



Ayr Minor Softball and You

The Ayr Minor Softball Association is comprised of a group of committed volunteers (administrators, coaches, officials) who provide the opportunity for the youth of our community to play the great game of softball. We have approximately 230 young players aged 5-18. There is a Board of Directors which consists of 8 volunteers.

Softball Canada Long Term Development Program (LTPD)

AMSA is committed to following the principles and guidelines outlined in Softball Canada's Long Term Development Program. This program provides a framework for developing the game from the earliest starters (Learn to Play) through all levels up to international competition. The LTPD program was created to address a crisis in the sport due to decreasing participation at all levels

This is not an easy road as it involves a shift in how we structure and view youth sports. In general the focus of the early years is on development of skills as well as a love for the game. As in most sports this mission is often expressed but very rarely followed. Most young athletes are expected to compete at high levels without sound fundamental skills, playing with rules that don't reflect this reality. The LTPD program addresses these issues. Our goal is to give our players the skills and passion to continue to develop in the game well into their adult lives.

Following the LTPD program, at U12 there is a split into two separate streams, community and competitive. This will allow for participants at all levels of skill to find a place to enjoy the game.

AMSA Participation

AMSA is in a difficult phase now due to our participation numbers. Typically we do not have enough participants to have clearly defined streams. Within each age level we must evaluate the number of players and the relative skillset of the group. In previous years AMSA has had teams participate in the South Oxford Softball League (SOSL) which includes several centres with large programs. In most cases our teams were severely overmatched as we sent our mixed level teams to compete with select teams.

We found that several other small centres are experiencing the same difficulties and as a result we have begun the process of creating a new format intended to improve the fit for our teams by developing a strong Local League program and utilizing Select teams to provide additional competition for the players.



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AMSA Local Leagues

In 2014 we started an 8 team U10 Local League (Ayr, Paris, Baden, Drumbo/Plattsville) and a 2 team U12 Local League (Ayr, Paris). Both proved to be a successful starting point. We aim to expand the Local League program into U14 as early as the 2015 season if we are able to get participation from other centres. Alternatively, U14 players will join an existing league close to Ayr.

Local League participation allows for a more balanced competition and a somewhat reduced schedule with only one game per week instead of two with SOSL.

The primary focus for Local League will be fun and skill development. All AMSA players prior to U16 will participate in the Local League for their age group.

AMSA Select Teams

For those players who desire to play to a higher level we are also offering a select team program at each age group. In addition to their Local League play they will be part of a team that plays in the SOSL. These players will have a higher commitment level as they may have up to 2 practices and 2-3 games per week. By also playing in the Local League it will give these players an opportunity to be team leaders and help elevate the level of play for all.

We understand that some may not be able to fully commit to the increased schedule so there will also be an option for alternate players. The select team will have a full time core of 7-10 players and the alternates will be able to play on a rotating schedule. Selection of core and alternates will be made at evaluation days in March/April/May.

If there is enough interest we will create both a boys and girls select team within an age group.

The primary focus of Select teams will be competition. All Select players will be expected to fully participate with their Local League team as well.

AMSA Rep Teams

Due to the limited number of players in the U16 age group there is only one team in each of U16 Boys and U16 Girls. This group has expressed an interest in following the competitive stream and therefore will be considered Rep teams. This will mean that they compete in SOSL as well as ORSA playdowns. The teams coaches will have the freedom to determine playing time based on the criteria they choose.



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Coaching

One of the major focuses in player development is coach development. Each coach is provided with a Softball Canada Coaches Manual specific to the appropriate age group. AMSA will also begin a coach training program in 2015 to give everyone the tools to help their players. In addition to team coaches there are skill development clinics available throughout the season and this year for the first time prior to the season.

Officiating

Just as important as bringing young players into the game is to bring in young officials. The game cannot exist without them and all across Canada the sport is suffering from an extreme shortage of officials.

AMSA has a good start with our youth umpires and we are committed to growing the program. In 2015 we are initiating official training programs and a mentor program. We are also committed to ensuring a positive working environment for these officials. Mistreatment or abuse will not be tolerated.