

Parents more trouble than help to baseball children

A team manager and some parents are very disillusioned with their recent experience in the North Farmington West Bloomfield little league.

"I don't know if I'll coach and manage again," said Pam Pettit, of NFNB Junior Girls Softball League. "I would have to have one good year to make up for this season."

In an open letter to a parent, Mrs. Pettit detailed some of her frustrations in coaching the 10-12 age team this summer.

All of her complaints involved parents. There were parents who complained about driving kids to games. Mrs. Pettit and team mothers would

agree to pick up those kids, but often they would not be ready on time.

Most parents, Mrs. Pettit of Farmington Hills, said, would show up for one game all season. During that game they would criticize umpires and the coaches.

No one offered to help all season except two team mothers who helped arrange for rides and watch the kids. Mrs. Pettit handled both the coaching and managerial duties.

"APATHY AMONG the parents is pathetic," said Mrs. Terry Lifton of West Bloomfield, a team mother. "Half of the games the parents don't even show up. They treat it just like a baby sitting service. They drop off

their kids and two hours later they pick them up."

"Once they showed up," Mrs. Lifton said, "they decided they knew more than the coach. If they could have helped the kids at all they would have been helping the whole season, not going after the coach."

"There were parents who knew the game would end by 5 p.m., but we would have to sit around for 45 minutes waiting for them to pick up their kids. Unfortunately, in this day and age, you don't leave a child unattended at a field."

Mrs. Lifton added that the coaches do the best job possible. She said that the league does not do enough to instruct coaches.

"That's why I've never coached," Mrs. Lifton said. "It's not fair to the girls because I don't know enough about the game. Too many coaches are taking on the job and not giving the girls all they should know."

Officials in both youth baseball and soccer leagues have complained this summer about lack of parental involvement.

MRS. NANCY VANGILDER has two daughters playing softball in NFNB. One plays on Mrs. Pettit's team. Mrs. Vangilder is a team mother for another team.

"There's a lot of emotion among parents," Mrs. Vangilder said. "That's

typical of any little league, not just North Farmington West Bloomfield. I attended the games. I have no complaints about the organization, management or coaching."

"The only problem," Mrs. Vangilder said, "is that it becomes rather cliquish. Even though there is an attempt to fairly distribute the players on each team, sometimes it becomes lopsided."

Team manager and coach Mrs. Pettit played junior softball herself. When her daughter began playing, it seemed natural for her to become involved as a coach. She may not coach again after this year.

"The thing which really bothered me," Mrs. Pettit said, "is you would look at 15 little girls who all want to play a certain position. I want to let them play too. I can't let them play there every time. I would do what I thought was best and hear some parent on the sideline saying, 'What's the matter with that manager, putting that girl on second base?' If I have five girls who want to play second base, I'll give them all an equal chance."

"The kids know what's fair," Mrs. Pettit said. "They don't get upset. If they say something to me it's because the parents prompt it."

Youth cites parents as problem

OPEN LETTER TO A PARENT FROM A LITTLE LEAGUE MANAGER

I had 15 softball games and 16 practices this season. You are the parent who came to only one of those games. Oh, I know it was you. I heard you. You were the one who thought the outfielder should be playing closer to the infield. Before I even met your child you called me to complain that you had six children of your own to drive to different activities and why did I make it so difficult for you by having so many practices?

Remember when you asked me to take your child to some of the games because you weren't able? I at least hoped you would have her ready on time when I picked her up. You made me 10 minutes late for the game and the other parents were angry with me for the delay in starting the game.

I asked you to tell me

when your child would be unable to make a game but I guess you were too busy. But that's OK. I was at home working on the game rotation, carefully choosing each player for her position, making sure she wouldn't have to sit out too often. When game time arrived the rotation was useless because you didn't bother to inform me. I kept believing in you though, and never gave up trying to play the girls fairly.

YOU WERE THE parent who screamed at the opposing team, criticized the umpire and just couldn't figure out why I placed my girls in the batting lineup as I did. Most of all I appreciated your concern when you approached me during a game and asked, "May I make a suggestion?"

For the 14 games you didn't attend, there was usually another parent to take your place.

Finally, after the last game, you picked up your child and the two of you drove off and as I stood there watching you I thought, "They didn't even say 'good-bye.'"

I know you feel you can do the job more effectively, so I am stepping aside so that you can manage a team next year.

To help you get started, I'll give you an idea of what to expect: 150 hours of hard work without monetary compensation broken down that would be approximately 50 hours actual game time, 30 hours of practices, 5-10 hours of meetings with league commissioners and four hours of meetings learning first aid and softball strategy.

You must learn the current season's rules because what applied last year doesn't necessarily apply the following year. You must be prepared because some parent invariably will know more than you. After all, they only have to watch one thing while you must

have your eyes in all directions at once, whether it be softball strategy, making sure the batter is wearing a helmet, being careful a batter in the dugout doesn't hit another player with her bat, etc.

YOU MUST spend endless hours going over the rule book, interpreting its jargon and making sure the local league's rules do not conflict with the official rule book.

You will need a

dependable coach, team mother and scorekeeper. Tell them they will all play an integral part in the team's success and must be willing to put in a great deal of their time.

Expect three to four telephone calls from a team member every day there is a game. Some need a ride (from you) and some forget where the game will be.

You must be prepared to pick up equipment and uniforms, distribute the uniforms and be respon-

sible for their return at the season's end.

Make up a team roster. Set aside time for team pictures.

Expect the unexpected. Expect criticism from parents and your own coaches—but be ready to tell them, "If you think you can do it better, take over." After that they won't say anything.

Pam Pettit Softball Manager

P.S. Letter to kids: You make it all worth it.

CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS NOTICE

The City of Farmington Hills will hold a Public Hearing August 14, 1978 at 7:00 o'clock P.M., at the City Administration Building in the Council Chambers at 3155 Eleven Mile Road, Farmington Hills, Michigan, to discuss the Housing Assistance Plan pursuant to the Community Development Block Grant Program. Comments from the Public will be welcome.

FLOYD A. CAIRNS, City Clerk

Published August 3 and 10, 1978

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Specific details about the registration fee and the day's program may be obtained by contacting Ken Pauley at 755-0413.

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