

THE BEDFORD CITIZEN

Bedford 10U Shows What It Really Means to Play Like a Girl

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The 2014 Bedford Bucs 10U Softball Team, following a game in Methuen on July 23rd. Standing (L To R): Tsoline Gervorkian, Alayna Potter, Narineh Gervorkian, Bella Fernald, Jillian Mici, Ava Venuti, Sydney Daniels. Kneeling (L To R): Gianna Mici, Monique Lyons, Gianna Missiti, Cassidy Schuman, Michaela O'brien. Front: (L To R) Ellie Mitchell and Maggie Carluccio. (Credit: Beth Venuti).

By John Mitchell

For many Bedford kids, summer means the end of the busy spring sports season and easing into a routine of relaxing days at the beach and nights on a campground. But not for the girls of Bedford Babe Ruth Baseball & Softball's 10 and Under (10U) team. With barely a chance to empty their backpacks from the last day of school, a dedicated team of rising fourth, fifth, and sixth graders took the field for a seven-week season of fourteen softball games, plus one tournament and numerous practices.

This year's 10U team was the first in Bedford in a few summers. A surge of interest in softball among grade-schoolers—30 third- and fourth-graders played on three teams during the spring—created a large and talented pool of eligible girls.

The team came together largely at the initiative of manager Paul Schuman, who has been a volunteer with Bedford Softball for four seasons, since his elder daughter, Cassidy, began to play in the league. Schuman was encouraged by the large turnout for spring softball this year, and felt a summer league would give the girls an opportunity to have fun at a more competitive level of play. Player Jillian Mici, 10, agreed: “I came out for the summer team because all my friends were playing, and the spring season was really fun. So I wanted to keep doing it.”

At this level, Schuman and his coaches—Jack Daniels, Christine Fernald, John Mici, and John Mitchell—emphasize skill-building, sportsmanship, and inclusiveness. During games, the girls regularly move around the infield and outfield, and no team member is permanently assigned to any position. Likewise, coaches organize practices to give girls plenty of opportunities to work on batting, pitching, and fielding. As a result, everyone can play everywhere on the field, including on the mound. “I’m impressed with our depth, especially in pitching. Our coaches have committed to work on pitching with any girl who wants to learn,” says Schuman. “As a result, several girls have great accuracy and speed, which makes games more fun and helps us win. In our last game, a different girl pitched each inning, and all of them had a great outing.”



Cassidy Schuman waits for her pitch in a game vs. Danvers on July 30th.



Gianna Mici delivers a pitch during the “Girls of Summer” tournament in Chelmsford, on July 26th.



Ave Venuti bare-hands a grounder during warmups prior to a July 30th game vs. Danvers.



Maggie Carluccio fields a fly ball during warmups prior to a game vs. Danvers on July 30th.

Photos – Credit Emily Mitchell

This year’s 10U team consisted of a regular roster of 12 girls. The team practiced nearly every Sunday afternoon, and coaches also organized free Friday-night scrimmages for both team members and other Bedford girls who want to learn the game and practice together. Frequent scrimmage attendees were regular “call-ups” to the 10U team, filling spots in the lineup for

every game. “My favorite part was that I got to play a lot. I love to play sports, and since I started softball I have been very active. And I’ve been getting a lot better!” said call-up player Kaylee Grace, 9. Gianna Missiti, 9, another call-up player, was equally excited: “It’s been fun hitting and pitching. I had a good time and I want to play again next year.”

Likewise, coaches are optimistic about future seasons, and hope that interest remains high. “Girls in Bedford are fortunate to have a wide variety of sports to choose from,” says Schuman, “but that means softball has a lot of competition for players. We hope our girls have had fun, and will get their friends to come out for softball next spring. It is never too late to learn to play.”

This year’s regular roster included Maggie Carluccio, Sydney Daniels, Bella Fernald, Narineh Gervorkian, Tsoline Gervorkian, Gianna Mici, Jillian Mici, Ellie Mitchell, Michaela O’Brien, Alayna Potter, Cassidy Schuman, and Ava Venuti. Call-up players included Sydney Cox, Danielle DiGangi, Kaylee Grace, Amber Hurley, Caitlin Lembo, Monique Lyons, Laney Mead, Gianna Missiti, Sydney Poor, Lindsey Steele, and Nicole Steele. The girls played in the MiddleEssex 10A league, and faced teams from Arlington, Burlington, Chelmsford, Danvers, Methuen, Newton, and Wakefield. Bedford finished the season with 5 wins, 7 losses, and 2 ties. Players elected Gianna Mici, Jillian Mici, and Cassidy Schuman to the MiddleEssex All-Star team.

