



Wekiva Softball

Nominated by: Christina Maloz (Coach)

What Makes the Wekiva Softball Team Members True Champions

Many of us have heard the age-old cliché that true champions are born, not made. While I partially agree with this quote, the coach in me realizes that sometimes players have to be molded into champions. At no time in my life has this been more true than now.

My husband Bryan, our 16-year-old daughter, and I moved to Apopka this summer after having lived our entire lives in Southwest Louisiana. (To put this transition even further into perspective for you, I taught and coached for 10 years at the high school from which I graduated. My daughter, Laine, also attended that same high school and would have graduated from there as well had we not, as a family, chosen to broaden our horizons.) While it was tough to leave all of our family and friends behind, Bryan and I knew that this was the best decision we could make for our daughter's sake. What we didn't realize at the time was how much this decision would impact the lives of the girls waiting for us.

Since this is only the fourth year that Wekiva High School has been in existence, one would think that the members of the athletic teams here had not undergone much strife or difficulty in three years. One would, consequently, be wrong—especially if talking about the Wekiva Lady Mustang Softball Team.

While the specifics of this turmoil are of no consequence, what does matter is the atmosphere that Bryan and I encountered when we took over the program this summer. What we faced were a group of individuals looking out for themselves and putting what was best for “me” above what would most benefit the team. And while each player expressed a desire to have a championship team, few were willing—at that time—to sacrifice what was necessary to achieve this goal.

As we have worked with the 21 young ladies who make up our softball team, we have found attitudes slowly starting to shift. Where Bryan and I saw individuals before, we now often catch ourselves referring to our girls as a unit. While we had issues at the beginning of the season with girls picking up equipment or setting up for practice, they each now take the initiative to do things to help our program succeed. And while there appeared to be no order to practices before, the girls

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have eagerly embraced the new concept of a “practice plan” that has been presented to them daily. And that attitude has made all the difference.

The members of the Wekiva High School Softball Team are true champions because, although wary of the unknown, they have embraced a new way of doing things and have, essentially, bought into what we as their coaches have tried to teach them—about softball *and* about life. And that is why, less than halfway through the season, it looks as if we are on our way to win more games than any other softball team has done in the history of Wekiva High School (**IF** I haven't just jinxed the entire program!).

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