year but I was not sold on them. We definitely lost a few because of them. I also think they slowed the game down.

Sam This isn't espionage. Generally there is one of three choices to make on any given play. An opposing coach worth his salt is going to know what those options are. He doesn't care about your signs. Coaches doing their job aren’t concerned with stealing signs. Unless you are one of those morons that like to lay down a bunt with two out and bases loaded, you aren't fooling anyone.

Troy I switched to them this year with my high school team and they love them. It is actually quicker and easier than giving signs the traditional way. My daughter also pitches on a 12U team that uses them and she likes them as well. The only problem is the cost to get started. I would recommend them for any team.

Sam The wristband teams never win. They are always slightly above average. It's a case of coaches thinking they have outsmarted the game. If your team doesn't have the memory skills to remember indicators and hand signs then dumb it down for them, don't slow it down.

Sean Wrist bands speed the game up, and allow you as a coach to be as simple or as complicated as you want. My team at 14U uses the a lot for both calls from a batter perspective but also from a base running perspective. I can give 3 different base calls, and a batter call in a matter of
seconds, and I know they got it. As a coach I'm playing chess with the other team, this lets me think about strategy and my next few decisions without having to think about indicators, touches, movements etc. I use an excel sheet broken down into abbreviated calls, using only two or three numbers. 1 number down, 2 across. The players love it. They can focus on the game and they understand and can see my other calls to base runners to grasp the play scenario I'm shooting for. Anybody who thinks this game is swing, bunt, or take, is an idiot. Colleges all over the country are migrating to the systems. Some even use them to call some signals to pitchers and catchers to speed up games, and ensure calls. As with anything, it's to your advantage to give your team an advantage no matter how slight.

**Myra** Not a good idea. If girls are old enough to remember signs and remember how to play the game, why complicate it? Not to mention they get lost all the time, I've found a couple of wrist bands of opposing teams. For some teams it may work great, but I prefer not to and put the responsibility on the girls.

**Brea** Not going to write all I really want to say. I just bet that the people that have written about the teams using the wristband being "idiots", they are saying that because their teams have gotten the brakes beaten off them by these "idiot" teams. Grow up folks!!!

**Pete** We used a very simple watered down one in 8u and then used full versions in 10s ,12s , 14s, and 16s. Girls love them and they are actually easier for girls because every coach has different signs. How many haters are coaches or parents of kids who have tried them?

**Ali** I think they over complicate something simple, and I think younger teams use them to look more sophisticated or professional. Let the score and what you do on the field do your talking, not your accessories. If the other teams coaching staff and team are that concerned about figuring out your signals instead of their own game-plan, winning should not be very difficult! The only time I see them useful is for a pitcher/catcher that has a coach calling the pitches, the other team reading those signs could really be hurtful

**Mike** Wristbands make coaches and players look like idiots. Learn your signs, it's not that difficult. Quit slowing the game down!

**Tammy** At the end of the day, it’s really up to you. You know your team’s ability better than anyone commenting. If you think they can handle using them without slowing the game down (or losing the wrist band, let’s not forget they are kids!), then use them. I personally don’t like using them for anyone but the pitcher and catcher. There are coaches out there who try to pick the pitch for their batter and if you have a numbers system for your battery, it could keep your pitcher protected longer. Other than that, I don’t see a point. I grew up using old fashioned indicators and hand/body signals and turned out just fine.
**Ryan** We use them in addition to conventional hand signals and it really keeps the opponent off balance. It doesn't take the kids long at all to pick it up. If your system is too complex it will really slow the game down and cause problems with your team.

**Kevin** It keeps the opponent off balance?? Are you crazy?

**Amanda** We use them for all of our age groups in the organization and they work great!
More Books From Fastpitch TV Publishing

Softball Pitching Drills
Pitching practice drills for fastpitch softball players.

99 Cents - Purchase Kindle Version

Softball Hitting Drills
Hitting practice drills for fastpitch softball players.

99 Cents - Purchase Kindle Version

Softball Base Running Drills
Base running practice drills for fastpitch softball players.

99 Cents - Purchase Kindle Version

Softball Fielding Drills
Fielding practice drills for fastpitch softball players.

99 Cents - Purchase Kindle Version

Softball Catchers Drills
Catcher practice drills for fastpitch softball players.

99 Cents - Purchase Kindle Version
The Complete Book Of Softball Drills
All of my practice drills for fastpitch softball players in one book.

$4.99 - Purchase Kindle Version

$14.95 Purchase Paperback Version
Resources

Over the years, I have developed a large network of websites dedicated to Girls Fastpitch Softball.

Some are educational, while some have my softball ecommerce sites.

I thought I would share them with you here:

www.Fastpitch.TV
www.SoftballJunk.com
www.USAfastpitch.com
www.SoftballCoaches.com
www.PitchChart.com
www.iPitch.com
www.SportsDecorating.com
www.WeightedBalls.com
www.Fastpitchmagazine.com
www.BaseballJunk.com
www.SoftballFacemasks.com
www.BatTape.com
www.EyebblackStickers.com
www.StrikeZoneMat.com
www.WindmillTrainer.com
www.CatchersZone.com
Conclusion

I hope you found these questions and answers helpful. If you would like to receive my free newsletter, sign up at:

Fastpitch.tv/newsletter

Would you please take a moment to rate it for others on Amazon.com?

Best Regards,

Gary Leland