

14U Major Division Coach's Handbook (SCPAS) — “New Coach Ready Guide”

Built for a first-time (or new-to-14U) head coach managing a competitive 14U Major team in the South Central Pennsylvania Softball (SCPAS) league.

0) What “14U Major” Means at This Level (Quick Context)

14U Major is a transition age: players are developing **game speed decision-making**, **stronger throwing/receiving**, **more consistent pitching**, and **advanced team tactics** (bunt defense, first-and-third, slap/short game counters, situational hitting). Your job is to create a structure that is:

- **Clear** (roles, expectations, communication),
- **Repetitive** (fundamentals every week),
- **Competitive** (game-like reps),
- **Positive** (growth mindset + team culture).

1) Gameplay Rules (14U Major) — SCPAS-Specific (from attached rules)

1.1 Game format & time

- **Regulation: 7 innings.** A game becomes “official” after **4 innings** (or **3½ if home team is winning**) if it cannot continue due to darkness/weather/field conditions.
- **Time limit: 1 hour 40 minutes, finish the inning** (time starts immediately after the pre-game plate meeting).
- **Ties:** Major division games may end in a tie only if they can't be completed because of conditions; otherwise, if tied at end of regulation/time limit, **ITB (International Tie Breaker)** is used until a winner or the game can't continue.
- **Special time-limit tie note** (Division Reference): If tied at time limit, each team gets a complete half inning; if still tied after that, the game ends in a tie.

1.2 Lineups, substitutions, and DP/FLEX

- **Lineup card required** for 14U (provide to plate umpire at pregame meeting).
- Major teams may start with **9, 10, or 11 batters**, including up to **two Extra Players (EPs)** inserted anywhere in the order.
- You **may use DP/FLEX** regardless of lineup size (optional).
- You must **keep the same number of batters** you started with for the entire game.

- **Free defensive movement:** Players in the batting order may be interchanged defensively without using a substitution (re-entry rules still follow sanctioning body rules).
- **Injury + bat-all:** If you bat all players and someone is injured, you may **compress the lineup** by the number of injured players (no penalty); the injured player **may not re-enter**.

1.3 Pitching rules & pitching style

- SCPAS follows the sanctioning body rules **including the PIAA pitching rule**, unless otherwise stated.
- For **12U/14U/18U Major**, the **PIAA pitching rule is allowed**.

1.4 Run limits / mercy

- **14U Major has a 5-run limit per inning for the entire game.**
- “Run ahead”/mercy for Major division uses the approved sanctioning body rule set (SCPAS specifies mercy details primarily for minors; majors follow sanctioning body run-ahead rules).

1.5 Pre-game / post-game & game admin expectations

- **Home team book is official** if scorebooks differ (scorebook or GameChanger required).
- **Visiting team gets the field 20 minutes before game** for warmups.
- Coaches meet umpires **5 minutes prior** for ground rules, lineup exchange, etc.
- **Lightning:** at first sight of lightning, umpire suspends immediately.
- **Grace period:** 5 minutes to have enough players at game time; if not, ready team can be awarded a forfeit win.
- **Score reporting:** home team must report score within **48 hours** or it becomes a **forfeit for the home team**.
- **Post-game sportsmanship line** (thank opponents).

1.6 Conduct standards (important for 14U)

- SCPAS **Zero Tolerance** includes warnings for arguing calls, taunting, alcohol/tobacco use; escalation leads to **ejection + suspension**.
- **Throwing equipment:** 1st offense warning; 2nd offense player removed/disqualified; egregious actions can be immediate ejection.
- **No alcohol/tobacco/vaping** (warning, then ejection on next offender for that team).

1.7 A small but big operational rule (game strategy)

- “Teams can use **any rostered player** to run for the **pitcher or catcher.**”
Coaching tip: Pre-plan 2–3 runners so you don’t burn your best defender unexpectedly.

2) Recommended Skills Development for 14U Major (What to prioritize)

Below is a practical “competency checklist” you can use to guide your season plan. At 14U Major, aim for **consistency under pressure** more than “new tricks.”

2.1 Offensive priorities

Hitting

- Consistent hard contact: line drives to middle/oppo + controlled pull power
- Approach: count leverage, “yes-yes-no,” pitch selection, two-strike plan
- Adjustments: inside/outside, changeups, moving the ball with runners on

Short game

- Drag & push bunts (if your roster uses them), sac bunt execution
- Bunt defense reads (offense: seeing corners crash, slap/bunt counter)

Base running

- Explosive first step, correct turns, sliding variety (bent-leg/pop-up/hook)
- Situational running: tagging, first-to-third reads, dirt-ball reads

2.2 Defensive priorities

Throwing / receiving

- Efficient footwork into throwing lanes
- Quick exchange; accurate throws (especially SS/2B to 1B)
- Cut/relay positioning and communication

Infield

- First step reads (bat angle, speed cues)
- Backhand/forehand technique
- Double play footwork (even if not frequent, reps matter)

Outfield

- Drop step/crossover, angle routes

- Catch-and-throw transitions; hitting cutoff targets

Catcher

- Blocking, recovery footwork
- Throwdowns + glove-to-hand transfer speed
- Communication and field leadership

2.3 Pitching / battery

- Command: fastball to spots, changeup reliability
- Spin development: peel drop, curve/slider progression (as appropriate)
- Game management: rhythm, controlling running game, working ahead

3) Practice Format Suggestions (Structure that works at 14U)

3.1 The “90-minute” practice template (most common for weeknights)

0:00–0:10 — Dynamic warmup + throw prep

- Movement prep + band work + wrist/forearm activation
- Quick team message: “theme of the day”

0:10–0:25 — Throwing progression (mandatory every practice)

- Wrist/one-knee → rocker → shuffle → long toss (as space allows)
- Finish with **5 accuracy throws** each at game intent

0:25–0:50 — Defensive stations (3 x ~8 minutes)

Rotate: infield footwork, outfield routes, catching/pitching (or team defense)

0:50–1:15 — Offensive stations (3 x ~8 minutes)

Rotate: tee work, front toss, live reads (machine or coach), situational hitting

1:15–1:30 — Team segment / competition

Examples: bunt defense vs offense, first-and-third reps, controlled scrimmage, “2 outs—score run” game

3.2 The “2-hour weekend” template (deeper work)

- Add: situational defense, relays/cutoffs, live pitching, scrimmage innings
- Consider: 20-minute “chalk + walk-through” for strategy/communication

3.3 Rules-based practice planning (SCPAS 14U Major)

Because you have a **5-run limit per inning**, your practices should include:

- **Run-production games** (score 1–2 runs “on demand”)
- **Pressure defense:** “defend 0–2 outs with runner on 3rd”
- **ITB scenarios** (because you may see ITB often)

4) Example Practice Drills (with YouTube links)

Below are ready-to-run drills you can drop into your practices. I included links that are clear and coach-friendly.

4.1 Infield footwork + throw quickness

Drill: Rapid-fire field → throwing position

- **Setup:** Coach rolls/short fungo. Player fields, uses quick small steps into power position, throws to target.
- **Coaching points:** “Beat the ball to the spot,” glove out early, replace feet, throw on a line.
- Video: [Infield Drill: Footwork & Proper Throwing Position \(MegRem Softball\) \[youtube.com\]](#)

Drill: 3 youth infield footwork drills (zigzag / stutter / timing)

- Great for cleaning up bad habits and improving tempo.
- Video: [3 Infield Drills For Youth Players \(MegRem Softball\) \[youtube.com\]](#)

4.2 Outfield drop-step + route efficiency

Drill: Drop step + change of direction

- **Setup:** Coach throws/tosses balls over shoulder, then line-drive change direction.
- **Coaching points:** First step is a drop step (no false step), tuck glove, run efficient angle.
- Video: [Two Outfield Drills — Change of Direction & Drop Step \(MegRem Softball\) \[youtube.com\]](#)

Drill: How to drop step (teaching video)

- Useful for players new to true drop-step mechanics.
- Video: [How To Drop Step In The Outfield \(MegRem Softball\) \[youtube.com\]](#)

4.3 Pitching: wrist snap + spin building

Drill: Wrist snap progression (10-minute routine)

- **Setup:** Close-distance snap into glove; progress to K position; focus on finger finish.
- **Coaching points:** Loose whip, fingers finish through seams, consistency > speed early.
- Video: [Wrist Snap Practice for Softball Pitchers \(Plus Ultra Pitching\) \[youtube.com\]](#)

Drill: Wrist snap fundamentals + common mistakes

- Video: [The SECRET to a Good Wrist Snap \(Plus Ultra Pitching\) \[youtube.com\]](#)

4.4 Catching: blocking & lateral quickness

Drill: Six-ball blocking (lateral explosion)

- **Setup:** Six balls spaced ~2 feet apart. Catcher blocks each moving down the line.
- **Coaching points:** Beat ball to spot, angle chest down, recover under control.
- Video: [Six-Ball Blocking Drill \(DICK'S\) \[youtube.com\]](#)

Drill: Blocking mechanics basics

- Video: [Softball Catcher Skills: Blocking \(DICK'S\) \[youtube.com\]](#)

4.5 Base running: sliding + leads

Drill: Sliding types + baserunning tips

- **Setup:** Use sliding mats/cardboard; progress walk → jog → run.
- **Coaching points:** “Figure four,” keep hands up/controlled, eyes on base, safe entry.
- Video: [How to Slide + Baserunning Tips \(Lexi Blackmon + Coach Steph Kim\) \[youtube.com\]](#)

4.6 Hitting: tee progression + swing development

Drill set: 6 hitting drills (top hand, bottom hand, split grip, extension, load work)

- **Use:** Station circuit—players pick 2–3 drills that match their swing needs.
- Video: [6 Hitting Drills to Improve Your Swing \(MegRem Softball\) \[youtube.com\]](#)

Drill: Launch position + hips fire first

- Video: [Hitting Drill for Proper Launch Position \(MegRem Softball\) \[youtube.com\]](#)

5) Age-Appropriate Motivation, Team Building & Character Development (14U)

14U athletes want **autonomy, respect, and belonging**. They respond best when you:

- Explain the “why,”
- Give them a voice,
- Hold them to a consistent standard,
- Celebrate effort + improvement, not just outcomes.

5.1 Team culture ideas that actually work

A) “Standards > Rules” (team-created)

- In week 1, have players define 5 standards:
 - How we talk to umpires
 - How we respond to errors
 - Dugout energy
 - Hustle expectations
 - How we treat teammates
- Print them, review quickly before games.

B) “One teammate better” challenge

- Each practice: players must help one teammate (tip, encouragement, extra rep).
- End practice: 60-second share-out (2–3 players max so it stays short).

C) Leadership rotation

- Assign weekly captains (2 players) to:
 - run stretch line,
 - lead “break,”
 - pick player-of-practice.

D) Character shout-outs

- After games, do **two shout-outs**:
 - one for effort/response,
 - one for sportsmanship/teammate support.

5.2 Motivation tools (simple + sustainable)

Process goals (weekly)

Examples:

- “80% first-pitch strikes in bullpen charting”
- “Less than 2 throwing errors this week”

- “Every batter has a plan with 2 strikes”

Competitive practice games

- 14U loves competition—build it into drills:
 - Infield “5 in a row” clean fields
 - Hitting: points for hard-hit line drives
 - Baserunning: timed home-to-1st with form grading

Mistake response training Teach a “reset routine”:

1. Breathe out
2. Flush (“next pitch”)
3. Verbal cue (“I’ve got this”)
4. Ready position

5.3 Building trust (the secret sauce)

- **Consistent consequences** (same standard for everyone)
- **Private correction, public praise**
- **Role clarity:** tell each player what you need from them this week
- **Short memory:** you model it first after errors/bad calls

Bonus: Game-Day Management Checklist (copy/paste)

24–48 hours before

- Confirm field/time, opponent contact, roster availability
- Create lineup options (bat 9 vs bat 10/11 vs bat all; DP/FLEX plan)

Arrival

- Assign scorekeeper (GameChanger or book)
- Warmup timeline (remember: visitors get 20 min field time)

Pre-game meeting

- Lineup card to ump (required for 14U)
- Ground rules, time start, run limit reminder (5 runs/inning)

Post-game

- Sportsmanship line
- Report score within 48 hours (home team responsibility)