



Ralph Kreidel

For the Love of the Game

Ralph first became interested in softball in 1978 when his daughter Kerry expressed interest in the game and in 1980 his youngest daughter Deanna also expressed interest. At that time the family resided in Des Peres, Missouri (a St. Louis suburb). The girls quickly became interested in pitching so father and daughters started taking pitching lessons from George Jones, a man who was quite prominent as an adult men's fast pitch pitcher.

Ralph was involved in coaching his daughter's teams until the family relocated to Sylvania in the fall of 1985. At that time fast pitch was not played in Sylvania. The parks and recreation department sponsored a community recreational slow pitch program.

His daughters formed a fast pitch team from their junior high school basketball team. The girls drafted Ralph as the coach. His request to use a Sylvania ball field was refused. He discovered that Perrysburg, Anthony Wayne and Springfield were playing fast pitch so he asked to have his team play with/against them. An informal group was formed. They called themselves Suburban Girls Fast Pitch Softball. The following year Ralph and his wife Carolyn formed Sylvania Girls Fast Pitch Softball and held open registration. Two teams were formed. Sylvania Girls Fast Pitch grew to 430 participants while Carolyn and Ralph operated the program from their home. There were no pitchers so Ralph taught pitching in the Northview Gymnasium for ten years.

During this period Ralph and Carolyn's daughters both were selected as First Team All Ohio high school pitchers. When his daughters left for college Ralph continued to coach 14-U, his favorite age group. Ralph said; "the girls learn quickly, the parents still have some control, and the girls do as they are asked".

Ralph became president of Suburban Girls Softball and during that time 21 communities and a number of splinter groups were consolidated into one program, including Sylvania. When he stepped down in 1996 he turned the program over to Bill Beckham who ran it successfully for a number of years before he joined Martin Drain in the development of the FAST Wizards softball organization.

Ralph then started a tryout travel program in Sylvania and coached the 14-U tryout travel team. The "Sting" played for three years. In 1986 Ralph and Jerry Sigler (girls' basketball coach at Sylvania Northview) had the opportunity to coach at Sylvania Northview High School. Ralph and Jerry coached the girls' varsity for 12 years. During that time they made two trips to the state tournament. During this period and beyond Ralph continued to coach 14-U as a feeder program to both Sylvania Northview and Southview high schools.

Ralph retired both from coaching and business in 2004. In 2005 he decided to start a business which rapidly became very successful. In 2006 Martin Drain coerced Ralph to re-enter coaching in the FAST Wizards organization. He coached for two years with Tom Denman also a father of two All Ohio pitchers.

After the 2007 season Ralph again retired to relocate to South Carolina. The down turn in the economy hampered this effort. In 2008 Martin Drain again approached Ralph to take over a 12-U team of girls whose coach, Laurie Wagner, had passed away. At this writing in 2009 Ralph and Tom continue to coach young Wizards players.

"The gratification is so great that it is almost sinful."