

This season, MGSA has had a few players register for fastpitch to "play-up" -- registering for an age level older than what they normally would play. The Fastpitch Committee has discussed what to do, and has done some research, and the purpose of this email is to describe our approach for 2010.

1. Softball age determination is based on the player's age at January 1. For example, a player who is 10 on January 1, but turns 11 on February 2 would be eligible to play 10U even though they are actually 11 years old during the April-to-July season. This is done nationwide based upon ASA rules. Technically, a player like the above example COULD play either 10U OR 12U and still be within League and Tournament guidelines.

2. Fastpitch policy and practice in the past has been that players were NOT allowed to play-up except in very rare occasions. For example, a pitcher that qualified for the A team at the older level would be allowed to play-up. This would be quite rare. In one recent instance, a player was allowed to play-up after an early-season injury rendered a team without a catcher, and the younger player was not registered for fastpitch, and joined the team in this unusual circumstance. In another instance, an older level was short pitchers and a younger pitcher played up to support the additional team and players at the older level, and the lower level didn't suffer as a result.

3. Other than the situations noted above, historically Fastpitch has rostered players at their "league-age" level, regardless of skill level. One reason is that we have felt it important that we field as many teams as we can, factoring in skill levels. A player like the example mentioned above might be 11 during the season, but can bring other value to the team including leadership, lead-by-example, as well as their playing skills and maturity to the game. In this way, likely more teams can be formed, therefore more girls get to play the game than would be the case if experienced players moved up frequently, leaving relatively fewer experienced players/coaches to form teams around. This exact situation happened in 2007 at 10U when 5 teams were formed. This is very true at the 10U level, but also applies to some degree at the 12U level.

4. In all cases, MSGA reserves the right to roster teams in a way that is in line with the mission of Minnetonka Girls Softball. Any given year, this may mean that some players are cut (e.g, at 12U or 14U) or certain younger or very inexperienced players are counseled to play inhouse for a year to build skills and start fastpitch in the fall. Team sizes are extremely important (11 or 12, for example) and problems can ensue with teams of 10 or 13. So, every year there is the challenge of the numbers of girls registered, their relative skills, the number of coaches, and the number of teams. **The single most important thing that MGSA does is balance all these things and try to do the right thing in the spring.**

5. In some ways, Minnetonka is unique, but in most ways, we are similar to nearby fastpitch programs. We believe that nearby communities are handling their team formation and play-up decisions similar to the way we have handled it. Perhaps more than Minnetonka, some communities accommodate playing up for players with well-above-average skills, perhaps not as high a bar as Minnetonka has in the past.

THEREFORE,

1. Parents and players are strongly encouraged to register and participate at their normal age-level grouping. It's expected that the large majority of players are properly placed in their normal age-level grouping.

2. The Fastpitch Committee will accept input from parents if they feel that their daughter would be better positioned at a higher age level. Factors to consider are actual birth date, skill level, maturity, and ability to interact with a team of possibly slightly older players. We presently don't have a formal

method to provide this input, but obviously registering at an older level will alert us. **We require that parents discuss their particular situation with either the Fastpitch Director or an involved Fastpitch League Director BEFORE tryouts**, so the Fastpitch Committee can understand the unique situation and expectations. This includes 10U-age players wishing to play 12U, and 12U-age players wishing to play 14U.

3. The player must try out with the older level group, to allow evaluators and data processing to be most efficient. We are not able to accommodate situations where the parents or player wish their daughter to tryout just "to get the experience". This is not a good use of our volunteer time running tryouts and takes away from evaluation time for players seriously considering that league level.

4. The parents and player must understand that the play-up request may or may not be accommodated. They need to be prepared for an outcome where, as a result of circumstances beyond their control, they will be rostered on a team with their age level. It will be assumed that whichever team they end up rostered on (age-level or play-up), the player will participate in the team during the season. This is required since all teams are formed "at one time" and players opting-out late in the process trickles down and causes numerous problems with many formed teams. (These items need to be discussed by the parents and Fastpitch Director/Fastpitch League Director during the one-on-one discussion mentioned above.)

5. The Fastpitch Committee, as part of the normal team formation process, will factor all this information, along with the total number of registrations/coaches, etc. to determine teams. This happens in a short time frame as soon as possible after the makeup tryout session, so that teams can form, families can be notified and teams can have an initial dome practice before spring break. **The Fastpitch Committee has final decision-making on all team formation and rostering decisions.**

We appreciate your understanding in this changing environment. In the end, the objective is to get girls on the fields playing a game that they learn to love. If you have questions, you can contact a Fastpitch Committee member listed below.

MGSA Fastpitch Committee 2010

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