

## **Equipment Changes for 2014**

- Pitchers in all levels, except American Division of 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> Grade and 10<sup>th</sup>+ Grade will be required to wear a safety mask. American Division of 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> Grade and 10<sup>th</sup>+ will follow PIAA rules.
- All batting helmets at all levels must have a facemask on them.

BTAA teams will be equipped appropriately to meet these new requirements, but I wanted to give everyone an early heads-up for those doing some off-season shopping.

## **Playing Levels Starting in 2014**

I am pleased to inform everyone that the ELV, the league in which we play in, has adopted a new playing level structure for the 2014 season. The new structure includes new rules. I would have liked to see a few more changes, but it is a big step in the right direction. I have attached a summary of the key rules by level. You can also find it at (website).

### **The levels are:**

Kindergarten/1<sup>st</sup> Grade (girls who are not in Kindergarten, but turn 5 before April can be considered)

2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> Grade

4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Grade

6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> Grade

8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> Grade

10<sup>th</sup> Grade + (must not turn 20 before 7/1/2014)

You will notice the name designations have gone away. I would not recommend trying to map the new levels to the old names because the ages and rules are significantly different.

Below are some anticipated questions:

### **Why are changes being made?**

It was determined that league-wide we could be doing better job of improving the quality of play and teaching the girls more. At the same time the league wants to maintain the inclusive nature that is a strength of the league.

### **How is the league going to meet the goals of improving the quality of play, teach the girls more, and still be inclusive?**

The girls will be exposed to more of the game at slightly younger ages. For example, all 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders will be exposed to the pitching and playing the catcher position. In the past only some were exposed to these positions in 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> grade, and most didn't really have a chance to play the positions until 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

Also, each level is older than it used to be.

### **Are there additional benefits to this new approach?**

There are additional benefits to this new approach. They include:

- 1) Improvement on the social aspects. For example, in the past some 3<sup>rd</sup> graders played Coach Pitch, while others played Minors. With the new approach all 3<sup>rd</sup> graders would be in the same level.
- 2) For those interested in pursuing it, the levels are aligned to prepare girls for the start of middle school ball.

### **Can my daughter move up a level?**

It is a possibility. Our goal is to the best for each girl. I am in favor of moving girls up when it makes sense. At sign-ups, please mark your sign-up sheet if you are interested in your daughter being considered to move up a level.

Moving girls up will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Do they have the ability to play up?
- Do the parents and kids understand the ramifications?
  - o They can't go down a level once the rosters are set.
  - o They may be the only one in their grade at that level and/or not play with their school grade friends. For example, a 5<sup>th</sup> grader playing up to the 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> Grade level may not be teammates with anyone else in 5<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - o Understand the upper end of the competition at they will be facing. For example a 7<sup>th</sup> grader playing up to the 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> Grade level may face JV high school pitchers.
- Do the roster numbers make sense for all levels?
  - o It would not be fair to move a girl up if it takes away playing time from a girl already at that level. Ex: if there are 3 teams of 13 players, moving a player up to make a team of 14 is not fair to the other 13 girls on that team.

### **If my daughter plays up, must she move up again after 2 years?**

If a player plays up, she does not have to automatically move up after 2 years. For example, a 5<sup>th</sup> grader who plays at the 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> Grade level has the option to play 3 years at the 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> Grade level.

### **Are there any changes to territories or how rosters are handled for non-Bethlehem Township residents?**

There are no changes on these topics. If you are a non-Bethlehem Township resident who has played BTAA Softball in the past, waiver paperwork will need to be done with the corresponding organization and the league. To date, no girl with a history of playing with BTAA has been denied a waiver. I do not expect that to change, but nothing is final until the paperwork is done.