



Ocee Park Spring 2009 Softball Program Changes for Majors Division (11-12 year olds)

In an effort to continue to enhance the overall experience for the softball players in our Majors Division, primarily our 11- and 12-year old players, changes to the Majors Division were implemented in Spring 2008. The Majors Division was split into two separate leagues based on player assessments with the more competitive of the two leagues participating in the North Atlanta NGFA league. The result was highly successful and Ocee Park teams placed in the top-3 in the NGFA end of season league championship tournament.

We will again offer 2 leagues in this division for Spring 2009 which will play by identical rules. The most competitive of these leagues will again be the **Major NGFA League** and will include returning Majors division players from Spring 2008 combined with the top assessing players from the Spring 2009 player assessments. NGFA is an acronym for North Georgia Fast Pitch Association and is a consortium of fast pitch softball programs in the area designed to facilitate interleague play at a highly competitive level. Our second league, known simply as the **Major In-Park League**, will include all remaining 11- and 12-year old players either not selected for the Major NGFA League or those that chose not to play in this more competitive league. The Major In-Park League is identical in format and rules to the AAA League from Spring 2007. Below are the highlights for each of the leagues in the Majors Division:

Major NGFA League

- Three (3) teams of 11 players per team (# of teams varies year to year)
- Plays an intra-league schedule amongst Ocee Park teams during the week
- Plays an NGFA schedule of 10 games including Home/Away games on Saturdays (travel time may vary from 20 minutes to 45 minutes one-way)
- Some Saturday events will be double-headers
- Players selected to a Major NGFA team that are 10- or 11-years old will automatically return to the Major NGFA league the following season
- Requires a significant time and schedule commitment including local travel
- Plays utilizing the NGFA "C" Class rules as posted on the Ocee Park web site
- Features trophies for regular season champion based on best record including all intra-league and NGFA games
- Features end of season NGFA invitational tournament (double elimination)
- Features an In-Park All Star game with top 7 players from each team being selected by their team mates (league champion gets 8 selections)

Major In-Park League (AAA in 2007)

- Four (4) teams of 11 or 12 players per team
- Plays only an intra-league schedule amongst Ocee Park teams with all games being played at Ocee Park during the week and on Saturdays
- Plays utilizing the NGFA "C" Class rules as posted on the Ocee Park web site
- Features trophies for regular season champion based on best record
- Features end of season intra-league tournament at Ocee Park with trophies for tournament champion (pool play or double-elimination format)

- Features an In-Park All Star game with top 6 players from each team being selected by their team mate

Which League is Best for my Daughter?

All 11- and 12-year old players will be assigned to a team in one of the two Major leagues. Players must qualify for the Major NGFA League based on skills assessment. There are a limited number of openings in this league each year since players with a league age of 11 are eligible to return to the Major NGFA League the following season without the need to re-assess and qualify. The Major NGFA League is highly competitive and requires a more significant time commitment than the Major League. In addition to games between the Ocee Park Major NGFA teams, each team will play 10 games against local NGFA teams including at least 5 games at other locations. To accomplish a 10-game schedule with only 8 weekends in the season, some Saturday events will be double-headers. Travel to other parks will require between 20- and 45-minutes one-way depending on the location.

In addition, players are less likely to rotate positions freely with some players only playing infield positions on a very limited basis. Pitchers in the Major NGFA League are experienced players that are expected to practice their pitching on a regular basis outside of scheduled events and to also receive pitching lessons and instruction outside of team events. Casual pitchers or players that are interesting in becoming pitchers will not have an opportunity to pitch or develop in the Major NGFA League since only experienced and capable pitchers will be utilized in games.

Lastly, players are selected for Major NGFA teams without any regard for special requests such as car pools, best friends, desired coaches, or any other criteria. Any player entered into the Major NGFA draft is considered unencumbered by any special requests and no special requests, even if made during the registration process, will be honored except by chance. Special requests are however taken into consideration as part of the Major In-Park (AAA) League draft although it is not possible to honor each and every request.

The Major In-Park League is also a competitive league which plays by the same set of rules as the Major NGFA League. The primary differences between the Major In-Park League and the Major NGFA League are:

- All games are played at Ocee Park (no travel requirement)
- All games are against Ocee Park Major League teams
- No double-header events
- Greater opportunity for playing a variety of positions in games
- Greater opportunity to develop as a pitcher or to pitch as a casual pitcher
- Overall less intense competitive environment in contrast to Major NGFA
- Recognition of best regular season team based on record (trophies)
- End of season local tournament to determine league champion (trophies)

Player Assessments and League Assignment

All 11- and 12-year old players must attend a Majors Division skills assessment session in January (with the exception of players returning to the Major

NGFA League from 2008). Based on the results of player assessments, the following options are available to each player:

- The top assessing players, based on the number of openings in the Major NGFA League, are made available during the Major NGFA League draft
- Players not selected during the Major NGFA draft are made available for the Major In-Park League draft (all players are assigned to one of the 2 leagues)
- Parents may request that a player be removed from the Major NGFA draft in which case the player will be drafted to a team in the Major In-Park League
- Any player that does not attend skills assessment will be ineligible for the Major NGFA League draft and will be entered into the Major In-Park League draft
- If siblings are registered in the 11- and 12-year old age group, they will be assigned to the same team in most cases. However, if one sibling qualifies for the Major NGFA League but another does not, the players may be split between the two leagues or both players may be assigned to the Major In-Park League at the request of the parents

What Other Programs are Doing?

Ocee Park is unique in that we are offering two competitive leagues in fast pitch softball for this age group. Most programs in the area that also compete in NGFA use a different approach. These programs offer from 1 to 3 teams in what is the equivalent of the Major NGFA League and then either turn away the players that do not qualify or in the case of North Park, they are assigned to a developmental slow pitch softball league. Our program philosophy is to accommodate as many players as we can while at the same time recognizing the differences in both talent level and the level of commitment required. We feel that the two league offerings in the Majors Division address the needs for both groups of players by providing both with a fun, challenging, and competitive fast pitch program.

Summary

The addition of the NGFA component to our Majors Division softball program in 2008 was an exciting change and one that enhanced the Ocee Park softball program. The Major In-Park (AAA) League offering will continue to provide a competitive fast pitch environment comparable to that provided by the AAA & Major leagues in the Spring 2007 program. The main differences are the level of commitment required, the expectations for each player, and in the overall talent level required for the Major NGFA League. Both leagues will however continue the fine tradition of 11- and 12-year old fast pitch softball at Ocee Park.

If you have questions or require additional information about league structure or which league is best for you, please do not hesitate to contact Rob Latzsch, VP Softball Programs at vpsoftball@oceepark.com.