

Diamond Cuts

Laura Olson- President Minnesota Fastpitch Coaches Association
Fastpitch Softball Article

Here we are, March!! Mother Nature has been tempting us with some unseasonably warm February weather. Let's hope that is an indication of the weather that we will have this spring for our season.

Speaking of February, we had two great events in Becker on February 3rd and 4th, the Section Rep meeting and the Annual Coaches Clinic. On the 3rd, the section reps met for the annual meeting to discuss topics that pertain to the upcoming season and the summer to come. The highlights from the meeting include a new sponsor for the senior All-Star series, a change to the number of players on the All-Star teams, an additional team in the Border Battle, and Hall of Fame nominations.

Thanks to initial talks by Neil Johnson of Shakopee, the Minnesota Twins will now be a sponsor of our All-Star Series, just as they are for the baseball All-Star game. We are grateful to the Twins and look forward to a great working relationship with the organization as we look to make improvements to our All-Star series. The section reps also approved a change to the the number of innings played and the number of players on each of the All-Star teams. We will now play 7 innings instead of 5 and we will have teams of 12 instead of 10. The additional members will include one more pitcher for each team. We are asking our coaches to make sure to nominate your senior players for the All-Star series. We want to honor more girls and that starts with your nominations! We trust that you know your players and you know who is worthy of this nomination. The last bit of information regarding the All-Star series is the exciting news that Illinois is now going to join the Border Battle series. This year, Wisconsin is hosting the series and it will be held at Wisconsin Dells.

Speaking of nominations, we are also asking our coaching base to nominate players, coaches, officials, etc for our MFCA Hall of Fame. The form to do so is on our association website, or can be reached at <http://www.mshsca.org/forms>. We know there

are very deserving people who deserve to be in our Hall of Fame, especially former players, so let's make sure they get the honor they deserve.

On February 4th, we hosted the annual clinic. We were pleased that numbers were up, but would love to see even more of our high school coaches at all of the levels get involved. There was great information shared by John Tschida, Gerice Olson, Beth Spoehr and Jody Lunz and we appreciate them taking time out of their preseason to share their knowledge with us.

Just a couple of reminders as we get ready for the upcoming season. First, the MSHSL advisory committee approved the following for the upcoming 2016-2017 season: seeding of the state tournament team and a 15 run rule after the completion of 3 ½ innings. Second, a great resource for our coaches is our association website, <http://www.mshsca.org/fastpitchsoftball>. It contains important information such as the link for membership, the link to update your win/loss record and the dates for submitting nominations for Academic All-State Individual (*April 7*), Academic All-State Team (*April 7*), All-Star (*April 23*) and All-State (*May 21*). Because of turnaround time, these dates are firm and there will be no exceptions. Of course, this is all a mute point if you are not a member of the coaches association, so if you are not a member yet this year, you have until April 1st to do so. The biggest benefit of membership is our liability coverage. Since many of our programs have coaches that are not paid employees of a school district, this coverage would cover them in case of a situation would call for it. I would strongly encourage every member of your coaching staff to be a part of the association. Lastly, make sure that you are staying current and up to date on your MSHSL coaches clipboard. Remember, this is where you will find the online rules meeting you will need to complete and well as information on your continuing education requirements as a coach.

I leave you thinking about the words of Mike Candrea, *"It's a game of making great pitches at the right time, being opportunistic by getting a run at the right time and playing good defense."* Good luck on the upcoming season!

If you were to need anything, please contact your section representative or feel free to email me at lolson@isd2135.org.

Respectfully, Laura Olson - Maple River High School