



## West Hill Softball Association Evaluations, Team Formation and Coach Selection

### **EVALUATION OVERVIEW**

While the emphasis for the season is always skill development and fun, player evaluations are essential to the formation of teams in each age group, except for U7 Timbits. Evaluations and the placement of players within the division levels is required for our association's participation within Calgary Minor Softball. This is to ensure meaningful competition against other district clubs within Calgary and the rest of the province.

For the evaluation process to be as effective as possible, players are strongly encouraged to attend ALL their assigned evaluation times. Failure to attend any assigned evaluation time, may have an impact on the final placement of the player.

The Evaluation Committee is supported by the entire Board of West Hill Softball ("WHS"). The Evaluation Committee is comprised of an Evaluation Chairperson (WHS Board Level position) along with each Age Group Evaluation Coordinator. Each evaluation session will be organized by the appropriate Age Group Evaluation Coordinator and will include a team of volunteers, comprised primarily of past and future season coaches and prospective coaches. The intent of each evaluation session is to provide age and skill-appropriate drills which will allow for a proper comparison of skill and techniques between the athletes.

General evaluation process will consist of scheduled evaluation timeslots for each player. Pitchers and catchers may be required to attend separate additional sessions.

Evaluations will be structured for your player's age group and will assess the following skills:

- Throwing (e.g. accuracy, speed, and mechanics)
- Catching
- Fielding ground balls
- Fielding pop flies
- Running Speed
- Batting (may include bunting)

Each evaluation group will have 6-10 evaluators collecting scores for each player. There will be times when we will have coach observers on the field taking notes and watching all players' behaviour, interaction, and level of interest, in addition to technique. This will be a particular consideration for the Division 1 Selects teams.

An *immense* amount of work has been done over the years to improve and streamline our evaluation process. Each year, WHS incorporates parent/coach/player/volunteer feedback from previous years as well as learnings that has been shared from other associations.

WHS relies on our network of qualified coaches to perform player evaluations. Qualified evaluators must be coaches and/or other skill experts within the Softball community (ie. University/college team players, Calgary Minor Softball or Alberta Softball coaches and experts).

Please note, the evaluation process is intended to be carried out as described, however plans may change on short notice depending on final registration numbers, changes to gym/facility availability, public health restrictions, etc.

## **EVALUATION PROCESS**

Age Group Evaluation Coordinators will be named for all divisions, and they will be responsible for organizing each of the evaluation sessions for that age group. Age Group Evaluation Coordinators **and** evaluators **cannot be** from their child's current age group.

The evaluations themselves will consist of 2 to 4 sessions, per player within each age group, plus a potential call back and/or a separate pitcher/catcher evaluation. The first evaluation will be grouped based on how each player finished the prior year. After that, the players will move to subsequent evaluation sessions, based on how they performed in relation to the other players in their session. This is done to better align the players into their proper skill-based group. After each session, players *may* be locked into a division and as such they *may not* be required to continue attending future evaluation sessions.

The evaluation schedule for each age group will be posted on the WHS website (and sent out by email). Families are expected to plan around any conflicts to ensure their player can attend the assigned evaluation times.

## **OTHER EVALUATION CONSIDERATIONS**

The total evaluation process includes more than just the preseason gym evaluations. WHS realizes that it is difficult to get a full sense of a player's skill level inside a gym/facility. WHS will consider any or all of the following components when determining the final evaluation of a player:

- Previous Season's Coach evaluation, age category, and division level
- Previous season's WHS pre-season evaluation
- ID Camp performance
- Current Season's Evaluation sessions
- Pitching & Catching Evaluations
- Ad-hoc feedback / knowledge

A player's placement in a previous year DOES NOT guarantee placement at the same level in the current season.

## **PLAYER INJURY / ILLNESS EXEMPTION**

For any U9 – U19 player that cannot attend any of the assigned evaluation sessions due to illness, injury or family emergencies, an exemption notification email must be submitted the Evaluations Committee Chair, prior to the first assigned evaluation session.

**Exemption requests due to illness and injury must be accompanied with a doctor's verification of injury/illness (date incurred, description of injury/illness, and projected recovery time).** Refer to the list of **required** information to be provided in the email for exemption requests:

- Name of Player
- Birthdate of Player
- Email of Player Guardian
- Age Group
- Description of Injury / Illness
- Date of Injury / Illness
- Expected Date of Return to Play

**Exemption request email to be sent to [Evaluationsdirector@westhillsoftball.com](mailto:Evaluationsdirector@westhillsoftball.com)**

Each exemption request will be reviewed and player placement on a team will be determined by the appropriate Age Group Evaluation Coordinator and will be based on available information at the time. Such information for player placement may include prior years' placement, placement of their peers, performance in Fall or off-season training sessions, and discussion with previous coaches.

**NOTE:** Exemptions due to mandatory COVID-19 or other public health isolation requirements will be determined with the evolving public health orders at the time.

## **NEW ID CAMP PROCESS – Starting September 2023**

In preparation for the 2024 season, West Hill Softball will adopt a new evaluation process as follows:

- ID camps for Division 1 players will occur for the first time in the Fall of 2023
- Camps will be based on the age categories for the following season.
- Sessions will occur over 1-2 weekends in September/October, on outdoor diamonds, weather permitting.
- Players wishing to compete for a Division 1 team are strongly encouraged to attend the ID Camps.
- ID Camps are not mandatory, but will provide WHS Coaches, Evaluation groups, and Board Members the opportunity to identify our top players heading into 2024 evaluations.
- WHS will use these camps to identify potential coaches for our Division 1 teams for the following season. It is expected that those coaches will continue to volunteer with that age group through our Winter Clinics.

## **TEAM FORMATION**

- All players U9 and above must attend evaluations to ensure accurate ranking.
- Many factors impact team size formation, including by not limited to:
  - Total number of players registered in an age group.
  - Number of critical positions (pitchers, catchers, coaches) to support teams.
  - Discussions with other Associations to strive for competitive equity.
  - If any cohort size restrictions are required by public health orders.
- Per Calgary Minor Softball guidelines, WHS must have a minimum of ONE team at the Division 1 level, per age group.

**Final placement of any player is at the discretion of the Evaluation Committee.**

### **U7 Timbits Team Formations**

- Teams will be 7 to 10 players
- There is no evaluation process for this age group.
- U7 team formation will be based primarily on friend requests
- WHS will attempt to distribute coach volunteers across all teams where possible.

### **U9 Team Formations**

- U9 age group plays a “modified” version of the game (no outfielders) and will have an ideal size of 8-9 players. (Only by exception will a team have more than 9 players). This is a guideline, not a guarantee.
- This age group will be evaluated into two groups: (new in 2023)
  - Senior – The top skilled/experienced players within the u9 group will compete on a Senior division team.
  - Junior – All other players will play at the Junior level.
- U9 team formations will introduce an evaluation component to be completed by each athlete. The intent of this is for WHS to rank the entire group and sort players onto balanced teams (outside of the Senior team).
- Friend requests will absolutely be taken into consideration at the Junior level, with a maximum of two requests. Friend requests must be reciprocated between the players during the registration process.
- WHS will attempt to provide volunteer coach coverage across all teams.

### **U11+ Team Formation**

- For U11 and higher age groups, WHS will aim for teams of an ideal size of 11-13 players. This is a guideline and not guaranteed. Due to higher player conflicts, High School teams will try to have larger rosters where possible.
- U11 introduces 3 “tiered” levels (Division “1”, “2”, and “3”) for play in Calgary Minor Softball. This is the first time that many players experience being placed on teams that best fit their skills and ability.
- Players in U11 and above **must** participate in the evaluation process.

- Once all evaluation data is compiled, the entire group will then be ranked. Teams within the same tier will be balanced using the “snake” method (ie. 123-321), friend requests, pitcher, catcher, and coach requirements taken into consideration.
- U11+ player placement is based on a player’s evaluation ranking within the entire group. The Evaluation Committee and the specific Age Group Evaluation Coordinator reserves the right to take into consideration player age, where the player played the prior year and the comments of their previous year(s) coach(es), in order to supplement the evaluation process.
- The goal is to place each player on a team with other players of similar skill level. However, there may still be a range of skill within a single team as all players are still in the developmental stage with areas to learn and grow.
- Friend requests at U11+ age groups will be considered, however efforts will be made for prioritizing **one** friend request per player, where possible. Friend requests must be reciprocated between the players during the registration process. **Please be aware, that friend requests cannot be guaranteed, and these considerations come secondary after the tiering process of evaluations is completed. For example, if two friends evaluate in different tiered divisions, the request cannot be honored. In this scenario, if the player who ranked in the higher division wishes to drop to the lower division to play with their friend, consideration may be made with a specific request made to the Evaluation Committee Chair.**
- From our many years of experience, if your player is placed on a team without a specific friend request, they will make new friends quickly. Please do not let this be a barrier to participation in this wonderful sport.
- For all tiered team evaluations, it is important that parents help their player’s experience by not pressuring them during the evaluation process. The purpose of evaluations is to place players on tiered teams that best fit their skills and ability. All tiers represent good, competitive softball and offer opportunities for development and fun.

## **DIVISION 1 “Selects” TEAM FORMATION CONSIDERATIONS**

Division 1 Selects teams require athletes who are competitive by nature and want to get the most they can out of softball. They will be challenged by coaches to improve every time they are on the field and must be willing to accept feedback and instruction.

Playing on a Division 1 Selects team requires an extra level of commitment of which athletes and families need to be aware. This may include 2 practices per week, 2 regular-season games per week, weekend tournaments (possibly 4 or more weekends at the U15 and above levels), increase financial requirements and a more competitive approach to coaching.

Division 1 Selects athletes are selected for their on-field performance, coachability, ability to be a good teammate and a willingness to learn and advance the game of softball.

### **Specific Div 1 “Selects” Team Formation Process for U11, U13, U15, U17/19**

- Still adhering to the team formation process and considerations stated above, we recognize that the evaluation data can be extremely tight for players on the “bubble” of each tier. For this reason,

the Division 1 Selects team formation for U11 through to and including U17/19 will utilize a limited “Lock & Pick” procedure.

- Here, the “Selects” head coach(es) will be selected before last evaluation session for their respective age group and those coaches will be given the opportunity to select the final one to four players for their team from a “pick list” of the top ranked “bubble” players.
- This Coach selection process will be done in conjunction with the Age Group Evaluation Coordinator and the Evaluation Committee Chair and will require WHS Board final approval.
- Division 1 Select team selections are conducted first. Remaining players are released to the Division 2 tier pool.

## **COACH SELECTION**

- **All past and prospective head coaches are expected to be involved in evaluation process, if participating in the upcoming season.**
- Individuals who wish to be considered for a Head Coach or Assistant Coach role with WHS, **must** complete the WHS Coach Application Form, available through an online application link on the WHS website.
- Coaches are required to meet the immediate requirements listed on the website (Police Security Clearance, Respect in Sport Activity Leader, and Fundamentals of Coaching Softball course), as well as attend the Coach Pre-Season Meetings.
- The Evaluation Committee, with oversight from the WHS Board, will have the responsibility of making Head Coach and Assistant Coach selections for teams from the list of applicants. The Head Coach will be consulted in the Assistant Coach selection.
- Where possible and dependent upon the applications received and qualifications of candidates, WHS will strongly encourage having a female on the coaching staff for each team.
- Any disciplinary action or significant incident in previous seasons will impact coach selection.
- The WHS Board will review information regarding the applicants’ previous coaching survey evaluations and parent feedback for reference during the selection process. Coach evaluation form will be sent out to teams at the end of the season. Players and parents are encouraged to participate in the process and inform coach selection for next season
- **With the exception of Division 1 Selects teams, all head coaches and assistant coaches are selected from the applicant list AFTER team formation has occurred.**
- Please be aware the WHS does not support a single coach or group of coaches putting in their own team of pre-selected players into any age division. The evaluation process and appropriate tiering outcomes with consideration of a potential friend request will determine teams.
- In rare cases where no applicants are available to ensure minimum team coaching staff available at the time of team formation, the WHS Board will endeavor best efforts to encourage and recruit additional coaches from either the parent group, or from external candidates to meet a minimum requirement to run the team effectively.