



Long-Term Player Development – A guide for softball parents

First Edition – November 2009

MESSAGE FROM SOFTBALL CANADA'S PRESIDENT

Softball's Long-Term Player Development (LTPD) model uses the latest scientific research to provide information for players, parents, coaches, officials, and administrators regarding the ideal pathway for the development of softball players in Canada. This eight stage framework presents suggestions for appropriate training, suitable competition exposure and recovery programs for optimal personal growth with particular focus on physical, mental, cognitive and emotional growth, maturation, and development. This pathway will give each player the best opportunity to reach their potential, whatever that might be – club, regional, provincial, national, or even at the international level.

This Parent Guide is a brief overview of what is covered in detail within the **Long-Term Player Development Guide for Softball in Canada** document. Softball Canada realizes the vital role that parents play in many aspects of a child's development and realizes the huge commitment you make as a parent of a softball athlete through both your time and your financial support. This Parent Guide was developed to help parents to understand how to assist your child in achieving their full potential. The more you as a parent understand the role of proper training, competition, nutrition, hydration, rest, and recovery, the better the experience your child will have in softball. Softball Canada

encourages parents to be involved in your child's softball experience and to be educated in the concepts of LTPD and physical literacy. I encourage you to visit Softball Canada's website (www.softball.ca) to obtain more information about LTPD.

A key component of any player development pathway is that development takes time. While individuals follow a predictable pattern of physical growth, the rate at which children go through this growth varies by individual. It is important to realize that the pathway described and the ages referred to in this document are a guide to effective programming and that there is some degree of flexibility and an understanding of the need for individualization when appropriately implementing the suggested direction. There is also overlap between the stages to account for different maturation rates of players. The guide recognizes the need to promote a physically active lifestyle and that the notion of being 'Active for Life' is a cornerstone objective.

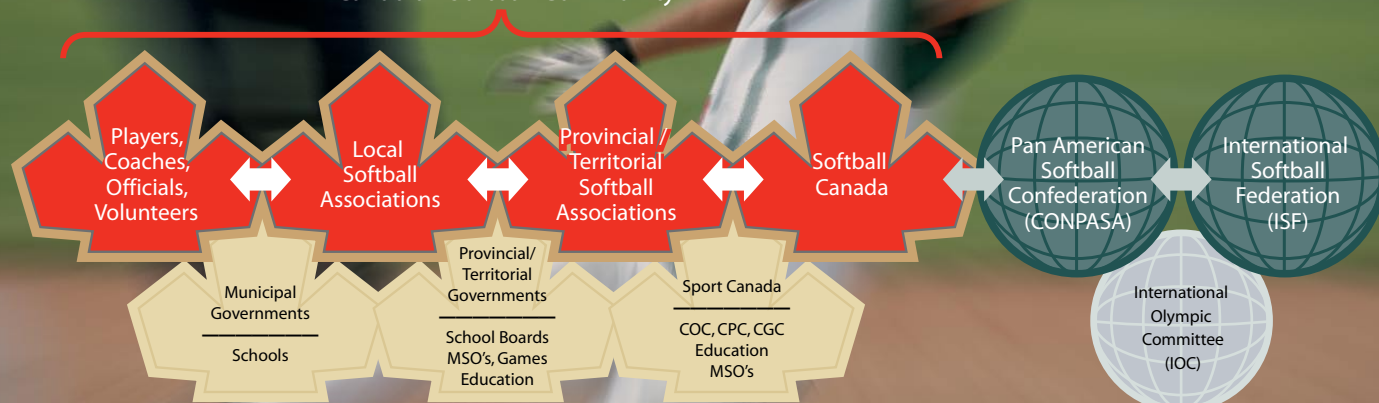
Thank you for assisting us in making the sport of softball the sport of the future in Canada as well as the sport of choice for the majority of Canadians.

Kevin Quinn
President — Softball Canada

Global Softball Community

The Global Softball Community encompasses play at the domestic local level right up to the world governing body, the International Softball Association (ISF). Softball Canada and its multiple members and partners make up the Canadian softball community.

Canadian Softball Community



10 KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING LTPD

The following factors are the research, principles, and tools upon which LTPD is built. These 10 factors guided the decisions regarding the framework for Softball's LTPD model as presented in the 8 stages described later in this document.

1 THE 10-YEAR RULE

This principle emphasizes that the development of a softball player must be viewed as a long-term process. Research has shown that winning at a young age does not guarantee winning performances later in life. Focusing on winning at early stages can have negative consequences like lack of skill development, burnout, and injury. Research on elite athletes has shown that it takes a minimum of 10 years or 10,000 hours of training to become the best. In the early stages of a player's development, training should be the main focus.

2 FUNDAMENTALS

Fundamental movement skills are the foundation of all physical activities and sports and include locomotion skills (such as running, jumping), object manipulation skills (such as catching, throwing, striking with an implement) and body management skills (such as agility, balance, coordination, speed). Children must develop a good base of these skills prior to puberty to optimize both lifelong activity and future performance. It is important to master fundamental movement skills prior to developing fundamental sport skills like catching a softball with a glove, pitching underhand to a batter, and hitting a softball for a base hit. The combination of fundamental movement skills plus fundamental sport skills equals physical literacy. Children should develop physical literacy before the onset of the growth spurt. As a parent, you should

ask your local softball association how their program develops physical literacy. As a parent, you need to expose your child to activities that encompass the four different environments of land, water, air, and ice/snow to ensure their overall athletic development.

3 SPECIALIZATION

Softball is considered a late specialization sport meaning that it can be mastered later in a player's development. Children need to develop as athletes before they become specialized as players of any sport. As a parent, you should be looking for softball programs where your child gets equal playing time early in their development and gets the opportunity to play all positions. You should be registering your child in a variety of sports and physical activities to develop all their physical capabilities. Some parents think that if their child specializes in one sport and plays that sport all year round they will reach the top of the sport. Research shows that these players tend to drop out of the sport because they are burned out.

4 BIOLOGICAL AGE VERSUS CHRONOLOGICAL AGE

LTPD is based on the biological age (maturity of physical, motor, cognitive and emotional qualities) of the child. All children follow the same stages of maturity, but the timing, rate, and magnitude of these qualities differ by as much as +/- 2 years. Therefore, there may be as much as a 4-year difference between two children of the same chronological age. LTPD requires the identification of early, late, and average maturing players to help design appropriate instruction, training and competition programs according to the readiness of the player. Often early maturers are bigger, stronger, and faster and therefore selected for teams. However, this is due mostly to growth and not talent. It should be noted that because the late maturer has more time to develop, they can often become the better player over time.



5 TRAINABILITY

Trainability is the responsiveness of an individual to the training stimulus at different stages of growth and maturation. All physiological systems are always trainable, but there are sensitive periods in development when the body is more responsive to specific training. These are called windows of trainability. In order to reach their full genetic potential, players need to be exposed to the right training at the right time. The windows of trainability for the 5 S's are:

Fundamental Movement Skills:

- Females: Ages 5 to 8
- Males: Ages 6 to 9

Speed:

- Window 1 (less than 5 seconds in duration):
 - Females: Ages 6 to 8
 - Males: Ages 7 to 9
- Window 2 (between 5 to 20 seconds in duration):
 - Females: Ages 11 to 13
 - Males: Ages 13 to 16

Suppleness (Flexibility):

- Males and Females: Ages 6 to 10
- Special attention during Peak Height Velocity (PHV)
 - maximum rate of growth during growth spurt

Softball-Specific Skills:

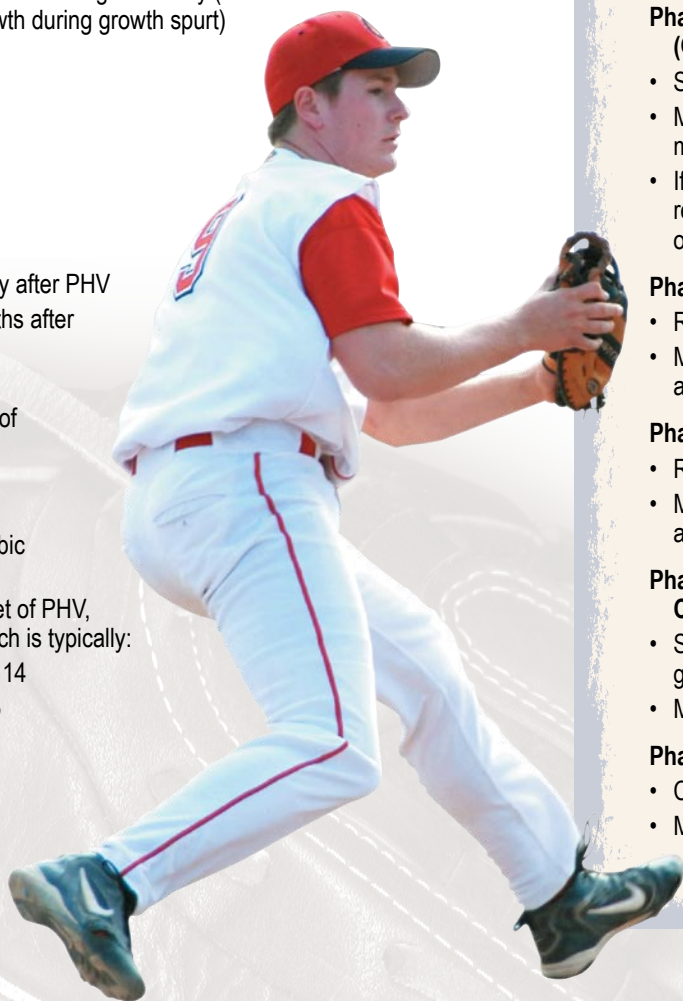
- Females: Ages 8 to 11
- Males: Ages 9 to 12

Strength:

- Window 1:
 - Females: immediately after PHV
 - Males: 12 to 18 months after PHV
- Window 2:
 - Females only: onset of menarche

Stamina (Endurance):

- Prior to PHV, train aerobic capacity
- Beginning with the onset of PHV, train aerobic power which is typically:
 - Females: Ages 10 to 14
 - Males: Ages 10 to 15



Measuring Growth

Coaches and parents can use stature measurements (height) before, during, and after maturation as a guide for tracking the developmental age of their child. Tracking growth allows coaches to address the windows of trainability of physical development (endurance, strength, speed and flexibility) and skill development at the appropriate times.

How to Measure Growth

- Stand straight against a wall, no shoes, heels touching the wall.
- Measure from floor to top of head.
- Measurements should be taken at the same time of day (AM or PM).

Phase 1: Age 0 to 6

- Very rapid growth.
- Measure standing height and weight on birthday.

Phase 2: Age 6 to the Onset of Growth Spurt (GS)

- Steady growth until the onset of GS.
- Measure standing height and weight every 3 months.
- If measurement takes place outside of home, replace birthday with an annual starting point of measurements.

Phase 3: From the Onset of GS to peak of GS

- Rapid growth until peak is reached.
- Measure standing height, sitting heights, and arm span every 3 months.

Phase 4: Peak of GS to Slow Deceleration

- Rapid deceleration.
- Measure standing height, sitting heights, and arm span every 3 months.

Phase 5: From Slow Deceleration to Cessation

- Slow deceleration of growth until cessation of growth.
- Measure standing height every 3 months.

Phase 6: Cessation

- Cessation of growth.
- Measure height and weight on birthday.

6 HOLISTIC APPROACH – PHYSICAL, MENTAL, COGNITIVE, AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A major objective of LTPD is the holistic approach to player development. Parents should enroll their child in programs that consider the whole player (physical, mental, cognitive, emotional, and social) and not those that focus only on the technical/tactical and physical aspects of softball. Softball programs should also teach life skills (dedication, work ethic, determination) and enhance character development.

7 PERIODIZATION OR ANNUAL TRAINING, COMPETITION, AND RECOVERY PLAN

Research has shown that periodization (the detailed plan that a coach creates to arrange the complex array of training, competition, and recovery factors) is required to produce optimal improvements in performance. It means planning the right activities with the adequate degree of difficulty and in the right sequence to reach the training and competition objectives sought. The plan must be broken down into workable units. The proper sequencing of these units is critical for success. In order to reach optimal performance in a competition environment, the training units have to be sequenced in the following manner

- 1) Develop the performance capacity of the player. The performance factors are: softball specific skills, tactics/strategies, physical components, mental skills.
- 2) Integrate the performance factors in a complex and harmonious blend.
- 3) Prepare the player to perform at identified competitions.



8 COMPETITION

Different stages of development and different levels of participation have different requirements for the type, frequency, and level of competition. At some stages of development, training and development take precedence over competitions and short-term success. Very young children should neither train nor compete formally. As children get older and develop, they should progress from fun-based activities to a combination of training and competition. At later stages it becomes more important for players to experience a variety of competitive situations and then finally to perform well at international events. For each stage of development, LTPD recommends specific training to competition ratios which are listed later in this document.

Local, regional, provincial, and national competition and event calendars must also be coordinated, and tournaments selected according to the priorities of the specific stage of development of the players/team.

9 SYSTEM ALIGNMENT AND INTEGRATION

LTPD is a vehicle that will allow everyone in the sport system to be on the same page. The ultimate goal is to have one country, one vision, one system. Softball Canada is working with all provincial/territorial softball associations and local softball associations to align the sport of softball so we are all working towards the same goals. Softball Canada is also working with other National Sport Organizations (NSOs) to better align the entire Canadian sport system. And finally all partners delivering sport programs (municipal recreation departments, schools, local clubs, etc.) are working together to align for player development.

10 KAIZEN - CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Softball Canada does not pretend that everything is known regarding the best way to develop softball players. We recognize that new research is constantly emerging and we will review this new knowledge and information and incorporate it into our LTPD model on a continuous basis. Parents should also stay informed about new developments in the sports and activities that their children are participating in.

OBJECTIVE:

- Physical activity should be fun and a part of a child's daily life

SEASON STRUCTURE

- Pre-Season:** No pre-season recommended
- Competitive Season:** 8 to 10 weeks
- Number of Practices & Games:** 10 to 20 combined practice/modified game sessions lasting 60 minutes
- Frequency:** 1 to 2 times per week for 60 minutes per session

PHYSICAL

- Use softball to teach fundamental movement skills while also introducing activities like gymnastics, athletics, skating/skiing and swimming to develop physical literacy.

MENTAL

- Use imagery to develop visualization skills.
- Design activities that help players feel confident and develop high self-esteem so they can participate in a variety of fun and challenging sports and activities.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

- Encourage personal growth and introduce fair play attitudes and behaviours.
- Encourage the development of positive individual values through sport examples.
- Introduce life skills (cooperation, sharing, respect, determination, and dedication).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS

- Learn, practice, and master fundamental movement skills such as running, kicking, throwing, catching or striking with an implement through the process of play. Building these skills now will help your child to later master softball-specific skills such as hitting a softball with a bat and throwing a windmill pitch to a batter.
 - Encourage your child to run – not just in a straight line, but with stops and starts and changes in direction. Tag and chasing games are excellent.
 - Encourage your child to try a variety of sports or activities (at least 3 to 4 per year).
 - Play catching games with your child. Use a wide range of soft objects and balls of different sizes. Start with catching a large ball with two hands, and progress towards smaller balls and eventually one handed catching. Balls that don't bounce too much are great for learning, as are bean-bags.
 - Play games making body shapes – upside down and right-side up. Pretend to slither like a snake, and roll like a rolling pin on the floor or down a small grassy slope.
 - Play throwing games. Start with soft objects that your child can hold easily in their hand. Try to get your child to throw at a target, and sometimes to throw as hard as they can. Get them to use both their left and right hand when they throw.
 - For quiet times, or when in small spaces, play balancing games. Stand on one foot and then try the other. Try balancing on different body parts, and try walking along any painted lines on the ground.
 - Jump, make shapes in the air, jump to see how high your child can go, or how far. Make imaginary "rivers" and get your child to jump from one bank to the other. Try jumping from one foot, or from both. Make sure your child bends at the knees when they land.
 - Introduce your child to water activities and learn to swim programs. Get them on skates or skis and out on the ice or snow so that they learn to slide.
 - Ride a tricycle, or a bike with or without training wheels to develop dynamic balance.
- Ensure games/activities for children are non-competitive at this stage and are structured around participation and having fun. Change the rules to suit your child's abilities:
 - Use modified equipment, modified distances, and lead-up games with a high number of repetitions of the skills.
 - Play small sided games (maximum of 6 vs. 6) with children with various skill levels participating together.
 - Ensure the program has each child play every minute (no one on the bench) with players getting a chance to play all positions including pitcher.
- Be a role model for your child. Be physically active with your child (30 minutes a day for toddlers and 60 minutes for preschoolers regardless of the weather) making it fun and a natural part of your child's day. You can participate in physical activity by playing games, throwing, catching and kicking a ball. Plan or join different activities that fit your child's abilities and interests.



OBJECTIVES

- To master fundamental movement skills and then introduce fundamental softball skills while focusing on fun and participation.

SEASON STRUCTURE

EARLY IN STAGE

- **Pre-Season:** No pre-season recommended
- **Competitive Season:** 8 to 10 weeks
- **Number of Practices & Games:** 10 to 20 combined practice/modified game sessions starting with 60 minutes using activities and lead-up games and progressing to 45 minute structured pre-game training session followed by a 45 minute modified game.
- **Frequency:** 1 to 2 times per week for 60 to 90 minutes per session.

LATER IN STAGE

- **Pre-Season:** 8 to 12 practices
- **Competitive Season:** 8 to 10 weeks
- **Number of Practices & Games:** 10 to 20 combined practice/modified game sessions that include a 30 minute structured pre-game training session followed by a 60 minute modified game.
- **Frequency:** 1 to 2 times per week for 90 minutes per session.

PHYSICAL

- Develop the ABC's of athleticism (agility, balance, coordination, and speed) and general physical conditioning with fun games and activities.
- Window of trainability for flexibility and speed (less than 5 seconds in duration in all directions).
- Develop strength and power using your child's own body weight during exercises.
- Teach fundamental movement skills: running, jumping, throwing, and catching.

SOFTBALL TECHNICAL/TACTICAL

- Introduce fundamental softball skills (hitting, fielding, throwing, catching, pitching, and sliding).
- Use simple rules in modified games. Reinforce fundamental movement skills and softball skills learned in practice during modified games and use warm-ups as additional skill development sessions.
- Emphasize the use of skills during games rather than focusing on winning or losing. Praise should be given freely for attempts and correct execution, but there should be no criticism for mistakes or errors.
- Maximize a child's opportunities to practice the skills by ensuring each child has their own equipment. Your child should be practicing individually and in pairs as much as possible to increase the number of repetitions to try the skills being taught.

MENTAL

- Use imagination to develop visualization skills.
- Introduce decision-making with coach assistance on the field to help direct play.
- Introduce team-building/socialization activities.
- Develop emotional control.
- Develop self-esteem within your child through reinforcement of individual effort (self and others) versus outcomes (win/loss).

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

- Encourage personal growth and development through teachable moments and acknowledge players doing something well.
- Encourage development of positive individual values (honesty, integrity, trustworthiness).
- Introduce concepts of sportsmanship and ethical play.
- Introduce social skills (cooperation, sharing, respect).
- Develop life skills (teamwork, work ethic, and dealing graciously with defeat and victory).

"This is a critical stage for the development of physical literacy, and it is during this time that the foundations of many advanced skills are laid down." Colin Higgs, LTAD Expert



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS

- Enroll your child in programs that follow LTPD principles. Programs at this stage should
 - Focus on learning and having fun, rather than on doing whatever it takes to win games and leagues.
 - Concentrate on overall skill development. It should be well-structured, positive and FUN, and develop the ABCs – Agility, Balance, Coordination and Speed. Hand and foot speed should be developed during this stage. If this window of trainability to develop speed is missed, body speed later in life may be compromised.
 - Develop strength, endurance and flexibility through fun games and activities rather than a training regiment.
 - Develop physical literacy in your child. It is important that your child masters fundamental movement skills before softball-specific skills are introduced. As a parent, you can play catching, throwing, hitting, running, and other physically demanding games with your child.
- Encourage daily participation, regardless of weather, through a combination of unstructured play with friends and structured programs offering quality instruction from knowledgeable teachers/leaders/coaches in community recreation activities, schools, and minor sport programs (at least 90 minutes per day).
- Don't believe the myth that early specialization in sports by playing one sport year round will lead to far greater performance later in life. Developing all-round athletes at this stage is far better. Encourage your child to play a wide variety of sports that focus on fun, participation, and learning while being sensitive to your child's preferences for activities. Although they may well have a preferred sport that they take part in once or twice a week, they should take part in other sports or activities at least 3 to 4 times per week. They should be encouraged to take part in land-based, water-based, and ice/snow based activities during the different seasons. Encourage your child to play all positions as well.
- Ensure competitions are structured around participation and having fun. Competitions should be modified to suit children's abilities and characteristics
 - Children this age have a strong sense of what is "fair" and should be introduced to the simple rules and ethics of sports. Basic tactics and decision-making can be introduced.
 - Ensure equal playing time with players of various skill levels playing together and getting a chance to play all positions including pitcher.
 - Modify rules to ensure: maximum scoring opportunity for all, maximum action for all, nobody is sitting out on offence or defense, avoids dominance by higher skilled players, and ensures a positive learning opportunity and high success for all.
 - Focus on process (learning and effort) rather than on the outcome of competitions (wins/losses). Don't be concerned with the score. At this age, many programs that include competition should not be keeping score. Put the focus on learning and having fun, rather than on doing whatever it takes to win matches, games, and leagues. Help your child to learn by asking open ended questions like
 - "What was the most enjoyable part of today's practice/game?"
 - "What worked well?"
 - "What didn't turn out so well?"
 - "What did you learn that can help you in the future?"
 - "Any thoughts on what you'd like to work on before the next game?"
- Be involved in your child's sport experience and not simply spectators. Assist the coach by participating with your child or take small groups of four to six children and lead the drills the coach has organized.



OBJECTIVES

- Refine fundamental movement skills early in stage and develop fundamental softball skills later in stage all within a safe softball environment that promotes self-confidence, participation, and fun.
- Introduce simple tactics and strategies systematically in training that will be applied in modified games.
- Introduce general physical fitness training and mental skills training later in stage.

SEASON STRUCTURE

EARLY IN STAGE

- **Pre-Season:** 8 to 12 practices
- **Competitive Season:** 8 to 10 weeks
- **Number of Practices and Games:** 10 to 20 combined practice/modified game sessions that include a 30 minute structured pre-game training session followed by a 60 minute modified game.
- **Frequency:** 1 to 2 times per week for 90 minutes

LATER IN STAGE

- **Pre-Season:** 12 to 16 practices
- **Competitive Season:** 12 to 15 weeks
- **Practice to Competition Ratio:** 70% practices:30% competitions
- **Number of Games:** 18 to 22 games, plus structured skill development prior to games
- **Number of Practices:** 42 to 52 practices
- **Frequency:** Softball-specific activities: 2 to 3 times per week for 90 minutes

PHYSICAL

- Window of Trainability for:
 - Skill Development
 - Flexibility
 - Speed (less than 5 seconds in duration)
- Develop strength, power, speed, agility, and quickness using fun games/activities early in the stage and own body weight exercises, medicine balls and Swiss balls later in stage.
- Monitor growth to determine Peak Height Velocity (PHV-maximum rate of growth in height or growth spurt).
- Encourage daily participation in numerous sports or recreational activities for fun, participation, and learning.
- Encourage players to play 2 to 3 complementary sports over the year. By this stage children have developed clear ideas about the sports they like and in which they feel they have success, and should be encouraged to pursue them.

SOFTBALL TECHNICAL/TACTICAL

- Ensure appropriate practice by following a practice to competition ratio of 70% to 30% to take advantage of the window of trainability for skill development in this stage. This is the most important stage for the development of sport-specific skills as it is a period of accelerated learning of coordination and fine motor control. The brain is nearing adult size and complexity and is capable of very refined skill performance. It is also a time when children enjoy practicing skills they learn and seeing their own improvement.
- Develop fundamental softball skills (hitting, fielding, throwing, catching, pitching, and sliding).
- Use modified games with simple rules to reinforce fundamental movement skills and fundamental softball skills learned in practice. Use pre-game warm-ups as additional skill development sessions.
- Group players of all skill levels together early in stage and divide players into teams based on skill levels later in stage if possible.
- Ensure equal playing time for all players with players getting a chance to play all positions early in stage and then encourage playing 3 to 4 positions later in stage. Encourage all players to pitch early in stage and then develop 5 pitchers per team later in stage.
- Ensure practices are well organized, varied, game-like, and active.
- Use rule modifications to ensure player success, encourage pitcher development and avoid pitcher overuse, avoid dominance by individuals or by one team and to ensure more participation and more action by players.
- Avoid recording league standings or statistics that emphasize wins/losses rather than process. Instead the focus should be on giving best effort and on improving skills.



MENTAL

- Use imagination to develop visualization skills.
- Introduce self-control expectations early in stage and emotional control later in stage.
- Use guided decision-making with coach assistance on the field during modified games and autonomous decision-making during practice.
- Provide team-building/socialization activities.
- Introduce goal setting later in stage.
- Introduce player independence and focus on the process of the individual and team development rather than on the competitive outcome.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

- Encourage personal growth and development through teachable moments and acknowledge your child doing something well.
- Continue developing fair play attitudes and behaviours: respect for self, teammates, coaches, opponents, officials, rules and sport.
- Continue to develop positive individual values: honesty, kindness, responsibility, integrity, trustworthiness, fairness, self-discipline, and self-esteem.
- Continue developing team concepts including: teamwork, work ethic, giving best effort, dealing graciously with defeat and victory, and playing safely.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS

- Continue to encourage your child to engage in unstructured physical play with friends every day, regardless of the weather.
- Encourage and support your child to work on flexibility, speed, endurance, and strength. Use their own body weight, Swiss balls or medicine balls to develop strength. Develop endurance through games and relays as part of practices. This is an important time to work on flexibility.
- Encourage your child to take every opportunity to try different sports or activities at school, during physical education classes, intramurals, on school teams or through community club-based sports. Try sports/activities that are land-based, water-based and snow/ice based activities. Have them try different positions or events. They might find something they are very good at that was unexpected. Ensure your child is having fun and enjoys being physically active.
- Ensure your child is not over-training, over-competing or specializing in one sport or position too early. It is still too early for specialization in late specialization sports like softball. Although many children at this age will have developed a preference for one sport or another, for full athletic development they need to engage in a broad range of activities, playing at least 2 to 3 different sports.
- Ensure the learning environment is stimulating, organized, active, game-like, and includes a variety of activities.
- Think long-term, not short-term with regards to athletic development. Because this is a significant window of trainability for skill development, more time needs to be spent in practice than playing games. For best long-term results, 70% of the time in the sport should be spent in practice, with only 30% of the time spent on competition. Games are a forum for players to test their skills and should be considered an additional means of development, rather than the objective.
- Talk with your child that sudden changes in growth may occur and they may experience temporary decreases in performance. This is normal and will improve as they adapt to their new body.



OBJECTIVES

EARLY IN STAGE

- Consolidate fundamental softball skills and introduce more advanced softball skills and tactics/strategies.
- Optimize the skill set and build on competitive experiences.
- Develop overall general physical fitness and general mental skills.
- Introduce softball-specific mental skills and learn to cope with the mental and physical challenges of competition.

LATER IN STAGE

- Further consolidate fundamental softball skills and simple tactics/strategies and develop more advanced softball skills and tactics/strategies.
- Further develop overall general physical fitness, general mental skills and introduce softball-specific mental skills.
- Focus on transferring the performance of skills developed in training into the competitive environment with a greater focus on optimal team performance.

SEASON STRUCTURE

EARLY IN STAGE

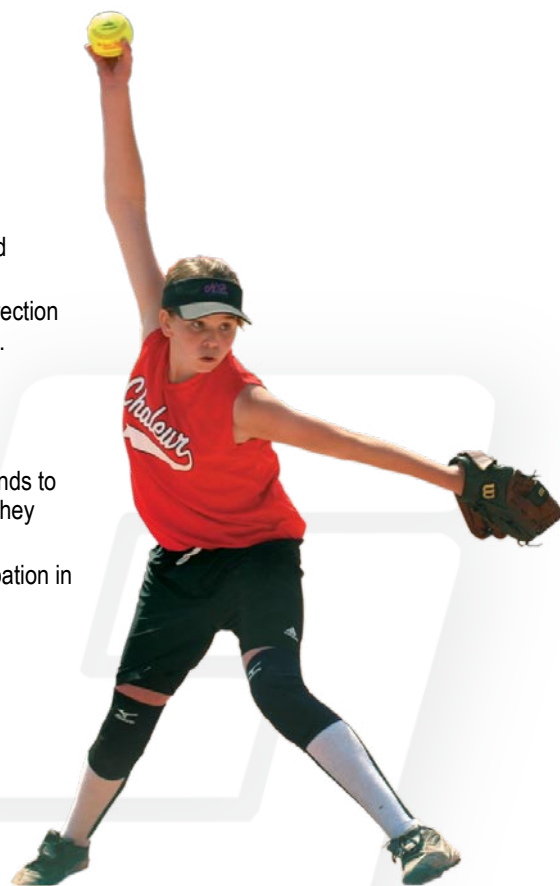
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- **Competitive Season:** 12 to 15 weeks
- **Practice to Competition Ratio:** 70% practices:30% competitions
- **Number of Games:** 18 to 22 games
- **Number of Practices:** 42 to 52 practices
- **Frequency:** 2 to 3 times per week for 90 minutes per session

LATER IN STAGE

- **Pre-Season:** 10 to 15 practices
- **Competitive Season:** 12 to 15 weeks
- **Practice to Competition Ratio:** 60% practices:40% competitions
- **Number of Games:** 24 to 30 games plus structured skill development prior to games
- **Number of Practices:** 36 to 45 practices
- **Frequency:** 2 to 4 times per week for 90 minutes per session

PHYSICAL

- Window of trainability for:
 - Speed (Window 2 - between 5 to 20 seconds in duration)
 - Strength
 - Stamina
- Introduce general physical conditioning
 - Develop strength and power using formal weight training under the supervision of a qualified fitness instructor.
 - Develop speed, agility, and quickness by using specific activities that focus on change of direction using intervals between 5 to 20 seconds. These activities can be done during the warm-ups.
 - Develop aerobic capacity prior to PHV and aerobic power after PHV.
 - Develop flexibility with special attention during the growth spurt.
 - Introduce injury prevention.
- Monitor Peak Height Velocity (PHV - maximum rate of growth in height (growth spurt) which tends to last between 2.5 and 3 years in most adolescents) especially for females during this stage as they mature earlier (visit www.softball.ca for more information on PHV).
- Encourage participation in 1 to 2 complementary sports over the year. Encourage daily participation in numerous sports or physical activities.



SOFTBALL TECHNICAL/TACTICAL

- Divide players based on skill levels if possible.
- Focus on individual and team development rather than on the competitive outcome.
- Consolidate all fundamental softball skills and tactics/strategies and introduce advanced softball skills and tactics/strategies. Reinforce softball skills in practice using game simulations, but emphasis shifts to performing skills well during games.
- Develop at least 4 pitchers per team early in stage and at least 3 pitchers later in stage.
- Encourage players to play 2 to 3 positions in softball.
- Ensure playing time is fair and reasonable.
- Use rule modifications to prevent injury and to ensure the focus is on player development. Structure competition to focus on development rather than on wins and losses.
- Shift the practice to competition ratio to 60% training to 40% competition and competition-specific training. These percentages vary according to individual specific needs.

MENTAL

- Introduce and develop softball-specific mental skills.
- Develop visualization skills.
- Develop players' autonomy by encouraging decision-making during practices and games. Encourage players to make decisions about their sporting experiences and training.
- Develop goal setting.
- Provide team-building/socialization activities.
- Develop emotional control.
- Introduce game plans and pre-game and game routines.
- Introduce stress management, coping strategies, and attentional control.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

- Establish a code of ethics and encourage personal growth and development through teachable moments and acknowledge players doing something well. Formalize teaching with examples or discussions.
- Continue developing fair play attitudes and behaviours: respect for self, teammates, coaches, opponents, officials, rules, and sport.
- Continue to develop positive individual values: respect for the truth, moral reasoning, including considerate behaviour, responsibility/accountability, mental toughness, determination, and integrity.
- Continue to develop positive team concept, taking pride in: teamwork, work ethic, humility, playing safely, tolerance, inclusiveness, expressing gratitude, and accepting and fulfilling role on team.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS

- Understand that coaches are beginning to identify 'talent' at this stage. But be aware that there may be up to a 4-year physiological advantage for early maturers over late maturers when selecting teams. Enroll your child in enrichment programs and follow the Softball Canada approved Achievement Award Program to ensure your child continues to develop while participating in community softball programs so that when they mature, they have the requisite skills to advance to a higher level, should they choose to.
- Caution should still be shown against early specialization (in either position or sport). You should ensure your child is not pushed, over-training or over-competing as injuries and burnout can result. This is a time when players quit sports because of these factors so encourage them to try new positions or new sports to remain physically active for life.
- Ensure programs are fun and that there is a balance between participation and competition. Community softball tends to be more socially motivated.
- Talk with your child that with sudden changes in growth, they may experience temporary decreases in performance. This is normal and will improve as they adapt to their new body. Pay special attention to flexibility training due to sudden changes in stature and structure.



Training to Train (T2T) Competitive Softball

MALES: AGES 12 TO 16 AND FEMALES: AGES 11 TO 15

OBJECTIVES

EARLY IN STAGE

- Further consolidate fundamental softball skills and simple tactics/strategies.
- Introduce more advanced softball skills and tactics/strategies and build on competitive experiences.
- Develop overall general physical fitness and general mental skills.
- Introduce softball-specific mental skills and learning to cope with the mental and physical challenges of competition.

SEASON STRUCTURE

EARLY IN STAGE

- **Pre-Season:** 14 to 18 practices
- **Competitive Season:** 12 to 15 weeks
- **Practice to Competition Ratio:** 60% practices:40% competitions
- **Number of Games:** 24 to 30 games
- **Number of Practices:** 36 to 45 practices
- **Frequency:** Softball-specific activities: 2 to 3 times per week for 90 minutes per session

PHYSICAL

- Window of trainability for:
 - Speed (Window 2 - between 5 to 20 seconds in duration)
 - Strength
 - Stamina
- Introduce general physical conditioning
 - Develop strength and power using formal weight training and emphasizing proper lifting technique under the supervision of a qualified fitness instructor.
 - Develop speed, agility, and quickness by using specific activities that focus on change of direction using intervals between 5 to 20 seconds. These activities can be done during the warm-ups.
 - Develop aerobic capacity prior to PHV and aerobic power after PHV.
 - Develop flexibility with special attention during the growth spurt.
 - Introduce injury prevention.
- Monitor Peak Height Velocity (PHV-maximum rate of growth in height (growth spurt) which tends to last between 2.5 and 3 years in most adolescents) especially for females during this stage as they mature earlier (visit www.softball.ca for more information on PHV).
- Your child should be active every day. Encourage participation in 1 to 2 complementary sports in the off-season.

LATER IN STAGE

- Further consolidate fundamental softball skills and simple tactics/strategies and develop more advanced softball skills.
- Further develop overall general physical fitness, general mental skills and softball-specific mental skill
- Focus on transferring the performance of skills developed in training into the competitive environment. There is now an additional focus on optimal team performance.

LATER IN STAGE

- **Pre-Season:** 15 to 20 practices
- **Competitive Season:** 12 to 16 weeks
- **Practice to Competition Ratio:** 60% practices:40% games
- **Number of Games:** 30 to 36 games plus structured skill development prior to games
- **Number of Practices:** 45 to 54 practices
- **Frequency:** Softball-specific activities: 3 to 4 times per week for 90 minutes per session



SOFTBALL TECHNICAL/TACTICAL

- Divide players based on skill levels.
- Consolidate all fundamental softball skills and tactics/strategies and introduce advanced softball skills and tactics/strategies in practice using game simulations. Position-specific skills are developed but with players still learning at least 2 to 3 positions. Develop at least 4 pitchers per team early in stage and at least 3 pitchers later in stage.
- Focus on individual and team development rather than on the competitive outcome.
- Play to win during competitions but the major focus is on learning softball skills and tactics and successfully applying them in competitions rather than on wins and losses.
- Ensure fair and reasonable playing time.
- Use rule modifications to prevent injury and to ensure the focus is on player development.
- Group players in training based on their maturation (pre-PHV, PHV, and post-PHV) to ensure their specific training needs are met.
- Shift the practice to competition ratio to 60% training and 40% competition and competition-specific training. These percentages vary according to individual specific needs.

MENTAL

- Introduce and develop softball-specific mental skills.
- Develop visualization skills.
- Develop players' autonomy by encouraging decision-making during practices and games. Encourage players to make decisions about their sporting experiences and training.
- Develop goal setting.
- Provide team-building/socialization activities.
- Develop emotional control.
- Introduce game plans, pre-game, and game routines.
- Introduce stress management, coping strategies, and attentional control.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

- Establish a code of ethics and encourage personal growth and development through teachable moments and acknowledge players doing something well. Formalize teaching with examples or discussions.
- Continue developing fair play attitudes and behaviours: respect for self, teammates, coaches, opponents, officials, rules, and sport.
- Continue to develop positive individual values: respect for the truth, moral reasoning, including considerate behaviour, responsibility/accountability, mental toughness, determination, and integrity.
- Continue to develop positive team concept, taking pride in: teamwork, work ethic, humility, playing safely, tolerance, inclusiveness, expressing gratitude, and accepting and fulfilling role on team.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS

- Understand that coaches are beginning to identify 'talent' at this stage. But be aware that there may be up to a 4-year physiological advantage for early maturers over late maturers when selecting teams. Enroll your child in enrichment programs and follow the Softball Canada approved Achievement Award Program to ensure your child continues to develop so that when they mature, they have the requisite skills to advance to a higher level, should they choose to.
- Caution should still be shown against early specialization (in either position or sport). You should ensure your child is not pushed, over-training or over-competing as injuries and burnout can result. This is a time when players quit sports because of these factors so encourage them to try new positions or new sports to remain physically active for life.
- Ensure programs are fun and that there is a balance between participation and competition. Competitive softball tends to be more competitively motivated so ensure these situations are challenging yet not overwhelming.
- Talk with your child that with sudden changes in growth, they may experience temporary decreases in performance. This is normal and will improve as they adapt to their new body. Pay special attention to flexibility training due to sudden changes in stature and structure.
- Understand that this is a major fitness development stage for speed, strength, and stamina. Seek assistance from a qualified fitness instructor to develop your child's physical capacities.
- Assist your child in learning ancillary capacities that enhance their performance such as: warm-up and cool-down procedures, stretching, nutrition, hydration, rest, recovery, restoration, regeneration, mental preparation, and taper and peak.
- Understand that to properly accommodate all the development that should be completed in this stage, an increase in time and financial commitments will be required. Teach your child time management skills to ensure a balance between their sport participation and other aspects of their lives such as school, jobs, family, and relationships.
- Provide support to your child and encourage increased independence as the player becomes more responsible for making decisions about their athletic career. Be available when the player needs guidance.



Training to Compete (T2C)

MALES: AGES 16 TO 23+/- AND FEMALES: AGES 15 TO 21+/-

OBJECTIVES

- Refine fundamental softball skills and further develop advanced softball skills and tactics/strategies
- Refine general mental skills and further develop softball-specific mental skills
- Further develop general physical fitness and introduce softball-specific physical fitness
- Focus on the preparation for optimal performance in competition

SEASON STRUCTURE

Community Softball

- **Pre-Season:** 10 to 16 practices
- **Competitive Season:** 9 to 11 weeks
- **Practice to Competition Ratio:** 40% practices:60% competitions
- **Number of Games:** 26 to 30 games
- **Number of Practices:** 18 to 20 practices
- **Frequency:** Softball-specific activities: 2 to 3 times per week for 90 minutes per session

Competitive Softball

- **Pre-Season:** 15 to 20 practices
- **Competitive Season:** 12 to 16 weeks
- **Practice to Competition Ratio:** 50% practices:50% competitions
- **Number of Games:** 44 to 52 games plus structured skill development prior to games
- **Number of Practices:** 44 to 52 practices
- **Frequency:** Softball-specific activities: 4 to 8 times per week including fitness and mental training

PHYSICAL

Community Softball

- Develop general physical conditioning and introduce softball-specific strength and power training.
- Maintain flexibility.
- Practice injury prevention.
- Encourage participation in complementary sports/activities 3 times per week during softball season. Your child should be active every day.
- Encourage participation in 1 to 2 complementary sports in the off-season.

Competitive Softball

- Introduce softball-specific physical conditioning (strength, power, general speed, agility, stamina, and quickness).
- Maintain flexibility.
- Practice injury prevention.
- Encourage daily participation in complementary sports or activities in the off-season.



SOFTBALL TECHNICAL/TACTICAL

Community Softball

- Reinforce fundamental skills and develop advanced softball skills in practice using game simulations but emphasis shifts to performing skills well during games.
- Ensure fair and reasonable playing time.
- Play softball and 1 to 2 other sports. Encourage players to play 2 to 3 positions in softball. Develop at least 3 pitchers per team.
- No rule modifications required. Follow rules as per Softball Canada official rulebook.



Competitive Softball

- Begin to individualize instruction and preparation to address each player's individual needs, strengths, and weaknesses.
- Teach players, who are now proficient at performing fundamental and advanced softball-specific skills, to perform those skills under a variety of conditions during training and competitions.
- Specialize in softball. Specialize in 1 position but play 1 to 2 other positions. Develop at least 3 pitchers per team.
- Ensure fair and reasonable playing time.
- Increase opportunities to develop player's autonomy in terms of decision-making regarding individual and team preparation and play.
- No rule modifications required. Follow rules as per Softball Canada official rulebook.
- Utilize multiple periodization as the optimal framework of preparation for learning to taper and peak for important competitions throughout the season. Place special emphasis on optimum preparation by modelling high-level competitions in training.
- Change the training to competition ratio to 50% training to develop technical and tactical skills and improve fitness and to 50% competition and competition-specific training.
- Conduct a critical evaluation of the program at regular intervals throughout the season with coach and player(s) thoroughly examining competition results, achievement of team and individual goals and how the player and team prepared. Together, the coach and player(s) will make modifications for the next cycle.

MENTAL

Community Softball

- Further develop autonomous decision-making skills.
- Provide team-building/socialization activities.
- Consolidate emotional control.
- Consolidate game plans, pre-game, and game routines.

Competitive Softball

- Refine visualization skills.
- Refine autonomous decision making during games and decision-making regarding training and sport experience.
- Develop goal setting.
- Provide team-building/socialization activities.
- Consolidate emotional control, stress management, coping strategies, and attentional control.
- Consolidate game plans, pre-game, and game routines.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

- Establish a code of ethics and encourage personal growth and development through teachable moments and acknowledge players doing something well. Formalize teaching with examples or discussions.
- Continue developing fair play attitudes and behaviours: respect for self, teammates, coaches, opponents, officials, rules, and sport.
- Continue to develop positive individual values: respect for the truth, moral reasoning, including considerate behaviour, responsibility/accountability, mental toughness, determination, and integrity.
- Continue to develop positive team concept, taking pride in: teamwork, work ethic, humility, playing safely, tolerance, inclusiveness, expressing gratitude, and accepting and fulfilling role on team.
- Encourage respect and adherence to Drug-Free Sport.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS

Community Softball

- Ensure programs are fun and that there is a balance between participation and competition. Community softball tends to be more socially motivated so encourage team activities.
- Promote fun, fairness, excellence and respect.
- Support your child to follow the training guidelines as prescribed by Softball's LTPD Guide and ensure coaches and program do as well.



Competitive Softball

- Understand that for your child to continue to develop to their potential, an increase in time and financial commitments will be required to provide a year-round, high-intensity training program that includes softball-specific training and testing. Teach your child time management skills to ensure a balance between their sport participation and other aspects of their lives such as school, jobs, family, and relationships.
- Provide support to your child and encourage increased independence as the player becomes more responsible for making decisions about their athletic career. Be available when the player needs guidance.
- Ensure programs are fun and that there is a balance between participation and competition. Competitive softball tends to be more competitively motivated so ensure these situations are challenging yet not overwhelming.
- Ensure your child has the most skilled and qualified coaches to ensure their technical/tactical, physical, mental, and emotional needs are correctly addressed within softball. Seek out the best training and competitive situation.
- Seek out experts to assist your child to individually tailor to a greater degree fitness programs, recovery programs, and psychological preparation to meet the player's individual needs and address their strengths and weaknesses.
- Support your child to follow the training guidelines as prescribed by Softball's LTPD and ensure coaches and program do as well.



DOMESTIC EXCELLENCE

OBJECTIVES

- Refine advanced softball skills and tactics/strategies.
- Develop softball-specific and position-specific physical fitness.
- Refine softball-specific mental skills.
- Focus on maximizing performance in competition.

SEASON STRUCTURE

Community Softball

- **Pre-Season:** 4 to 6 practices
- **Competitive Season:** 9 to 11 weeks
- **Practice to Competition Ratio:** 40% practices:60% games
- **Number of Games:** 26 to 30 games
- **Number of Practices:** 18 to 20 practices
- **Frequency:** Softball-specific activities: 2 to 3 times per week.

Competitive Softball

- **Pre-Season:** 10 to 20 practices
- **Competitive Season:** 14 to 16 weeks
- **Practice to Competition Ratio:** 40% practices:60% competitions
- **Number of Games:** 44 to 48 games plus structured skill development prior to games
- **Number of Practices:** 30 to 32 practices
- **Frequency:** Softball-specific activities: 6 to 9 times per week including fitness and mental training

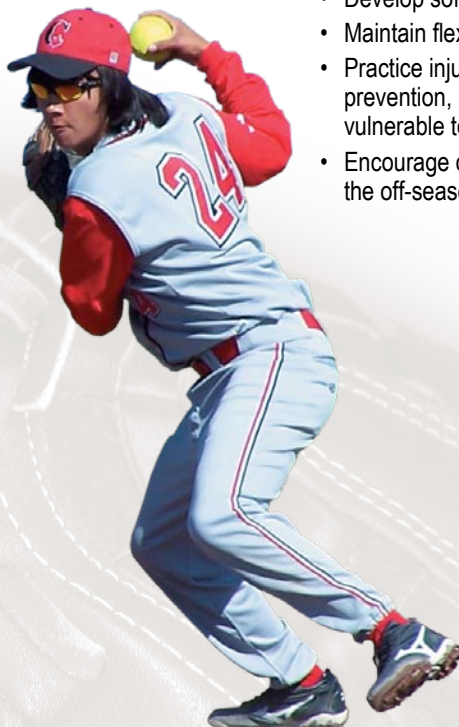
PHYSICAL

Community Softball

- Develop general physical conditioning and general or softball-specific strength and power.
- Maintain flexibility and practice injury prevention.
- Encourage daily participation in sport or physical activities.

Competitive Softball

- Develop softball-specific physical conditioning and introduce position-specific physical conditioning.
- Develop softball-specific strength and power and introduce position-specific strength and power.
- Develop softball-specific speed, agility, and quickness.
- Maintain flexibility.
- Practice injury prevention. Special attention should be paid to injury prevention, recovery, and regeneration as players will be especially vulnerable to over-training.
- Encourage daily participation in complementary sports or activities in the off-season.



SOFTBALL TECHNICAL/TACTICAL**Community Softball**

- Develop advanced softball skills and position-specific skills in practice using game simulations. Emphasis shifts to performing skills well during games.
- Play softball and 1 other sport. Play 2 to 3 positions in softball. Develop at least 3 pitchers per team.
- Ensure fair and reasonable playing time.
- No rule modifications required. Follow rules as per Softball Canada official rulebook.

**MENTAL****Community Softball**

- Refine autonomous decision-making during games and regarding player's development.
- Refine emotional control.
- Refine game plans, pre-game, and game routines.
- Provide team-building/socialization activities.

Competitive Softball

- Teach players, who are now proficient at performing advanced softball and position-specific skills, to perform these skills under a variety of conditions during training and competitions.
- Provide year-round, high-intensity, position and softball-specific training and testing.
- Emphasize cooperation between players, synchronization, and increased speed of execution of plays.
- Specialize in softball and 1 position but have the ability to play a second position well. Develop at least 3 pitchers per team.
- Increase focus on softball-specific and position-specific training and testing.
- Playing time is dictated by performance.
- Individualize player instruction and preparation in order to address each player's individual needs, strengths, and weaknesses.
- Utilize multiple periodization as the optimal framework of preparation to learn to taper and peak for important competitions. Expose players to national multi-sport games and begin the transition from high-level national competitions to international competitions. Place special emphasis on optimum preparation by modelling high performance competition.
- Conduct critical evaluation of the program so that coach and player(s) thoroughly examine competition results and how the player/team prepared. The cycle should occur after each major event.
- Change the training to competition ratio to 40:60. Devote 40% of available time to developing technical and tactical skills in training and 60% to competition and competition-specific training.
- Be aware of environmental factors such as time change, altitude, pollution, and food choices on performance and develop strategies to compensate.
- Begin to work with an Integrated Sports Team that is lead by the head coach to ensure players and team reach high levels of performance.
- No game modifications required. Follow rules as per Softball Canada official rulebook for domestic competitions and International Softball Federation rulebook for international competitions.

Competitive Softball

- Refine visualization skills, autonomous decision-making during games, goal setting, emotional control, game plans, pre-game and game routines, stress management and coping strategies, and attentional control.
- Provide team-building/socialization activities.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

- Encourage personal growth and development through teachable moments and acknowledge players doing something well and formalize teaching with examples or discussions.
- Establish a code of ethics and adhere to fair play attitudes and behaviours: respect for self, teammates, coaches, opponents, officials, rules, and sport.
- Apply positive individual values: respect for the truth, moral decision making in the heat of competition, healthy living, considerate behaviour, and responsibility/accountability. Mental toughness and determination, integrity, committing to a particular course of action, time management of school, work, sport, and social aspects of life. Seeking new information and opportunities to learn, and committing to continuous improvement.
- Apply positive team concept, taking pride in: teamwork, work ethic, humility, playing safely, tolerance, inclusiveness, expressing gratitude, and accepting and fulfilling role on team.
- Respect and adhere to Drug-Free Sport.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS

Community Softball

- Ensure programs are fun and that there is a balance between participation and competition. Community softball tends to be more socially motivated so encourage team activities.
- Support your child to follow the training guidelines as prescribed by Softball's LTPD Guide and ensure coaches and program do as well.
- Support your child to make decisions about their playing career.



Competitive Softball

- Seek out the best training and competitive situation for your child. This may include private instruction/coaching.
- Ensure your child has the most skilled and qualified coaches to ensure their physical, technical/tactical, mental, and emotional needs are correctly addressed within softball.
- Individually tailor, to a greater degree, fitness programs, recovery programs, psychological preparation, and technical development. Emphasize individual preparation that addresses each player's strengths and weaknesses.
- Assist your child to seek out experts to maximize their physical conditioning and mental preparation to bring about optimal performance. Ensure that physical training programs employ the most advanced techniques and sport science information. Update, review, and understand the importance of personal goal setting to performance.
- Support your child to follow the training guidelines as prescribed by Softball's LTPD Guide and ensure coaches and program do as well.
- Provide support to your child as they become more responsible for making decisions about their athletic career. Be available when the player needs guidance.
- Celebrate that your child has become an international champion.
- Encourage your child to give back to the sport and be a positive role model.
- Recognize that other parents will now "look up" to you. Help them by directing them to become aware and informed.

INTERNATIONAL EXCELLENCE

OBJECTIVES

- Refine advanced softball skills, position-specific skills and tactics/strategies.
- Refine softball and position-specific physical fitness and monitor through regular testing.
- Refine softball and position-specific mental skills.
- Focus on maximizing performance at international competitions.

SEASON STRUCTURE

- **Pre-Season:** 18 to 22 weeks of daily training.
- **Competitive Season:** 14 to 16 weeks (longer if climate or travel permits)
- **Practice to Competition Ratio:** 25% practices:75% games
- **Number of Games:** 40 to 50 games
- **Number of Practices:** Daily skill development, fitness training, and mental training with appropriately scheduled rest and recovery.
- **Frequency:** Softball-specific activities: 9 to 12 times per week including fitness and mental training.

PHYSICAL

- Refine softball and position-specific physical conditioning, softball and position-specific strength and power and softball and position-specific speed, agility, and quickness.
- Maintain flexibility.
- Practice injury prevention.
- Daily participation in complementary sports or physical activities in the off-season.
- Conduct detailed physiological and biomechanical testing and monitoring, two to five times annually to optimize physical performance.
- Ensure that physical training programs employ the most advanced techniques, sport science information, and testing protocols in order to maintain a high level of fitness so that softball can be played without the risk of fatigue or injury.

SOFTBALL TECHNICAL/TACTICAL

- Individualize instruction and preparation in order to address each player's needs, strengths, and weaknesses.
- Teach players, who are now proficient at performing advanced softball and position-specific skills, to perform these skills in pressure situations at the international level.
- Emphasize cooperation between players, synchronization, and increased speed of execution of play.
- Specialize in softball. Specialize in one position, but develop the ability to play a second position well.
- Use player's performance to dictate playing time.
- Change the training to competition ratio to 25% training and 75% competition, which includes competition-specific training activities.
- Utilize multiple periodization as the optimal framework of preparation. Train players to taper and peak for major international competitions. Set very high objectives for competitions (i.e. podium).
- Continue the critical evaluation program by which coach and player(s) thoroughly examine preparation for competition and how the team and players performed. The cycle should occur after each event.
- Be aware of environmental factors such as time change, altitude, pollution, and food choices on performance and develop strategies to compensate.
- Work with an Integrated Sports Team that is led by the head coach to ensure players and team reach high levels of performance.
- No game modifications required. Follow rules as per International Softball Federation official rulebook.



MENTAL

- Refine visualization skills, goal setting, autonomous decision-making skills and emotional control.
- Provide team-building/socialization activities.
- Refine game plans, pre-game and game routines, stress management and coping strategies and attentional control.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

- Establish a code of ethics and encourage personal growth and development through teachable moments, acknowledge players doing something well, and formalize teaching with examples or discussions.
- Adhere to fair play attitudes and behaviours: respect for self, teammates, coaches, opponents, officials, rules, and the sport.
- Apply positive individual values: respect for the truth, integrity, moral decision making in the heat of competition, healthy living, considerate behaviour, seeking new information and opportunities to learn, responsibility / accountability, committing to continuous improvement, mental toughness/determination, committing to a particular course of action, and time management of school, work, sport, and social aspects of life.
- Apply positive team concept taking pride in: teamwork, playing safely, work ethic, expressing gratitude, accepting and fulfilling role on team, humility, tolerance, inclusiveness, and accepting and embracing discipline for the benefit of the team.
- Respect and adhere to Drug-Free Sport.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS

- Celebrate that your child has become an international champion.
- Encourage your child to give back to the sport and be a positive role model.
- Recognize that other parents will now “look up” to you. Help them by directing them to become aware and informed.
- Support your child to make decisions about their athletic career.
- Be aware of the indicators of physical and mental fatigue and be knowledgeable about how to assist your child to deal with them.



The recommendations below for Active for Life apply to all community softball programs.

OBJECTIVE

- Pursuit of lifelong participation in softball and daily physical activity.

SEASON STRUCTURE

- **Pre-Season:** 4 to 6 practices
- **Competitive Season:** 10 to 14 weeks (possibly longer if climate permits)
- **Practice to Competition Ratio:** As desired by player. Recommend 10% practices:90% competitions
- **Number of Games:** 28 to 36 games
- **Number of Practices:** As desired by player
- **Frequency:** Softball-specific activities: As often as desired by player.

PHYSICAL

- Develop general physical conditioning (strength, power, speed, agility, and quickness).
- Maintain flexibility.
- Practice injury prevention.
- Encourage daily participation in sport or unstructured moderate intensity physical activity. Minimum of 60 minutes of moderate activity 3 times a week.
- Play desired number of sports according to interest of player.

SOFTBALL TECHNICAL/TACTICAL

- Select the position according to the player's interest.
- Use modified rules as required.

MENTAL

- Transfer mental skills learned in softball to everyday life, work life, or volunteering.
- Transition the mental approach used in competitive softball to the recreational or Master's level.
- Use softball as a stress reliever and for relaxation.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

- Establish a code of ethics and encourage personal growth and development through teachable moments, acknowledge players doing something well, and formalize teaching with examples or discussions.
- Adhere to fair play attitudes and behaviours: respect for self, teammates, coaches, opponents, officials, rules, and the sport.
- Apply positive individual values: respect for the truth, integrity, moral decision-making in the heat of competition, healthy living, considerate behaviour, seeking new information and opportunities to learn, responsibility/accountability, committing to continuous improvement, mental toughness/determination, committing to a particular course of action, and time management of school, work, sport, and social aspects of life.
- Apply positive team concept taking pride in: teamwork, playing safely, work ethic, expressing gratitude, accepting and fulfilling role on team, humility, tolerance, inclusiveness, and accepting and embracing discipline for the benefit of the team.
- Respect and adhere to Drug-Free Sport.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS

- Encourage the player to enter this stage at any age.
- Provide a positive example for your child to transition to this stage by participating in your own activity. The active parent is the best role model!
- Explore and expose your child to new activities.
- Promote key values: fun, fairness, staying healthy, and giving back.
- Ensure programs are fun and that there is a balance between participation and competition. Community softball tends to be more socially motivated so encourage team activities.





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