



## IN THE GAME

with Linda Derk

# starting a New Program

It is hard to be the FIRST to do something.....like it's hard to take the first piece of pie out of the pie plate without making a mess.....but sometimes the greatest reward comes to those who aren't afraid of being the FIRST to do something.

Starting a softball program can be overwhelming. There are many things to consider: scheduling practice, tryouts, ordering new equipment, preparing the field, fundraising etc.....before you know it the season is about to begin.

It is important to have a routine in practice and create an environment where all can learn and grow as players. It is also important to have fair policies that are enforced consistently. Create two or three practices that will help develop all the fundamental skills and keep using those practices over

and over. Good fundamentals will win ball games. Keep the parents informed regularly and don't be afraid to turn down volunteer help.

Through all the preparation and chaos, it is important to think about your coaching philosophy and style. The coach is the leader. As the leader you are expected to inspire, teach, and instill pride in your players. Players look to their coaches to show them what they can be, not what they are.

A coach must be dedicated to the overall development of the player. Academics, social and community service should all be a part of the equation. It is important to place emphasis on respect and responsibility. Respect for all, respect for the game and respect for themselves. It is the coaches' responsibility to help the athletes understand they are responsible for their actions on and off the field. A good coach is dedicated to the overall process of the program to ensure success over time and to build a strong tradition in the program.

A good coach is one who loves the game and shows a lot of heart. Our actions will speak louder than our words. Our players are perceptive and they will respond if they know you are giving your all. The saying is a "a player does not care how much you know until they know how much you care" rings true in everything you do!

Finally, when starting a new program or continuing a tradition it is important to be consistent in policy, rewards and consequences. Keep an open line of communication with all. Most important remember to have fun!