

TRAVEL 101

JUPITER SEAHAWKS



WHAT IS TRAVEL?

What is Travel Softball?

Typically travel teams are privately funded by individuals (parents) and sponsors and affiliated with a community or recreational organization. (In older divisions teams may be organized and run by private individuals and businesses.) Tournaments are held by local and national organizations including United States Specialty Sports Association (USSSA), National Softball Association (NSA), and American Softball Association (ASA).

JTAA's travel program provides girls the opportunity to travel to softball facilities outside of Jupiter and compete with similarly formed teams from other areas of the County, State and on some occasions out-of-state.

Travel softball is for players looking to challenge their ability and better their skills through higher levels of competition and who have the ability and desire to compete at a more advanced level. Travel softball requires a high level of commitment, time-wise and financially, on the parts of both parents and player. Families involved in travel ball usually consider the sport to be the primary athletic commitment for their daughters.

What Are the Benefits of Playing?

The girls that participate in travel softball typically benefit in a number of ways. The following are just a few of the benefits most often cited by past and present participants:

1. **Friendship:** They bond and make friends with their teammates. Many of these friendships are long term as a number of the same girls will participate in travel softball each year. The friendships provide a desirable base group of friends with a healthy common interest; softball.
2. **Skill Level:** The girls' softball skill level typically increases dramatically as the quality and quantity of instruction coupled with level of play provide the ideal learning environment.
3. **Self-esteem:** Developing self-esteem is vital for young girls today. Helping them to excel in a sport provides one more avenue to attain a feeling of self worth. The girls that participate in the program typically improve their playing ability and simultaneously their positive self-image.
4. **Parent Bonding:** Parent involvement is encouraged. For those that do get involved, the program offers a physical activity in which they can participate with their daughter's development. The time commitment that accompanies participation in travel softball can be a wonderful opportunity to bond with your daughter.

Primary Goals of Travel Softball

The primary goals of travel softball teams differ from organization to organization and can change based on age-group and competitive levels. Overall we are looking to:

- Build strong relationships and instill character values focused on Teamwork, Commitment, Self-Discipline, Hard Work, Sportsmanship and Respect.

We will strive to achieve these goals by:

- Continuing development of each individual player's skills and potential
- Building confidence and self-esteem in each player
- Fostering the importance of teamwork and success as part of a team

- Encouraging positive attitudes, camaraderie and mutual respect amongst players, coaches and families
- Creating and maintaining an enjoyable, educational and productive environment for players, families, coaches and community
- Encouraging families and fans to support the team with spirit and integrity
- Fielding a team and developing players that can compete to the best of their ability
- Supporting the JTAA recreation softball program
- Providing a program that is admired by other fastpitch programs and the Jupiter community
- Finally and most important, nurturing an atmosphere where the girls will make friends and have fun.

In addition to the above, travel softball is highly competitive. There is a higher focus on fielding a competitive team and winning. A first year 8U team will emphasize skill development and knowledge of the game. As teams move up in age groups the commitment to winning increases and the coaches will field the players at the positions that put the team in the best position to win at that time. While winning is important, having fun, showing good sportsmanship and being a team player are consistently reinforced.

What does it Cost?

There are defined and not defined costs. **Jupiter's travel program non-refundable registration fee is \$400 per player (\$600 for 16U/HS).** Full payment is due upon your daughter's invitation to join the travel team and the player and parents' acceptance of the offer.

Depending upon the number of tournaments entered and number of players per team, team budgets vary greatly. In our research, Jupiter's registration fee ranks in the middle of the pack for travel teams. However including non-defined costs, the ultimate out-of-pocket costs for travel team parents tend to be similar throughout the country.

Jupiter Seahawk teams typically play in several tournaments during the season. The majority of the tournaments are within an hour's drive of Jupiter and the Treasure Coast. If the team and the parents are willing, tournaments may be scheduled that would require greater travel distances and an overnight stay which would require overnight travel expenses for each family.

Extra expenses to consider:

- Glove, bat, cleats, sliding shorts
- Travel expenses to/from tournaments (gas, food)
- Helmet – would like to have the teams with standard batting helmets (approx \$45)
- Occasional cost to bring in professional trainer to practices

Fundraising

Fundraising by teams may be required if additional tournaments are scheduled, overnight trips are planned, additional uniform or apparel items are desired and individual team expenses exceed the fees paid. Individual teams can pursue fundraising activities for their team that might support equipment, tournaments or travel. In order to avoid duplication and to ensure fundraising strategies are consistent with the JTAA Softball Board's vision, teams are required to seek approval through the Board prior to committing to the activity.

Schedule (Where and when are tournaments played?)

The travel program typically starts at the completion of the recreation season. However, teams are selected prior to the completion of the season to determine the number of teams participating in each age division and to enable coaches to meet with families and coordinate their travel tournament plans. Individual team practices may start before the recreation season ends. The travel season is usually completed by no later than mid-July. Teams desiring to play additional tournaments and/or statewide and national competitions may complete their season later in the summer.

Tournaments are almost exclusively held on weekends. On rare occasions, a tournament may include play on Friday evening. Tournaments occupy a full Saturday (typically 3 games) and part of a Sunday (typically play to you lose). Teams can play a minimum of 3 games in a weekend and up to 7 games depending on how well they perform. Games can start as early as 8 AM and run as late as 9 PM.

What Type of Commitment Will Be Needed From the Girls and Her Parents?

The time commitment typically varies with age group and level of play. The number of practices in each of the age groups typically ranges from a minimum of two to a maximum of four per week. During tournament weekends, at a minimum two practices during the week should be expected.

Girls are selected to participate in travel softball based on their current skills demonstrated during a tryout period as determined by the JTAA Softball Board and through the knowledge of the player's skills and game sense from prior playing history. Girls who have been selected in the Jupiter travel softball program must be willing to make a substantial commitment of time to the team. Attending practices, games and functions is expected.

In considering your daughter's acceptance of the invitation to play on a travel team, we specifically request that you review your family's vacation, camp, or other times your daughter will be away so that the coaches can plan accordingly when selecting girls for the team. If you plan on missing multiple tournaments and/or practices, the roster spot may be better served going to a girl who will be able to attend the games and/or practices.

Most travel teams consist of 11-12 players, so commitment and attendance are critical to the team's success. Again, it is expected that all players will attend all tournaments and practices. It is discouraging for a coach and the other players not to have all players attend practice or a tournament. We all are aware that circumstances come up; illness, unavoidable family, school, and religious conflicts, therefore parents should consider the tournament and practice schedule prior to commitment. During the season, if your child cannot attend a practice or tournament you are asked to call/email the coach in advance and let them know.

Although the head coach will determine distribution of playing time, it is common practice that playing time is influenced by a player's attendance at practices and games.

Playing Time

In travel softball there is no requirement or guarantee that equal playing time will occur.

Travel coaches strive to continue to develop the skills of every player on the team. The younger the age group, the more that playing time should be arranged to enhance the development of skills for every player at more than one position with comparable playing time. The older the age group, and higher level of play, the more team development and placing the most competitive team on the field is stressed. Total playing time, positions and batting order will be based on merit. Playing positions are dependent on players' abilities

in comparison to others on the team, as well as the current needs of the team and will not necessarily be at the player's or parent's desired position.

Conclusion

If you are thinking like how most of us now involved in Jupiter Seahawk travel softball for the past 8-9 years were, you are probably asking yourself, "What the h*ll am I getting into?!" That's exactly what most of us thought back then, plus no one ever provided any of the above information, so we all learned as we went along.

Despite the commitments mentioned above and emphasis on structure, rules, merit and regulations, participation in a travel team is ultimately to have fun. Travel team participation is very rewarding for the girls, contributes to the overall success of your child, and the fun and fellowship that is shared by the families is unmatched.

Here's looking forward to a great season!