

## **Why We Don't Allow Coach Requests**

Most Parks and Recreation departments do not allow requests to play with a friend or for a particular coach. Historically in Broadview Heights we have allowed player requests and coach requests. Beginning in January of 2014, we determined that allowing players to request a specific coach was causing significant difficulties in our programs when creating balanced and equally competitive teams. The decision to no longer allow coach requests was made. It was not made lightly and we received considerable "feedback" prior to last year's baseball season. Upon completion of last year's season however, it was clear that we made the right decision and by and large everyone had an enjoyable summer of baseball and softball.

In order to answer any questions you may have about why we made this decision and to address any concerns, please review the following comments and our explanations.

### **That team was "stacked."**

Every season, in every sport we would get complaints that certain teams were "stacked." Despite our best efforts to make teams even, when we allow teams to stay together or allow players to request coaches, some coaches do start to "put" teams together creating "stacked" teams. It happens. No, not every coach will do that, in fact most coaches don't. But some do. So, if we allow a coach to put together a team of friends from the neighborhood or friends from school, how do we then not allow a coach to put together a team of "friends that all want to play together" on a team that the coach recruited? Or even a team that the kids themselves recruited? We can't.

### **"Kids just want to play with their friends. "**

Yes they do, and for the most part they will. However, often kids who are friends tend to be at the same skill level as each other. They are on the same football team together and the same basketball team together, etc. They are all good athletes. Put them all on the same rec baseball team and now you have a "stacked" team. Conversely, put a group of friends that are not that talented together and you get a below average skilled team.

Also, friends tend to be the same age or grade. With all of our softball teams and boys baseball teams starting at 11 years old, our leagues cover multiple ages. Can we have a group of 11 year old friends playing against a team of all 13 year old friends? The younger kids would get destroyed.

Please keep in mind that we are not saying they can't play with their friends. They can and will. We are just not allowing a large number of players to play for the same coach year after year.

**“But we would rather play together and lose than be on different teams. “**

Maybe so, but it's no fun getting beaten every game AND it's no fun beating up on a team that is horribly mismatched. All teams should be as even as possible. Our responsibility is to try and make it fun for everyone, not just one group.

**“We loved our coach from last year! Why can't we request he be our coach again?”**

Every year we have some outstanding coaches. Everyone loves them and wants to continue playing for him or her year after year. Teams that want to stay together usually stay together because they have a really good coach. And because they have a really good coach, they DO tend to get better than other teams. Through no fault of the coach, they become a better team than all the other teams. And everyone else complains.

In addition, word gets around that so and so is a great coach. Parents call each other asking who they should request as a coach and suddenly some coaches have 30 to 40 kids requesting to be on their team. It does happen and this is what originally prompted us to stop allowing coach requests.

When a player gets a coach they like in 5 year old tee ball, and that coach continues to coach, everyone on his or her team wants to stay with them. Year after year. Why should one player have the advantage of staying with last year's great coach when another player who maybe didn't care for their coach last year not be able to play with that great coach? Then we get complaints that if a child didn't get on the right tee ball team when he was 5, he will never get a good coach and always ends up on a losing team.

Occasionally the opposite of the stacked team is true. Some people whose children are not that skilled, like a particular coach because that coach is understanding and patient. Over time word gets around and all the players that are not skilled want that coach. Then the coach and the coach's child are burdened year after year with a below average team, while other teams are “stacked”

**“But the kids that want to play together are all average talent. We're not stacked. “**

Ok, maybe. But what happens then when your team does, by coincidence, luck, great coaching whatever, end up winning all or most of your games? The rest of the parents begin to complain that we allowed such and such a coach to put together a team and they beat everyone. That's not fair. Then that opens the door to another coach coming along and trying to put his or her team together because so and so did it last year.

**“You should have a draft system.”**

We have 14 different leagues with over 1200 players and around 120 teams. The simple logistics of a draft would make it impossible. Getting all of the coaches together at one time for a particular league would never happen.

Then, if we did have a draft, the coaches would pick the kids they want and it would be the same as coaches putting their own teams together, except if your child is talented, you probably wouldn't get the coach you want. If your preferred coach doesn't draft your child, then there are hurt feelings. And, if you are familiar with any leagues that do have a true draft, you will know that it is more like coaches picking their fantasy football teams than it is creating recreational baseball league.

**“Baseball / Softball should be fun. If we don't get on this coaches team, summer will be ruined!”**

First of all, although some do, most community programs do not allow coach requests. In fact the majority do not allow ANY requests. And their kids have fun anyway. In perspective, this is an activity that usually takes place for about two hours per week. In contrast, your child is in school for 9 months, 5 days a week, 6- 7 hours a day. Schools have good teachers and not as good teachers. But schools do not allow you to pick your teacher. And, you can't request your friends be in the same class.

Our goal is to make sure everyone in our programs has fun. We completely understand wanting to be on the same team as a friend or sharing rides to practice. In many cases we will be able to accommodate friend requests. But for the benefit of the entire program, we cannot accommodate a large group of kids who all want to play together for the same coach year after year. Many players do not make any requests for coaches or friends, and they still have fun playing baseball or softball in the summer.

**Summary**

Ask yourself this question: If your preferred coach moved away or decided not to coach, would your child not play that summer? He or she probably would and would most likely still have fun. He or she will still have friends on the team and will probably make new friends.

We hope this helps to answer any questions you may have about this policy. Our goal is to see that everyone has a fun time playing baseball, softball and tee ball together this summer. Sometimes that means making some changes that some people won't like, but it is for the betterment of the overall program and the over 1200 kids that participate each year.