

August 3, 2016

To the Parents of the Lady Cougars 10U Team:

I've had the privilege of talking to most of you already, but for those who don't know me yet, my name is Heidi Woodard and I will be your daughter's softball coach this season.

Seeing as the softball season (like any other family commitment) will take up a chunk of your free time, I want this experience to be a good one for you and your daughter. To that degree, I will be as upfront and open with my communications and expectations as possible. My only expectations for your daughter this season are for her to listen to the instruction given by me and my assistant(s), to hustle while giving her best effort *without fear of making mistakes*, to respect her teammates, and to have a good time in the process.

As adults (and, if you're anything like me, an overly competitive adult), we tend to make the "end result" a higher priority than the "ongoing process." I vow to you that I will not get caught up in the wins and losses and will be more concerned with the betterment of each individual player. If your daughter is a better all-around player and person after July 1 than she was when she entered this program, I hope that you and she will consider her time well invested.

This team will be made up of 8, 9, and 10-year old girls. Invariably, some girls will have more natural talent and coordination than others (regardless of how I coach). Three years is a huge gap in terms of player development when you look at youth athletics.

The girls will know that, in spite of their natural talent and coordination levels, they ALL have a role to play on THEIR TEAM. I ask that you respect every young lady who is playing on this team the same way you would treat your own daughter. There should be no talking about other players, parents, or coaches behind their backs and especially not in front of your child.

By supporting this team of girls, we are helping them both on and off the softball field. *Studies have consistently shown that girls who participate in sports achieve better grades, possess higher graduation rates, lower their risk of depression, have heightened levels of confidence and self-esteem, and are more likely to have positive body images as compared to girls who do not play sports.*

Your expectations of this season will potentially differ from other parents' expectations depending on various factors: whether or not your daughter plays one or multiple sports, whether your daughter is an only child or has siblings who have their own commitments, what birth order your daughter falls into, whether or not you actually played or enjoy watching the game 😊, etc. One of the most amazing things about youth sports is that it allows girls/boys from various socio-economic, religious, and cultural backgrounds to come together, learn from one another, and work to achieve a common goal.

I promise your daughter will learn how to handle ups and downs in life as well as how to forge lasting friendships through sports. Although the season is only a few months on the calendar to us, this may be one of the bigger/more influential experiences in your daughter's world right at this moment. I say that as a former athlete who still considers her ex-teammates to be some of the greatest and most impactful people in her life.

Everyone in the batting order this season, every pitcher who appears on the mound, every little girl I place in the infield and outfield, as well as anyone who is rotated on/off the bench, will be part of something special. We will win humbly and lose graciously together, constantly learning.

I ask that you check your own personal egos at the door and support your daughter and her teammates to the best of your ability. If you want to read a story about a time I personally came up short and had to be reminded about what was truly important, you can read that at:

www.givethegameback.com/mymoment

There may be times when you disagree with an approach that I or my assistant(s) have taken and I am 100% committed to having open and honest conversations with you. I simply ask that you allow 24 hours post-event-in-question to do any venting whether that be over the phone, via email, or in-person.

More than anything, I want you to know how big of an honor it is for me to spend some time with these girls as they learn to play a game that I love. Thank you for allowing me to coach your daughter.

Sincerely,
Coach Heidi