



CGAA SOFTBALL STRIKE ZONE NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 30, 2009

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 1

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Special Events Director

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Vacant

A letter from the Vice President

2009 was a FUN and successful year for CGAA softball. We saw an increase in the number of girls playing softball. Our coaches for both Traveling and In-House did a wonderful job working with and teaching the game of softball to the girls. We would like to thank all of our coaches for the time and dedication that they give planning and coaching the girls in our program. We would also like to thank our volunteers that worked hours at tournaments and behind the scenes to help make those events successful. We would like to thank the parents of the girls in our program for your support in your daughter's event. We would especially like to thank the Girls in our program. These girls love the sport of softball and that can be seen by their time in practice and that rolling over to the field during games and the growth and improvement seen during the year.

A call for coaches. Our Traveling team coaches are set and teams formed. For those parents whose girls are playing In-House softball this year please consider volunteering your time to coach. Last year we saw more In-House teams than coaches to coach them. We were able to find four coaches to step up and volunteer to coach those teams. This year we would like you to start thinking about the opportunity to coach your daughter's team early and often. We are working on organizing clinics and meetings through the year designed specifically for coaches to help you be more comfortable going out there and coaching, or if you have coached for awhile maybe give you some new ideas to spice up your practices. Look for more to come.

We are excited about the 2010 CGAA Softball season coming up. We have a motivated and giddy board working diligently to provide the girls in our program, whether they play Traveling or In-House, with plenty of opportunity to improve and prepare for the upcoming season. Please continue to monitor your emails for information about these upcoming events and do not hesitate to contact anyone on the board if you have questions or suggestions.

Duane Lindahl, Vice President and Senior League Director

Did you know...

- We had over 80 girls play Fall Ball this year, including over 40 at the 10U level alone?
- We had over 70 girls try out for the traveling teams for the 2010 season?
- We are looking for a few more traveling players at the 12U and 14U levels?
- You can help CGAA Softball earn a \$2,500 grant from Responsible Sports Sponsored by Liberty Mutual? To help, go to www.cgaasoftball.com and click on the Responsible Sports link. The deadline is November 30, so please help us reach the goal and win \$2,500 for our program.

Upcoming Events

- **Winter Pitching Clinics**
- **Winter Catching Clinics**
- **Skill Development Clinics @ Park Activity Ctr.**
In House and Traveling Players are Welcome

Date for all Clinics to determined soon.

Check out the full calendar at www.cgaasoftball.com

Traveling News

This is a very exciting time for CGAA Softball. The high school has a new head coach in place and we have many new board members who are looking to enhance the opportunities for the softball players of Cottage Grove. Despite the very "un-softball-like" weather, traveling tryouts went very well the first weekend in October. Thank you very much to all of the girls who tried out. We had a total of 73 girls try out. This year we will have two teams at the 10U, 12U, and 14U level, and one 16U team. Last year we did not have a 16U team, so this is definitely a step in the right direction. We are still looking for a few players at the 14U and 12U level. If interested, contact me at Phil.Kuemmel@cgaasoftball.com.

Thank you to all of our volunteers who helped with tryouts, including coaches, parents, and board members that helped with registration, fielding, and hitting. We could not have done it without you! We also appreciate Park varsity coaches Bob Loshek and Julie Christensen helping out with the evaluations.

Starting in January, there will be opportunities for teams and players to improve their skills with some Sunday night clinics at the Activity Center. There will also be a clinic with University of St. Thomas head coach John Tschida in February. Look in future newsletters for more info. I am very excited for the upcoming season. Think Spring!

Phil Kuemmel, Traveling Director

Board Member Billet

With the turn of the "Board Year" this fall, it saw some long time members leave the board and several new faces come aboard.

Those stepping away from their positions this fall include:

- Lori Galloway, Secretary
- Eric Anderson, Equipment Manager
- Kathy Strauch, Traveling Director
- Kim DeVaan, Treasurer
- Scott Fodor; In-House Junior League Director

Each has their own reason for stepping away and moving on, but one common thread is that they will be greatly missed. Their years of experience and knowledge will be difficult to replace. On behalf of the Board of Directors, please join me in thanking them for the innumerable hours that each gave to the girls of CGAA Softball to make the program better for each and every girl in it.

As sad as we are to see those folks step away, we are also excited to welcome a new group of people into the fold. Please join me in welcoming the following people to their new board positions:

- Phil Kuemmel, Traveling Director
- Jodi Dahler, Secretary
- Mike Snyder, Fields Director
- Mitch Mortenson, Fall Ball Director
- LeRoy Olson, Equipment Manager
- Kim Scollick, Tournament Director
- Christine Silvis, Member at Large

Each new member brings a great deal of excitement and enthusiasm to their new position. Their fresh voices, new thoughts and ideas are welcomed and look forward to joining them in taking the program to the next level.

If you have any comments or questions about CGAA Softball, please don't hesitate to contact any board member. Your feedback and communication is vital to improving the program for the softball players of today and tomorrow.

Brad Strom, Communications Director

Registration Dates for In House:

Watch for In Person registration dates in February 2010 to be announced soon.

Register Online at www.cgaasoftball.com beginning in January 2010.

Watch for details about registration in coming editions of **Strike Zone**

Treasurer Tidbits

Isn't it great to begin the 2009-10 season? This new season is very exciting for me. As treasurer, I get to see first-hand how each league functions and can appreciate all the various behind-the-scenes aspects of running CGAA Softball.

As this season's new treasurer, I have many goals. My first is to run a sound, solid accounting system. Secondly, I aim to be responsive and available to you, the general membership. Third, be prompt and timely with deposits and payments. This last one refers to my time-line for deposits and payments. From the beginning, my goal was to process fees in a timely manner. Thus the Travel fees will not be deposited prior to 10/19, but sooner than 10/31.

Congratulations to the players who will begin our travel teams! For those who remain In-House - this next season will be a BLAST! I can't wait... there is so much to look forward to, I almost forget today!!

Verna Witzany, Treasurer

Equipment – Volunteers Needed!

My name is Leroy Olson and I am the new equipment director.

I am looking for volunteers to help with the cleaning of equipment and the organizing of the equipment shed on Saturday morning, November 14th from 9:30 AM to 11:30 AM. Remember it takes a lot of volunteers to make the program successful. Please email me if you are able to put in some volunteer hours. Any time you can give would be greatly appreciated.

Thanks,
Leroy Olson, Equipment Director
Leroy.olson@cgaasoftball.com

Communications Comments

With the 2009 season coming to a close, we asked you for your comments and feedback. We are still compiling that data, but one thing I heard was that while our communication was better with things like emailing weather updates and putting weather updates on the website for cancellations and simply freshening our website content, we still have room to improve. This newsletter is a step in that direction. Beginning with this newsletter, you will be seeing a newsletter hitting your inbox once a month in addition to the periodic updates for special events that we were sending last year.

We are in the process of making further updates to our website as well to add even more tools for coaches, parents and players to help each group take YOUR PROGRAM to the next level. While the board may be the stewards of the program, this program exists because of you and most importantly for your girls. Know that we are listening and striving to make this program better for everyone.

Look for the new and improved CGAASoftball.com in the next few months. If there are things you think are missing or you'd like to see, please don't hesitate to drop me a note and let me know.

Brad Strom, Communications Director
brad.strom@cgaasoftball.com

Organizing Your Practices

Planning

Considerations:

1. Facilities (field, cages, warm up areas)
2. Time (daily, weekly, and monthly)
3. Equipment (balls, buckets, bats, gloves, tees, machines)
4. Numbers (players, staff, practice opportunities)

What Needs to be

Taught:

1. Warm-up skills (active warm up, throwing warm up, cool down)
2. Individual skills (throwing, receiving, fielding, hitting, bunting, sliding, base running)
3. Team skills (defensive responsibilities, communication)
4. Strategy (defensive and offensive strategy, communication)
5. Rules of the game

Key Elements of Practice:

1. Warm-up
2. Individual skill development
3. Team defense
4. Team offense
5. Batting practice
6. Game situations
7. Cool down

Coaches Corner

From Candrea on Coaching...

Mike Candrea is the ASA Director of Coaching Education as well as a two-time Olympic team coach and writes a monthly newsletter Candrea on Coaching. Enjoy the excerpts from recent issues and hopefully you can find some pieces to use in your next game or practice.

Organizing Your Practice Sessions

There is one common theme that I use on a weekly basis:

"If you cannot perform in practice – how do you expect to perform in a game?"

Many coaches and players over-look the importance of putting a high demand on the performance of your players in a practice session. One of the greatest attributes of great players is that you can never tell whether they are practicing or performing in a game because they have the same preparation, focus, and energy levels in both arenas. These are the players that have the ability to slow the game down in competition and have a great sense of where they need to be physically, mentally and emotionally to play the game at a high level. Is this something that we can teach our players?

Practice is the foundation of developing the physical, mental and emotional skills of our players. We must first understand a very simple, but true, illustration of how the skill level and the challenge effect the development of the athlete. It has been proven time and time again:

- If you have an athlete with a low skill level and the challenge is too great, this will result in frustration.
- If the skill level is high and the challenge is low, the athlete becomes bored.

This is a very good thought to always consider when working with athletes, at *all* levels.

Softball is a process-oriented game that requires a basic level of skill. To develop these skills, as in anything that is complex, requires repetition to teach the necessary movement and to convert it to spontaneous reactions. I have used a saying for years: **"Softball is monotonous repetition of fundamental skills ."** Our ability as coaches to teach young kids how to throw, catch, hit & run is the foundation of their ability to learn how to properly execute the game. If we can understand that it takes 10,000 repetitions to perfect a skill, we can begin to understand the complexity of the game and the importance of providing a quality learning experience in practice.

Your practice planning must adapt to many factors including equipment, field accommodations, time and the amount of help you have to run a practice. I have seen quality practices run all over the world that adapt to their particular situation, yet they all follow some basic principles of teaching the game.

Breaking Down the Game

1. Lines – Individual skills
2. Groups – Parts of the game
3. Team – "The game"

Want some more practice ideas? Need different drills to teach the fundamentals of softball? Check out the Softball X's and O's on ResponsibleSports.com for skill development techniques with diagrams, tips, images and more to improve your teams skill set.

Coach Mike Candrea

Bunting Techniques

The most often used short game skill is the bunt.

The most common bunts are:

1. Sacrifice Bunt
2. Push Bunt
3. Drag Bunt (Sneak Bunt)

Tips to execute the sacrifice bunt properly:

- Move up in the batter's box to increase the fair territory to work with.
- Achieve a balanced athletic position with adequate plate coverage.
- Bat held at the top of the strike zone level or barrel slightly above the hands.
- Always adjust from high to low by using your legs as an elevator. Never allow the barrel to drop below your hands or reach for a pitch.
- Bunt to the middle of the field — the pitcher is usually the farthest away from home plate in bunt situations.
- Grip should be firm but not tight.
- Attempt to bunt strikes only —be selective!

CGAA Softball
PO Box 337
651-458-6086
info@cgaasoftball.com
Visit our website
www.cgaasoftball.com

Players Page

"The Short Game"

The development of short game skills is the foundation for success in fast-pitch softball. Short game skills are much easier to perfect than the swing itself. By having the proper knowledge of the fundamentals and consistent practice of the skills, anyone in your line up can increase your team's opportunities to score runs.

As you get to higher levels of fast-pitch softball, you will find that the game is played on the ground. A groundball has to be fielded properly, thrown with accuracy and caught. A fly ball just has to be caught. The successful execution of the short game will win championships and the inability to execute those skills will increase your chances for defeat. Obtain proper knowledge, practice the execution and be 100% confident that your team can perform in game situations. Everyone can be a good short game player!

Bunting:

The **sacrifice bunt** is named as such because the hitter is sacrificing their bat to advance a runner already on base. The sacrifice is used to advance a runner into scoring position. Every hitter needs to be able to execute the sacrifice bunt. The two basic techniques used to execute the sacrifice bunt are squaring around both feet and pivoting the back foot only.

Aggressive corners will overplay the bunt and this will open some other options. One option would be the **push bunt**. The push bunt is executed by holding the bat tighter in your top hand and using your legs to push the ball towards the second baseman or in the seams between the corners and pitcher. We are attempting to bunt the ball hard enough to get it past the corners and pitcher. The key is to look for a good pitch that you can bunt easily. Right-handed hitters would look for a pitch middle-out to push toward the second baseman. Remember — the second baseman covers first base on the bunt so watch for infielders that cheat! This would present a great opportunity for the push bunt.

The **drag bunt**, or some call the "sneaky bunt," is sometimes used in a sacrifice situation but most commonly used to get a base hit. The drag is shown much later than the sacrifice and depends on the element of surprise.

From the right side, the drag bunt is executed by dropping the right foot back into a sprinters position as the bat is placed in a bunting position. Having our hands and bat head out in front of our center of gravity is crucial to our contract position. This allows for better vision and increases our ability to keep the bunt fair. Once again, it is not so important the direction of the bunt but the distance from home plate. Far enough from home plate that the catcher cannot field the bunt too quickly.

From the left side, the drag bunt becomes the foundation for any slapper that is an offensive threat. Most left hander's will use the same footwork as they would for the slap which are the straight-crossover, the step-back and crossover, and the shuffle. A key factor for quick left handed slappers is their ability to explode out of the box. By running hard through the box, you gain valuable distance & time in getting to first base. The drag can be executed off any of these foot works with effectiveness. Everyone can be a great short game player if they choose to understand the importance of proper execution and the tremendous affect it has on developing a productive offense. Watch for a future article where we will go into more detail on the left-handed slap and how you can utilize speed to become an offensive weapon.

Bunting will be more of an offensive weapon for the 2010 season. Spend some time learning this skill to become a more complete player.