

## **AGSA Ideas for Building Team Unity and Confidence**

### **Team Ice Breakers (to get to know each other at the beginning of every season)**

- 1) Favorite Softball Memory - Players take turns describing to the team her best at-bat, most memorable game, most memorable team, etc. (Older players)
- 2) Pair Introductions - Girls are divided into pairs and given a set of questions to ask each other. (For example, Where do you go to school? When did you start playing softball? What's your favorite \_\_\_\_\_? What's one thing about yourself that would surprise us to know?). Then have each pair take turns introducing their partner to the team.
- 3) Name Game - Team forms a circle and gets into ground ball fielding form (knees bent, hands out in front). One girl has a ball. She calls out a teammate's name and rolls her the ball. The player receives the ball maintaining good fielding form, and then rolls it to another player while saying that player's name. Keep going until girls know each other's names pretty well and things are moving quickly. At that point, you can stop or throw in another ball so there are two going at the same time. (Younger players)
- 4) Two Truths and a Lie - Each player takes a turn sharing three things about herself. Two things are true, and one thing is a lie. The rest of the team has to guess which of the three is the lie. (Older players)
- 5) Why are you here? - Have each player write down their answer to the question "Why are you here?" Share the answers with the group either by each player reading her own or by putting them in a pile and having the girls pick out someone else's to read. These answers can help the coach clarify the season's goals. (Older players)

### **Team Unity and Confidence (at practice as wanted/needed)**

- 1) What do you bring to the team? - Bring a large poster board/piece of paper and marker to practice and enough pens and small pieces of paper for the players. Each player lists EVERYTHING she brings to the team (example: love of the game, sense of humor, five years of softball experience, intelligence, big bat, etc). Collect all the papers and begin to list all of the traits on the large poster board. The power of the exercise is that the team can see the amazing number of qualities listed that no one person possesses but they possess together as a team. Afterwards, consider bringing the posterboard to games as a reminder that they are stronger when they work together. (Older players)
- 2) I've got your back - Have each player tape a piece of paper to her back. Players go to each person and write why they like being on the same team as that person/or what that person brings to the team. You can also do this anonymously by giving each player a sheet with all the teammates listed. Each player makes a comment for everyone (except

themselves, though they can comment on themselves if they would like). Collect the papers, compile the compliments by player, and hand out the next practice/game. (Older players)

- 3) Team Buddies - Divide the girls into pairs (picking from a hat at random, or coach can choose - trying to break up the girls who are always together). The girls are to put together a "Psych Sheet"/"Motivation Sheet" for their buddy for the games. The sheets can have quotes, personal messages, inspirational pictures, etc. You can do this for each game, or switch buddies, or just do it for a few games. Up to you and what your team wants/needs. Team buddies can also be used to "Fill Each Others Emotional Tanks" as suggested by the Positive Coaching Alliance:  
([http://www.positivecoach.org/common/cms/documents/Coach%20Tools%20-%20Public/PCA\\_eTank\\_script.pdf](http://www.positivecoach.org/common/cms/documents/Coach%20Tools%20-%20Public/PCA_eTank_script.pdf))
- 4) Frisbee Softball - A fun cardio and communication workout to start or end practice. You can use this as a "carrot" (incentive) for a focused effort at practice if you do it at the end. Use a softie ball, instead of a hard one, for safety. (Could also use a nerf football instead - downside is then the girls would not use their gloves). The game is played just like ultimate frisbee. Two teams. Two end zones where the teams need to get the ball across to score a point (either run across or caught on the other side). The ball is moved by throwing or taking a maximum of three steps while holding the ball. A dropped ball is a turnover. It takes the girls a bit of time to get the hang of it, but once they do, they have a blast. Takes about 10-15 minutes minimum. (Girls need basic catching skills for this)

### **Team Unity (off-field once a season or as wanted/needed)**

- 1) Team Meal - ask a family to host a pasta party/dinner the evening before a game; have the team go to lunch/dinner together after a game
- 2) Team Service Project - ask the team to come up with a cause/project they can work together on for the season (such as collecting canned goods for Arlington Food Assistance Center, donations for Doorways for Women and Children, books for The Reading Connection, etc.)
- 3) Team Sign or T-shirt Making - Girls can make signs to display at the next game (with good sportsmanship, of course) or t-shirts to wear to school and/or practices.
- 4) Team Activity - trip to a local high school or college softball game; roller skating; ice skating; bowling; etc.

### **Reference**

Bristow, Cindy. *A Coach's Guide to Creating Team Chemistry: Tips on Coaching Female Athletes*. Tallahassee: Softball Excellence, LLC, 2007. Print.