

# AMFA's Return to Play Guidelines

June 16, 2020

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## Association Background

The Abbotsford Minor Fastball Association (“AMFA”) is a not-for-profit society incorporated under the *Societies Act* of British Columbia and annually registered and maintained through the Registrar of Companies of British Columbia. Last season, we had 391 registered players including males and females, ages 4-19, of varying religions, ethnicities and abilities registered in our house and rep programs. The AMFA provides a minor fastball program in Abbotsford, underpinned by a focus on our core values which are passion, effort, commitment, integrity, and recently and unanimously adopted as our fifth core value, equality. We are committed to instilling these values in our minor players, connecting our community under a common interest and allowing children to explore the joy of sport.

## AMFA Return to Play Guidelines

The AMFA, in continued pursuit of its mandate to allow children to explore the joy of sport, has created and approved these association-specific return to play guidelines (the “Guidelines”) in order to allow AMFA members and their families to return to the ball park in a safe environment. The Guidelines are intentionally and thoughtfully designed for facility-specific compliance with social distancing and hygiene recommendations. The AMFA Guidelines are intended to be used along with and supported by the following government and sport sector requirements:

- A. British Columbia Guidelines from WorkSafe BC and the B.C. Health Authority;
- B. Municipal Requirements;
- C. ViaSport Return to Sport Guidelines for B.C.; and
- D. Softball B.C. - Back to Bases Guidelines

*\*\*Important Note - Where these Guidelines are silent or ambiguous, the Softball B.C. Return to Play guidelines shall apply; the AMFA Guidelines are meant to be in support of and addition to, not in place of, the Softball B.C. Return to Play guidelines.*

## AMFA Process for Approving the BC Softball – Back to Bases Guidelines

The Softball B.C. – Back to Bases Guidelines (the “Softball B.C. RTP Guidelines”) were approved by the Softball B.C. Board of Directors and sent the AMFA Board on Tuesday June 9<sup>th</sup> to give the AMFA Board of Directors ample time to read and understand the well-crafted guidelines prior to ratifying the document. We had 16 of our 19 Board members attend a virtual conference on Friday June 11<sup>th</sup>; our President, Tom Eaton, ran through the process, then asked for verbal confirmation that everyone had read the document. One Board member had to abstain from the vote as she wasn’t able to finish the entire document. We discussed the strong desire to control our environment to avoid cross-contamination; the ability to avoid cross-contamination and limit use of the parks by other user groups shapes our request to the City of Abbotsford. We had sufficient numbers for a quorum and



unanimously supported the Softball B.C. RTP guidelines. We decided not to move ahead with Learn to Play (Under 6 and Under 8) this year. Running a program for our youngest players in this category would add a layer of complexity to successfully social distancing, compounded by the challenges of not being able to share equipment, and the fact that we typically are recruiting parents to get involved rather than having a foundation of committed parents for each team, who we know we can count on for screening, sanitation, monitoring distancing, etc. The below AMFA Guidelines have been submitted to Softball B.C., which has approved and sanctioned the AMFA to submit the AMFA Guidelines request to the City of Abbotsford.

## City of Abbotsford – Parks & Recreation Request

We would like your consideration for the exclusive use of Ellwood Field (2 ball diamonds) from July 1st to September 30<sup>th</sup>. We would be prepared to give up the requirements for other City of Abbotsford fields in order to be the only association and user group operating at Ellwood. This gives us much needed leverage with resources, minimizes complexity, and streamlines contact tracing. We think this approach is optimal. Allowing several user groups to access Ellwood creates the potential for cross-contamination, and requires more coordination in terms of sanitization, timing, and common spaces. In addition, it introduces a different user into a reasonably controlled environment. The Softball B.C. and AMFA Guidelines are thorough and complete, and other user groups may have different expectations for protocols and hygiene requirements, opening up our user group to increased risk. If we are required to operate at multiple sites, it increases the workload in terms of site preparation and maintenance for the volunteer community and we end up having to purchase additional resources such as signage, personal protective equipment, sanitizer, etc. The AMFA is familiar with Ellwood Park, as are most of our families. If we are granted exclusive use of Ellwood, we can control traffic flow with controlled points of ingress and egress. WE have two parking lots that we can direct families to depending on which field they would be on. Most importantly, it helps create simplicity in the area of contact tracing if we experience a confirmed COVID case.

## Our Approach to Softball this Summer

We are looking at team practices in July, along with skill clinics for pitching, catching, batting, and fielding. If we do this properly we are looking at graduating into Abbotsford-only team scrimmages in early August. If we do this properly we are looking at graduating into a few exhibition games with Langley and North Langley in late August, assuming we meet the sanctioning requirements from our PSO – Softball B.C.

## Events (Practices, Clinics, Scrimmages) - Timing & Roles

All AFMA practices, clinics, scrimmages and exhibition games will be scheduled ahead of time and staggered to avoid large numbers of players and families arriving to the field at the same time. For



example, Ellwood 1 would have it's first time slot from 5 pm – 6:30 pm, while Ellwood 2 would have it's first evening time slot at 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm. Players, coaches and parents will be asked to leave promptly when their scheduled time expires. Each team will be responsible for assigning three new roles to parents for each event (which roles may not be assumed by the team coach). These roles must be assigned in our online platform, Team Snap, prior to the start of the event. The team manager is responsible for sending a screen capture of the assignments to [screening@amfa.ca](mailto:screening@amfa.ca) after each event. The three roles are Attendance Tracker/Screeener, Distance Monitor and Sanitizing Champion, as set out below.

*Attendance Tracker/Screeener* – The person assigned to ask the designated screening questions as well as record the name and phone number of all participants and others attending any softball activity. This individual will also be required to send a picture of the daily screening log to [screening@amfa.ca](mailto:screening@amfa.ca) after each event. Failure to do so will result in immediate loss of all privileges for the remainder of the season. Each person entering the field will be asked these questions:

1. Are you experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, dry cough, chest or respiratory pain?)
2. Has any member of your household exhibited any symptoms of COVID-19 within the last 14 days?
3. Have you or any other member of your household arrived from outside Canada in the past 14 days?

We will have a screening logbook for each diamond. In addition to the physical log, a picture MUST be emailed to [screening@amfa.ca](mailto:screening@amfa.ca) after every event. Our Attendance Coordinator, Wendy Lanphear, will keep both the logbook and the images for 90 days in a secure location.

*Distance Monitor* – The person assigned by each team to monitor the physical distancing of the players, coaches, and spectators on and off the field.

*Sanitizing Champion* – The person assigned by a team to be responsible for sanitation of the facility and equipment during a given softball activity.

## Player Considerations

The most important part of this entire equation is the people. We understand that everyone is in a different spot right now. Some are extremely excited and eager to get onto the fields; others are reluctant based on their situations. Some want to see kids reconnect, and others are highly concerned about the impact that group gatherings could have on the greater community. Some want to get their kids outside and engaged in a more predictable routine, and others are looking toward the summer as an opportunity to explore & travel. We completely understand, and have provided a frictionless refund process for those who requested it.

## Umpire Considerations



Umpires can do their best to arrive at the park dressed, but that will not always be possible. Alternatively, parking spaces for umpires will be clearly marked so that physical distancing can be maintained while they dress out of their vehicles. In order to follow the guideline of umpires sanitizing their hands after every half inning, hand sanitizer will be accessible to umpires from the inside of the diamond through the fencing. In a typical setting the umpires are responsible for ball control (holding the games balls and introducing new balls to the game as needed). In order to keep the balls as sanitary as possible, each team will have a ball manager responsible for introducing new balls to the game and sanitising the balls frequently. When the umpires are entering and exiting the diamond, teams will clear away from the access gate to allow them to pass at a safe distance. Umpires will have the choice to stand behind the catcher as normal or to stand 6 feet behind the pitcher. The umpires will not be standing 6 feet behind the catcher, but will be wearing masks.

## Family Considerations

Since the maximum number of people at a ball diamond is 50, we will limit each family to 4 total people (including the player) into the Ellwood bleacher area. With clinics capped at 10 players and teams made up of 12-13 players, we will maintain numbers below the threshold. If more family members arrive (grandparents, siblings, etc.), the family will decide who will watch from the bleachers and who will watch from the other side of the fence in the outfield.

## Coaching Considerations

What we can assure our coaches of is if we can return to play, we will do it with safety as our guiding principle, and that the choice will be theirs. If they don't feel comfortable with the situation, they have our support to pass on the season, with the hopes that they will return in the future (we have amazing coaches, and we know how critical they are to the lived experience for the kids).

## Closing Remarks – this is who we are...Equality & Community

A culture is best defined as a collection of attitudes, behaviours and feelings that characterize a group and inform its membership. As recent tragic events have ignited many feelings of racism and inequality, we wanted to illuminate something critical to our culture. We do not support or condone racism or inequality in any form and expect that everyone who represents the AMFA, parents, players, and coaches, will support that position. Silence is not acceptable; we need to teach the next generation to stand up for themselves, their friends and teammates if they ever experience this type of behaviour. As an association, we have prided ourselves on our core values of Commitment, Effort, Passion and Integrity, and look to reinforce those virtues annually. With the unwavering support of our committed Board, we decided that this set of values was incomplete, and we adopted the fifth value to our culture –



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Equality. We support those who judge people on the quality and content of their character and not the colour of their skin or their gender.

We are going to be launching a social media and clothing campaign designed to connect the community centred around the theme of -- 'we all stayed home to keep everyone safe, but our hearts were at the ballpark' -- watch for #HeartAtThePark.

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