

The Status of Softball

What is the status of softball now that the Olympic decision is over?

Now that the IOC has made the decision to keep wrestling in the Olympics, they are now back in the same position they started at having made no changes to the Olympic program. This was a heartbreaking blow to baseball and softball.

With Tokyo earning the host city bid for the 2020 Olympics, there is a small chance the organizing committee will add baseball and softball back on the program. The Japanese are huge bat and ball fans and the Olympic games held in their country would not feel complete without these two sports on the lineup.

How does the Olympic decision affect softball in the US?

Softball in the USA will remain very strong with the strength of the sport at the youth level all the way up to the increased competition in the NCAA collegiate softball system. We find more and more young athletes specializing in only one sport, in hopes to some day play for their favorite college team or their parent's alma mater. With the increase in summer/travel ball teams and tournaments, many athletes find themselves playing year round. The negative effect of softball being removed from the Olympic program is the decrease in national team funding from the USOC, which will greatly impact countries that are without collegiate or professional teams.

What will happen to softball around the world?

That is a great question and a huge concern due to many countries funding and support of the sport. Many countries financially support their very own institute of sport to develop junior athletes into future Olympic Medalists. Since softball is not on the program these sport institutes will direct that funding toward other sports. That's why it's imperative that as the worldwide leader of our sport that we continue to travel around to different countries to spread our sport and to teach others how to play.

How do I make myself visible and get noticed so I can get a scholarship?

Getting a college scholarship nowadays is not easy. You have to be visible, you have to reach out to colleges and let them know that you are interested in their programs. It's not enough to think that everyone will just find you. You have to go to camps and clinics. You have to work hard on and off the field... you have to have great grades! More importantly, you need to be coachable and a genuinely good person. College coaches want to recruit great people who are good athletes, not good athletes who are terrible people.

What's the most important pitch I can learn?

Once a pitcher has the ability to hit their corners and work zones off the plate with a fastball, the change up would be my personal favorite pitch for young pitchers to learn. Along with varying speeds, the drop ball would be the next pitch to learn. It's easy to get caught up in wanting to learn four or five different pitches, but that will only slow your progress. Change up first, drop second and then depending on your natural pitching style, a curve or rise. I normally recommend a screwball last due to it being hard on the elbow. Young pitchers should be very careful when learning the screwball. The mechanics of this pitch can damage the elbow if thrown incorrectly.

What's the most important thing I can do off the field in order to become a better softball player?

That's another great question. Simply working hard on the field is not enough anymore. Today many athletes know that working hard between the white lines is a given. If you want to excel you need to work hard off the field in your conditioning and in the weight room. Dedicate yourself to learn and understand a conditioning and lifting program, making it a priority just like 'on the field practices'. You also have to work on your fitness, especially if you're a pitcher. Everyone on the field should be able to run a 5k without any issues, while pitchers should also do sprints and work on recovery. Pitchers need to have very strong legs, a strong core and back in order to take care of their shoulder.