

Mitch Alexander's SOFTBALL ACADEMY

10 Holiday Gift Ideas for Youth Softball Players

Well it's that time of the year again! Fall ball is officially over in the northern parts of the country and teams are starting their indoor workouts. I get lots of emails and requests to recommend a special gift for youth softball players. The following are my top ten gift ideas. They may not be the typical gifts you might expect!

GIFT #1 – PRIVATE LESSONS - \$100 or less -

Buy that special softball player a private lesson or series of lessons with a professional trainer or coach. Team coaches can't spend enough individual time with each player to perfect their play. Private instruction can be for fielding (if the player normally plays first base, get a private lesson for that position or for a position they are interested in but don't normally play!), batting, or agility. Even if the player is highly skilled, having another coach's input is invaluable.

GIFT #2 – VIDEO ANALYSIS - \$50 – Have your player's pitching motion or batting swing analyzed. You can save money by taking the video yourself and sending it

to an expert for frame by frame analysis. For \$50 more, you can get comparisons to Olympic or professional players! One resource is www.virtualsoftballacademy.com.

GIFT #3 – TEAM USA TRAINING DVD's – \$35 -

The ASA in concert with Team USA created a series of training DVD's that offer some great instruction. They have disks for pitching, catching, hitting, slapping and bunting. They sell the disks individually for \$35 or in a set (minus the catching disk) for \$140.00. Many of the segments are taught by Coach Mike Candrea, Coach Ken Eriksen, and Cat Osterman. Go to www.usasoftball.com.

GIFT #4 – POCKET RADAR - \$200 – This compact yet accurate radar gun is great to work on speed building. Whether it's for a pitcher working on fastball speed, a batter concerned about bat speed, or outfielders trying to make that long throw in to the plate, this radar gun makes a great gift for any softball player. Go to www.pocketradar.com, available at many online retailers.

GIFT #5 – J-BANDS - \$35 – This tube-based exercise program provides 10 exercises to strengthen the rotator cuff muscle group which are heavily used by all softball players. They have two models one for older youth players and adults, and a junior model for starting players. This exerciser helps to build the support muscles that stabilize the shoulder and allow the player to build serious arm strength for throwing and pitching. Go to www.jaegersports.com, available at many online retailers.

GIFT #6 – BALL ON STICK - \$15 – This is exactly what it sounds like – a 12” softball mounted on the end of a stick, which is used as a handle. This is a tool for softball pitchers and helps youth pitchers develop spin on their ball so they understand what it feels like to add spin to their pitches. This simple tool is so important! Go to www.softballpitchingtools.com.

GIFT #7 – DeMARINI VENDETTA C6 - \$120 – Forget the CF5 or Xeno for younger players. The Vendetta C6 takes the best of the CF5, a composite barrel and mates it with a hybrid handle that results in a -12 drop that is hot right out of the wrapper. Bat speed is so important and younger players often are not strong enough to get the bat around fast

enough when going up against fast pitchers. This bat, in a 30” length is a mere 18 ounces! It swings fast yet has the performance of the CF5. One note, the 2012 model currently out does not have the new USSSA stamp for use in 2013. Go to www.demarini.com, available at many online retailers.

GIFT #8 – SOFTBALL BEST OF THE BEST AUTOGRAPHED BOOK - \$30 – This is a great book about the top Fastpitch players and coaches in the history of women’s softball and it’s autographed by one of the best, Monica Abbott. It includes sections by Coach Candrea and Dot Richardson and has both color and black and white photos. Go to www.monicaabbott.net.

GIFT #9 – JUGS SMALL BALL PITCHING MACHINE - \$200 – This small pitching machine is great for indoor workouts and does not require a batting cage. It can be used in garages and basements too. It fires small 5” balls at speed of up to 75mph. If you couple this with a small stick bat it makes for a great batting workout. Also get a bucket of yellow 5” balls! Go to www.jugssports.com, available at many online retailers.

GIFT #10 – BOWNET SOFT TOSS NET - \$150 – Every softball player needs a net to practice with! Pitchers can build endurance

pitching into a net. Players can practice hitting into the net while having a family member or friend soft toss the ball. The net can also be used to build arm strength by throwing the ball overhand

into the net. This net is 7ft x 7ft when fully assembled, which only takes 2 minutes! Go to www.bownet.net, available at many online retailers.

Mitch Alexander is the CIO for a major electronics company and coaches both Little League and Travel softball teams and is currently completing his PhD. He is a certified SUNY, ASA, and Double Goal Coach. His wife, Marie was one of the first female student athletes in the country to play Little League softball after Title IX was passed and played in the first Little League Softball World Series. Over the years, both have managed teams together and helped spark a love for softball in their student athletes. In his spare time, Mitch designs websites for fastpitch teams and businesses and can be reached at mitchalexander@optonline.net



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Every year thousands of players create videos to show their softball skills to college coaches. Some hope to get a scholarship and others just hope to get a spot on a college team's roster. Since so many coaches watch our shows, visit our website, and download our podcasts I thought this would be a great resource for young players.