

SOFTBALL NEW ZEALAND GUIDELINES FOR TOURNAMENT TEAM SELECTIONS

Note: National tournaments that consist of 10 teams or more will require the naming of a Tournament Team and a Rest Team.

Naming players to a tournament team is very different from selecting players for a touring team or playing some future contest. For a touring team or future contest, past, present and probable future performances are all taken into consideration. To be named to a tournament team the player's tournament performance should be the primary consideration. For a touring team much emphasis is placed on a player's ability to get along with others, their willingness to listen and learn their state of fitness, experience, motivation etc. For a tournament team the above points may be considered but to a lesser extent.

Watch as many games as possible; the first two days of a tournament will provide sufficient time to see all the teams play. By that time there will be ample statistics for the in-form players to be known. Statistics can be extremely useful but can be misleading if used incorrectly. Some examples are: A batting average of .400 that is built off weak pitching may not be as good as a .350 average which includes hits off the better pitchers. Also, keep in mind that players do not bat against their own pitcher. This may be an advantage or a disadvantage and does affect their own batting average. Another example is an infielder with a top pitcher on their side does not have the ball hit to them as often or as hard as an infielder whose team has a weak pitcher. Outfielders with a top pitcher have very few and very routine balls hit to them. Outfielders with a weak pitcher have a wide variety of balls hit to them and plenty of action.

A fielder with a fielding average of .925 and playing with a weak team could be much better than a .950 fielder with a strong team. Superstars with a weak team can look very ordinary while an ordinary player with a strong team can be made to look like a superstar.

Fielding averages can only be compared in the same position. Catchers and first basemen have higher averages than the rest of the infielders. Shortstops generally have the lowest fielding average of all infielders because they seldom have time to knock a ball down then pick it up and throw for an out.

Apart from drawing attention to errors made, statistics tell very little about outfielders.

Coaches of weaker teams often play their players in several positions. This makes it all but impossible for their players to be considered for selection in a specific position other than "utility infielder".

There may be 200 to 300 players at a tournament. It may seem like an impossible task to be fair to all of them. It is much easier than is generally realised. At least 75% eliminate themselves with poor execution of basic fundamentals. Consider only those who possess an accurate over arm or 3/4 arm throw. The rest will make too many throwing errors. (However there is a time and place for a sidearm or underarm throw.)

Shortstops, second base and third base players should only be considered if they take routine ground balls in front of their body and use the pocket of the glove rather than the

web. The rest will make too many errors. Every once in a while there will be an exception to this rule but the statistics will draw your attention to them and then they can be given further consideration.

Hitters will generally be identified from statistics, but thought should be given to the player who consistently hits hard and long (especially on open diamonds), but may not feature on the batting statistics because the ball is fielded or caught.

Slap hitting is a valuable asset providing the "slapper" can also hit normally, i.e., singles and doubles.

Bunting is vital to softball, especially the sacrifice bunt, yet very few players execute this skill correctly.

Base running and sliding always rate a high priority - these skills will win games.

Also seek support or advice from the following:

- Ask the chief scorer or tournament statistician for any information you require
- Liaise with the Regional Coaching Coordinator who is there to support you and talent identify players for future development
- Seek the opinions of coaches as to who they think their best players are
- Seek the advice of softball people "whose opinion you respect"
- But always remember that at the end of the day, it is you the tournament selector who has final say on awards and tournament team selections.

SELECTION BY POSITION

PITCHING

Is the most important defensive position. It is probably the easiest position to select. They virtually select themselves. Lots of statistics are available for pitchers but again they must be used with caution. For example, a team may use two pitchers at a tournament. One could be a top NZ pitcher and play against the better teams and the other of lesser ability and pitch against the weaker teams. Statistically the better pitcher or the NZ pitcher could come off second best. Or a pitcher who has to pitch every game at a tournament would pace themselves against the weaker teams and only bear down against the stronger ones. Their statistics may not be overly impressive. Commonsense should be used especially when selecting pitchers. Batting ability would not rate a high priority.

NB: The Tournament Pitcher Award is not necessarily to be given to the pitcher with the best ERA. The award is to be given to the best performed pitcher at the tournament. Low ERA's can be achieved by second string pitchers facing weaker opposition while the first string pitcher is required to contain the stronger batters from the top ranked teams – again, raw statistics often do not tell the whole story.

CATCHING

Is the second most important defensive position. Pitcher-catcher combinations (from the same team) are often chosen. Often it is justified but sometimes not. Superior catchers with average teams are often underrated and overlooked. An ordinary catcher receiving

to a top class pitcher is often overrated and selected. At the same time a catcher's true ability may be reflected in a pitcher's performance. Coaches sometimes replace a pitcher, when replacing the catcher would be more beneficial.

Points to consider are:

1. Catchers are generally right-handed.
2. Their throws must be strong, accurate and with a quick release.
3. They should provide a solid target for the pitcher and be able to catch the ball.
4. Intelligent signal calling. Understand the physical and mental characteristics of batters. Know their strengths and their weaknesses
5. They must have the ability to field bunts and catch foul balls
6. Direct defensive positioning and play, encourage the pitcher.
7. Must be able to block balls in the dirt, or wild, loose pitches
8. A good hitting catcher is an asset but can never replace defensive ability

FIRST BASE

1. MUST be a good hitter.
2. Preferably left-handed and tall but not a necessity.
3. Must have the ability and agility to field bunts and take the lead runner.
4. Maintain good body balance so that off target throws can be caught.

SECOND BASE AND SHORTSTOP

1. Exceptional ability with the glove.
2. Able to move in all directions, especially laterally.
3. An accurate thrower and in the case of the shortstop strong as well
4. Good thinker of the game.
5. Not necessarily good batters but always an asset as well.

THIRD BASE

1. Quick reactions.
2. A good thinker of the game.
3. Good with the glove.
4. Have the ability to field bunts.
5. An accurate thrower.
6. Fielding is of a higher priority in the women's game than the men's due to the larger volume of infield hits.
7. Average to good batter or high on base average.

OUTFIELD

1. Must be good hitters. Centre field to a lesser extent, as their first priority is defence.

2. Outstanding fielders with good running speed.
3. Strong accurate throwers.

UTILITY INFIELDBERS

1. Utility infielders are those players that have played several positions during the tournament to a competent level.
2. Alternatively they may be the 3rd best short stop at tournament, as generally, especially in age grades, coaches will play their best player in key positions such as short stop.
3. To be selected in this position, priority is defence.

DESIGNATED PLAYER

1. After all other positions are selected the next best hitter is chosen.
2. Must be a power hitter or a high average hitter.
3. It is an advantage if the DP can also play particularly well in the field.

COACH

In yesteryear, we simply selected head coach of the winning team as our tournament coach. Now a greater emphasis is placed on selecting the best coach at the tournament. Points to consider are:

1. Attitude towards umpires
2. Appropriate game strategies e.g. bunts, steals, squeezes
3. Substitution of players
4. Signals
5. Knowledge of the rules
6. Team communication, encouragement and motivation of the team
7. A good attitude to Fair Play.

MANAGER

This position will be selected by either the tournament organizer or the SNZ Tournament Representative (STR). Check beforehand with the STR to ensure that they have this selection covered.

INDIVIDUAL TOURNAMENT AWARDS

Most Valuable Player

The player you feel has been the most valuable towards the success and achievements

of the team. All round excellence should be taken into account when considering this award.

Top Batter

This selection will come from statistics supplied by the tournament statistician.

Top Pitcher

Refer to previous notes on pitcher selection. This selection should be made in conjunction with the pitching statistics and your own observations of pitching performance.

Top Catcher

This new award introduced in 2009 reflects the importance of the Battery (Pitchers & Catchers). Keep in mind best performance as a catcher (refer to previous notes) and leadership and encouragement provided to the pitcher and the team. The catcher is the only player that has the whole team in front of them and is pivotal to the tone set for the game. It may be useful to confer with umpires as they can relate to the skills required for this position.

Please note; Winners of Individual Awards must be named in the Tournament Team.

This is not intended to be a complete list but rather useful guidelines for selectors to follow. Please feel free to comment if you have feedback on the information in this handout or conversely, selection policy at the tournament. We are always interested in hearing other points of view in regards to selecting.

You are required to complete a post tournament report form. This information will be sent to you closer to the tournament and must be returned within 14 days of completion of the tournament.

ENJOY IT SELECTION IS FUN AND YOU HAVE AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE IDENTIFICATION OF OUR FUTURE STARS!

Softball New Zealand
93 Hutt Park Rd, Seaview
PO Box 30 322, Lower Hutt
New Zealand
www.softball.org.nz



Softball Manager
Glen Roff
Telephone: 64 4 5600389
Mobile: 021 537082
Email: glen@softball.org.nz