

**Parent Guide to  
BLFPA Softball Evaluations**



<http://www.biglakefastpitch.com/>

## **Preface:**

Big Lake Fastpitch Association conducts evaluations for travel players as outlined in our Association Bylaws. Our goal is to identify each player's skill level and place them on a team that will maximize their opportunity to develop and compete. Evaluations can be a very stressful time for parents and athletes alike. It is our hope that the following article will help ease some anxiety and allow your player to perform their best during the evaluation process. PLEASE READ IT AND SHARE THE INFORMATION WITH YOUR PLAYER PRIOR TO EVALUATION DAY!!

## **Tryout Tips: A Responsible Sports Playbook**

Making the youth sports team can be one of the most difficult challenges that youth athletes can face – both physically and emotionally. And making the team can be hard, no matter how talented or driven the athlete as the well documented tale of basketball icon Michael Jordan not making his high school team as an underclassman illustrates.

So this preseason, as tryouts get underway, how about taking a Responsible Sports approach to tryouts? How can Responsible Sport Parents and Responsible Coaches help kids manage this process and stay positive?

It's important to remember the positives in the tryout experience – and that these positives exist whether or not your young athlete makes the final cut. Tryouts are one of the many experiences in youth sports that prepare us for similar situations in our adult life, such as college applications, job interviews and more.

"Disappointment is a great opportunity to reinforce positive character traits like determination and resilience," said Jim Thompson, Founder and CEO of Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA). The experts at PCA have a few good tips for you and your youth athletes as the tryout process unfolds this preseason:

1. **Set Goals:** Before the tryout process kicks off, Responsible Sport Parents can sit down and have a conversation with your young athlete about what their goals are for trying out and playing on the team. Give them positive assurances that no matter the outcome, you support them and are proud of them. Talk about other opportunities that might be available in your area if they don't make the team. By talking about goals and outlining alternatives, the tryout process won't feel so "do-or-die" for your young athlete.

2. Focus On Effort: As your young athlete enters the tryout process, remind him or her that they can't control the outcome – whether or not they make the team. What they can control is their effort and attitude. Remind them to give maximum effort at all times, and to focus on their own effort, not what other athletes are doing.

3. Keep Athletes Active: The pressure to perform and the fear of failure can wreak havoc on young athletes. Responsible Coaches organize tryouts where athletes are constantly in motion, not standing around watching other players perform or getting nervous before their turn.

4. Have Fun: Laughing, having fun and learning new things can all be part of tryouts. Regardless of the outcome, kids should have a good time during the tryouts themselves. Laughter can also really help young athletes let go of stress and stay relaxed. Responsible Coaches never purposely create a stress filled environment if they want to elicit the best performance from athletes.

5. Open To Learning: While coaches are certainly looking to evaluate players based on skill levels, coaches also look for athletes who have the potential to improve (aka a player who is "coachable"). Remind your athletes that they might make mistakes in the tryouts, but how they handle those mistakes may be even more important. Responsible Sports Coaches look for this attitude just as much as they evaluate skills.

6. OK To Be Disappointed: As Responsible Coaches and Responsible Sports Parents, we can help kids cope with their disappointment by reminding them that it is in fact OK to be disappointed. Empathize with them. Don't try to make your child feel better by saying the tryout wasn't important. Instead, consider sharing a story of when you were disappointed and how you overcame that disappointment.

7. "You're The Kind Of Person": The team at PCA reminds us that "You're The Kind Of Person" statements can really help kids manage through the disappointment of not making the team. "I know it means a lot to you, but you're the kind of person who doesn't give up easily." Or "You're the kind of person who doesn't let setbacks keep you from playing the game you love." Use these statements to help shape your athlete's self- image in the face of disappointment, and to begin planning how to move beyond that disappointment.

8. Check Your Emotions: Responsible Sports Parents keep their own emotions in check when it comes to their children's youth sports experience. Having parents who get upset or angry, or want to challenge a coach's decision about tryouts, just puts added pressure on kids.

9. Feedback: As Responsible Coaches, one of the best things you can do is give kids honest feedback about their tryouts, including areas where they can improve for next year. Feeling rejected is hard enough, but not knowing why you didn't make the team is even worse. Try to give young athletes some direction on what they can do to improve, and encourage them to try out next year.

As you and your athletes prepare for tryouts this season, consider taking a Responsible Sports approach to ensure that, regardless of the outcome, our kids gain valuable life lessons.

## **On Evaluation Day . . .**

### **Know your start time and arrive 30 minutes prior:**

Evaluations will be held at the Big Lake High School Gym. After registration closes, evaluation times by age group will be posted on our website @ [www.biglakefastpitch.com](http://www.biglakefastpitch.com)

### **Checklists before you leave home:**

- Wear comfortable athletic clothes. Shorts and T-shirts are fine (sliding will not be evaluated.)
- Avoid jerseys with player names or numbers on them
- Tennis / running shoes. No cleats or black soled shoes in the gym
- Softball glove
- Bat / batting gloves/ helmet (A selection of bats & helmets will also be provided)
- Fielding mask (if desired)
- Water Bottle
- Pony tails, headbands, visor or other hair retention aids
- \*\*Checkbook for payment – All fees and outstanding balances must be current.

**Check In** - There will be a check in table just outside the Gym Main Doors. A volunteer will ensure that all registration paperwork is complete and assign a tryout number for identification. Parents are requested to help pin the number onto the back of their player's shirt (similar to a marathon runner). Please do not wear jerseys with pre-printed names, numbers.

**Gym Doors will be closed** - only players and evaluation personnel will be allowed inside the gym. Parents, please feel free to check out our Fastpitch Clothing sales table for current gear and 2015 season order forms!

**Warm up** - Approximately 15 minutes prior to the start of your evaluation period, a student volunteer will lead the group to a location where a cardio warmup and stretching will take place. From there, players will make their way into the gym to complete a throwing warmup prior to any evaluation of skill.

**Evaluation Elements** - when warm up is complete, players will be divided into small groups and rotate through various evaluation stations set up throughout the gym.

- **Hitting** – players will be given the opportunity to warm up on hitting T's similar to open gym. When ready they will enter the batting cage one at a time and be scored while hitting a series of balls thrown from a pitching machine at an age appropriate speed. Hitting will represent 33% of total score. Scoring will be based on contact, power, technique, bunting. (Bunting will not be part of the 10U scoring).
- **Infield** – players will be evaluated in their ability to field ground balls that are hit at an appropriate distance for their age group. After fielding each ball, the player will simulate a throw to a designated base. Fielding ground balls will represent 33% of the total score. Elements evaluated will be fielding the ball cleanly, throwing (accuracy & arm strength), & technique.
- **Outfield** – players will be evaluated while fielding fly balls thrown from a distance that simulates outfield play followed by throwing the ball back to a cut-off person. Catching fly balls will represent 33% of the total score.

**TOTAL SCORE** - All of the above categories and elements are added together to produce a total score. A spreadsheet is created for each age group showing rank and jersey number. An asterisk or marker shows if the player has elected to “try up” to the age group. The sheets have no names on them. They are then given to the voting members of the board at a closed meeting to begin the process of team selection. Division of teams is determined in accordance with Association Policy and Bylaws. Please read them for further details. A copy is available under the documents tab of the [biglakefastpitch.com](http://biglakefastpitch.com)

- **PITCHING** - \*\* Is also evaluated but NOT USED AS PART OF THE TOTAL SCORE IN THE RANKING OF PLAYERS! A completely separate rank is given to pitchers within each age group and is only used in cases where splitting teams EQUALLY is in the best interest of the program. If teams are split equally, pitching can be divided among all teams. The following pitching categories are evaluated and comprise 25% of the pitching only score.
  - Mechanics
  - Speed
  - Accuracy
  - Off Speed

## Frequently Asked Questions

- Q: Can I stay and watch my player evaluate?

- No. The gym doors will be closed.
- Q: Can I see my player's evaluation score after teams are posted?
  - No. Your players score is simply a snapshot of skill level taken for the purpose of forming teams. Unlike grades in school, scores can't be compared to a nationwide database and would have no real context. Comparing scores to players within our association will only lead to hard feelings, jealousy and conflict. If you want direct feedback on your player's skill development, please ask your coaches during the course of the season.
- Q: Will teams be split equally or will there be an upper and lower team?
  - Our goal is to form teams that will maximize player development and challenge each player to succeed. This is generally best achieved by gauging each group and determining the **highest possible level** where they could be competitive. In most cases, this leads to an upper and lower team. There may be a situation where both teams could compete at an "upper" level. In some cases we only have enough girls to form a single team. The question of upper and lower can't be determined until we receive scores and feedback from the evaluators.
- Q: Does Big Lake Fastpitch ever cut players?
  - BLFPA strives to provide opportunity for all girls in our community to play the sport of softball. We do our absolute best NOT to cut any players. However, there are situations where roster guidelines set forth in the bylaws may not allow us to keep everyone. In those situations, the board will refund all registration fees and provide assistance in finding a team for your player.
- Q: When will teams be posted?
  - Teams will be posted approximately 1 week following evaluations. A mass email will be sent to all parents when teams are posted and ready for viewing on our website. PLEASE do not call.
- Q: When will practice begin?
  - Coaches will be in contact with all players following team posting. Look for first team meetings and practice to begin the last week of March or early April depending on weather. As always, our website is the best source of information.

**Thanks and best of luck to all!**

**BLFPA**