

Strathmore Thunder Fastpitch Handbook

ORGANIZATION STATEMENT

The Strathmore Thunder is a competitive & development softball program for female youth ages 19 and under. The goals of the program are to develop individual skills of young female athletes while stressing the values of hard work, team play, and sportsmanship. The Thunder will provide volunteer coaches who will emphasize the teams' mission, help guide its athletes to become outstanding teammates and citizens of the community. All to create fun & life long lasting memories.

TO THE PLAYERS:

We will give every player the same amount of attention and teaching, to the best of our ability, and in relationship to your coachability and ability to learn. If certain players learn more than others do, first examine yourself and your ability to understand and retain teaching, as well as the extra time you are willing to sacrifice, before accusing any coaches of not giving you their best. This is not a perfect world and you will not always experience the utmost happiness as you would desire, but remember this program is no different than anything else in life...you get out of it what you put into it. Control the things you can (your attitude, willingness to learn and compete, hustle, aggressiveness, and effort) and accept the things you cannot control. As you grow and mature, you will learn to tell the difference.

Chemistry is just as important as talent if an organization is to be successful in the true sense of the word. If your actions or attitudes are detrimental to the chemistry of the team, expect to be asked to make changes. If you do not attempt to make the necessary changes, expect us to make the changes we feel are necessary to restore chemistry. Our desire is that everyone involved in our organization will consider the experience to have been a positive and worthwhile one.

TO THE PARENTS:

We strive to be different, and better than other programs. We will be a class organization from top to bottom.

Our players and parents will not engage umpires, as well as other teams' coaches, players, or parents. Our coaches are the only ones who will share words with umpires. Players will wear their uniform properly at all times (shirt tucked in, etc.). Bad language, bad attitudes, and laziness will not be tolerated from players at practices or during competition. Many of you may have witnessed or been involved in games where players threw equipment and swore at umpires, coaches, parents and each other. Many of you have watched or have been involved in games where the parents and fans were out of control and a poor example of what adult maturity should be. Any of these actions is inappropriate, unsportsmanlike and unacceptable in the program. We will maintain an open door policy for players and parents...say what you need to say in private. Communication, done properly, is vital to our success. Parents however

will agree not to interfere in the coaching of the team or to verbally banter with officials or opponents and their parents during competition. We will teach the players that it is just as important to have class as it is to compete. The area of discipline is critical to the success of our organization. We ask that parents, siblings, and friends be kept out of and away from the dugout before and during game play unless invited into the dugout by a member of the coaching staff. It is imperative that the players be allowed to focus on the game and tasks ahead. The coaching staff may, from time to time, ask a parent to assist in the dugout in making sure the players are well hydrated, etc.

INSTRUCTION

Our goal is for volunteer coaches to train players in all aspects of the game. This is a competitive softball program therefore the standards of effort will be very high. We expect that players make a commitment to the sport, the team, and have the open mind to learn new things about the game.

PRIORITIES

A family's' commitment to play is significant. The team will practice and play in tournaments most weekends from April – July. However, we realize that Softball only, does not make a well rounded person. You must clearly notify your manager 2 or more days prior to practice if there is a reasonable excuse for not attending. We expect your priorities to be as follows:

1. Family
2. School
3. Sports – We expect softball be your primary sports commitment from April to July. Our Rep teams higher level of play may include August.

PLAYING TIME PHILOSOPHY – Varies with competition level of team.

If you are a healthy member, you have been coming to practices or at least have a valid reason for missing a team event (you have communicated with the coach), and you are following team rules you will get valid playing time.

Sundays or what we call “Championship Day”, we still make an effort to get everyone in the games but it doesn't always work out as even playing time for all. Game strategies and games played in a day are vital to the decisions the coach's make. Positions are NEVER guaranteed to players.

WHAT WE WANT PLAYERS TO GAIN FROM PLAYING FOR THE THUNDER

- Improve Softball Skills
- Develop core values such as a strong work ethic, teamwork, sportsmanship, etc.
- Learn to Take Initiative
- Accept Personal Responsibility (No Excuses)

TEAMWORK

We believe that the deciding factor between winning and losing is mental attitude, mental toughness, and mental dedication of the team as a unit. Good teams know what they want, have a plan to get there, and are relentless in their efforts to get it all year long. We realize that softball requires both physical and mental endurance. It is passion and desire that keeps you going each and every day. The team that sustains over the long haul most likely will come out on top at the end. It is a challenge to stay inspired and driven for an entire season. We know that the effectiveness of any sport group to achieve and realize their goals is dependent upon each athlete's ability to understand, accept, and actualize team philosophy, standards and goals. Even when the game is a loss, it can still be a win!

KEYS TO TEAM SUCCESS

- Play hard at all times...games and practices.
- Never be complacent...always strive to be a better player, teammate and individual.
- Channel emotions into determination, rather than frustration.
- Win or lose, have class.
- Be willing to be taught...you can learn from everyone.
- Focus on a goal and don't hold back.
- Prepare for success with proper nutrition and conditioning.
- Be punctual and dependable.
- Act responsible and appropriate.
- Have a passion for the game!

GOAL SETTING

Players may be asked to come up with several goals for themselves for the upcoming year. One of these goals should NOT be sports related. We would like parents to talk to their kids about setting appropriate goals.

TEAM GOALS

Below are several example goals;

- Get along with ALL members of the team
- Communicate well with ALL players on the team
- Make Friends with ALL members of the team
- Maintain a positive attitude
- To work hard at practices and tournaments
- Experience game success!

The players know that if we can get along with one another and develop a bond as a team it will lead to team success on the field.

PLAYER EXPECTATIONS – Development Players/Teams Progress Up To Rep Teams

- **COME READY TO PLAY** - If a practice is scheduled for 6pm, it means you need to be ready to play ball (not pulling into the parking lot) at 6pm. Always dress warm for practices. Long sleeves and/or sweatshirts, so always have them with you. Be prepared to slide at every practice. You are asked to be at the game field and ready to start normally 45 minutes prior to game time. It is asked that your uniform be worn properly.
- **HUSTLE** – Once a player hits the field they are expected to hustle. Run from station to station at practice. During games, please run on and off the field.
- **FOCUS** - Never talk when a coach is talking.
- **TEAMWORK** - All communication between teammates must be of a positive nature. The coaching staff will handle disciplinary issues.
- **HAVE AN OPEN MIND** - When you are corrected by a coach, accept it and apply it. If you have a question about instruction, or do not understand something, ask a coach immediately.
- **HAVE CLASS** – Respect your teammates, coaches, opponents, umpire, your equipment, and yourself. Do not argue with the umpires or an umpire's call. Do not engage an opponent. Your coaches will communicate with umpires and opposing teams. Please leave the dugout as clean or cleaner than it was when we arrived. Take pride in what your uniform represents.
- **CONTROL YOUR EMOTIONS** Please do not react with the display of temper, or swearing during practices or games. Coaches also will not use inappropriate language in the presence of players.
- **ACADEMIC SUCCESS** – Playing sports is a privilege, not a right. Athletics are just a game – academics are life. Try to be serious about your work ethic as a student.
- **AVOID MENTAL ERRORS** - Learn your signs and team strategies. A number of physical mistakes are unavoidable; however mental repeated mistakes should be reduced.
- **NO EXCUSES!** – Always accept personal responsibility, learn from them all.
All of this becomes Fun!!

HITTING

We will work with the players to limit strikeouts as we would like to have a team that makes consistent contact with the ball that pressures the defense. We believe in letting the girls swing away and hit something hard and bunting when the situation calls for it and/or the opportunity presents itself. We also recognize the importance of “going with the pitch” – pulling inside pitches, hitting middle pitches through the middle of the diamond, and driving outside pitches to the opposite field. We do not believe in “cloning” hitters, yet we understand that certain fundamentals of hitting are “absolutes” – these fundamentals must be adapted to your style to achieve maximum success. Our approach to hitting must be aggressive, yet disciplined.. Make every at bat a quality at bat for you and your team.

PITCHING- CATCHING

Aggressively attack the strike zone. Understand that there is no defense against a base on balls. They try to establish in the umpire's mind that you have control of the strike zone and work ahead in the count as often as possible. Try to identify and exploit a hitter's weaknesses through change of speed and pitch location.

BASE RUNNING/SLIDING

Our teams will run the bases aggressively. We believe that games are won and lost many times on the base paths. A team with an aggressive base running plan can have a devastating effect on a defense, often causing them to make errors on even routine plays. Although the rule of thumb that you "never make the first or third out of an inning at third base or home plate" applies to our team on most occasions. There are certain situations when the possible result makes the risk worthwhile. We desire to be unpredictable and ready to exploit any and all weaknesses of our opponent. Each player must be aggressive and able to accurately make split second decisions when the opportunity to advance one or more bases exists.

DEFENSE

Our defense will strive to consistently make the basic plays we are supposed to make. We will work on team defensive communication and playing catch. We believe in the importance of making all of the routine plays. We always try to be aware of the inning, score, number of outs, speed of each base runner and speed & ability of each hitter. Then we can properly position ourselves to execute on each play. We want to realize the importance of backing up all plays and all potential plays so that we are never caught out of position and minimize the chance that an error will result in a run for our opponent. Do understand that a number of physical mistakes are unavoidable, however our goal is to avoid mental mistakes. Learn to understand and properly execute all defensive responsibilities and strategies.

PLAYER GOALS

NAME:

DATE:

Each player will list 5 goals they have for the upcoming season.

The goals should all be attainable because the goals should challenge players' commitment, attitude, and effort.

Enjoy Your Season!!