



2014 Valley Stomper Travel Teams

PROGRAM INTRODUCTION and PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Dear Valley Stomper Parents:

This document outlines the core values of our softball program for the upcoming season. It is important that you feel comfortable with our approach while participating on our Valley Stompers team. As some of you may know, the Valley Stompers is the "A" Travel Ball division of the San Ramon Valley Girls Athletic League (SRVGAL). SRVGAL is the "*largest girls' softball organization west of the Mississippi*". SRVGAL, as a girl's softball organization has been in existence for about 45 years. SRVGAL has always maintained strong representation in ASA "B" travel softball with their "Stompers" program. About 10 years ago, SRVGAL initiated their "Valley Stomper" program to address the needs of players who wanted to play an even more competitive level of play in the "A-Ball" arena. Since that time, the Valley Stompers has grown to become one of the most respected and best thought of programs in northern California. Our Stomper program is one of the few programs to offer travel teams in the "A", "B", and "C" levels.

For our upcoming season, our focus will be to pursue our team goals as they relate to the greater whole. The underlying premise of our philosophy is that the whole is greater than the sum of all the individual parts. While it is only natural for parents to focus on their player, our plan is that the coaches and players will focus on the team as a whole. We will stress the values of teamwork (both on and off the field), softball competitiveness, and fundamental skill development that will enable our team to compete at higher level.

To ensure an enjoyable and productive experience for everyone, we require that all parents become stewards of the Valley Stomper culture by adopting and abiding by the principles outlined in this document. This document represents the foundational values of the Valley Stomper organization and provides the doctrine that all families in the program are expected to abide by.

Program Objectives and Approach

Our program is designed to contribute to the development of positive, confident, respectful, and hard working young adults that will be able to understand to correlation between effort and reward. Our medium is softball and we will use softball to achieve that objective. We will teach our players the fundamental skills and advanced strategy that defines a higher-level softball program. While we believe the competitive nature of our program accelerates a player's development, the competitive element can become destructive if our parents and players lose sight of the basic purpose of our program; to teach the game of softball within the perspective of real world life lessons. Our basic theory is that teaching the game inherently promotes "on-field success". We do not believe that "on-field success" inherently promotes teaching. By participating in our program, our players will develop the physical, mental, and emotional skills to play the game at the next level. While we believe that winning is important, we will never measure a season by wins and losses. Winning at any cost does not represent the primary goal of our program. **Our basic belief is that it is more important to teach and develop than to win.** Keep in mind that this should not be misinterpreted as any less of a commitment to winning, however, we are much more concerned about our player's development than the number of tournaments we win. We will focus on skills development and the importance of consistency. We will emphasize our expectation of putting forth a complete effort rather than the results from that effort. In return for that complete effort, we will coach and teach at a higher level, support our girls as they grow to young adults and treat each player with respect. You will never see a Valley Stomper coach verbally berate or otherwise disrespect a player. We will hold the player accountable within the context of effort, focus, and respect for the program and their teammates. We will promote the triangle of respect. One side of the triangle being **respect for peers**, the other side of the triangle being **respect for authorities**, and the base or foundation of the triangle being **respect for yourself**.

Commitment

For our program to be successful, it is imperative that players and parents understand the level of commitment required. We can assure you that your daughter will receive the highest level of instruction we can provide. We will do our best to utilize as many avenues of development available to us that are within our budget. As we move through the season, you might see us utilizing other coaches, clinics, and maybe even a couple of older players in our program.

This program is intended to be a full schedule of softball activities. Accordingly, we discourage players from supplementing their schedule with recreational softball leagues. This will inevitably create a prioritization issue that isn't fair to your daughter or her teammates on either team. We realize that some players play other sports. We certainly encourage these activities as long as they do not create exceptions to our team time. Please understand that we do carry primarily "softball-only" players who deserve for you and your daughter to respect that priority.

If you commit to the team and then later decide to leave before the conclusion of the season, you will probably not be able to return that same season. This is unless there are mitigating circumstances that are approved by Coach Callaway. The intent here is to keep the team intact and to avoid that revolving door syndrome. In return, you and your daughter will enjoy the same level of commitment from us. Once the team is selected, we will not recruit players to join the team unless a situation such as an injury roster opening occurs which dictates a new player being added for the good of the team.

Participant Selection

The program is designed to attract players who have the greatest developmental potential with a reasonable strong existing skill set. We place a strong weight on a player's attitude and willingness to work hard and get better. We want our players to be aggressive players with above average attitudinal and mental capabilities. Since we expect our players to learn the game at a high level, their mental approach and work ethic is integral to their success. Our focus on teaching both fundamental and advanced skills requires the discipline to focus and move quickly both mentally and physically. Mental or physical lethargy will not mesh well with the Valley Stomper program.

We will carry enough players on the roster to afford some degree of scheduling flexibility. We know that the season is a long one that can provide schedule conflicts so we will roster accordingly. Not all players will play in every game. Practices are generally open to non-roster players all throughout the season. Non-roster players that we invite may work out with the team in case a roster spot develops.

Playing Time

There is no guarantee of playing time or position for any player. Playing time is based on a player's skill set, their effort and attitude during practice, as well as their success in games. A player demonstrating less effort in practice will have her playing time impacted. For some games, not all players will play. But over the course of a weekend, everyone will get the appropriate playing opportunities.

The manner in which playing time is distributed may be impacted by external factor too. Considerations will be given to the skill level of the team that we are facing and the game situation. There will be situations such as Sunday bracket play where playing time may not be evenly distributed. While it is unreasonable to expect or assume equal playing time for all players, we recognize and appreciate that it is difficult for a player to develop her skills on the bench. We understand the importance of providing every player with adequate playing time to develop her skills, providing that she expends the necessary effort. There will be **no** discussion about playing time or positioning during the course of a tournament or friendly between the parents and the coaches. If you feel the need to have this discussion with Coach Callaway, please pick an appropriate time and approach him in a professional and respectful manner.

Instruction

We believe skill development is a function of repetition. Therefore, we utilize repetitive drills in most phases of our practices. We have found that this muscle memory training is the most effective mechanism for teaching strong softball fundamentals. The more you can practice with your daughter outside of our program, the better.

We encourage individual instruction with other skilled coaches. This type of instruction accelerates development, both physically and mentally which we can't provide on our limited meeting times. This opportunity is strictly your decision but is supported and encouraged by our coaches. For all practices, you must be at practice on time (this really means to be ready to start 15 minutes before practice begins), with your equipment. We know there are times that things come up, but being late all the time or not hustling to a field will not work.

Position Assignments

Position assignments for each game will be made based on each player's abilities, opportunities to develop position depth, and the line-up that makes the team appropriately competitive. During competitive game situations, we will do our best not to play players in positions that have not been practicing. Playing position decisions will be based on the judgment of the coaching staff. Obviously, only a limited number of players will play the pitcher and catcher positions, as these require a unique skill set. Batting lineups will always be a function of doing what is best for the team. I will do my best to communicate with each player and give her a clear understanding on where we see the best position(s) to both develop individually as well as to help the team.

Communication

If you are concerned about any aspect of the program, we urge you to communicate your concerns directly to me. This should be done outside the presence of your daughter or other parents. If concerns arise during a game, please wait until 24 hours after the game to discuss the situation with me. This will give you time to gain some perspective and provide me with the opportunity to be able to listen with an open mind. ***Playing time or lineup issues are generally something that should not be discussed.*** We are committed to providing you with a forum for your concerns provided that it is handled in a calm and respectful manner. We ask that you refrain from involving other parents in your personal disagreements, since this tends to lead to inappropriate dissension among program participants. Our Valley Stomper program is a "drama free environment". If you are a parent or a player that likes to create drama, then this is not the program for you. A primary goal of our program is to provide a unified environment that is enjoyable for the players, parents and coaches. If a recurring conflict with a player or parent cannot be solved, it is possible that we may need to evaluate whether or not this is the right fit for you or your daughter. Please understand that from a coach's standpoint, conflict with players and parents takes the fun out of what we do and turns this into a chore. The coaches are human and will make mistakes.

Providing instruction from the stands is strictly prohibited as it undermines the coaching staff's role and it places your daughter in a compromising position. Allowing her to focus on the on-field instructions will maximize your daughter contributions. Your coaching from the stands may impact your daughter's playing time. Don't ever assume that you know what the coach is planning to do in any game situation. It is imperative that everyone understands their role. We believe that **PLAYERS PLAY, COACHES COACH AND PARENTS WATCH.**

I can usually be reached during the week by cell, text message, or email. Please make the effort to notify me if you can't make a practice or something comes up for a game. Please try to give me as much notice as you can if you can't make it.

School

Education, not softball is the most important activity in your daughter's life. Homework is very important to your daughter's school. But please, do not routinely make homework to be an excuse to miss practice. Granted, there are exceptions, but time management is something your daughter will need to learn for life. If your daughter knows the report is due 4 weeks from now, and she has practice, she should do the work when away from the field so that she makes both activities. Again, there are exceptions and communication is just needed. Our goal is to field not only an athletic team but also a scholastic team.

Travel

One of the benefits of this type of team is that you get to go places to play softball. We will try to minimize the travel but, we may have some tournaments that will require overnight stay by the entire team. When that occurs, we will try to stay at the same hotel and the girls will eat at least 1 meal a day together. There are very few "Personal Choices" if the team will be staying together as that undermines the entire concept of team. We do this for the purpose of allowing

our players to build the team culture and camaraderie off the field. We think this is very important to the big picture. Therefore, we would like to have one parent from each family assist with the planning when the time comes.

Parent Conduct

We all want to see our daughter to achieve her goals and succeed on the field. But, this game is about teamwork, roles and team success. Therefore, your daughter will be placed in those roles for the best of the team. The season is very long and every player will play her fair share over the length of the year. But, there will be games that she may not play the whole game or even any of the game. You need to understand that there is a zero tolerance for complaining to a coach and/or being detrimental to the team. I highly value my time with your child and we understand the amount of time it takes for the team to do well. I refuse to take payment for this time at this level as other coaches may do. Therefore, we are all volunteers. We also understand that we have close friendships, and we would hate to lose a friendship over some meaningless game or position. Therefore, we ask all parents to be mature about the responsibility as we move forward. **Please don't ever do anything that might embarrass your daughter.**

Our core rules are:

- There should be no conversations about positions or playing time from anyone.
- Providing instruction from the stands is strictly prohibited.
- Please be on time and ready to go for each practice and game. If you are arriving at the time listed, you are late! Our girls cannot drive (yet!) so this is the parent's responsibility but the players are the ones who will be held accountable.
- Please give all coaches a 24 hour cooling off period after your issue to speak to them about that issue.
- We need your help in many areas. – Please be involved. This is your team, too.
- We will communicate with everyone, but please understand that my primary relationship is with the players and we would rather go through the girls, first, as they begin to gain the responsibilities of being a young adult.

Game Conduct

It is important that your behavior reinforces our values. We are responsible for your behavior. We have worked very diligently to build a reputation as one that promotes sportsmanship, good culture and mature behavior. Please understand that the officiating will nearly always be near sub-standard. Keep in mind that talented umpires may not be working at this level. You will be doing the team a real disservice by being critical of an umpire's performance as umpires at this level will generally take their frustrations out on our team. Accept the premise that the umpiring will be sub-standard and focus your comments elsewhere. Our players will be taught that it is unacceptable to argue an umpire's call, as there is nothing more bothersome to an umpire than a youngster challenging their decisions.

Dugout Etiquette

Only Water/Gatorade, sunflower seeds, and the team supply of red ropes will be allowed in the dugout. We will not allow any other types of food. If we play back-to-back, please make sure your daughter has had something before the game to hold her over until we end. If we have a break between games, getting normal "healthy" food is encouraged. No other food will be allowed in the playing area or dugout at any time.

No player will be allowed to throw equipment, yell or reprimand her teammates or members of other teams or be disrespectful to her teammates, opponents' adults or spectators. Players will be disciplined if this occurs but I doubt this will be an issue. Players are to stay in the dugout at all times. There should be no communications between players and parents during the game.

Dugouts must be CLEAN after the game. Players will not be allowed to leave until this is completed. It's time for your daughter to be responsible for her equipment and apparel, as well. We are very fortunate to have the High School as our home field. Therefore, it is our responsibility to leave the field cleaner than when we found it. This may mean staying a few minutes after cleaning trash and putting away equipment.