



## **Team Formation Policy — 10U+**

### **OVERVIEW**

The method of forming teams is always one which generates many different opinions. There are many different methods to choose from, which each optimize different parameters. Mountain View – Los Altos Girls Softball strives to create teams in a fashion that supports our core principles and objectives for developing girls as strong, confident members of the community through the sport of fast pitch softball.

Our divisions are age-based with a cut-off date of January 1, as defined by our national governing organization, the Amateur Softball Association. We believe this model gives players an opportunity for development through stretching in both years in a given age division — the first year, stretching to learn the new rules and skills of that division; the second year, stretching to develop leadership skills on the team by helping younger players on the team. In both years, we encourage the development of teamwork skills and adapting to the diversity of their teammates, who may come from different schools and backgrounds.

Even a perfect process is unable to overcome every issue which affects team balance, most of which are unpredictable. Examples of these include:

- Players who have conflicts with other activities and choose to attend sporadically
- Players who get injured
- Players who are inspired and especially excel during the season above their initial rating
- Staff who have conflicts
- Non-staff who provide extra support to their team
- Teams that gel, or don't gel, due to the larger social context of the team

These are all issues which we attempt to prevent, but ultimately can't predict or control.

### **PRINCIPLES**

At the divisions of 10U, 12U, and 14/16U players, creating balanced teams is the main priority. We make every effort to form teams balanced by skill and experience to produce an equal playing field for fun and fair competition. As such, teams are no longer school-based — teams are composed of girls from various schools and everyone has the opportunity to make new friends.

While this is our main goal, it is not our exclusive goal and we do consider these factors to be important:

- Players should be able to play with a particular buddy, unless that buddy situation will make it very difficult to create balanced teams and therefore disadvantage other players. For this reason, certain types of buddy pairs are not allowable at 10U and up — two pitchers, two catchers, nor two Nova (travel) players. The MVLGS Buddy Policy has these limitations to ensure that the most skilled players, pitchers, and catchers can be spread out fairly amongst all the teams in the division. Outside of those limitations, every effort is made to keep buddies on the same team, even though it does occasionally cause some challenges during the Team Draw.
- All teams deserve to have willing and capable staff. Since we are a 100% volunteer-run organization, the pool of experienced, capable and available volunteers is limited to those who are willing and able to help out. We try to spread the more experienced coaches and managers out across the teams so they can mentor those that are newer to softball or our league. The limitations in our player Buddy Policy make this more possible.
- Actual team balance is more important than perceived team balance. The team balance mechanism focuses on the best information available on the actual performance of the players. Because some non-Nova players may turn out to perform better than some Nova players, teams will end up with an equal skill distribution but may have an unequal number of Nova players. Again, we believe actual team balance is more important.

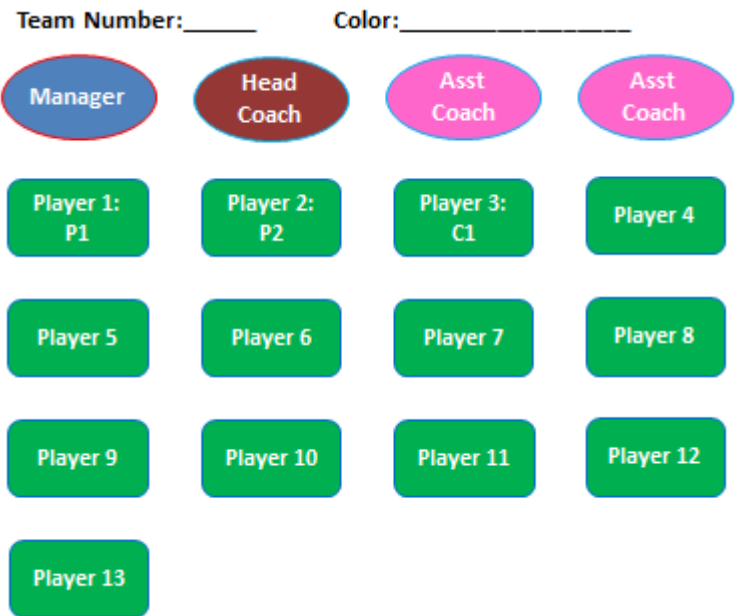


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### PROCESS

- In order to create teams balanced by experience and skill level, all players in the 10U, 12U and 14/16U divisions take part in a mandatory Skills Evaluation session. During the Skills Evaluations, the players rotate through different softball skill stations and are evaluated by multiple coaches. The data gathered in this fashion are averaged and added together to give each player a General Player Rating relative to all other players in their division. Those girls who have been identified as a possible pitcher or catcher and anyone else who would like to, also take part in the pitcher and catcher evaluations which follow the general Skills Evaluation session. This extra evaluation, commonly run by experienced coaches without children in that division, is used to determine and rank the most skilled pitchers and catchers so they can be distributed fairly among all the teams.
- The General Ratings and the Pitcher / Catcher Rankings are the basis for the Team Draw system. Unlike a team draft, players are not selected or chosen by the Team Staff, but instead, are 'dealt' according to the rules of the Team Draw system. This system has been developed over a long period of time and has been proven to create the most well-balanced teams.

- The Team Draw is done one division at a time. The Manager for each team in a division attends as an observer for their future team so they can see how the process works and explain it to their eventual team. The Manager, who must be a female per league policy, is the starting point for each team. She randomly draws a team color and a sequence number to determine the order in which each team will be 'dealt' its players. She is also given a sheet that looks somewhat like a Bingo card (see figure), which eventually gets filled up with two ranked pitchers (a 'P1' and a 'P2'), one ranked catcher and all additional players ranging from a top row of highly-ranked players down to a bottom row of less skilled and less experienced players.



- The first players to be dealt to each Manager are the ranked pitchers. The ranked pitchers have been put into pairs, with the highest ranked P1 going with the lowest ranked P2. For example, in a division with eight teams the number one ranked pitcher is normally paired with the number sixteen ranked pitcher, the number two ranked pitcher will be paired with number fifteen, and so on. All the pitcher pairs are dealt out in order until each team has a pitcher pair, while making sure to place any of the pitchers who have either a manager parent or a head coach parent, so that the players fall on their parent's team and each team gets a head coach. No one, not even the league Player Agents who have crunched the evaluation data and created the player cards, can predict who will land where. The outcome can only be known when the draw is actually done in front of the gathered team managers.
- Once each team has a manager, a pitcher pair and a head coach, the General Ratings of the Pitcher Pair are calculated and the team with the lowest combined General Rating gets the highest ranked available Catcher. The second-lowest combined General Rated pitcher pair gets the second highest available catcher, etc. until each team has a ranked catcher as well as two pitchers. In some cases the highest ranked catcher on a team is already one of the two ranked



## **Team Formation Policy — 10U+**

pitchers for that team. In those cases, that team does not get another of the ranked catchers until all teams have at least one of the top catchers. Instead, they are dealt one of the next highest ranked catchers so that every team has at least two girls with pitching skills and one girl with relatively strong catcher skills as their first three players.

- At this point, the General Rating of those first three players per team (two pitchers and one catcher) are summed one last time to determine the order in which the rest of the players are dealt to the team in serpentine fashion. The rest of the players (who are not ranked pitchers or catchers) are then dealt out to the teams starting with the next strongest player available for each row on the teams. If a player is drawn whose buddy has already been dealt, then that player is put on the same team as their already drawn buddy and the next available player of similar rating goes where they would have been dealt, or one who was very recently drawn who has similar rating but no Buddy is swapped. While the system would be more straightforward if buddies were not allowed at all, we feel that these swaps of players who are of similar rating in order to accommodate buddy pairings do not impact the final team balance enough to force a policy of disallowing buddies entirely at the upper levels.
- As a player is 'dealt' to a team, their parent volunteer (if they are a coach or chaperone), goes to the team that their player is on. In the event that all the players have been dealt and one team has three Assistant Coaches and another has none, a player of relatively equal rating that is associated with one of the Assistant Coaches will be moved in order to have all teams have at least one Assistant Coach. Once the teams are finalized, the Managers write down their rosters and are able to notify their players and their coaching staffs about their team's roster.