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POSTED ON [MARCH 3, 2022](#) **BY** [RACHEL PFEIFFER](#)

I-5 Softball's Growth and Development Mindset Yields Success

by Rachel Pfeiffer – Fastpitch Network

[I-5 Softball](#) is a young organization, but it has quickly grown in size and competitiveness. I-5 will have its first set of alumni soon, with several players already committed to colleges. Coach Jared Snyder believes the organization's commitment to the players is one reason they've had success.

"We don't rush out to find the next best player. We develop the players we have to make them as great as we can make them," Coach Snyder said. "We're very loyal to the families and the girls that commit to us."



This mindset helps teams come together, and catcher [Addison Snyder](#), a [Cal State Fullerton](#) commit, said that the relationships developed because of this commitment motivate the players.

“The majority of the teammates are the same from what we had in the start. Being with them for so many years, you want to work hard for them,” she said.

I-5 now has 14 teams ranging from 10U to 18U. They focus on developing players in the five skill areas that scouts and schools evaluate: speed, arm strength, fielding ability, hitting for average and hitting for power.

Coaches are essential to player development, and I-5 boasts qualified coaches, with several former professional players on staff. Coach Snyder explained that coaches ultimately join the organization because they want to help the players succeed. Having coaches with this goal helps foster the encouraging, growth-minded culture that catcher [Trinity Estrada](#), a [Northern Illinois](#) commit, appreciates so much about I-5.

“Before coming to I-5, I had stepped back from playing because I was very discouraged by my coaches and by a few of my teammates on my previous team,” Estrada said. “I-5 Softball was just such a caring environment. They really worked to build up my confidence and to help me be the player that they know I can be.”



I-5 Softball Team Photo

This encouraging environment is also a hard-working one. Teams practice throughout the week, which teaches them both the softball skills and time management skills they'll need to be successful in college. I-5 players embrace these lessons, and Addison Snyder believes she and her teammates are better for it.

"I-5 helped me develop as a player by the work ethic that we all put into it. Everyone puts in 100% effort at every practice," she said.

In addition to having coaches who are excellent teachers, I-5 encourages the players to become teachers and mentor one another. Joint practices with players of different ages give the older players a chance to help younger players and see how much those young players look up to them. These teaching and communication skills are ones Coach Snyder believes will help them develop as leaders.

"I-5 has really taught me to be a leader and to express my will and want to win to lead my team to success," Estrada said.

Of the softball and life skills taught at I-5, Coach Snyder believes respect is central.



I-5 Softball

“We want to make sure our girls know when they go into life, this is how they should be treated, with respect and dignity,” he said. “It’s a big thing for our organization, and I think that it carries over to how hard our girls work and play for us because they know they’re respected and that we’re going to hold them accountable.”

In addition to developing players’ softball and life skills, I-5 helps them reach the dream of playing at the college level by getting them in front of college scouts and helping them understand what schools could potentially be good fits for them.

“We tell our girls, ‘Don’t pick a school because the hat is somebody everybody recognizes, pick the school that you can go play for four years. There are all kinds of divisions that you can be successful at academically and athletically,’” Coach Snyder said.

Much of I-5’s growth and success can be attributed to the retention and development of players and the hard work put in by players and coaches alike. However, Coach Snyder recognizes that all of this only works because of the players’ families.

“As coaches, we can develop girls, but the biggest thing is that families truly dedicate themselves to us, believe in what we’re teaching and trust us to develop

their daughters into both great softball players and great human beings,” he said. “Without that family aspect of our organization, it’s just another organization.”

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