



## **PLAYER PROGRESSION – PLYMOUTH FASTPITCH PROGRAM**

### **PFDL (Plymouth Fastpitch Development League) (Ages 6 - 10)**

This division is primarily for 6 to 10 year olds who are just starting to play organized softball and want to learn the fundamentals of hitting and fielding. We will push 10 year olds to the 10U level if basic skill set is there. The PFDL is generally the first introduction to organized softball for most players. The primary objective by the end of the season is to ensure that each player has a "positive experience" with softball, desires to play again the following year, and has successfully demonstrated the skills listed below. A safety ball will be used at these levels since this will be the first-time the girls will be pitched to versus hitting off of a tee.

#### *TECHNIQUES TO DEVELOP -*

- Warm up techniques
- Names of defensive positions
- How to execute a throw (proper grip)
- Proper fielding position (down and ready)
- How to hold a bat properly
- What to do after the ball is hit (as a batter and a runner)
- Knows how, why and when to run to the next base (Ages 6 – 9, exceptions made for 10's)
- TEAM concept
- Basic pitching mechanics work and grip of fastball
- Number of outs per inning
- Fielding techniques (starting basic footwork and throwing to a base)
- Uses both hands to catch the ball vs. one handed or trapped catches
- Understands where to make the defensive play
- Proper batting position
- Proper base running (on the ground vs. in the air) Good Sportsmanship (End each game with a high five)

## **10U LEVEL (Ages 8-10)**

We like to see at least one year of PFDL softball prior to moving to 10U softball. This division is primarily for 8-10 year olds who have successfully demonstrated all of the PFDL softball skills. At the 10U softball level most games will allow 4 player-pitch balls, then the coach comes in and picks up the count after bases are loaded. An 11" little league approved ball will be used for all innings (*not* incrediballs or safety balls). The 10U softball level is where the players should recognize situations and begin to understand "HOW BEST" to make certain plays. As with PFDL softball, the primary objective is to ensure that each player has a "positive experience" with softball, desires to play again the following year and has learned the skills listed below with the emphasis on "HOW BEST".

- Advanced warm up techniques
- The ball is always "LIVE"
- Ground ball fielding techniques
- Where to make the play – Learning to think ahead if it's hit to me...
- Relaying the ball from the outfield to the infield
- Batting stance (closed, open)
- Pitching mechanics – fastball and change-up grips – proper form and finish
- Proper Bunting and Stealing mechanics and use in games
  - Understanding basic signs such as bunt and steal
- Infield Fly Rule
- Communication (calling for a fly ball)
- Backing up plays
- Pitcher position – proper fielding and backing up plays
- Difference between a Force Play and a Must Tag
- Good Sportsmanship

## **12U LEVEL (Ages 10 - 12)**

Any girl who will attain the age of 10-12 years old on or before January 1st of the previous season year shall be eligible to play at the 12U level. A player review and draft process (evaluation) may be held to form teams as needed. The primary objective at the 12U level is the same as the previous levels with emphasis on preparing players for advancement to the 14U level. The 12U level is both competitive and instructional with more emphasis on instructional than competitive during the regular season. It is critical that the managers and coaches of this division provide sound training and good balance of playing time and position rotations for all players. Besides building upon the skills taught to them at the preceding levels, players should successfully demonstrate the following skills:

- Coming on time to practices and games prepared to play softball
- Competence in batter's box positioning
- Proper grip of the bat
  - Proper throwing mechanics and catching mechanics
  - Proper understanding of signs from a coach
- Acceptable level of determining ball vs. strike
- Proper hitting mechanics
- Proper base running techniques including:
  - o Stealing after the ball leaves the pitchers hand
  - o When to tag up and how and when to slide
    - Advanced signs such as fake steal and take a strike
- Correct pitching mechanics
  - o Understanding how to throw a fastball and change-up consistently for strike
  - o Catchers and pitchers begin to understand pitch calling - fastball and change-up
- Proper footwork to field and throw quickly
- How to go back on a fly ball – proper drop step
- Sacrifice situations
- How to rundown a base runner (pickle)
- Covering bases and backing up positions after a hit
- Always show good sportsmanship on and off the field (no bad-mouthing other players)

## **14U LEVEL (Ages 12 - 14)**

Any girl who will attain the age of 12-14 years old on or before January 1st of the previous year shall be eligible to play at the 14U level. A player review (evaluations) may be held to form teams as needed. The 14U level is both competitive and instructional with admittedly more emphasis on the competitive aspects of the game. All players are ensured playing time. Players should focus on refining their softball skills with a strong emphasis on consistency. Often the difference between an average player and a good player is the ability to consistently execute the required skills. Players at the 14U level should:

- Come on time to practice and prepared for practice or games (including safety equipment)
- Show proper batting stance, bat position, and swing execution
- Reasonable competence in making contact with the ball
- Know the difference between bunting for a base hit and a sacrifice bunt
  - Have a solid understanding of signs and situations
- Demonstrate proper base running techniques including:
  - Exploding off the base after the ball leaves the pitchers hand
  - When to tag up vs. going half way
  - Proper sliding techniques
- Execute proper pitching motion – throwing Fastball, Change up and third pitch (rise, curve, or screwball properly)
- Use Catching skills (blocking the plate with the ball, blocking wild pitches, throwing out runners)
  - Catchers should start learning to call games at this level
- Cover bases correctly when receiving a throw or fielding a ball
- Understand how to go back on a fly ball
- Properly execute a double play
- Execute a run down - both as a runner and a fielder
- Know what can happen after a ball is caught in foul territory
- Use the relay man from outfield or throw home if needed
- Cover all bases and backs up other players after a hit
- Always show good sportsmanship on and off the field (no bad-mouthing other players)

*Any girl at the 12U and 14U levels should focus on strategy and situational plays, mastering specific positions and preparing for play at the Junior Varsity and Varsity level if desired. Managers focus on fielding a competitive team while also providing the players with a positive development/learning experience. At this level, teams compete in 1-2 other softball leagues and possible tournaments within the area. The level of competition varies by league or tournament class.*