

2026

# Spring Lake Park Fastpitch



SLPSA

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Spring Lake Park Softball Association  
[www.slpfastpitch.com](http://www.slpfastpitch.com)

# Spring Lake Park Panthers Fastpitch Softball SLPSA Handbook

*Please Note: Every effort has been made to ensure this handbook is accurate as of the date of printing. As the year progresses, the SLPSA Board may have to make changes in response to changing circumstances. This document is tailored towards our 8U – 16U summer travel season teams. Please inquire about changes in procedure for the Fall season.*

## 1. Mission Statement

### Mission

To offer a community-based fastpitch softball program that allows opportunities for all Spring Lake Park female athletes to learn and enjoy fastpitch softball.

### Vision

Provide a fastpitch softball program that teaches fastpitch softball fundamentals in a fun and supportive learning environment by promoting team play, providing individual skill development opportunities (physical & mental), and developing competitive teams regardless of age or level of play.

### Values

- Fun: Foster a positive environment that promotes joy and love of the game
- Teamwork: Build strong relationships to accomplish shared goals
- Sportsmanship: Demonstrate respect and fairness in all aspects of the game
- Inclusivity: Promote a diverse and inclusive culture that is welcoming and accessible
- Integrity: Operate with honesty and highest degree of ethical conduct in everything we do
- Discipline: Embody a growth mindset and strive for excellence both on and off the field

## 2. Board of Directors

The current list of Directors and Board Roles and Responsibilities can be found [here](#) on the SLPSA website.

### 3.1 Contact Information:

- Email: [SLPSoftball@gmail.com](mailto:SLPSoftball@gmail.com)
- Website: [www.slpfastpitch.com](http://www.slpfastpitch.com)

## 3. Player Eligibility

### 3.1. Player Residence Requirement

The player must live in the area served by, or attend school in, Spring Lake Park School District 16 (the “SLPSA Area”). Players outside of the SLPSA Area may apply to the Board for permission to be evaluated for an SLPSA team by following the Waiver Request guidelines outlined in section 2.7 of this Handbook.

### 3.2 Player Age Eligibility

Players must be enrolled in 1<sup>st</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade and play in their age division 8U-16U outlined in Table 1 unless one of the scenarios in Section 3.2.1 applies. SLPSA is a member of the [MN Softball Big West Fastpitch League](#), which adheres to the rules of the USA Softball governing body. USA Softball rules determine age levels referenced in Table 1. If you need further clarification, please enter your child’s birthdate in the [MN Softball Age Eligibility Calculator](#).

**Table 1 | Player Age Division Classification By Birthdate**

The chart below is for the 2026 playing season which starts on September 1, 2025.

Match month (top line) and box with year of birth. The player's age and division is indicated on the right.

SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	AGE	DIVISION
2019	2019	2019	2019	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	5	6U
2018	2018	2018	2018	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	6	6U
2017	2017	2017	2017	2018	2018	2018	2018	2018	2018	2018	2018	7	8U
2016	2016	2016	2016	2017	2017	2017	2017	2017	2017	2017	2017	8	8U
2015	2015	2015	2015	2016	2016	2016	2016	2016	2016	2016	2016	9	10U
2014	2014	2014	2014	2015	2015	2015	2015	2015	2015	2015	2015	10	10U
2013	2013	2013	2013	2014	2014	2014	2014	2014	2014	2014	2014	11	12U
2012	2012	2012	2012	2013	2013	2013	2013	2013	2013	2013	2013	12	12U
2011	2011	2011	2011	2012	2012	2012	2012	2012	2012	2012	2012	13	14U
2010	2010	2010	2010	2011	2011	2011	2011	2011	2011	2011	2011	14	14U
2009	2009	2009	2009	2010	2010	2010	2010	2010	2010	2010	2010	15	16U
2008	2008	2008	2008	2009	2009	2009	2009	2009	2009	2009	2009	16	16U
2007	2007	2007	2007	2008	2008	2008	2008	2008	2008	2008	2008	17	18U
2006	2006	2006	2006	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007	18	18U

NOTE: This age chart is for USA Softball, and only for the 2026 season (September 1, 2025 through August 31, 2026.)

An athlete may apply to be evaluated at the age division ahead of their age division with the intent to play up for the season per the guidelines outlined in section 2.2.1 of this Handbook.

**3.2.1 Age Division Rule Exceptions**

In select situations, the SLPSA Board will consider allowing players to be evaluated with the age division ahead of their age division with the intent to play up an age level for the season.

**Scenario 1: Play up request by an athlete**

- A player requests to play up and both the player’s age level & the age level above have sufficient numbers with no need to balance roster sizes.
- A player who is granted permission from the Board to be evaluated at a higher age level must:
  - Attend 1 or more evaluation session(s) at the level they wish to be evaluated for
- Players may only request to play up one age level above their designated age division based on the guidelines outlined in Section 2.2 of this Handbook.
- At evaluations, the player will be scored at their age level as well as at the age level above, under section 10.5 of this Handbook. A player must score in the top six (6) of the age above evaluation to make the age above team for the summer season and cannot be a coach’s selection. If the play up player does not score in the top six (6) players of the age above evaluations, their score that was obtained during their age level evaluations will be utilized to appropriately place the player on a team within their age level.
- If a player plays up an age level one year, the player must be granted permission to be evaluated at the next age level each year and score high enough in the evaluators’ ranking to be placed on the higher age level team again.

**Scenario 2: Play up(s) needed to balance roster sizes due to registration numbers**

- Players are invited to be evaluated at the age level above when it does not have sufficient numbers and/or there is a need to balance roster sizes across one and/or both age groups.
- The Board may also consider creating hybrid/mixed age teams to accommodate roster size needs based on registration numbers.

- All players one level below may be considered to be evaluated to play one age level up with prior approval of the Board. A player who is granted permission to be evaluated at a higher age level must:
  - Attend 1 or more evaluation session(s) at the level they are being evaluated for
  - Exceptions may be made for scheduling conflicts
- At evaluations, players will be scored at their age level as well as at the age level above, under section 10.5 in this Handbook. A play up player must score in the top 15 of the age above evaluations to be considered for the top higher age level team.
- There is no guarantee that a play up player being evaluated at a higher age level will be assigned to a team at the higher age level.
- If a player is selected for the higher age level team, they are not required to accept the invitation. In a case where an invite is not accepted, the board will invite the next highest scoring athlete based on their evaluation score.
- If an insufficient number of eligible players opt to be evaluated at a higher age level, the Board may invite the highest scoring player(s) from their evaluation to play on the lowest team for the age above. Players are under no obligation to accept the invitation and may remain at the appropriate age level. If the highest scoring player declines the invite, the Board may continue to invite the next highest scoring player(s) until the teams are balanced.
- If a player plays up an age level one year, the player must be granted permission to be evaluated at the next age level each year and score high enough in the evaluators' ranking to be placed on the higher age level team again.

### **3.3 Moving away during the season**

A player, who makes a traveling team and moves out of the SLPSA Area or leaves a Spring Lake Park School in mid-year, may finish out the season with her team.

### **3.4 Split Families**

If a player lives in a split family, the player may elect to participate in the SLPSA program based on either Parent and/or Guardian's residence.

### **3.5 Joining after registration deadline**

A player may only join a team after the registration deadline with the permission of the board.

### **3.6 Waiver Requests**

Non-District 16 players may apply to the Board for permission to be evaluated for an SLPSA team if they first obtain a completed [Minnesota Softball Community Waiver from](#) their home fastpitch community for which they would otherwise be eligible to play and that waiver meets the USA Softball waiver criteria. Waiver requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Board.

Once an incoming waiver request has been approved by the board, that player's participation is continuous in the program for subsequent years and they are thereafter treated as an SLP player, unless there is a gap in enrollment. Players are still required to obtain the annual MN Softball waiver policy form signed by the waiver out community.

District 16 athletes who are cut during evaluations, and SLPSA does not have another SLPSA team for them to play on, may request a waiver to play with another community.

#### 4. Level of Commitment

SLPSA has high expectations for its teams, coaches, and players. Here is what you can expect:

- The summer season:
  - March: Tryouts
  - April: Practice
  - May thru July: League games and tournaments
  - Early August: Possible National Tournaments
- Practices are generally scheduled one (1) or two (2) week nights per week for an hour and a half
- League Games are scheduled:
  - One (1) night a week for 8U
  - One (1) night a week in May and two (2) nights a week in June for 10U; more games may be added
  - Two (2) nights a week for 12U, 14U, 16U and 18U; more games may be added
- Tournaments are generally held one (1) to three (3) weekends per month for 10U – 18U
- Most tournaments are two (2)-day events with multiple games per day. Some may include Friday night. Teams generally play at least three (3) games in a tournament.
- Sunday morning games are likely.
- Parents/Guardians must volunteer at the Panther Classic, with additional association opportunities or pay the determined volunteer fee.
- Every effort is made to provide families with a schedule of practices and games early in the season. The expectation is that you will be able to eliminate most scheduling conflicts if provided with adequate time to make adjustments. The goal should be to attend every practice and game. If a conflict does exist, it is the parent's responsibility to inform the coaching staff as soon as possible.

##### 4.1 Playing Time

Every player is a contributing member of the team. Players are challenged in practice sessions and are given opportunities in game situations to display their fastpitch softball skills. All players get playing time, but some players may get more than others. Playing time is determined by several factors including:

- Fastpitch Softball skill
- Match-ups
- Attitude
- Attendance
- Hustle at practice and games
- Work Ethic

At 8U and 10U, the fastpitch softball experience will primarily be focused on teaching and developing players' skills within the "team" context.

- League Games:
  - Equal playing time & participants should play in all games (not just bat)
  - Experience all positions (IF, OF, P\*, C\*)
  - Be placed in positions where players can experience success
  - Everyone must bat
- Tournament Games:
  - Equal playing time & participants should play in all games (not just bat)
  - Players play multiple positions over the course of the weekend.
  - Be placed in positions where players can experience success & *give the team in the best chance to win.*
  - Everyone must bat

At 12U and above, there will be an increased emphasis on the players and team performing at a higher, more competitive level. Playing time is at the discretion of the coach however, the expectation at this level is that all players should get playtime.

- 12U League Games:
  - Equal playing time & participants should play in all games (not just bat).
  - First ½ of the season
    - Experience all positions (IF, OF, P\*, C\*).
    - Be placed in positions where players can experience success.
    - Everyone Bats.
  - Second ½ of the season
    - One (1) game each night players should be placed in their natural positions, and positions where they likely will play as they grow as softball players, thus giving the team the best chance to win.
    - Be placed in positions where players can experience success.
    - Everyone bats.
- 12U Tournament Games:
  - Participants should play in all games (not just bat).
  - Be placed in positions where players can experience success & give the team the best chance to win.
  - Everyone Bats.
- 14U -16U League Games:
  - All participants should play in all games (not just bat)
  - Players should be placed in positions where players can experience success & give the team the best chance to win.
- 14U – 16U Tournament Games:
  - All participants should play during the weekend.
  - Players should be placed in positions where players can experience success & give the team the best chance to win.
  - Some Tournaments do allow the option of a nine (9) person roster. It is at the discretion of the coach if they chose to play a nine (9) person roster. In this scenario, not all players are required to play or bat in a given game.

\*Rotations within pitching and catching positions for league games may vary based on athlete interest and level of play the team is designated for. SLPSA believes it is important that all athletes, especially those at the younger age levels (8U/10U), have the opportunity to experience these key positions however we understand it may not be for everyone. A team with a lower level of play designation (B/C) with less experienced players may allow for more opportunity to rotate these positions compared to a team with a higher level of play designation (A) with more experienced players. Coaches should make decisions regarding pitching and catching based on team needs, and communicate the approach with parents and athletes accordingly throughout the season.

Modifications to playing time are allowed because of injury, practice/game attendance issues or other disciplinary reasons. Coaches should provide player and parents with a verbal warning if playtime will vary from the above-mentioned expectations for disciplinary reasons. Coaches should be clear in their communication with players and parents about expected playing time so that expectations can be managed.

Please do not forget that coaches are volunteers – respect their decisions. If you have questions about your player, discuss them with your coach in private. SLPSA requests that you arrange your conversations with the

coach at least one (1) day after a game – not on game day. If you do not feel comfortable speaking with your coach, the next course of action is to consult your team liaison.

## 5. Registration

Registration is an online process at [www.slpfastpitch.com](http://www.slpfastpitch.com). A one-time payment or installments are available to families paying by credit card.

Late registrations will only be accepted with permission of the Board. If you are applying for a modified payment plan, please reach out to the [SLPSA email](#) to discuss options.

## 6. Cost

Please see the website [www.slpfastpitch.com](http://www.slpfastpitch.com) for the current season's fees.

- Head coaches are credited one free player registration to be used towards their child's registration fees at the end of the season.
- Family Max is in effect for families with three (3) or more athletes participating in the 8U – 18U ages. The family max is 85% of the highest total registration fee. Subject to change with the advent of more competitive teams at the higher levels.

### 6.1. Financial Assistance

A family can apply for a modified payment plan. If approval is granted, a code will be provided for that family to register online. At this time, SLPSA is not in a financial position to offer athlete scholarships.

### 6.2. Refunds

Teams depend on every player in order to keep up their intense schedules. Teams have a limited number of players and if a player leaves during the season, another child may have been deprived of an opportunity to play. SLPSA also incurs expenses related to each player that cannot be recovered if a child leaves. For these reasons, refunds shall not be given for any portion of a player's registration. Refunds shall be provided to players that do not make a team as a result of evaluations, minus the \$35 nonrefundable evaluation fee.

### 6.3. Volunteer Deposit

The Panther Classic is usually held in May and is one of the largest fundraisers during the season. Hosting a successful tournament is critical to keeping player registration fees down and requires a substantial commitment of time and energy by volunteers.

To ensure the support needed, each family must provide a check for \$200 as a Volunteer Deposit at Evaluations. The deposit check shall be destroyed after the family meets the minimum volunteer commitment. The minimum commitment is one shift at the Panther Classic or another sanctioned volunteer opportunity e.g. Team Manager or GameChanger administrator. These volunteer hours are based per family not per player.

Deposit checks shall be cashed for all families who have not met their volunteer commitment. A pro-rated amount will not be refunded if a family partially fulfills the volunteer requirements.

Board members, Head Coaches and Full Time Assistant Coaches (up to two per team) will receive full volunteer credit for their time spent helping in all aspects of the SLPSA program.

#### 6.4. Uniforms

When playing as an SLPSA team, players shall only wear uniforms authorized by SLPSA. SLPSA provides uniform tops to all athletes as a part of the registration fee. Players are responsible for purchasing the additional required uniform attire including pants, belt and socks at their retailer of choice.

- Additional uniform items
  - Black Softball pants
  - Socks (color to be determined prior to the start of the season)
  - Belt (color to be determined prior to the start of the season)

SLPSA follows a 2-year jersey cycle. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, jerseys will be ordered for returning players on as needed basis. (outgrown, lost, poor condition etc.) Players will have the opportunity to indicate this need during the registration process.

If teams unanimously decide to wear matching belts or socks of another color (white socks, blue belt, etc.) that is allowed as long as core uniform elements are worn (jersey and pants).

Each player is responsible for additional equipment including fielding mask, softball helmet with cage, cleats, glove and bat (USA certified softball).

#### 6.5. Other Costs

##### 6.5.1 Evaluation Fee

The Evaluation fee is included in the registration fee. This helps the SLPSA recover the cost of hiring independent evaluators and paying for facilities. Players that are cut as a result of evaluations shall be refunded their registration fee minus a \$35 non-refundable evaluation fee.

##### 6.5.2 Admission to tournaments

Most fastpitch softball tournaments do not require an admission fee for spectators. In the event that there is an admission fee for spectators at a tournament, those are the responsibility of the families or other spectators.

##### 6.5.3 Team Apparel

SLPSA offers sweatshirts, t-shirts, and other branded items for sale throughout the season for purchase online. These items are optional. The link shall be circulated when the online store is open for orders. A small portion of the proceeds go back to SLPSA.

##### 6.5.4 Additional Tournaments:

- 8U – As a part of your registration, SLPSA pays for the Panther Classic, the State Tournament and (1) TBD additional invitational tournament. Any other tournament would be at the expense of the families on the team.
- 10U & 12U – As a part of your registration, SLPSA pays for the 3 guaranteed tournaments, the Panther Classic, two (2) invitational tournaments, State Qualifier, and the State Tournament if a team qualifies. Any other invitational tournaments would be at the expense of the families on the team.
- 14U – As a part of your registration, SLPSA pays for three (3) invitational tournaments, State Qualifier and the State Tournament if a team qualifies. Any other invitational tournaments would be at the expense of the families on the team.

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- 16U – As a part of your registration, SLPSA pays for three (3) invitational tournaments, State Qualifier and the State Tournament if a team qualifies. Any other invitational tournaments would be at the expense of the families on the team.
- Nationals:
  - SLPSA will pay for the registration fee & any sanctioning fees in the event a team earns a national berth by finishing 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> in the “gold” or “silver” bracket of a tournament
  - The attending team will be expected to cover:
    - The Gate Fee (approx. \$200)
    - Pins (\$3-\$5/pin - optional)
    - Gift Bags & Parade Outfits
  - National Call up Procedure:
    - Attending Teams coach identifies a need.
    - Attending Teams coach meets with the coach of the potential call up to inquire about their recommendation.
    - SLPSA board approves the National Call up.

### 6.5.6 All Star Nominations:

SLPSA will pay 75% of the player registration fee. All other associated fees are the responsibility of the family of the player nominated.

## 7. SLPSA Annual Expenses

Includes:

- |                       |                                 |                                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ● Facilities Rental   | ● Postage and printing          | ● Leagues fees                      |
| ● Insurance           | ● Umpires                       | ● Community Engagement              |
| ● Equipment           | ● Background checks for coaches | ● Athlete & Head Coach Uniform Tops |
| ● Trainings & Clinics | ● Coaches Salaries              | ● Field Maintenance                 |
| ● Website             | ● Evaluations                   | ● Field Maintenance                 |

## 8. Fundraising

Teams shall not carry out fundraising activities or seek sponsorship without Board permission. The Board may grant permission upon request if, in the opinion of the SLPSA Board, the money raised will be spent for a purpose consistent with SLPSA’s mission statement.

Throughout the year, SLPSA will provide fundraising opportunities for the entire organization to participate in. Funds raised through those initiatives will be spent on items that benefit the broader SLPSA organization including but not limited to: offsetting increasing costs to run the program, additional team equipment needs, incremental training opportunities, facilities needs etc. As such, participation is highly encouraged. Details regarding fundraising expectations for the season are to be shared during the February Parent Meeting.

## 9. No Competing Tournaments

No director or coach may organize any fastpitch softball tournament for USA Softball recognized teams that is held between April – July, outside of tournaments sponsored by SLPSA unless otherwise approved by the Board.

## 10. Evaluations (10U – 18U)

### 10.1 Purpose

The purpose of evaluations is to assign players to teams based on an objective assessment of skills and abilities to form a successful team. It is not possible to accommodate individual parent requests for team assignments.

Evaluations therefore rely on independent evaluators to assess players' skills and abilities as they perform drills and modified scrimmage activities.

### **10.2 Required Participation & Scheduling**

Evaluations are required for all team placements regardless of number players registered. This is subject to change at the discretion of the SLPSA Board.

The Board shall determine the dates, times, and locations for evaluations. Evaluations are normally held shortly after the player registration deadline so that teams can be formed as quickly as possible. The SLPSA website shall be updated frequently to provide schedule details.

### **10.3 When two or more teams are formed at an age level**

If 20 or more players registered, then two teams will be created and so on and so forth in 10 to 12 player increments subject to coach availability.

### **10.4 Evaluation Rules**

Evaluations are required for all teams registered (10U-18U) in the program regardless of the number trying out. This is subject to change at the discretion of the SLPSA board. A non-refundable evaluation fee of \$35 per athlete is paid with registration fees.

All Evaluation judging shall be conducted offsite by a fully independent evaluator, Minnesota Fastpitch Academy. Evaluators are selected based on their knowledge of the game. The Board shall exercise due diligence to ensure that there are not any conflicts of interest between the evaluators and the players/families participating in the evaluations. There shall be no less than two evaluators per evaluation group and may be up to four evaluators.

10U and 12U will each have one evaluation session. The evaluation session will be no more than 3 hours in total. Players will receive an evaluation number to pin to their shirt during evaluations. Athletes should arrive at least 15 minutes prior to their evaluation time. Team placements for the entire season are dependent upon the evaluation results.

A player may request to be evaluated with a different age level due to a scheduling conflict if the evaluation committee is notified of the conflict at least 48 hours prior to evaluations. In this case, the player will be allowed to participate in the evaluation of another age level and their score will be transferred to their appropriate age level. The score will not be changed or altered as part of this transfer. That player will be ranked as if they were evaluated with their age level and would be subject to rules described in section (d) player assignments along with all other players from that age level.

In the instances where a player is being evaluated with a different age level or at a different time, there is no way to ensure that the player receives the same score had they tried out with their age level. No modification to a player's evaluation score shall be considered. The player and family choosing to be evaluated with a different age level group/time assumes the risk that scoring could affect the overall player placement of that player on a team.

In the event that a returning player is unable to attend evaluations because of illness, injury or an SLPSA Board excused conflict the athlete will be placed with the majority of similar situated peers who they played with the previous season. New players who have not previously participated in evaluations will be placed on the lowest team. Athletes are not able to be a coach's pick without a score.

To create full neutrality there will be no head coaches or board members present at evaluations. The only scoring considered in the ranking of the athletes shall be the scoring of the judges. It is unacceptable to approach any coach, board member, or evaluator to dispute evaluation scores.

Parents may drop off their player or they may wait outside the facility. Parents will not be allowed inside the facility to observe evaluations.

**10.6 Scoring**

MFA will use scoring sheets that allows evaluators to score, make notes while observing each player in an effort to appropriately construct each team. All evaluators’ scores are final and not open to debate. The independent evaluators’ final scores and rankings are reviewed only by the Board Evaluation Committee. This committee reviews “player readiness” and total roster sizes to determine any need for additional coaches.

**10.7 Team Sizes**

The maximum number of players on a team is 14, however we strive for 11-12 players per team for maximum player engagement. For the SLPSA program, team sizes are based on the number of players who register. Typically, Table 2 is used as the guideline for making team size decisions.

**Table 2 | Team Size Guidelines**

Number of Candidates	Team	Players
19 or Fewer	One team only	12-14
20	A	10
	B	10
21	A	10
	B	11
22	A	11
	B	11
23	A	11
	B	12
24	A	12
	B	12
25	A	12
	B	13
26	A	13
	B	13
27	A	12
	B	12
28	A	12
	B	12
29	A	12
	B	12
30 or more	A	10
	B	10
	C	10

Note, team labels such as A and B distinguish the top team and second team within our association and do not determine MN Softball playing level. MN Softball levels are assigned annually based on factors such as registration numbers, team makeup, and athlete experience.

**10.8 Player Assignments**

Evaluation results by rank order are used to place a specified number of evaluators picks players on a team depending on number of candidates as outlined in Table 3 below. The remaining selections are by coaches’ choice. A player must score in the top 20 based on the evaluations to be considered for the “A team” at a particular age level. All coaches’ selections will be accepted pending approval by the evaluation committee. The evaluation committee is defined as the Board President and/or 1-2 other board members without conflicting interests at an age level.

For 10U-18U: If 20 or more players register, the top 6 will go to Team A, except that the Team B head coach has the right to keep their child on their own team. The Team A coach then chooses additional players. The A team coaches’ player must score in the top 15 or have evaluation committee approval to be selected as a coaches’ pick. Of the remaining players, the top 6 go to Team B. The Team B coach may then choose additional players to bring the Team B total up to 10. If the skill level and registration numbers support a C team, after the A and B team selections are made, the remaining top five go to Team C. The Team C coach may then choose additional players to bring the Team C total up to 10.

**Table 3 | Player Assignment Guidelines**

Number of Candidates	Team	Positions Determined by Evaluation scores	Positions selected By the coach
19 or Fewer	One team only	8	4-6
20	A (10)	6	4
	B (10)	All Remaining	
21	A (10)	6	4
	B (11)	All Remaining	
22	A (11)	7	4
	B (11)	All Remaining	
23	A (11)	7	4
	B (12)	All Remaining	
24	A (12)	8	4
	B (12)	All Remaining	
25	A (12)	8	4
	B (13)	All Remaining	
26	A (13)	8	5
	B (13)	All Remaining	
27	A (12)	8	4
	B (12)	8	4
28	A (12)	8	4
	B (12)	8	4
29	A (12)	8	4
	B (12)	8	4
30 or more	A (10)	6	4

	B (10)	6	4
	C (10)	All Remaining	

**10.9 Results Announcement**

The evaluation committee shall communicate results to the head coaches and the results will be posted by player first name and last initial on the [SLPSA website](#) in a timely manner following evaluations

Rosters are posted for all teams even if a head coach has not been identified. Should a team not have an identified head coach by the specified deadline on the results web site, athletes will be cut and the impacted players/families will receive a full refund minus the \$35 non-refundable evaluation fee and any online transaction fees.

**11. Pairings or Special Selection**

When a family has multiple players at the same age level, the family has the option to elect to have both players placed on the same team. If electing to place both players on the same team, both players will receive the score of the lowest scoring of their two players at the completion of the evaluation process. Both will then be ranked at their age level along with all the other players according to that lowest score and fall under the previous selection rules.

Alternatively, the family may opt to allow their players to be evaluated as individuals with the understanding that they could be placed on separate teams, or that one player is cut while the other is placed on a team. The family’s preference must be communicated prior to evaluations.

**12. Coaching**

**13.1 Coaching Expectations**

To receive full consideration to coach with SLPSA coaches must:

- Complete the online registration application completely.
- Pass all coach training requirements.
- Attend player evaluations, required coaches meetings and coach’s clinics offered by the organization. Dates and times will be communicated via email to the email address listed on your account.
- Complete online concussion training.
- Complete online ACE training
- Criminal background check will be completed and paid for by SLPSA

**13.2 Coach Selection**

Prospective coaches must submit an application, available at SLPSA’s website, to the board by the posted deadline. The President identifies board members who shall interview all coaching applicants (new and returning) each year. Coaches are selected based on the following criteria:

- Demonstrated previous coaching experience and/or coaching experience with SLPSA
- Knowledge of fastpitch softball
- Player and parent feedback from previous years
- Commitment to the mission of the SLPSA
- Discussions with past players, coaches, or parents

The interview team shall make final coach recommendations at future board meeting for approval by the Board.

For situations where the coach selected for the A team, has a player competing in evaluations and that player does not score high enough to automatically be on the A team the coach may select his or her player as a

coach's pick if that player scores in the Top 20, the board shall evaluate the circumstance, taking into consideration evaluator input and approve the player as a coach's pick. In instances where the player is not approved for the A team, a discussion between the A and B coaches, and the board will be had to explore possible coaching changes. This is designed to ensure that players play on the team best suited for their skill level.

Coaches selected as B team coach who have a player who makes the A team as a result of evaluations, have the option to opt out of coaching, or after requesting the approval of the board, their player may play on the B team.

In the event that no one applies for a certain age level by the conclusion of evaluations, the board will post that coach opening on the SLPSA Website and perform due diligence to find a coach. Any coach stepping forward after the conclusion of evaluations will be considered on a first come, first serve basis. If no coach can be secured by the posted deadline following evaluations, there will not be a team.

Assistant coaches are selected by the head coach after evaluations have been conducted and team formations are final.

### **13.3 Background Checks**

The Board conducts annual background checks on all head and assistant coaches. There are no exceptions.

Once head coaches' selections are complete they are required to complete a concussion training course, the ACE exam, and a background check through USA Softball. SLPSA requires all coaches to pass background screening without any "flags" as identified by USA Softball. For information on the background screening process and what constitutes a "flag" please reference the USA Softball background check policy and disclaimer. Coaches identified with a "flag" will be asked to step down from their role with the program.

At the conclusion of the team formations all Assistant Coaches are required to complete the same concussion and background-screening if they will be participating in practices or sitting on the team bench during games.

SLPSA allows three adults in the dugout during games. One head coach and two assistant coaches.

### **13.4 Coach's Code of Conduct**

The head and assistant coaches must sign the Coach's Code of Conduct as well as a coaching contract.

### **13.5 Coach Development**

Varieties of online resources exist for coach development, and SLPSA works to ensure coaches have development opportunities. Please see the coach's resources portion of the SLPSA website for more information.

At the end of the season, the three objectives for each child in our sports program are:

- Did the child have fun?
- Did the child learn and progress in their chosen sport?
- Do they want to come back and play again?

### **13.6 Coach-Board Relationships**

SLPSA cannot exist without good coaches. SLPSA is always eager to assist coaches in any possible way. SLPSA shall strive to ensure that coaches receive the resources needed to accomplish success in line with the mission statement of the organization, within reason.

### **13.6.1 Team Liaison**

A board member will be assigned to each team as a Team Liaison. The Team Liaison will meet with the team parents at the beginning of the season (usually at the first practice), and shall attempt to attend team games or practices from time to time during the season. The Team Liaison should be the parents and coaches first point of contact for any questions or concerns.

### **13.6.2 Attendance at Board Meetings**

The Board may invite coaches to attend Board meetings during the year. The purpose of these meetings is to encourage dialog between coaches and the board, and to discuss any concerns or questions the coaches have about the program. Board meetings are an open forum and coaches and parents are welcome to attend any meeting throughout the year, subject to closed voting meetings specifically for board member only business.

## **13.7 Coach-Parent Relationship**

Coaches and parents must work together to create the best possible experience for the children on the team. Children learn what they are taught, but they also learn from what they see, including how their coaches and parents behave and interact.

Sometimes a parent will disagree with a coach's decisions and/or will be unhappy with the way their child is being treated. When these situations arise, it is best to discuss them with the coach - but not when the coach or parent may still be under the stress of the immediate incident. The Parent's Code of Conduct describes SLPSA expectations of parents and includes: I will respect coaches and their authority during practices and games and will never question, discuss or confront coaches at a game, and will take the time to speak with coaches at an agreed upon time and place.

Here are some additional suggestions for working out disagreements:

- Remember that coaches are genuinely trying to do the best thing for the team and for each child. Fastpitch Softball is competitive, and coaches will make lineups and rotations based on giving the team a win in a given situation that aligns with the aforementioned playing time guidelines.
- Wait until the day after an incident before mentioning it to the coach. Sometimes "sleeping on it" will give you a better perspective.
- You can disagree with a coach's decision without attacking the coach on a personal level. Both the parent and the coach need to treat each other with respect, even if they disagree.
- Conversations between a coach and a parent should remain private. Neither the coach nor the parent should discuss their disagreement with other parents or with players. To do so can easily lead to feelings of "ganging up" and make it more difficult to resolve the problem.
- If the problem cannot be resolved after the initial conversation, then the parent and the coach should ask the team's Board Liaison for help. If you do not know who your Board Liaison is, consult with the SLPSA President. The Board Liaison will arrange for a Board member to meet with the parent and the coach to discuss the issue.
- If the issue still cannot be resolved, then the parent can initiate a formal complaint. This should happen very rarely. The complaint process will always produce a decision, but it may be a decision neither the coach nor parent likes. The individuals can usually find better results if they work things out themselves.
- Do not involve your children. Your disagreement with the coach is for you and the coach to work out. Kids see, listen, and talk. Keep them out of it.
- Never use email to complain to a coach. Email is a great communication tool, but it does not work well when emotions kick in. There is a tendency for people to put things in emails that they would never say to someone's face. It is also very easy to misunderstand an email, and read it as a personal attack, when no

attack was intended. Each angry response leads to another, in rapid succession. Finally, emails are simply too easy to pass along to others. Disagreements between a parent and a coach are private matters. Trust between the parties will completely and immediately be destroyed if on side broadcasts their version of things “to the world”.

- Remember: if you cannot work things out privately, bring in a Board member for help.

### **13.8 Team Meetings**

SLPSA encourages coaches to conduct a team meeting at the beginning of the season to set expectations, review schedules and any other housekeeping items. Additionally, coaches may meet with team parents during the season. Some coaches hold individual one-on-one meetings with parents (similar to parent/teach conferences at school). This gives the coach and parent an opportunity to discuss the player’s development, as well as any concerns the parent may have.

## **13. Conflict Resolution**

Dispute between parents, coaches, or Board members are subject to an identical complaint procedure:

- The individuals should try to work things out on their own, privately. See section 13.7 for suggestions.
- If the problem remains, an independent Board member will attempt to mediate the dispute.
- If the problem is unresolved, either party may file a written complaint. Complaint forms are also available from any Board member.
- Following the schedule set out in the complaint form, the Board will give the other party an opportunity to respond in writing.
- The Board will convene a Hearing Committee of three Board members and will announce a date for the hearing of the complaint.
- At the hearing, both parties will have an opportunity to argue their case, and to present letters from others who have personal knowledge of the events giving rise to the complaint. Outsiders will not be permitted to attend the hearing.
- The purpose of the hearing is to resolve the dispute, and the Hearing Committee will encourage the parties to do so. If the parties are unable to agree, then the Hearing Committee will render a written report with 72 hours of the conclusion of the hearing.
- The Hearing Committee report will include a summary of the facts, an explanation of how those facts constituted a violation of the relevant code of conduct, and a recommendation for any sanctions or other consequences they consider appropriate.
- The Board will meet within seven days of the Hearing Committee’s report to decide on the appropriate sanction. The Board may not change the Hearing Committee’s findings of fact but may decide on different sanctions.
- If the final sanctions include removal as a coach, the Board will call a meeting of the team’s parents and coaches. At the meeting, participants may express their views on the coach’s suitability, general character, or any other matter they think might assist the board in making a final decision. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Board will meet privately to render a final decision.
- Within seven days of the Board’s decision, either party may appeal the decision by notifying the President in writing of the reasons for the appeal. The President will give the other party an opportunity to respond in writing. Within seven days of the notice of appeal, the Board will convene an Appeal Hearing. The entire Board will hear the appeal.
- At the Appeal Hearing, the parties may argue why the decision should be changed but may not argue the Hearing Committee misunderstood the facts. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Board will meet in private, and announce their decision.

## **14. Codes of Conduct**

Every player, parent, coach and Board member must read and sign the SLPSA Codes of Conduct. Forms are distributed via the online registration process and are also available on the SLPSA website for reference. Violations of the Codes of Conduct may result in a warning, suspension for participation for a definite or indefinite time, removal from a coaching position, or removal from SLPSA in total.

### **15.1 Player's Code of Conduct**

I recognize that as an athlete in the community, I must conduct myself both on and off the playing field in a way, which exhibits respect for others and myself. I therefore resolve to conduct myself with dignity as an athlete and as a citizen of the community, recognizing and accepting that I:

- Must accept accountability for my behavior and its outcomes.
- Must honor my obligations and promises.
- Must exercise self-control.
- Must be willing to be fair with others in my dealings on and off the playing field.
- Must take pride in my accomplishments, and myself but never at the expense of demeaning another person or group.
- Must respect the efforts of others.
- Must respect authority including, officials, coaches and parents.
- Must be a good sport and acknowledge all good performances including my teammates and my opponents.
- Must treat all fellow teammates and my opponents, as I would like to be treated.
- Must abstain from the use of tobacco, alcohol or drugs.
- Must cooperate with coaches, officials, teammates, and opponents, for without them I would not have an opportunity to participate in Fastpitch Softball.
- Must remember that winning is not everything. Having fun, improving skills, making friends and doing my best are important.
- Must play by the spirit, not just the letter, of the rules of the game and the rules of life.
- Must strive to make my community – whether that is the team on which I play or the community in which I live – better because of my contribution as a team member and as a citizen.

#### **15.1.1 Player Removal/Violation Process**

Violations to the code of conduct may result in a warning, suspension or removal from SLPSA. Coaches will communicate with parents of the player in person or by phone, but follow up with a written follow up to be signed by both parties to ensure parents understand the violation and consequence(s).

Coaches should notify their board representative as well, and if possible, have board member present for meeting with parents. Repeated or escalating offenses can result in either a tournament suspension or removal from SLPSA depending on the severity of the violation.

### **15.2 Parent's Code of Conduct**

Children's sports are supposed to be fun - for the children. Unfortunately, many parents do not realize that their actions, whether verbal or nonverbal, can have a lasting emotional effect on children. Too many children are leaving sports activities because adults unfairly take the fun away. Parents who follow this simple code can help reinforce what sports are all about...BEING FUN FOR EVERYONE.

SLPSA asks that you pledge to be responsible for your words and actions while attending or participating in all youth sports events and shall conform your behavior to the following code of conduct:

- I will not force my child to participate in fastpitch softball. I will try to make it FUN!
- I will teach my child to play by the rules and to resolve conflict without resorting to hostility or violence.

- I will fulfill my volunteer obligation willingly, knowing that the effort I put forth directly impacts my child's SLPSA experience.
- I will inform the coach of any physical disability or ailment that may affect the safety of my child or the safety of others.
- I will teach my child that doing one's best is as important as winning so that my child will never feel defeated by the outcome of the game.
- I will praise my child for competing fairly and trying hard, and make my child feel like a winner every time.
- I will never ridicule or yell at my child for making a mistake or losing a game.
- I will remember that children learn by example. I will applaud good plays by both my child's team and will not be critical of, or embarrass any player, including opposition players.
- I will never question the official's judgement or honesty in public. I recognize that officials are being developed in the same manner as the players.
- I will respect and show appreciation for the volunteers who give their time to fastpitch softball for my child.
- I will never yell, taunt, threaten or inflict physical violence upon any player, coach, official or spectator at any youth fastpitch softball activity. I will refrain from the use of abusive or vulgar language, racial, ethnic or gender-related slurs at any time on the field or any youth fastpitch softball function. I will support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from youth fastpitch softball games.
- I will leave the coaching to the coaching staff. I will encourage my child to play in a manner consistent with the team's strategy or plans.
- I will emphasize skill development and a serious approach to practices and explain how skill development will benefit my child.
- I will attempt to learn about the game of fastpitch softball and the policies of the league so that I may best support my child's development in the game.
- I will communicate all and any concerns regarding inappropriate behavior to the coach or local youth fastpitch softball association representative.
- I will respect coaches and their authority during practices and games and will never question, discuss or confront coaches at a game, and will take the time to speak with coaches at an agreed upon time and place.
- I will insist that my child plays in a safe and healthy environment. I will support a sports environment that is free of alcohol, drugs or tobacco – smokeless or otherwise and I will refrain from their use at all youth sports events.
  - Please refrain from using tobacco products around our athletes. If you must utilize a tobacco product, please do so in a place that is away from our athletes and in designated areas.
- I understand the benefits from participating in a team sport, the commitment, the discipline and the social skills learned and acquired.
- I will remember that my child plays fastpitch softball for her enjoyment, not mine.

### **15.3 Coach's Code of Conduct**

The Spring Lake Park Softball Association is concerned about the conduct of all coaches during games. SLPSA wants to ensure that games are fair, positive and enjoyable experiences for all of the children and adults involved. A fastpitch softball game should be friendly and unifying - a spirited social and athletic occasion for players, coaches, referees and spectators.

To satisfactorily meet these responsibilities, the coach is expected to:

- Know the rules of the sport and abide by them. Instruct team members in the rules of the game and motivate each player to compete according to the rules at all times.

- Support the Spring Lake Park Softball Association and its Board of Directors and will follow the rules and by-laws of the SLPSA.
- Respect the game officials and refrain from questioning their decisions or from addressing them in a loud, disrespectful, or abusive manner.
- Ensure that the fans of his/her team conduct themselves with sportsmanship and maturity at all times while in attendance at game sites. Assist game officials in maintaining control of spectators and players during the games.
- Respect the coaches and players of the opposing team both during the play of the game and at its conclusion, win and lose.
- Teach each player, through personal example, to be humble and generous in victory and proud and courteous in defeat.
- Maintain control of his/her emotions and avoid actions, language and/or gestures that may be interpreted as hostile or humiliating.
- Treat each athlete as an individual and help her to reach full potential.
- Let athletes know the benefits of sport and encourage them to participate in sport throughout their lives.
- Provide a safe environment. Check that equipment and facilities are safe.
- Keep up with the latest coaching techniques and seek continual improvement.
- Ensure training and competition is suitable for the age and fitness level of the athletes.
- Avoid any form of harassment towards your athletes. This includes harassment on gender, pace of origin, color, sexual orientation, religion, political belief, economic status and disability.
- Support a sports environment that is free of alcohol, drugs or tobacco and refrain from their use at all youth sports events.
- Realize, accept, and practice the principle that a team's reputation is build not only on its playing ability but also on its sportsmanship, courtesy, and manner.

Your example is powerful, for better or worse. If you insist on fair play, if you concentrate on your players' enjoyment of the game and their overall, long-term development, and if you support the officials, your players and their parents will notice. If you encourage (or allow) your players to play outside the rules, if you are overly concerned about results, and if you criticize the officials harshly, your players and their parents will notice.

Think about what you are doing during a game! Uphold the Spirit of the Game! If you follow the expectations described above, the spirit of the game will be alive and well in Spring Lake Park and will grow, along with the enjoyment of all.

### **15.4 Board Member Code of Conduct**

Board members are elected by the membership to carry out the day-to-day operations of SLPSA. Their responsibilities, however, are broader. In their dealings with the community, they are also ambassadors of the sport and SLPSA. They serve as role models for coaches and players. Above all, they are entrusted by parents to provide a safe and supportive environment in which children can reach their full potential in fastpitch softball.

To meet these expectations, Board members must:

- Perform the function of their office in good faith and honestly.
- Act in the best interests of SLPSA and take all necessary steps to assist SLPSA in achieving its objectives in such a way that SLPSA's credibility and integrity is not compromised.
- Conduct themselves in a manner worthy of their position within SLPSA.
- Act with due care and diligence in the discharge of their functions for and on behalf of SLPSA.
- Disclose to SLPSA any direct or indirect personal or private business interest that they or their spouses, partners or business associates may have which may conflict with SLPSA's interests.

Board members may not:

- Engage in conduct, behavior or practices, which may be detrimental to the best interest of SLPSA.
- Engage in any conduct, behavior or practices, which may bring SLPSA or the game, into dispute.
- Disclose confidential information entrusted to them or obtained as a result of their position as a Board member, unless legally obliged to do so.
- Disclose information, unless legally obliged to do so, in a way, which may damage the reputation of SLPSA or the game.
- Use their position or privileges as covered persons for private gain or to benefit another person improperly.
- Commit or be responsible for, or party to, any form of discrimination including but not limited to, discrimination on the basis of race, color, gender, sex, ethnic or social origin, religion or political persuasion.
- Do anything, which is likely to intimidate, offend, insult or humiliate any person on the grounds of his or her race, color, gender, sex, ethnic or social origin, religion or political persuasion.
- Harass any person on any grounds whether physical, mental, professional or sexual.
- Accept hospitality, goods or services, which may influence or affect judgment in the conduct of SLPSA affairs.
- Give gifts or perform favors of any kind where it could appear designed to influence others improperly or which may influence or affect judgement in the conduct of SLPSA affairs.

### **15.5 Social Media Code of Conduct**

The Social Media Policy applies to all Board members, athletes, sport coordinators, sport committee members, coaches, employees, and volunteers (“SLPSA Members”) and applies to all social media content posted by SLPSA Members in their professional and personal capacity to the extent the content is related to SLPSA.

SLPSA strives to create a positive and inclusive organization that is dedicated to helping young athletes reach their potential. In furtherance of this goal, SLPSA aspires to engage members of the Spring Lake Park community in positive, honest, transparent, and knowledgeable dialogue about SLPSA through social media.

SLPSA views social media as an important tool for communicating its successes and opportunities for athletic and individual development. SLPSA also views social media as a platform for receiving constructive feedback from the community and for discussing SLPSA’s challenges and opportunities for improvement in a positive and constructive way.

If you do not want your child to be pictured in any social media posts it is your responsibility to let the board know.

#### **15.5.1 Social Media Policy**

All SLPSA Members shall abide by the following guidelines when using social media.

- Be positive and respectful, and always take the high road. When disagreeing with others’ opinions, remain appropriate and polite. If you find yourself in a situation online that is becoming antagonistic, ask the SLPSA Board of Directors for advice on how to disengage from the dialogue in a polite and respectful manner that reflects well on SLPSA.
- Do not post content that would harm SLPSA or damage SLPSA’s reputation. Remember that even while you are on your own personal time, you are a representative of SLPSA, and people may interpret your online postings or social interactions as though they were official SLPSA statements.

- Use good judgment when posting comments on any official SLPSA sites. Bear in mind that your comments can create liability for SLPSA. If you are unsure whether a comment is appropriate to post, either do not post it or obtain prior approval from the Board of Directors.
- Be smart about what you publish. Once something is posted, it exists online forever. Ask yourself, “would I want to see this published in the newspaper or posted on a billboard tomorrow or ten years from now?” If the answer is “no,” do not post.
- Encourage others to engage in positive interactions on social media. If you are concerned about any SLPSA Member’s use of social media, please bring your concerns to the attention of your sport coordinator or a member of the SLPSA Board of Directors.
- Personally identifiable information (information, such as a name and date of birth and/or a street address which, when taken together, can identify a particular individual) should not be disclosed in any manner on official SLPSA social networking sites without the approval of the sport coordinator or SLPSA Board of Directors.

#### **15.5.2 Violations of the Social Media Policy**

The SLPSA Board of Directors shall have the authority to monitor and enforce this Social Media Policy. The SLPSA Board of Directors, and any individual appointed by the Board of Directors, shall have the authority to remove any inappropriate or offensive comments from official SLPSA sites and to block any individual or organization from posting on any official SLPSA social media platform if they determine, in their sole discretion, that such removal or block is in the best interests of SLPSA.

The failure of any SLPSA Member to adhere to this Social Media Policy shall be considered a violation of the SLPSA Code of Conduct, and any SLPSA Member who fails to adhere to this Social Media Policy shall be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of such individual’s involvement in SLPSA, in accordance with the SLPSA Disciplinary Procedures.

#### **15.6 Anti Harassment Policy**

SLPSA is committed to providing an environment free from harassment and will not tolerate discrimination against players, board members, coaches or any other volunteers based on race, creed, color, national origin, or sex. All volunteers while carrying out SLPSA activities are required to abide by this policy. No person will be adversely affected (ie. reduced playing time) with SLPSA as a result of bringing complaints of harassment.

### **16. Weather Related Cancellation Protocol**

The SLPSA Board and all team coaches should be aware of potential weather issues that may affect practices and games. Decisions around weather related cancellations or reschedules will be made at the discretion of the SLPSA Board in collaboration with coaches and will be communicated to families as soon as possible. SLPSA follows guidance from the [Minnesota Youth Sports Association](#) in assessing weather related adjustments to practices and games.

**16.1 Storms and Lightning** If a severe storm approaches the playing area the games and practices may be suspended. In the event a game or practice is suspended, ALL participants MUST clear the field immediately and move into their cars or other permanent shelter.

If there is visible lightning or audible thunder, play must be suspended and all participants are expected to seek shelter. Play cannot be resumed until 30 minutes passes without the presence of lightning or thunder.

In the event of National Weather Service warning (i.e. tornado warning) play must be suspended immediately and everyone must seek shelter.

#### **16.2 Heat**

The following precautions will be followed when there is a possibility of dangerous high heat index.

Heat Index	Warm Weather Guidelines
Up to 89°	No adjustments necessary.
90° - 99°	Additional water breaks; will consider shortened game/practice times.
100° - 104°	Additional water breaks, shortened game/practice times, may also consider canceling.
105°+	Cancel games and practices.

### 16.3 Cold

The following precautions will be followed when there is a possibility of dangerous cold conditions.

Cold Index	Cold Weather Guidelines
46° and higher	No adjustments necessary.
45° and lower	Additional clothing is allowed as long as it's deemed safe by the coaches and/or umpire.
40° and lower	Shortened games and practices.
35° and lower	Cancel games and practices.

### 16.4 Air Quality

The following precautions will be followed for determining activity level when there is a possibility that air quality is unsafe. Check local air quality levels at <https://www.airnow.gov>

Air Quality Index	Outdoor Activity Guidelines
Green	Great day to be active outside; No adjustments necessary.
Yellow	Good day to be active outside; Those who are unusually sensitive to air pollution could have symptoms.
Orange	OK to be active outside; Additional breaks will be taken and less intense activities/drills will be practiced.
Red	Proceed with caution for all outdoor activities; Additional breaks will be taken and less intense activities/drills will be practiced. We may also consider indoor options, rescheduling or another day or canceling if needed.
Purple	Not OK to be active outside; We'll explore indoor options, reschedule for another day or cancel if needed.