



Organizing a DYSA Team

This handout is meant to help you organize your team and have a successful season.

DYSA defines success for its teams in the following terms: the kids have fun, the kids get to try out different positions, the kids have a positive softball experience. Success is not measured by the result on the scoreboard, but rather by the effort and play on the field. We want the kids to learn, respect, and enjoy the game of softball.

At the same time, softball is a competitive sport. We have umpires, we keep stats, we keep score, publish scores and standings on the web and hand out trophies to the winner at the End of Season tournament. The goal of the game is to win. The goal of each player is to do their very best to help the Team win the game. The kids are aware of this at a very young age.

Your job as a coach is to teach the game of softball to the players, put each player in a position to succeed so the team will have success, and to teach the players to win, or lose, with class and dignity.

Hold a Team Meeting

The first step to a successful season is to hold a Team Meeting. You can hold a single team meeting for both parents and players, or two separate meetings, one for just parents and one for just players (perhaps during the first practice). These meetings are meant for you to introduce yourself, convey your coaching approach and philosophy, and define for everyone what it means to have a successful DYSA team.

Team Business

After the introduction, take care of team business. Create a list of contact info for each player – get parents names, phone numbers, and email addresses. You will need to communicate during the season and email is a great tool! You can pass around a sheet of paper for parents to write this info down while you proceed with other topics.

Get volunteers! DYSA does not work without every parent chipping in. Use the DYSA Team Volunteer Form (attached to the end of this handout) to get parents to help out. Again, pass this around while you proceed with the meeting.

The Golden Rules

There are three main rules you should emphasize at the beginning of the team meeting:

1. **Safety** - nobody swings a bat or throws a ball without checking to be sure that everyone around them will be safe.
2. **Fun** - we are here to have FUN. If anyone is not having fun, let the Coach know and he will work to remedy that.
3. **Attitude** - if you are Safe, having Fun, and have a positive attitude, you will have a successful season.

Playing Time

The next step is to remind everyone, including yourself, of the DYSA policy on playing time and positions. All players will be given equitable playing time and the opportunity to play all positions, with special consideration for safety issues. Players will be encouraged and given opportunities to try different positions in both infield and outfield, however players will not be placed in positions where game delay or safety is a major concern. Players bat in a continuous line-up throughout the regular season and will bat even if they are sitting out an inning in the field.

The one exception to this policy is in the position of pitcher, as this position requires a lot of individual instruction and outside practice. While DYSA encourages the development of pitchers, typically there are only 2-3 players who pitch consistently in games for each team (especially at 10U & above). If your child is interested in pitching, and is practicing at home, coaches will give them opportunities to pitch at practice. Once a player can demonstrate the ability to throw 4-6 strikes out of 10 pitches, coaches are encouraged to give them an opportunity to pitch in a game. Many pitchers take pitching lessons from personal pitching coaches or from softball schools around Sacramento; if interested in a referral, please ask your coach or contact one of the DYSA Board members for options.

Establish Team Rules

Here is a sample of some Team Rules and Expectations:

1. All league rules will be followed, NO EXCEPTIONS.
2. All kids will play each game, sometimes they'll play 3 innings, sometimes more. Kids who are at games and practices consistently, do their homework and work on their skills will have the best opportunity to play more.
3. If your kid can't be at a game or practice, please let the coaches know ahead of time. Please review the practice and game schedules and alert us of conflicts as far in advance as possible. If something comes up last minute, please call.
4. Uniforms are for games only. Wear comfortable and appropriate softball clothes to practice. You will not be allowed to practice in your uniform, you will not be allowed to play in a game without one.
5. Players are expected to remain in the dugout during games unless enlisted to shag fly balls. If a player must leave the dugout, they must ask the coach first.
6. Parents and siblings are not to be in the dugout. NO EXCEPTIONS.
7. All trash must be cleared from the dugout. You bring it in, you carry it out. Spectators please keep the field clean.
8. No batting or bats in hand unless you are at bat or on deck. Safety is important!
 - a. We will not swing a bat near any other people;
 - b. We will not throw the ball if there are any people behind either player in case of a missed catch.
9. ALWAYS be respectful of teammates, opposing players, coaches and officials. Disrespectful behavior by players or parents will not be tolerated.
 - a. Umpires are Human. If there is ever a disputed call:
 - i. Players will talk to the Coach;
 - ii. Coach will talk to the Umpire.
10. Show up at the field ready to play ball!
11. PARENTS PLEASE keep the on field commentary to positive cheering. Negative comments and/or conflicting instructions from a coach and parent in a game situation undermines the team.
12. Always pay attention and try your hardest-if you can look your teammates in the eye and know in your heart you did the best you could, then whatever happens is ok.

Practice

As soon as possible, establish a practice schedule that works for your team. For each practice, think about the skills you want to teach your players and make a plan to work on those skills through a variety of drills and exercises. Let your assistant coaches know the plan, what you want to teach, and how you want to teach it. Do not come to practice unprepared – your players will lose interest and you will not get a good effort out of them.

When you practice, try to have at least 2-3 stations that cover different skill areas. Always try to keep the kids moving so they don't have time to get bored.

Encourage parents to play catch for 10 to 15 minutes every day with their child until the start of the season. Good arms and good gloves come from thousands of hours of throwing, SO GET STARTED.

That's it. Good luck and have fun!