



Rose City Softball Association

RCSA Team Management Handbook

Purpose:

To help NEW Managers, and to give new ideas to SEASONED managers, the following is designed to help navigate through a theoretical RCSA year, from team start up through the end of the season and beyond. The suggestions included are intended as a guide, but they do represent the full breadth of ideas, nor specifically reflect an official philosophy of the RCSA.

Forward:

There are many ways to manage a softball team, from “Tough Love” to “Keep Everyone Happy”. The simple truth is that a manager, especially a manager of a *LGBTQ* amateur softball team, will never be able to please everyone with their management style.

But what you *should* strive for is *consistency* in what and how you do things. In the long run, the players that will stay with your team from year to year are the ones that come to feel comfortable with how you, as a manager, choose to define your team.

A manager does just that, he or she *sets the tone* for what a team is to be. If you allow casual “show up anytime” practices or if you are a stickler for on time arrivals, if you are efficient yet pursue your goals with humor; all of these things shape how your team presents itself and behaves throughout the season.

A manager, whether unintentionally or with purpose, imposes *his own* definition of what a team should be upon his players. And because of this, you should first and foremost examine your *reasons* for wanting to manage a team, be clear about your *goals* and be ready to *express* what you want your team to achieve.

And finally, don’t forget to have fun.

This handbook and its contents are written for and to be used exclusively by the Rose City Softball Association and it’s managing members. Use and / or reproduction otherwise is forbidden.

Jake Packer Ayon: author

RCSA Team Management Handbook

Table of Contents:

Page 1:	Purpose
Page 1:	Forward
Page 2:	Table of Contents
Page 3:	Starting a Team
Page 3:	Your Team Plan
Page 4:	Finding a Sponsor
Page 4:	Closing the Sponsorship Deal
Page 5:	Keep a Sponsor Involved
Page 5:	Reward a Sponsor
Page 6:	Recruiting Players
Page 7:	Uniforms and Team Equipment
Page 9:	Names and Logos
Page 10:	Get Organized
Page 12:	Manager Responsibilities
Page 15:	Coaching Effectively
Page 17:	Game Days
Page 19:	Get Through the Season
Page 20:	End of the Year
Page 21:	Appendix 1
	Sample Practice Schedule
	Appendix 2
	Sample Four-Week Beginning Team Schedule

RCSA Team Management Handbook

Starting A Team:

You have, at this point, committed yourself to managing a softball team in the Rose City Softball League. If you are starting up a *brand new team*, you are probably in search of a Team Sponsor. If you *inherited an existing team*, you may already have a Sponsor, but because of potential hidden or unexpected expenses a team has, it can be wise to pursue additional Team Sponsors to help ease the burden any single Sponsor may feel in committing to a team.

The RCSA attempts to assist managers in identifying and connecting managers with potential Sponsors, but the largest percentage of this burden rests solely upon the manager.

The RCSA has created a Sponsorship Package (available on line at the RCSA websites in the documents tab) to aid managers in their search. But this is not the *only* document you should rely upon when approaching a prospective sponsor.

Your Team Plan:

Take the time to type up your own personal goals for your team, your vision, and a brief timeline showing a *plan* for getting your team ready for your first season. Your plan doesn't have to be an all inclusive, highly detailed thesis, but it does need to show that you have put some thought into how you are going to achieve your goals. Your plan will go a long way in convincing a potential Sponsor to believe and invest in your vision.

Sample Plan:

Goals: *List of Team Goals and Philosophy*

1st Year Plan:

Month 1: *Complete First Year Proposed Budget, Secure Sponsor, Secure Coach, Name My Team (with Sponsor), Begin Player Recruitment.*

Month 2: *Participate in RCSA New Player Program and Draft, Continue Player Recruitment, Begin Team Fundraising, Decide on Team Uniform and Vendor, Start Team Practices.*

Month 3: *Order Uniforms, Finalize Roster, Collect Player Dues.*

Month 4: *Season begins*

2nd Year and Beyond: *List of Team Goals*

RCSA Team Management Handbook

Finding a Sponsor:

You have your Team Plan; you have a Sponsorship Package. You are now ready to find a Team Sponsor. There is no *one* way to actually find one, but here are some suggestions:

- 1: Start with what you know... do you already frequent a gay owned business or know an owner/ manager of a progressive corporation?
- 2: Check out Just Out or the Gay Yellow Pages... which ad is the largest, or in color?
- 3: Ask. Current and Former RCSA Managers may know of past Sponsors that could only just be waiting to be approached.
- 4: Do your homework. Once you have targeted some businesses, find out about the business before you approach. Do a news search on the web, go to their website and read it. Know who the owner is, the manager... show that you have interest in their business.

Closing the Sponsorship Deal:

There is no sure way to get a Sponsor to say yes, but being positive, showing you are committed to your goals, and being politely persistent can work wonders. If you need help, call in the reserves! Your RCSA Commissioners, other Officers and Managers can help in many ways. If your Sponsor wants reassurance, long time RCSA members can help your cause by offering testimonials, showing pictures of their teams, and showing trophies of past successes. Invite a potential sponsor to an RCSA event; a personal connection to the League can cement a commitment too.

Sit down with a Sponsor and tour the RCSA ON-LINE. Our website has video and pictures of the league that can help Sponsors get a feel for what and who we are.

Be up front with your potential Sponsor regarding the expectations and benefits each side receives in your partnership. The RCSA Sponsorship Package lists the financial obligation (The Sponsorship Fee) but a very generous Sponsor may go above and beyond this one time fee. The Sponsorship Package lists a few possibilities along these lines. Be sure to communicate to the Sponsor the timelines for which the Sponsorship Fee is due, and any other vital dates.

In return, the Sponsorship Package also lists the benefits the Sponsor receives. It is part of the Managers responsibility to see that his end of the bargain is upheld, inviting the Sponsor to RCSA games and events during the year, expediting Sponsor Logos and Information to the RCSA, etc... (See the Sponsorship Package for a complete list.)

All this agreed upon, you now have a Sponsor for your team! The RCSA provides a written contract, should both you and your Sponsor desire written documentation.

RCSA Team Management Handbook

Keep a Sponsor Involved:

Once you have found your Sponsor, your work is not complete. Keep your Sponsor involved and vested in your team.

1: If your Sponsor is in retail or is a bar/restaurant, make sure you encourage your team to frequent their establishment. After games or practices, or with some regularity, show up in uniform. Patrons get excited when they see the place they frequent has other connections to the community; they come to expect to see the team.

2: Invite your Sponsor to practices and to League games, keep them in the loop and involved. Make sure your team knows the names of your Sponsors and what they do.

3: Perpetuate good rapport with your Sponsor; they should not be just a means of financing. Relationships between otherwise un-connected individuals is what makes a community.

Rewarding a Sponsor:

Being a Sponsor of an RCSA Team, helping promote the community through sports, is it's own reward; but a Sponsor can and should experience more than that. Take every opportunity to bring business to your Sponsor. A few ways to accomplish this:

1: Have a car wash in your Sponsor's parking lot. Commuters who would otherwise drive past may pull in and learn about a business they might not have noticed.

2: Be vigilant about displaying your Sponsor provided banner at games. Other teams will see the banner and perhaps patronize their business. (Yes, ask your Sponsor to help pay for or provide a banner for your team! Banners are extremely affordable in the digital age.)

RCSA Team Management Handbook

Recruiting Players:

One of the biggest jobs a manager has to undertake is filling his roster. He has to be part detective, part salesman, and part herding dog. Knowing where to find players, how to sell them on your team, and how to keep them is an art form. Knowing what kind of team you want helps define where to begin looking.

If you are starting a D level team or trying to find supplemental players for such, and your goals are to be a fun, relaxed team, your job gets easier. You can look in unconventional places to turn *non*-softball players into *your* team members.

Example: Companies with traditionally high concentrations of Gay and Lesbian employees, maybe an entire Real Estate Company would want a team of their own.

If you are looking to be a more competitive team, there are options too: Use your contacts, talk up your team to everyone, you never know when someone will say, oh I have a gay brother that used to play baseball... In other words, network!

The RCSA does have New Member Outreach, but you can't come to rely only on the work of others, you have to do some hunting.

RCSA Team Management Handbook

Uniforms and Team Equipment:

Uniforms: There is a minimum level to which any team must be uniformly dressed to be able to play softball in the RCSA. Please refer to the current ASA and RCSA rules for specifics, but basically teams must have matching shirts that have each players number displayed on the back. A manager can choose to incur a minimum cost at start up, and require players to purchase their jersey. This way, no additional costs are passed onto the Sponsor nor add pressure to fund raising needs.

If you find yourself flush with cash, or you have assembled a team that has the means to afford more stylish uniforms, you can choose from what top of the line uniform companies offer. Jerseys, hats, undershirts, pants, socks, belts... all can be found and provided with logos and embroidery. Some teams have accumulated more than one uniform as they move from season to season.

Keep in mind the lead time when ordering your uniforms. Spring is one of the busiest times for uniform providers and you should automatically add 50% to the time they quote to deliver.

The RCSA provides a list of suggested Vendors, it is available on line at the RCSA websites (both Open and Women's) under the Documents and Information Tab.

Equipment: The only equipment the RCSA requires that you provide for your team is Game Softballs. If you are the home team, you must provide a new, ASA regulation softball to the umpire. If you are the visiting team, you are required to provide a good condition back up ball. The RCSA provides a discount through contracted vendors. One case of Softballs will get you through the Game Schedule, but you also need to anticipate practice balls and other equipment:

List of Team Equipment Listed in order of need:

Practice Balls: Sporting Goods stores offer bags of practice balls at reduced prices that are not regulation but are sufficient for practice use. Make a habit of asking the umpire for game balls back to supplement your practice ball supply.

Practice Team Bat: Purchase one, 34 inch / 26-28 oz *single-wall*, inexpensive bat (no more than \$50.00).

When starting a team, tell your new players "do not buy any equipment without consulting with me first". This holds especially true with bats. Players purchasing bats without knowledge of what they really need and what ASA rules allow will only waste their money. Every year the ASA updates their list of "disallowed bats", bats that are too responsive for what they deem as safe softball. The RCSA abides by these rules. Do not allow player to practice with an illegal bat only to find out first game of the season that he can't use it. Any bat that has a dent in it also becomes immediately illegal for game play.

If you are in doubt about bats in general, consult with one of the more experience managers.

RCSA Team Management Handbook

Team First Aid Kit: Bring one to every practice and every game. See recommended First Aid Kit in our RCSA documents area of the website.

Score Book and Roster Sheets: Required. As home team you are responsible for keeping accurate score and you must provide your team line up to the Umpire and to the opposing team. It is very good practice to keep your copy of every game roster sheets, both yours and the one the other team gives to you, and good scorekeeping records. In cases of protests, the side that has the accurate record keeping usually wins.

ASA and RCSA Rules: Always have a copy of both with you for games. You never know when a dispute will happen. Don't rely on knowing the rules by memory. The RCSA will provide an ASA rulebook at the beginning of the season after your ASA roster is turned in (required paperwork). RCSA rules are updated and made available on our website to print.

Practice Field Accessories: Bring a rake, bags of dry sand, and a towel to practice. In the wet spring of Oregon, the infields are frequently wet and soft, use the sand and rake to patch those worn areas. Use the towel in damp conditions for your pitcher, your practice balls, bats, etc.

Stop Watch: The home team is also the official timekeeper; don't rely on the Umpire. There are many cases where you use time to your advantage. Know how long RCSA games are by rule.

Roster Clip Board: Place your roster form on a clipboard that can attach to the fence, so that your players know the batting order. Know the rules about batting order and substitutions.

Team Bats, Bags and other Luxuries: If you find your team flush with cash from either a generous Sponsor or great fundraising, providing your team premium items makes them look good and feel like a professional team.

Team Bats: Prioritize your needs: 1: A double wall bat that is durable in cold weather, 2: a super premium performance double wall bat, and 3: a good "singles hitting" bat. You decide the order with which you acquire these. Some team members may even volunteer to purchase specific bats for the team, as long as they get to consider it theirs and keep it in their bat bag.

Team Bags: EBay or other discount on-line suppliers are a great way to buy in bulk. Team bags are frequently a reward for a season of dedication, or an incentive to stay for next year.

RCSA Team Management Handbook

Names and Logos:

A Team Name will be with you for the life of the team, make it a good one. Alliteration works wonders with a Sponsors business name, and fierce animals are great too. The Pepsi Panthers sounds better than Diet Soda Quixotics.

Logos should be simple and bold. Design with the thought that they are going to be seen from a distance. The League has plenty of designers within our Membership, should you find you need expert help.

RCSA Team Management Handbook

Get Organized:

An organized manager makes the player experience pleasant. The more you can anticipate the needs of the League, your Players, your Sponsor, your Fans... the happier and more rewarding your team's season will be.

Budget: Examine, to the best of your abilities, how much money your team is going to need both from the Sponsor and from each member of the team, and *when* you will need it. This is difficult at best. The RCSA will give you due dates for required fees, and also provides a basic budget form to assist you (website). Examine the "New Player Cost Estimate" the RCSA provides and make sure your team members understand their financial commitments. The best plan is to start by just trying to achieve the basics, and then build from there in subsequent years.

Team Calendar: Providing a clear month by month calendar to your team will help everyone anticipate conflicts and keep everyone aware of fee due dates, game times and practice locations. Often a team contact list or phone tree is also attached. A phone tree takes the burden off of you having to call every single team member when plans suddenly change (rainouts and practice time or location alterations)

League Schedule: Though the RCSA will not give out specific game times and days till approximately two weeks before League Opening Day, you can anticipate and inform your team of the dates they can expect to play so that there are no surprises once the schedule becomes official. The League does not play on major holidays, allowing for team travel to tournaments and other personal commitments. This also allows breaks in the normal schedule so players aren't overwhelmed by the commitment. Your players should understand that you expect them to commit to your FULL SEASON.

Teams sometimes have difficulty fielding full teams early and late in the season because managers don't communicate early and often. You must diligently manage your player levels throughout a season. A hard-core, long-term dedicated team has less turnover than newer teams with players with recent connections to the league. It is always a difficult task to balance having plenty of personnel on your roster and giving players enough play time.

Setting a Schedule: Give your team an overall schedule as far in advance as you can. A month before the start of practice, your team should have a feel for the entire season commitment. It is good policy to tell your team four times about all normal League dates: First in your overall Calendar (total span from first practice till end of season), then a month in advance, then a week in advance, then 2 days in advance. An email distribution list is a great tool. Never assume that your team will be diligent about knowing their practice and game schedule.

Where to Practice/Getting a Field: Greater Portland has plenty of available fields, and early on most fields will be open to practice on. If you "stake out" a field, consistently practice there at a certain time, other teams will come to know

RCSA Team Management Handbook

you are there and avoid it. However, Portland Parks, as do other Jurisdictions, block out or “holds” fields for T-ball, School Leagues, etc. You can’t depend that a field will be available if you don’t reserve it. Portland Parks cost to reserve a field is currently \$20.00 hr.

If you do choose to book a field, you **MUST** bring your receipt to the field in case someone is there, so that you have proof you have reserved it. And you should always ask to see a receipt if someone tells you that they have it reserved. If they can’t produce it, technically, you don’t have to vacate, it clearly states this on the reservation.

Practices don’t always have to be on a softball field, there are many drills you can do in an open field, even batting practice. And there are rainy day alternatives too, many parks have covered areas where you can throw, etc and batting cages are great on rainy days too.

Phone/Email lists/IM/ Text Messaging: As mentioned before, Phone, Email and IM lists are great tools. If a practice is moved, you have quick reference to make sure everyone knows where to go. Also handy when there is a rain out or other game changes. IM or text your team quickly all at once, or make a phone tree (you call two people, they have two people each to call...etc). Get your team used to knowing the method to expect and that they need to be responsible and check messages, texts, or email at a certain time prior to practices and game times.

Team Website: If you are very industrious, you can create a team website and post your announcements there and have your team check in prior to practices and games. A team website can also be affiliated with your sponsors website. If you sponsor has an existing website, there is probably room on the current hosting plan to add a team page at no extra charge.

Team Policies: Discuss policies and expectations from the very beginning so that the team understands the direction you intend to take the team. As mentioned in the forward, how a manager runs a team defines the character and makeup of the team both intentionally and unintentionally.

Be consistent, be fair, be honest, but be diplomatic. Remember softball is supposed to be fun; our purpose is to promote community, social interaction, and recreation.

It may help to have a team meeting to decide your team policies, rather than simply dictate them to your team. Decide when and how much to practice, discuss if you plan on being competitive or if your specific emphasis is the social aspect.

Discuss if you intend to travel to outside tournaments, and how many, and how much such travel may cost per player. The RCSA provides a rough budget template to help estimate such costs, also available on our websites.

RCSA Team Management Handbook

Manager Responsibilities:

Know the Rules: A RCSA Manager should be intimately familiar with the rules that govern RCSA Softball. There are multiple levels and organizations that cover these rules:

ASA Rules: The ASA (Amateur Softball Association) is one of the National Associations that govern amateur softball. The RCSA abides by ASA rules with some modifications. RCSA Managers are given ASA rulebooks at the start of every season. You should not only read it, but also carry it with you to every game.

NAGAAA Rules: The RCSA is also a signatory of NAGAAA (North American Amateur Athletic Alliance), and follows NAGAAA guidelines that also affect RCSA play. The RCSA posts the NAGAAA IOG (Instruments of Governance) on our web site.

RCSA Rules: And finally, rules of play are affected by RCSA Open Division Rules. These mainly personalize the above rules of play for our specific needs and circumstances in the greater Portland, Oregon area. (Posted on the web site.)

RCSA Policies: The RCSA has Drug / Alcohol Policies and Profanity Rules that govern behavior during Scheduled Games and RCSA Events. It is up to each Manager to see that his or her Team is familiar with and abides by these policies. Umpires may eject players that violate these policies and rules.

RCSA By-Laws: Though not affecting play directly, a manager should be very familiar with RCSA By-Laws, as they affect how the RCSA goes about the business of providing slow pitch recreational softball to the Gay and Lesbian Community. (Posted on the web site.)

League Schedule and Submission Dates: The RCSA establishes a calendar of due dates for league fees, ratings, and player information as well as scheduling play-dates for the League. A Manager is responsible for making sure the RCSA receives all required documents and fees by the dates indicated, this includes collecting player fees from his or her team and sponsorship fees from the team sponsor.

Attendance Requirements: Managers (or a designated representative) must attend RCSA scheduled Open Division meetings to remain in good standing with the League.

Keeping your Team informed of League News: Managers are also responsible for passing on League news, information and requirements to his or her team. In addition, be prepared to represent your team opinions in matters that are brought before the commission.

The RCSA attempts to supplement your efforts by posting news, schedules, and information on the RCSA Websites as well as sending out news via RCSA Google Groups, but by and large, keeping a Team informed is the Managers responsibility.

RCSA Team Management Handbook

The RCSA encourages Managers stress to Team Members that they sign up for the Yahoo Groups distribution. This can be done by visiting the RCSA Websites and looking for the “Join Our Yahoo Group” link on the left hand side of the home page.

RCSA Fundraising and Other Non-Game Activities: The RCSA Schedules events throughout the year: Fundraisers, etc. A Manager should promote these events not only to his team, but also outside the RCSA to insure the success of such efforts. A strong RCSA insures that the recreational and social benefits of Gay and Lesbian Softball continue.

Tournaments: The RCSA presents the NAGAAA Sanctioned Cascade Cup each year on the July 4th Holiday weekend. The RCSA encourages all RCSA teams to participate in the Cascade Cup to help insure the ongoing success of both the RCSA and the Cascade Cup.

In addition, NAGAAA affiliated cities hold tournaments across the North American Continent. Teams are encouraged to broaden their Gay and Lesbian Softball experience by traveling to one or more of these tournaments. Experienced managers can recommend their favorite tournaments and the varied experiences they offer, or ask one of the League Officers for assistance as well. The RCSA posts a NAGAAA cities tournament schedule, as does the NAGAAA site directly.

NAGAAA Gay World Series: The National Organization the Open Division is affiliated with presents the Softball Gay World Series each year. The RCSA, as a signatory of NAGAAA, pledges to participate in the Gay World Series by sending teams in each respective Division of play. The RCSA decides how it will choose our World Series Representatives prior to the beginning of each season.

Practices:

Scheduling and Anticipation: Managers are responsible for scheduling practices, coordinating attendance, anticipating field conditions, being prepared with back up plans should your practice field be unplayable or occupied and communicating changes to the entire team.

- Have at least one back up field in mind as you arrive to each practice.
- Train your team to be familiar with how to deal with last minute changes.
- Discuss how you will contact them should changes occur.

Example: Rainouts: During practice and game days, it is good policy to tell your team to EXPECT to play, regardless of what the weather is at the start of the day. Tell them WHEN to expect a call or email from you that informs them of a rainout. If they do NOT hear from me by a certain time, they are to assume you ARE playing or practicing. However you decide to establish your procedures, make them clear up front and be consistent in how you execute them.

RCSA Team Management Handbook

You may also find it useful to have your team respond to all emails, texts or messages, rather than assuming they have received them. When players respond and specify if they will attend a practice or not, you know who to expect and why. It greatly reduces the stress of wondering who to worry about and / or whom you need to check on once practice or play begins.

RCSA Team Management Handbook

Coaching Effectively:

Though it runs into the realm of how to coach a team, a manager should help to plan and run practices.

How to Run an Efficient Practice: Avoid having players stand around. Keep practices moving swiftly so that your players are engaged. An hour or hour and a half is really the most you should ask your team to practice on any given day. If you keep it moving, they don't have time to get bored and they don't feel like their time is being wasted either. (See the attached sample practice schedule in the appendix)

Make it Fun: Remember, this is recreational softball first and foremost. It should be FUN for your players. There is great joy in learning new skills, achieving things they didn't know they could. Praise them as they improve, positively reinforce their continued enthusiasm.

Cover the basics / technique: Especially with new players, all the basics must be covered before they take the field for an actual game: the basic rules, how to hit, how to base run, how to catch and throw the ball, and to who... sometimes the best FIRST PRACTICE for a new team is to sit down and talk about rules, how the game is played, etc.

Play Strategy: This is probably the hardest skill to convey as a coach and to acquire as a player. The game of softball has many levels of strategy and understanding. It is important, especially with beginning teams, to stress the simplest strategies first, and build over the course of a season into the more complex. Explaining the REASONS for why you do things on a softball field goes a long way in helping new players improve and understand.

Batting: This is the most important skill to develop for a beginner team, yet also the most deadly when it comes to actual practice. It is NOT productive for the entire team to stand around while one person tries over and over to hit the ball and while the coach attends that person.

There are ways around this peril!

- 1: Have the group gather together and first explain and breakdown how to stand, how to hold the bat, where to stand in the batters box... SHOW them and break down the swing.

- 2: Then spread the group out, have them all practice the swing you just explained WITHOUT A BAT. Let their bodies first get used to the motion without the distraction of the bat.

- 3: Now players may swing a bat, everyone at the same time. (with sufficient safety room of course) As everyone swings, move through the group, correcting, giving tips and praise.

RCSA Team Management Handbook

4: Break the team into pairs and have them practice tossing a ball to each other and making contact with the bat. (Against a fence but don't let the parks and rec. department catch you!) This teaches players eye hand coordination with the bat and ball and confidence at how that timing works without the entire team watching.

This, and other types of batting drills are important progression techniques to instill a sense of success and milestones that a player can see for themselves they are improving.

5: Once you have progressed to actual Batting Practice with the entire team, limit the number of hits per player to say 10 for each at bat. It keeps BP moving fast, no time for players to get bored.

You can run specific drills with the fielded players at the same time:

Outfield, if the ball comes to them, can practice throwing to 2nd base as if there is a play.

Infield can throw to first, or second, or home... change it up as you bat through the line up so that players get practice under all situations.

6: You can always choose to run a second time through your line up, if you have the time and players are wanting to do so.

7: Always end a practice with BP, AFTER you have achieved your other goals and skill drills.

Scrimmages: It is a great idea to get your team ready for opening day by scheduling scrimmages with similar level teams a few weeks in advance of the start of the season. Put your players in real game situations, yet without the opening day jitters. Often times, teams that scrimmage agree to bat through the line up in every inning for 3 innings or so, and that there are no strike outs, so that each player gets to actually hit a fair ball and get the opportunity to get to first base and beyond. Talk with other managers and make sure you get a few of these to happen before you really have to play!

Keep it fresh: Don't do the same things week after week. Change up the drills you run through, the order you do them... your players will stay engaged with new stimulus.

Books and Online Help: Good softball coaching books are on the market. There are also a plenty of websites that have great skill drills and managing tips too! Invest some time and a little bit of money now and you will be WAY ahead of the game.

RCSA Team Management Handbook

Game Days: The art of managing on game day is at it's peak, you must not only make sure your team is ready to play, but you must also demonstrate the freakish ability to anticipate the unexpected. This is an acquired skill, but after a few times where you find yourself wishing you had brought this or that... you start to get a feel for having a back up or back up plan for just about circumstance.

Line Ups and Batting Orders: Part of the coordination with your coach is deciding who are your starting players on any given day and what the batting order will be. In a perfect world these are the same every week, but it never happens that way so be prepared to improvise if and when players miss games.

It probably is a good time to mention that you should anticipate double coverage of all positions; meaning: always have a back up! This is easier for certain positions; most outfielders can play any outfield position without too much anxiety. But most infield positions are more specialized. It is a good plan to occasionally have different players practice various positions so that they, at least on a basic level, understand the special needs of that position.

The pitching position takes special attention to make sure you have a back up with some experience should you have to go to a plan B. If you are lucky enough to have an "ace" pitcher already, it is a wise plan to have you less experienced pitcher pitch for half of your Batting Practices so he or she gets plenty of close to real world practice. And it also gives your starting pitcher some rest and/or an opportunity to practice some other position too.

Game Balls: Managers are responsible for providing one new game ball for every HOME game and one good condition back up ball for every visitor game. Needless to say, carry MORE than enough with you.

Team Uniforms, etc: It has happened, it will happen again, someone will forget something: a jersey, a glove, a hat... while it is not possible to always have a spare everything... the best advice is to try.

A shoelace makes a great emergency patch kit if someone's glove breaks a stitch!

Make sure that your team is following the dress code before they step on the field; this includes jewelry check!

First Aid: The Team First Aid Kit should be ever present, especially game days. If you find you are carrying just too much around, assign First Aid Kit Duty to one o your more reliable players. Keep it in the dugout, in plain sight. The RCSA website documents tab has a suggested list of First Aid Kit Contents.

RCSA Team Management Handbook

Water: Don't rely on water fountains at the field, make sure your team has, and is drinking plenty of water. Rotate the assignment of purchasing bottled water through your roster, or purchase weekly with Team funds; both are great ways to insure you have some for your team.

Remind your team to hydrate.

Sportsmanship: Sometimes, in the heat of play, it is easy to forget that RCSA softball is intended to be fun. The game is an opportunity to socialize with the other team; they are not the enemy.

Players should recognize that they not only represent themselves when they play, but their deportment reflects on your entire team. In a larger sense, individual actions also cumulatively define the RCSA and our community. When teams travel outside of Portland, they carry the added burden of representing Oregon as well.

RCSA Team Management Handbook

Get through the Season: So you are off and running and playing softball! Now the goal becomes “Manage your Team through the ENTIRE SEASON”.

Analyze your Games and Improve the Teams Skills: As you watch your team play, you will come across holes in what you have taught them and/or what they know and can execute when the circumstances arise.

Prioritize with your coach as to which skills need attention sooner rather than later.

Be Aware of Team Dynamics: Try to watch your team from outside yourself. Be aware of where they need more guidance and be aware where they need less. Often as a team starts to come together, gain experience, it begins to take on a life of it's own. The good manager allows this to happen; let them find themselves. Be there to guide, to cheer them on, and revel as you watch them grow.

On the same note, also be aware of potential problems, and there will be some. It is virtually impossible to assemble a group that absolutely becomes fast friends forever with ever other person in the group. Do not expect that you can MAKE them all like each other. Emphasize when you are playing and practicing as a team, that you expect individuals to sacrifice a little of themselves for the betterment of the team; that means learning to work well, even with people you may not agree with. This is how people become communities, how players become a TEAM.

Use Your Team Record As Motivation: What ever your win –loss record, a manager can use it to motivate the team. Yes, it is more obvious and easier if your team is winning, but it can be achieved with a losing record as well. This is especially true for the brand new team. You should, at the start of the season, truthfully tell them that it may take a while for the team to start winning. This is why teams that win are called “seasoned”.

Start small: Set a goal (something achievable) for each game. Example: Today lets try to score 4 runs. Then up the ante for the following week.

Week by week your team can see measured improvement and it binds them together. Eventually they get their first win, and then eventually winning becomes a habit.

It feels good to win, but it can also feel good to loose when your team recognizes WHEN and WHERE they have made strides as a team within those losses.

RCSA Team Management Handbook

End of the Year: As you get to the end of the season, winning record or not, it is natural for the manager to start thinking about the following year. “How many players will come back, How many will want to play on another team?”

Retaining Players: It is not unusual for players, at the end of a season, to not know if they want to play the following year. You may certainly ask, but you will hear “I don’t know” frequently. After an intense season of playing ball, it is natural to want to have a mental rest from the commitment. The smart manager gives these players some room, but MAYBE keeps in touch in subtle ways, a winter social event, etc. Keep players connected but don’t make them feel you are hounding them.

The first few sunny days in February usually wakes up the dormant desire to play softball again, THAT is the time to move!

Do not be too upset if players jump to another team or decide not to play. It is a natural occurrence, the ebb and flow that is social / recreational interaction. If you have made the past season fun and memorable, chances are you will retain a good core group of players into the next year.

Looking Ahead to the Next Season: You cannot guarantee that you will have the exact same team from year to year. Anticipate that you will have to continue recruiting. You WANT to bring new players into the team, fresh faces with fresh perspective and excitement can reinvigorate the enthusiasm of the entire team.

You can recruit new players throughout the year. They are not experiencing the softball burnout that your regular players are experiencing toward the end of the season. These new people are prime targets over the winter months; work on these first!

RCSA Team Management Handbook

Appendix 1:

Sample Practice Schedule:

Typical Practice Time Breakdown:

5 minutes	light jogging (muscles should be warm before you stretch them)
10 minutes	stretching (designate a team player to come up with, and lead your stretching routine)
20 minutes	first skill drill
20 minutes	second skill drill
30 minutes	Batting Practice
5 minutes	Closing Meeting

Appendix 2:

Sample Four-Week Beginning Team Practice Schedule: Pre Season Workup

Week ONE:

Throwing Drill 1:

Pair off your team. Have each pair face each other, beginning approximately 10 feet away from each other. Begin this drill on one knee, so that the arm motion is isolated. With each set, have one player move back an additional 5 feet. Then as you get to the 4th set, players stand up. Continue to have one player move back as you progress through to the 6th set.

1: Wrist Only: Emphasize keeping fingers over the ball, not like a waiter carrying a tray. Throw with hard wrist snap to put pace on ball.

2: Forearm: Add Forearm, keeping wrist snap, adding more pace and more distance to throw.

3: One Knee: From knee, emphasize chest turning perpendicular to direction of throw and left arm pointing to target. Use full range of arm motion for throw.

4: Back Foot: Standing with right foot perpendicular to direction of throw, step with left leg toward target. Keep chest turn and use more pace to target.

5: Step and Throw: Begin throw by stepping with right foot, then left as you release. Keeping chest turn out and wrist snap, adding more pace to throw.

6: Shuffle: Begin with the ball 5 yards in front of you, run up to ball, pick it up and continuing forward movement, throw ball at target. This randomizes your steps and more simulates real play and foot movement.

Long Toss: (Optional added Drill) Begin a designated distance from partner. Successfully throw the ball between you for a given number (5 times to start). Move back ten yards and repeat.... Continue until you reach a point where you can no longer complete the given number of throws. This drill helps in developing the arm for the long throws and hones distance judgment ability.

RCSA Team Management Handbook

Throwing and Catching General Tips:

- 1: Always move your body towards your target. This does two things: puts your momentum in line with the throw, increasing the chances your throw will be on target and; increases the pace you put on the ball.
- 2: Always (very few exceptions) catch the ball with both hands (free and covers ball in glove). Two reasons: Secures the ball, keeping it from bouncing back out; and makes the transfer to throwing the ball quicker.
- 3: Always make a target for the thrower (both physically and vocally) Stand ready, glove up at chest height, and call the ball to you “right here, right here”. This helps the thrower locate his target and as a team you are consistent in how you are presenting the target to him.
- 4: Always throw low: This keeps the ball in play and gives the target the opportunity to make the play. An overthrown ball takes him out of the play completely and in general adds an additional base to the runner.
- 5: Always be sure of the catch first then worry about the throw (or tag). You can’t make the second play if you haven’t made the first one. Keep the ball from getting past you. This goes for both infield and outfield. That is the biggest priority.
- 6: Always back up the primary person making a play, assume the ball is going to get past the primary playmaker.

Batting Drill 1:

Four Step Drill: From your starting batting stance:

- 1: Weight transfers to back leg (as you wind up for your swing, keep head toward pitcher, watching the ball).
- 2: Front leg steps forward (no more than a half step out from your original stance).
- 3: Barrel of Bat, hands and hip all turn forward at the same time (this is your power point and point of contact for the ball).
- 4: Bat and arms follow thru smoothly (keep your head steady and looking forward).

This is an “eight-count drill”, and may be first performed without a bat in hand. Everyone practices at the same time, performing the four-count swing, and then using 5,6,7,8 to get back to their start position. Repeat and speed up the count as players get comfortable and start connecting the 4 points of the drill smoothly. Have each player use a bat and repeat the process, starting slow and speeding up as they get used to swinging the bat. (make sure they have enough room to swing , spread them out!)

Batting Drill 2:

Partner up. Against a fence, take turns tossing the softball into the strike zone of your partner. The batter is simply trying to keep good form and make contact with the ball. This is a close-in drill, the pitcher should be forward and to the side of the batter, to stay out of the way of the swing, but close enough to give an accurate toss into the strike zone. Trade off after 10 or 20 hits. Repeat as needed.

RCSA Team Management Handbook

Batting Tips:

- 1: Know your pitch, what is the pitch you like to hit or are most successful hitting. Be choosy, wait for that pitch.
- 2: Don't crowd the plate; the barrel should be centered over the plate as you are at your power point. Be back in the box both directions... back and to the side.
- 3: Never make your first at bat the first time you swing the bat in a game. Always warm up with some swings before the game. This is each player's own responsibility.
- 4: Find out what works for you for pre at bat routine. Start thinking about it and getting in your zone well in advance.

Week TWO:

Base-running:

- 1: Running through first on a hit to the infield
- 2: Turning through first on a hit to the outfield. Listen for your 1st base coach to know whether to go onto second or not.
- 3: How to pick up your 3rd base coach to know if you should stay on 2nd or proceed onto 3rd.
- 4: How to listen to your 3rd base coach to know if you should stay on 3rd or proceed home.
- 5: How to listen to your team mate at home (the on deck batter) to know if you should slide or run through home plate (advanced players only)
- 6: How to run from 1st base (or any base when you there is a force) on a ground ball to the infield.
- 7: How to listen to your base coach when running from any base on balls hit to the outfield. (Do you tag up or run as the is safely hit into the outfield.)

Sliding: (optional, for C and up teams)

- 1: The correct position for the slide is: leading leg up, second (left) leg curled under and butt and body in line with the base. You should come in LOW, hitting the ground with your shin and butt at the same time. Hands are up.

For new players learning to slide, practice your form first on a piece of cardboard on the grass (without cleats).

Week THREE:

Infield:

This week, have your infield players arrive at staggered times: Your Catcher and Pitcher first, then 1st Basemen, then 3rd, and finally your SS and 2nd basemen. Have your outfield show up late for BP only.

Go over position by position, what the position entails and practice specific drills that reinforce each specific point. Finally ending with your entire infield running infield situation drills all together. Give them the following break down in advance of this day, so they KNOW what they will be covering and understand what their position calls for.

RCSA Team Management Handbook

Catcher:

The catcher can influence the game in many ways:

1: Allowing the pitcher to control the pace of play: by getting the ball back to the pitcher quickly, he allows the pitcher to make the choice of when to pitch the next pitch. However, if he sees the defense (his own team) is not ready, he should put his hands up, indicating to the pitcher that he should not pitch.

2: Taking the batter out of his game: By talking to the batter (in a friendly, social manner), he can take the batter out of his intended hitting mental zone.

He can also influence the batters choice of what he swings at by talking the pitch: "Ahh, there it is", "Nice pitch"... on pitches that are looking to be a little inside or outside or short. He can make the batter choose to swing at the bad pitch.

3: Talking to the Blue. By chatting up the umpire, he can influence the blue, however unconsciously, that your team is the "good" team.

4: By demonstrating his knowledge of the game, and confidence in his pitcher, he can also influence the blue into liberal strike zones against the opposite team. By "popping up" and saying "Nice pitch", etc. He can sometimes sway the blue to call a strike on an otherwise "ball" pitch.

How to position yourself as catcher for various plays:

1: Pop ups: keep your chest to the infield

2: Any fouls far enough down the 1st and 3rd base line, those basemen have priority, as the ball is coming toward them, and away from you.

3: Positioning for the tag at home.

A: For the low tag, start in front of the plate, not on the baseline. Tag low, both hands, blocking the plate with the glove. Be ready for the outside slide and be aware if the runner doesn't tag the base, and be ready to follow up with a second tag. Stay in the play immediately after, popping up and looking to the rest of the infield.

B: For the high tag, both hands, be on the inside of the line and turn with the tag so the runner does not knock the ball out of your glove. Stay in the play, making the full turn and looking to the rest of the infield.

Pitcher:

The Pitcher sets the pace and tone for the defense. He should be a natural team leader. *(Your pitcher should become a student of the game, especially how to pitch slow pitch softball. This breakdown does not attempt to cover all the fundamentals of the position.)*

1: Wait for the umpire to indicate that he is ready for the pitch; don't wait on the batter. He may decide to call for time, but if he doesn't, it is up to the blue to indicate when he is ready to call the pitch.

2: Coordinate with your catcher. You should both know and understand your intended game plan. He should help to keep you on your plan by indicated whether your pitches are coming in deep or short.

3: Always make sure you know where the play is going should the ball come to you. Know this before you pitch the ball.

4: After you pitch, be ready for the ball. Back up and have your glove up and ready.

5: Cover 1st Base if the hit brings the first baseman too far off the bag.

RCSA Team Management Handbook

6: Cover behind 3rd base if a play from the outfield is going to 3rd base. (The same is true for 2nd base, you should be ready should the ball to get past the infielder.)

1st Base:

- 1: Stance at the bag: Present yourself in the target stance, both feet on the bag until you know where the throw is, then step with the correct leg to maximize your stretch to the ball.
- 2: For wild throws, come off the bag to make the catch. If you miss the ball, consider it another base for the runner.
- 3: Block the ball when fielding, most important to keep the ball from getting past you. (As it is for all infielders)
- 4: Know which balls are not gettable, let 2nd baseman take those.
- 5: Know who is covering your base for fielded hits that take you too far off the base to get to it yourself. (Anything behind the base, the pitcher takes 1st; anything in front of the base, the 2nd baseman takes 1st base.)
- 6: Call off the throw to 1st if there is no play: “No Play, No Play”.
- 7: If making a tag on the runner going to 1st, tag low and with both hands, moving with the tag so the runner does not knock the ball out of your glove. Spin with the tag and stay in the play, looking to the other base runners.

3rd Baseman:

- 1: Play horizontal, stretching and blocking the ball from making it past you to the outfield.
- 2: Charge the ball on slow and medium grounders, move your body towards the ball, then towards the throw. Use both hands for harder hit balls, one hand for the slow rollers.
- 3: Own your base. Even if the play isn't coming to you, once the ball is hit, move to your bag and be ready.

Middle Infielders:

Short Stop Feeds to 2nd: Depending on the distance to second base, there are 4 throws:

- 1: Balls hit to your left, underhand to 2nd baseman (if not tagging the bag yourself)
- 2: Balls hit directly to you, pivot and throw overhand.
- 3: Balls hit to right, side arm the ball too second.
- 4: Balls hit to far right, throw the ball overhand to 2nd.
- 5: (for balls hit behind 2nd base, a backhand toss may be needed.)

2nd Baseman Feeds to SS:

- 1: Underhand Toss to SS if ball comes to your right. (or make the tag yourself)
- 2: Balls hit right at you, pivot and throw overhand.
- 3: Balls hit to your left close to you, pivot and throw to SS.
- 4: Balls hit to your far left, turn to the outside (following the momentum of the ball) and then throw.
- 5: (If the ball is hit close in on the line, there is the option of backhanding the ball to the SS)

Double Plays:

RCSA Team Management Handbook

Short Stop:

- 1: The Drag Step Thru the Base. (making the play on the run if the feed is early)
- 2: Left Foot Pivot: On the base and pushing back away from the bag to make the throw. (This is when the throw is late coming to you.)
- 3: Left Foot Inside Pivot: If the throw is coming from inside the infield. Left foot on the front of the bag, step off toward the pitcher with the right, then step towards first base to make the throw.

2nd Baseman:

- 1: Left Foot Pivot. (most of the time)
- 2: Drag Step. (For plays coming from inside the infield.)

Week FOUR:

Outfield:

This week, have your outfielders arrive first, in mass, then your infield can arrive late for BP.

- 1: Outfield is not just fly balls, and fly balls are not easy.
- 2: Cans of Corn (High fly balls that are within a few steps): Learn to take two steps back to take them, moving forward as you take the catch so that your throw has more pace.
- 3: Moving to the ball: Get there first, then get your glove up. You can move faster without your glove extended the whole time.
- 4: On the Run:
 - A: Call the ball, "Me, Me!"
 - B: Glove side fielder has priority.
 - C: Once called off a catch, move to back up position.
 - D: Always assume the ball will make it out of the infield.
 - E: Assume the infield will miss the infield throws as well. (Move to back up the play)
- 5: Running on the Diagonal:
 - A: Step with the far leg first, it gets your whole body moving and further in the direction of your run faster.
- 6: Know when to give up on a hard drive over your head and turn your back to run to the ball.
- 7: Running forward on the ball: (Taking the ball on the bounce)
 - A: Safe mode: our practiced kneeling stance on balls where there is no runner on base, and / or you are only throwing to second.
 - B: Game on the line: All or nothing throw. Taking the ball on the bounce, continuing the momentum towards the infield and throwing to home to the catcher.
- 8: Never hold the ball in the outfield, get it in as quickly as possible, even if the play is over.
- 9: Calling the ball:
 - A: "Me, Me"
 - B: "Short, Short" or "In, In"
 - C: "Back, Back"
- 10: Diving catches and sliding catches (advanced fielders only):

RCSA Team Management Handbook

A: Never dive to the back. Side and front only.

B: Hit glove first otherwise the ball will eject with the whip action.

C: Sliding is similar to base sliding, except top leg is also curled to avoid cleats hitting the turf. (in general, we shouldn't be making sliding catches, if it's that far in front of you, slow up and take it on the bounce)