

While the weather would have you believe otherwise, BFA is gearing up for another fun season of fastpitch for the 2018 season. Watching our girls play in 90-degree temperatures with high humidity sounds quite appealing right now. I for one can't wait to cheer the girls on as they play hard doing what they love.

We have a lot of exciting things happening right now to get our season started off on the right foot. First and foremost, we have a **new Board of Directors** who are working diligently to ensure our program's success this year. We have even developed new positions, like the VP of Development and a Corporate Sponsorship Director, to meet the evolving needs of our program. All 15 members that make up the board are dedicated to giving the best experience possible to our players.

[Click HERE to read board member's bios](#)

Another important addition we have made to BFA is our **In House Program**, serving girls in grades K-3. Because of the increasing influence that fastpitch has had in the Bloomington community and the tremendous value it has in helping develop strong, active, and confident athletes, we see the need to provide an opportunity for ALL Bloomington girls to experience this sport while keeping it local, fun, structured and affordable.

This program will have all of the support it needs from our development team to launch a successful inaugural year. While we know there is a need and desire for this program within Bloomington and our marketing team is putting forth their best efforts to promote the program, we are asking you, our current members, to *spread the word*. Referrals into our organization have always been our best recruiting efforts and no doubt it will be the same with our In House Program. So, if you know a young girl who would love to try this sport without making the commitment that traveling requires, please send them to our website to find out more information. [Click HERE for In House Program info](#). *We are also looking for an In House Director*. If you are interested in this role please contact me: [Molly Belmont](#)

Probably the most significant enhancement you have recently experienced is the debut of our **new BFA name and logo**. **We are officially The Blast!** This name embodies the spirit of the girls within our program. We are a force to be reckoned with, enjoying it every step of the way. To make this even sweeter the name was voted on by our membership, giving you all the chance to participate in this historic time. We are getting incredible feedback on the name and logo. I want to extend a special thank you to our branding team, along with Cynbad Media for all of the hard work and diligence it took to arrive at the final product.

A BFA tradition that our players have been privileged to experience are the player development opportunities in the pre-season. January 7th we kicked off our **FREE Winter clinics** for all existing BFA members and those interested in learning more about fastpitch. Our fielding clinics are hosted by Bethel University Coaches, Penny and Roman Foore, along with hitting instruction from Jim Hanson, Clutch Hitters owner and Jefferson head coach. Keep in mind this is also a chance for interested coaches to develop their skills and bring them back to their teams for the Spring season. [Click here for more information on dates and locations of the Winter clinics](#).

If your daughter is interested in learning more about pitching and catching, or taking those skills to the next level, we have **subsidized clinics** for her to participate in and explore if either of those positions might be a good fit. As you can see there is no shortage of development opportunities for our BFA players!

In addition to our FREE Winter clinics, BFA has **reserved gym space** for you and your player to throw the ball around or practice pitching and catching. **Open gyms are reserved at Valley View Middle School on Mondays and Wednesday from 6pm-9pm.** Please take advantage of this FREE and available space. A list of the exact dates are posted on our [website calendar](#)

Also, I wanted to make sure everyone was aware of a few adjustments that have been made to better address the needs of BFA. As I mentioned in my last communication in November, we needed to make changes to our **tournament volunteer requirements.** While so many of you graciously give of your time helping our teams as practice helpers, bench coaches, team managers, assistant and head coaches and even getting the fields prepped before games we still need help above and beyond this from everyone to volunteer at our hosting tournaments. Our focus is to reduce the costs of labor dramatically at our tournaments and prevent from having to raise registration fees significantly. Please [visit our volunteer page](#) for a description of our volunteer requirements.

In addition to a change in the required volunteer hours BFA has moderately **increased registration fees** for all traveling programs. This increase was not done without careful consideration. As we looked at our budget going forward this year it was quite clear that in order to continue to provide the free clinics, subsidized pitching and catching clinics, factoring in a rise in costs for umpires, gate fees, uniforms, as well as supporting the newly developed in house program we needed to raise the registrations fees. Keep in mind that we have not raised fees in over 3 years.

By increasing the fees (8u-\$100 (\$20 increase), 10u-\$290 (\$15 increase), and 12+(\$15 increase) -\$315) along with making cuts we were able to present a balanced budget for the 2018 year. I encourage you to research other traveling associations' registration fees and you will find that Bloomington still remains one of the lowest cost organizations for its members.

Lastly, one of the developmental changes that the board voted on was to put forth an **advanced 10u team** this year, comprised of only 2nd year 10u players. As our association as been growing and will continue to grow, we naturally have a large variety of skill levels. To ensure our players are having the best developmental experience possible we found it necessary to create an upper level team for this age group. This will allow more girls who are developing and mastering the specialized skills of pitching and catching to see more innings and for us to give all players a variety in experience in the field and behind the plate. I believe this will also help promote more leadership opportunities and build the overall confidence of our girls. As with any change like this it may be difficult to adjust to but rest assured our experienced and dedicated development team will be doing everything they can to help with this transition.

As you can tell the board is eagerly working to create the most positive experience overall for our player this year. Every decision we make has our players as the number one priority. If you ever have a suggestion or concern, please come to the monthly board meetings or reach out to a board member. You will find "all things BFA board" on the [BFA Board page](#)

I look forward to seeing you all and your players at the mandatory parent/player meeting in the Jefferson HS auditorium on Thursday, April 5th at 7pm!

Sincerely, Molly Belmont – BFA Board President