



What is the ACES Academy of Softball?

The ACES Academy of softball is a new and innovative softball program that focuses on the development of both players and coaches who want to enjoy playing the game of fastpitch softball at its highest levels. ACES consists of many elements. The Fall Firecracker, The ACES Super League, ACES Coach Development Program, Group Training and Practices, Tournament Training and so much more.

When was ACES started?

The idea for ACES was developed out of the initial Fall Firecracker Program in the fall of 2007. The Firecracker program was so innovative and the reviews so amazing that it was obvious that the people were looking for something different.

Why was it started?

The existing structure for softball in the city of Calgary, and in the entire province was very simply not working. Over the course of the past 10 years, despite a booming economy and a booming population, the number of kids playing the sport of softball in Calgary had dropped over 60% from well over 3000 kids in the year 2000 to about 1000 kids in 2008.

How is it different?

The ACES Program puts the focus on “instruction” instead of “coaching” and on “development” instead of “winning”. When working with kids, winning on the scoreboard should be a result of what you have accomplished, not the goal that you are trying to achieve. If the focus is on winning, decisions are not always made in the best interest of the kids. To keep on track, the ACES Program follows the principles of “Positive Coaching”, a program developed out of Stanford University. (www.positivecoach.org) The instructors in the ACES Program are trained to be “Double Goal” Coaches.

The ACES Program is different by making the game exciting for the kids to play, for the coaches to coach and for the parents to watch. The players and coaches all train together. The field space and equipment is used and shared by everyone in the Program.



What is the ACES Firecracker FastPitch?

Firecracker Fastpitch was the initial Program that led to the formation of the ACES Academy of Softball. Calgary's entire softball season is normally just 8-10 weeks long. It is tough to excel at any sport if you only play 10 weeks a year!!

Firecracker added an additional 6 weeks to the season by playing softball in the fall. More importantly, Firecracker put the emphasis on learning the elements inside the game, playing the game at a competitive level and making the game fun for everyone involved. The kids earn points for performing skills and the team with the most points at the end of the game is the "winner". The kids don't even realize that they are learning new skills along the way.

When was it started?

The idea was formed in the fall of 2006 with the first event held in the fall of 2007. The success of the program was recognized immediately by everyone who attended. The response and the positive reviews were instant.

Why was it started?

Softball was dying. Skill levels were dropping. Coaches didn't want to coach anymore. Parents were taking their kids to other sports. The playing season was too short. Something had to be done. Firecracker would be played in the fall, which would extend the season, develop the skills and help to keep people in the sport. Firecracker was the first step and it was a huge success.

How is it different?

Firecracker is different because the foundation of the entire program is educational. Educating the players to understand that they can excel at the game and have fun at the same time. Educating the coaches as to how to teach the skills to the younger kids who don't understand some of the complicated concepts of the game. Educating the parents to understand that the focus can't always just be on the scoreboard.

Firecracker is one of the most innovative and exciting programs ever introduced to the sport of softball. It is drawing the kids, the coaches and the parents back towards the game of softball.



What is the ACES Super League?

The ACES Super League is where the ACES teams play their spring softball. The players from 3 teams from each division are ranked based on their talent and then divided into 4 equally balanced teams. These teams play in the Super League. By dividing up the teams based on skill, the games are extremely competitive. All of the players get a chance to develop their skills in a fair and fun environment.

When was it started?

The first season of the Super League started in April of 2009. Right off the bat, the Super league was extremely successful. The games are fast and competitive. The players and coaches are developing at an amazing pace.

Why was it started?

The purpose of Super league is to have a league for competitive players to play in right here in Calgary. For the past many years, competitive teams could be formed, but they had no place to play competitive games locally. The existing structure simply didn't allow it to happen. Super league provides a fun and competitive environment for Calgary's young and talented ball players to develop their skills. The Super League allows for development without the high cost of extensive travel that has been typical in the past. More players can now afford to play ball at a high level and this will help to grow the sport once again.

How is it different?

Super League is fun, competitive, exciting softball. The Super League is about the kids and coaches playing and learning the game of softball. We want the kids to play the games. No team will ever have more than 9 players, which means every player plays every inning. If a team has less than 9, they play with whatever number they have. That just means they get to bat more often and they have to work a little harder defensively.

The Super League is different because the focus is on the kids playing the game. It's not about the scoreboard. It's not about the parents. It's not about the umpires. It's about the game.

ACES Coach Development Program

The ACES program understands that in order to develop the game, we need to develop the coaches. Most coaches start out with no experience, no training and in some cases not a lot of interest. If we want to grow the sport, we need to start with the coaches.

Group Training and Practices

In an effort to maximize the training and development of all of the players and coaches, the ACES Program practices together in larger groups. Each division of over 30 players and 6-10 coaches all work together to insure that all of the participants can take advantage of the most knowledgeable coaches. It also allows the much larger group to take better advantage of the facilities and training equipment. Two pitching machines can help all 11 teams, rather than having each team have to by their own machine!!

Tournament Training

The focus of any “A” level program is to perform at the highest level at the Provincial Championships. The Provincial Championships are held on a weekend in which teams can play multiple games every day. In the ACES program, the Super League games are held on weekends and the players play multiple games each day to help them to prepare for the all important Provincial Championships.

The ACES Academy of Softball is new, it’s innovative, it’s exciting and it’s drawing kids, coaches and parents back to the game of softball. Organizations in Okotoks, Red Deer and Lloydminster have participated in the Program and have started to implement similar programs in their area to attract players. A group from New Zealand has also shown some interest. For many kids, being a part of a well run minor sports program can provide a source of self esteem, confidence, teamwork and physical fitness. ACES can be that source.



www.acesacademyofsoftball.com