

# AGSA Ames Girls Softball Association

*We participate, believe, and Invest in the development and success of all girls at all ages*

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## AGSA Tournament Team mission statement:

The Ames Girls Softball Association tournament team program shall be open to any age eligible girl from Ames or surrounding areas. The purpose of the AGSA tournament teams program is to develop the skills and knowledge necessary for girls to play softball at the next level in a competitive atmosphere; give girls the opportunity to develop self confidence, leadership skills and self respect through the game of softball; to promote good sportsmanship for all involved; to help girls learn to succeed as a team through respect of coaches, players and other participants, and to develop a love for the game of softball to the high school level and beyond.

## Parent Guide for AGSA Traveling Tournament Teams

Thank you for your interest in this highly rewarding experience. Tournament teams provide a unique growth opportunity for girls and young women at a critical stage in their physical, social, and emotional development. This guide will help you understand the purpose and function of tournament teams, and outlines the expectations of players, parents and coaches. In addition, you will receive parent and player contracts (attached) that further clarify AGSA policies and procedures.

### What is a tournament team?

AGSA sponsored traveling tournament teams are competitive teams that play other quality teams both in and around Iowa. The primary purpose of these teams is to provide opportunities for players to

- Develop advanced softball skills and access targeted training to improve performance
- Learn strategy to facilitate critical decision making on the field
- Learn how to interact as part of a team to build confidence and self-esteem
- Determine where their own abilities are by focusing on specific positions
- Gain experience playing in competitive tournaments in new environments to measure their skills against a broad spectrum of players

### How is a tournament team different from a recreational league team?

AGSA offers two types of playing experiences for girls: recreational league teams and tournament teams. In recreational play, girls share playing time equitably, are encouraged to explore playing all positions, and games are limited to one or two a week. Tournament teams, however, differ from recreational teams as follows:

1. **Emphasis is placed on being competitive and winning:** Tournament teams focus on winning as the outcome as a result of several factors, including
  - Successful team management by qualified coaches
  - Assigning players to positions where they play best
  - A well-established level of confidence among team members
  - An advanced understanding of strategic play
  - Players' abilities to put the team first
  - Players' abilities to successfully field, pitch, run, and catch
  - A commitment and dedication to being the best
2. **Players demonstrate a high level of commitment and skill:** Tournament teams generally attract players who are interested in a higher level of commitment to the sport in terms of time and skill development. These are players who may also be interested in preparing for high school or college teams. Girls trying out for these teams typically have demonstrated some talent and ability for the game and are mature enough to take practices and time commitments seriously.
3. **Players compete for spots on a team:** Because emphasis is on building a team that can compete successfully at state-wide tournaments, players are chosen according to their skill level. Often there are enough players to establish

an “A” (highest ability) team and a “B” (developmental) team, which increases playing opportunities for girls. *In this case, girls are placed so that they are given the best training and will experience the most playing time possible given their abilities.* (See also, “How are players selected for a team?” on the next page).

4. **Players may compete for positions:** Though coaches consider players’ requests to play certain positions, assignment of those positions (especially pitcher and catcher) is dependent upon a player’s abilities in comparison to others on the team and upon the needs of team. Positions are assigned solely at the discretion of the coach.
5. **Players receive more intensive training under the direction of softball experts:** Tournament teams focus more on advanced strategy and skill development as they relate to individual player growth as well as working with a team. Because of this, AGSA has established a thorough interview process to ensure that head coaches, assistant coaches, and/or co-coaches are well qualified to serve as role models and softball experts. Prospective parent coaches are evaluated using the same guidelines as for non-parent coaches to ensure quality coaching at all levels.
6. **Playing time is based on skill level:** Playing time depends on a number of factors including skill level and attitude. At this level, emphasis is placed on competition (as opposed to league’s focus on learning the fundamentals and general skill development); therefore, *equal playing time is not guaranteed.* However, if a player has not violated any team rules (including those relating to attendance) and if the player displays appropriate sportsmanship, the AGSA recommends that girls play **no less than ½ of the games**, though, in some cases, girls may play more than this. Playing time is not determined by number of minutes but rather on games and/or innings. The attached player and parent contracts detail the behaviors expected by the AGSA.
7. **Players participate in weekend long tournaments:** Tournaments can run almost every weekend from May through July, and we ask every player to make a commitment to attend EVERY tournament. The team relies on each player to fulfill a specific role. Though illness and emergencies are to be expected, players signing up for traveling teams should plan to play every tournament. Tournaments can start as early as Friday evenings and end as late as Sunday evening (if the team continues to win).

## How are players selected for traveling teams?

The number of teams formed depends on the number and the skill level of the girls who try out. This is especially true for pitchers and catchers. Typically, a team is made up of 12 girls to provide adequate opportunity for playing time. Pitchers and catchers may be assigned to balance teams. To maintain an objective evaluation process, experienced, non-parent evaluators measure players’ abilities to throw, field, run, hit, bunt, catch and pitch. Tryouts are closed to everyone but evaluators and players; this allows evaluators to determine a player’s ability to function independently and limits interruptions.

Some girls may be asked to move up or down an age bracket to balance teams. This is competitive play and every effort is made to develop the most competitive teams possible. **Parents and players need to know up front that team assignments are final**, and that girls may not be assigned to the same teams as their friends, those who go to their school, or even those in their own age bracket. As girls develop, strengthen and grow at different rates, their assignments may change from year to year. We make every effort not to cut girls. As long as a girl can reasonably be expected to play at least half of the time, she has the opportunity to make a team. Do not be discouraged if tryouts do not result in the assignment you’d hoped for. AGSA can direct girls to outside resources to accelerate skill development and help players meet their long-term goals. AGSA traveling team selection policies and procedures can be found on the association website ([www.amesgirlssoftball.org](http://www.amesgirlssoftball.org)).

## What is the role of parents?

It is our coaches’ job to create an environment that encourages the girls to bond and rely upon their team members. This is very difficult, especially working with girls who have previously been solely motivated, rewarded, influenced, and supported by their parents. This is a transition time for girls and a critical part of the tournament team training relies on building on a girl’s individual sense of independence and self-confidence. To be successful at this task, we ask for parents to provide support from the sidelines during games. This means

- Allowing your daughter to build confidence, develop a sense of self, and establish relationships with team members and coaches at practice without the pressure of being continually observed or evaluated by family members
- Making encouraging remarks during games and directing praise toward the entire team (not just your daughter)
- Letting the coach direct the players by not coaching from the sidelines
- Making certain your daughter arrives at practices and games on time
- Encouraging your daughter to advocate for herself by constructively approaching coaches and other players

# Schedules and Expectations

## Tentative Schedule

The following is a tentative schedule for the traveling tournament teams for 2007. This schedule is subject to change. We will finalize the schedule by mid March. In addition, the AGSA sponsors a spring league for all girls who make a traveling team. The games will be played on weekends in April.

Date	14 & Under	12 & Under	10 & Under
Apr 1	Spring League	Spring League	Spring League
Apr 7,8	Spring League	Spring League	Spring League
Apr 14,15	Spring League	Spring League	Spring League
Apr 21,22	Spring League	Spring League	Spring League
Apr 28,29	Spring League	Spring League	Spring League
May 5,6	Spring League	Spring League	Spring League
May 11-13	Ankeny	Off	Off
May 18-20	EDM	EDM	Off
May 25-27	Ames	Ames	Ames
Jun 1-3	Off	Off	Off
Jun 8-10	Marshalltown	Marshalltown	Marshalltown
Jun 15-17	Off	State – Ames	Off
Jun 22-24	Ankeny	Ankeny	Ankeny
Jun 29-Jul 1	Off	Off	Off
Jul 6-8	Ames	Ames	Ames
Jul 13-15	IA Games	IA Games	IA Games
Jul 20-22	Davenport	Done	Done

**Practice Schedule:** The AGSA requires that traveling teams practice at least twice per week at 1.5 hours per contact. All teams should consider this to be a minimum requirement. The coaching staff will establish a practice schedule soon after the first team meeting. Conflicts with a scheduled practice time should be brought to your coaches' attention as soon as possible. Failure to do so may result in loss of playing time.

## Expectations

Despite the increased emphasis placed on winning, we still believe that the purpose of sport is to have fun. The rules set out by the parent and player contracts detail the expectations that the board has with regard to the conduct of the players and parents. The AGSA strongly supports sportsmanship at all levels, and especially expects the parents and players of our traveling teams to embody this spirit. The only contact many people outside of Ames have is through our traveling teams. Good sportsmanship enables all to have fun.

## Resolving and addressing concerns

We recognize that sports bring to the surface many concerns, anxieties and feelings for parents and their children. Often problems are the result of a misunderstanding or failure to identify expectations. We expect that coaches, players, and parents can be reasonable and considerate in approaching problems and work with the understanding that no one intends any ill will. To facilitate the resolution of these concerns, we have established the following procedures:

**Emergency Situations:** Actions that are inappropriate, or could cause bodily injury or unsafe conditions that could result in injury to a player must be brought to the coach's attention immediately. This can be done by Parent Representative, or parents. An incident report must be submitted to AGSA Vice President or Director of Coaches.

**Game day/tournament issues:** Parents are asked to wait 24hrs after the completion of a tournament to approach any coach with concerns about a particular tournament and/or game. This policy allows all parties time to reflect on the games, and is intended to protect all involved from hurtful words spoken in moments of high emotion.

**Action Timelines:** AGSA is run by volunteers. All meetings of board members must occur outside of work hours. Therefore, any step requiring meeting of the Grievance Committee or members of the AGSA Board of Directors will occur within 72 hours of initiation of a written grievance by the parent/player or coach.

**All grievances will be documented at every step and those involved will be asked to sign documentation at each step.**

If problems arise during the course of the season the following policy will be followed:

**Step 1: Parent and Player communicates with the Coach**

Players are encouraged to talk directly to the coach and attempt to resolve the problem themselves. Part of the AGSA experience is for girls to learn to advocate and solve problems for themselves, both on the field and off. Parents may also talk with coaches about a problem but, **the player must accompany the parent during this discussion.** Parents are asked to wait until after a practice to address the coach and are asked to do so privately with the player.

**Step 2: Situation is turned over to AGSA Grievance Committee**

*Parents MUST provide a detailed written document outlining their concerns before this step occurs.* In the RARE case that steps 1 and 2 do not resolve the issue, a meeting will be held to determine how to progress further. It may be determined that a member of the Grievance Committee should meet with the player, the coach, or both to resolve the issue. If parents/players are satisfied with recommendations of the Grievance Committee they will be asked to sign off at this point or request the situation be turned over the AGSA Board of Directors. To contact the Grievance Committee, please call Jennifer Owens at 515-268-9004.

**Step 3: AGSA Grievance Committee communicates with the AGSA Board**

*Parents will be asked to provide their concerns in writing (as above).* In the EXCEPTIONALLY RARE event that the issue still is unresolved, the Grievance Committee will present the issue to either individual board members, the executive committee or to the entire AGSA board. *Decisions at this level are final and will be closed door decisions. If a decision requires disciplining of a parent/player or coach this information will not be released by the board due to confidentiality issues*