

## **RMMSA 2017**

### **How Softball teams are formed**

Year of Birth (YOB) is the primary factor. Ideally all players on the team were born the same year so that they will age across divisions as a unit, avoiding every second year 'orphans'. This maximizes ball skill development and player retention. Teams are sequentially minor then major in each division.

Gender is an important factor in that teams are co-ed through 5-Pitch and are not co-ed for Mites or older players. In the RMMSA, we have far more boys playing than girls. For t-ball and 5-Pitch, girls are assigned to teams in groups of 2 minimum – no girl, nor no boy, plays alone on a team if it can be avoided, efforts are made to avoid that situation.

Starting with T-Ball (age 5, 6) teams are co-ed and are formed including:

- Requests to play with a sibling

- Requests to play with a friend

- Requests to play with a coach (often a family friend or relative)

- Other messy, personal or legal factors affecting who can be with whom

Regarding the 4 year olds – those not attached to a sibling, friend or coach, we twinned up by age and gender to spread them out. In 2017 at least 2 per team will allow the Blastball part to work.

5-Pitch teams are co-ed – When possible, minor and major teams are set with coach's kids. This is somewhat undone by requests to play with siblings, a friend, or a coach.

Mites teams and the older divisions are either Boys or Girls teams, not co-ed.

RMMSA typically runs only Boys teams as we haven't had enough girls to run a girl's team. The RMMSA has placed girls on our Boys teams when we have space and it is only 1 or 2 girls usually. Under Rural Ottawa Softball (ROS), ROMSA, Kenmore, Gloucester, and Greely all have at least as many Girl's softball teams as Boys teams. Kemptville and Winchester boys play Baseball (= hardball) while the Girls play Softball so they have only Girls teams. Most seasons RMMSA refers some (or all) Mite and older girls to ROMSA or Stittsville (SMSA).

YOB and gender are important to forming a Mite team. Specific player skill and knowledge are key to putting together a well rounded team. Positional skill (can pitch, back catch, play a base, shortstop or field) plus general skill in running, hitting and throwing/catching, plus knowledge of the game including the diamond and all its parts, rules of play, process of play and capacity to work with coaches.

Core teams of players and coaches emerge from 5-Pitch to the Mite level and we build that team forward through the seasons, moving to Squirt, Peewee and then Bantam-Midget. Success is kids learning softball, having fun in the fresh air and wanting to come back next year to play more ball.

New players and intermittent (year on, year off etc) players may fit a slot in an ongoing team, or may be assembled as a new team with focus on development. Can **all** teams be of similar skill and talent at the beginning of the season? No.

Can two new teams be set to have similar skill and talent at the beginning of the season? Attempts can be made but only if they are both major or minor teams, and there is a lot of evaluation, and cooperation for swapping kids around. People who 'care' about this issue tend to complain no matter the outcome of the exercise. Sadly.

The issue of strong teams and weak teams was discussed by ROS at the 2016 season wrap-up. The minutes for this topic are as follows:

***Agenda Item 8***

***Disparity in teams (A vs B)***

The issue of team balance had been raised several times. For example, why does one team have a 10-1 record and another a 1-10 record within the same association. A lengthy discussion followed between all associations regarding the challenges of balancing teams within the association and between associations followed.

Splitting divisions into A and B and C tiers was discussed as one option. Everyone agreed it would be challenging to properly assess and rank players and divide teams. As well, this would introduce politics and complaining about player and team placement.

There were several arguments about splitting good players to poor quality teams:

- a) They will not return due to the quality of play
- b) Playing with new or inexperienced players
- c) Loyalty to a team or coach

It was decided that the status quo for all associations will be maintained and that all associations will do their best when building balanced and fair teams. -30-

Which is to say, all ROS associations will continue to respect the core team year-to-year development, and will have new teams of minors or majors be as equally skilled as possible, while not cutting players for lack of skill or knowledge of the game. Parents need to understand that kids who go out and play catch or ball with friends or family will develop stronger ball skills than kids who do not. Also, running is key to successful ball play. Even teams that start even on paper may have vastly different win loss records, and may have very different average skill levels by the end of the season.

ROS divides teams into two or three groups for the playoffs (tournament) so the teams that win more than lose compete only against each other, and conversely the teams that lose more than they win compete against each other. Depending on the number of teams this may add teams that are in the middle of the pack playing either the winning teams or the weaker teams in the tournament.