

Rage Travel Softball Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Question: What is the biggest change that a parent and daughter will experience moving from town softball to travel softball?

Answer: The biggest change is the significant time commitment and expectations of both the parent and player to play at this higher level. The info below outlines some of our basic expectations for your daughter:

Minimum time requirements (excludes driving time):

- Up to Two practices per week @ 2 hours per practice (SEP-JUL)
- All-day tournaments @ 3 per month (SAT & SUN, 6 months, MAY-JUL, 1 in SEP or OCT)

Extra time (Encouraged to address/reinforce improving playing abilities):

- Optional Trainer (instruction time plus driving time)
- Practice at home (especially for those players that play a specialty position such as pitcher, catcher or middle infielder)

Question: My daughter has always played the best positions in town league (pitcher, 1st base, SS), can we choose what position we want her to play?

Answer: If your daughter is chosen to be a part of the Rage program, she will be given every chance to compete for any position she tries out for. However, it will be the decision of the manager to determine where she has the best chance for success and where the team needs her most. It is important to note that in travel ball, every single position is a "skill" position. There is action and opportunity in every position on the field. If you come with an expectation that your daughter may immediately become the starting shortstop for a travel team because that was the position she played on her town league all-star team, this expectation may not be realized immediately.

Question: What should I expect as a parent from a travel softball coach?

Answer: You should expect a higher level of game knowledge, coaching experience, and dedication from any travel coach. Programs with elite athletes should also have elite coaches. Generally, travel coaches have many years of playing or coaching experience before joining a travel program. You should expect to receive quality instruction for your daughter and see progress in her abilities. That said, parents need to let coaches work with their players with interference or having the parent hover over their daughter. If you have a specific concern about how a particular skill is being taught or how a coach is interacting with your daughter, it is recommended that you discuss this concern with the coach before or after a practice in a private setting. If you are interested in helping a coach during practices, discuss this with the head coach and be ready to articulate what specific help you can provide.

Question: I am paying for outside instruction for my daughter - how do I make sure that her travel coach doesn't contradict what she's being taught?

Answer: First, make sure the travel coach knows that your daughter is receiving outside instruction. Then, discuss with your private instructor what specific skills he would like her

travel coach to reinforce in practice and communicate this to the travel coach. Most travel coaches want to support and reinforce the skills being taught by the private instructor so it is the parents and player's job to make sure that the travel coach understands what the private instructor is teaching the player. As a parent, do not hover or try to coach your daughter during practice on the specific skills that are being taught by the private instructor. Instead, try to work with the travel coach to help them use the right words and look for the fundamentals that are being taught by the private instructor. Most travel coaches have a specific hitting, fielding or throwing system that they use. If your private instructor is teaching something different, be cognizant that this makes it more difficult for the travel coach because he now may have to coach your daughter differently than the rest of the players.

Question: What is the role of the parent on a travel softball team?

Answer: Parent support is critical to the success of any travel softball program but also the most difficult to manage. First, always try to support the coaching staff and their decisions. Second, be willing to help the coaching staff with administrative functions like finding hotels, organizing team social events, researching equipment needs, or even carrying practice/warm-up equipment. Coaches value parent support. Travel coaches also realize every parent has certain expectations for their daughter and that every starting line-up they put on the field exceeds, meets, or falls short of those expectations. As a parent, understand that travel coaches are generally trying to do what is best for the team collectively. In some cases, they may hold your daughter out of a game to rest her or save her for the next game. In other cases, your daughter may not be playing well that day. Playing time decisions are never personal. However, if you become concerned about the playing time decisions the coach is making, most coaches are approachable to discuss your concerns. It is generally best to not discuss your concerns in the heat of the moment - allow yourself a cool down period to think through your issues and specific concerns. Call or email the coach to set up a time to discuss your concerns and provide some of the specific issues you would like to address so that the coach or coaches can also organize their thoughts. At the end of any conversation with a coach, understand that the coach is the one ultimately responsible for balancing the needs of the team, the parents, the individual player, and the team's parent organization. While you may not be particularly happy with the outcome or the information you are told, you should try to support the coach's final decision.

Question: How far away are most tournaments?

Answer: Most tournaments are within the New England area. Most are played in our own backyard in Methuen, Lowell, Dracut. The more distant tournaments will often require a one or two night hotel stay.

Question: Besides the time commitment, what else should a parent consider when making the switch from a town league to travel softball?

Answer: There is a significant time and family sacrifice associated with travel softball. Each family needs to carefully weigh its impact on their work, other family members and siblings, education, religious commitments, and the townhold.

Question: What is the cost to switch from town to travel softball?

Answer: Time and family sacrifice will likely outweigh the playing and equipment costs. The travel coach will explain the costs to pay for registration, game uniforms, practice uniforms,

and tournaments. Unlike town leagues, each team is generally its own independent entity and is responsible for their own finances. Given the costs of tournaments, teams are often required to seek sponsorships and conduct fundraising to offset playing costs. Cost per season also depend upon the number of tournaments the team plays. In addition, parents will need to budget for replacing outgrown or worn out equipment like bats, cleats, and fielding glove. Positions like catcher will require additional costs for protective gear. The travel coach and parents are happy to provide recommendations for discount web sites.

***Question:* From a competitive standpoint, what is the difference between town leagues and travel softball?**

Answer: Travel softball is generally more competitive than town leagues. Each softball sanctioning organization (USSSA, ASA, NSA, PONY) classify teams as 'A' teams, 'B' teams, and 'C' teams (C teams apply to USSSA only). 'A' teams represent the highest level of play and are most competitive. 'B' teams are generally solid teams but slightly below the 'A' teams. 'C' teams are generally younger teams in a particular age bracket and less competitive than 'A' or 'B' teams. Rage teams at all levels are 'A' teams. The overall goal of Rage program is to develop the girls into better players, with a stronger understanding of the game – but we also want to be able to compete with other elite programs at the highest levels of age group play. Our approach is to prepare the girls in every aspect of the game and put us in the best possible position to be successful.

***Question:* Will travel softball impact my daughter's education and schoolwork?**

Answer: Education needs come first and any travel coach understands that there are some days when schoolwork may take precedence over a softball practice. Many girls on the travel team work hard both in school and on the field. This hard work requires that they have the ability to focus and manage their time wisely – skills that will serve them well through high school, college, and adult life. Travel softball, like other travel sports, requires a commitment that demands time of both the parent(s) and daughter and the time demands of travel softball help them learn to be organized and focused when doing their schoolwork.

If you have to miss a practice because of a school function, homework, or project, make sure that your coach knows in advance.

***Question:* My daughter also plays (another sport), can she do both? She also wants to still play on her town team?**

Answer: We have girls that play multiple sports and manage to make it work. We would ask the parents to take a serious look at our practice/tournament schedule and determine if your daughter can commit to full participation while playing both sports. We don't discourage multiple sports, neither coach will be happy if your daughter only attends 50% of the practices and games for both teams. In fact, most high schools do not let athletes try out for more than one varsity sport if their seasons are concurrent.

Your daughter may play on her town team, but cannot miss Rage Practices, functions or games to play town ball or practice town ball.

***Question:* Can we still take family vacations and long weekends?**

Answer: Throughout the year, there are opportunities to take the normal school holidays except for tournaments on Memorial Day weekend. Plan on doing tournaments throughout July. Travel softball families find it easier to schedule their summer vacations in August.

Question: I've heard the weekend tournaments are brutal and we give up the entire weekend for them- is this true?

Answer: Usually, the tournaments are set up as follows: We would play 3 games on Saturday at set times, sometimes 1 on Friday night. We generally get the specific times the week before, which gives people a chance to plan around the games. The organizers try to schedule team games in blocks, so we're not there all day – but we would be lying if we said that was always the case. On Sunday, it is usually "elimination play," which means we know the start time of our first game (usually early), then we could play anywhere from 1-4 games if we keep winning. We generally play 3 tournaments each month. We work hard to give you the tournament schedule months in advance, so your family can play accordingly.