

## Team Formation Philosophy

Our organization is committed to providing every athlete with a softball experience tailored to her age, skill level, goals, and desire for competition. We proudly offer opportunities across all levels, ensuring the right fit for every player.

### Core Principles

We believe in developing confident, skilled, well-rounded athletes who love the game while building character, leadership, teamwork, work ethic, accountability, and a positive attitude that serves them on and off the field.

Success is measured not only by winning, but by player growth, enjoyment of the sport, and preparation for the next level, whether that is high school varsity, college, or lifelong participation. We emphasize fundamentals, skill progression, game intelligence, and a supportive team culture where players are challenged to reach their potential.

### Tiered Team Formation Approach

We structure our teams to match players' competitiveness and developmental needs, with clear priorities by level:

- **A-Level Teams:** We strive to provide excellent experiences at every level, while recognizing that A-level teams are formed to compete at the highest level of play. We select the best combination of talent, skill, athleticism, coachability, and commitment to build elite rosters designed to compete at the highest levels in tournaments and league play. These teams emphasize intense competition, winning, and advanced player development. Practices focus on high-level mechanics, strategic execution, position-specific training, mental toughness, and performance under pressure. Playing time is earned through consistent effort, production, and contribution to team success. Our A teams represent the pinnacle of our competitive pathway for serious athletes who thrive in a demanding, goal-oriented environment.
- **B-Level Teams:** B-level teams remain highly competitive and focused on winning, skill development, and preparing athletes for higher levels. When fielding multiple B teams at some age groups, we'll strive to create balanced teams of similar strength and ability. At the same time, we will always consider what is in the best interest of that particular group of players each year. Our goal is to build strong, competitive teams that give as many players as possible the opportunity to compete at this elevated level. These teams maintain a strong emphasis on competition and performance while continuing to prioritize intentional player development in a supportive setting. B-level play provides an excellent environment for athletes who are committed and skilled but may benefit from balanced team dynamics and additional opportunities to contribute.

- **C and Community/Recreational Levels:** For those who may not try out at a higher level, or are beginners who are new to the sport, we offer a more balanced experience. C-level and community teams still focus on winning, with an emphasis toward fun, fundamentals, love of the game, and broad player development. Every player receives ample opportunity to learn, play multiple positions, and build confidence in a supportive, low-pressure setting. Winning remains important, but it is secondary to enjoyment, sportsmanship, teamwork, and fostering a lifelong passion for softball. These teams provide an ideal entry point for new players and a welcoming environment for families who prefer recreational play.

This tiered model allows us to place every player in the environment that best matches her current level and goals. We avoid forcing mismatched experiences, whether a highly experienced player on a rec team or a beginner on an elite roster. Tryouts, evaluations, and coach input guide placements, with flexibility for movement between levels as players develop.

### **Commitment to All Athletes**

As a large organization, we field numerous teams at every age group. This depth enables us to:

- Build truly competitive A-level squads.
- Create multiple strong B-level teams.
- Maintain robust C and community programs that prioritize development and fun, while remaining competitive in their class.
- Offer clear pathways for progression (e.g., from C to B to A as skills and commitment grow).

We celebrate success at every level, whether it is a state tournament win at A-level, strong competitive performances at B-level, personal bests and improved confidence at C-level, or simply a group of teammates bonding over their love of the game.

Our philosophy ensures every athlete receives the experience she deserves: elite competition and development for those who crave it at the A level, highly competitive balanced play at B, and a competitive, fun, and foundational experience for those at C and community levels. Through this approach, we develop not only better softball players, but stronger young women prepared for success in life.

We are proud to be a program where players of all backgrounds and aspirations can thrive. Join us in building a positive, competitive, and developmental culture that elevates the game in our community.

## Team Formation Process and Criteria

Team formation combines tryout evaluations, prior-season player rankings and coach feedback, and positional considerations for fairness and development.

### 1. Tryouts and Skill Evaluations (Primary Ranking Tool)

- All players (except those waived for documented injury/illness) must participate in tryouts/evaluations.
- Independent/neutral evaluators (external to the association where possible) will score players objectively on skill stations: hitting, fielding ground/fly balls, throwing velocity/accuracy, base running/speed, and position-specific skills.
- Separate pitcher/catcher evaluations are conducted.
- Numeric scoring system is used; results are tabulated confidentially.

### 2. Prior-Season Player Evaluations

In addition to tryout results, the association will consider information garnered from prior season coach evaluation sheets. Consideration and weight will be given based on:

- Level of team played on (A/B/C).
- Overall rating points assigned by coaches.
- Coach feedback and observations (intangibles such as work ethic, teamwork, coachability, leadership, and game IQ that may not fully appear in tryouts).

### 3. Specialty Position Players (Pitchers and Catchers)

During registration/signups, parents designating their child as a pitcher or catcher will be asked to complete a preference form:

- Would you prefer your player be placed on the **highest-level team they qualify for**, even if it means less (or zero) playing time at their specialty position?
- Or would you prefer they be placed on a **lower-level team** to receive more opportunities at pitcher/catcher? This input will be considered by the selection committee and head coaches during roster formation (along with overall skill and team needs).

### 4. Additional Information May be Necessary

- If the team formation committee determines that additional information would be beneficial, prior or future coaches may be consulted about individual player team placements.

## 5. **Roster Formation Steps** (Starting with Highest Tier)

- Form the highest-level team(s) first using the tryouts results and the combined ranked list.
- Initial roster construction begins with highest-ranked players while ensuring positional viability (typically top 4–6 position players + top 2 pitchers and catcher).
- Exceptions allowed for positional needs (e.g., additional pitchers/catchers) or marginal score differences.
- After highest-ranked players, decisions to fill teams are made based on team needs, specialty player numbers, and an effort to make the most competitive team while balancing team needs.
- Subsequent teams (B, C levels) are formed similarly from the remaining ranked players, aiming for equitable/balanced rosters within each tier, depending on the particular group of players that season.
- Roster size: Typically 10–12 players per team (adjusted for age and level).
- Final approval by the Board/Selection Committee.

## 6. **Additional Considerations**

- **Players trying out for specialty pitcher or catcher positions:** Not all players will make the cut as pitchers or catchers. This will be clearly communicated to parents and coaches when team formations occur. If a player is not assigned a specialty position, they will be provided with advice and resources for what steps they may be able to take to improve their chances for the following season.
  1. Coaches will be given information regarding the players who tried out but did not make a specialty position. The coach will be asked to involve the player in such position training and game situations, if feasible. But no requirement is made to do so.
- **Team Level Considerations:** Players qualifying for higher level A teams may be expected to commit to additional tournaments or practices. This would be made clear to parents prior to accepting this placement.
- **Conduct and Discipline:** Demonstrated patterns of unsafe conduct, serious disciplinary issues, code of conduct violations, or behavior detrimental to team culture may be considered during team formation.
- **8U and younger/rec Levels:** Emphasis on balance, fairness, fun, and skill development.

- **Playing up/down:** Playing up may be allowed in limited cases with Board approval, see playing up policy for details. Playing down is restricted by MN Softball rules and not allowed.
- **Notifications:** Results posted/communicated promptly; players/families given short window to accept (with commitment fee where applicable).
- **Cuts/Non-Placement:** Rare but possible if registration exceeds viable team capacity; every effort made to place players or provide refunds per policy.

### **Oversight and Appeals**

- A neutral **Team Formation/Selection Committee** (including Board members, independent evaluators, and coaches) oversees the process to ensure impartiality.
- All scores, rankings, and decisions are documented and confidential.
- Appeals for procedural concerns (not team placement), and all questions, should be submitted within 1 week from team posting communication.
- Violations of confidentiality or policies by persons having access to tryout results, coach evaluation information, or team formation considerations, may result in disciplinary action.

### **Commitment to Player Development and Inclusivity**

This policy prioritizes placing players where they can grow, contribute meaningfully, and enjoy the sport, whether on a highly competitive A team or a developmental-focused C team. It aligns with broader MN Softball goals of competitive balance while incorporating best practices from dozens of successful local associations.

Questions or feedback on this policy should be directed to the association President or relevant Program Director. The policy is reviewed annually and may be updated based on MN Softball guidelines, registration trends, and association experience.

*Adopted by the CYSA Board of Directors 6/14/2026*