



## Serious Softball

**It's a sunny April weekend** and immunologist Richard Locksley is drilling a cluster of teenage girls: “Hard throws please, hard throws. Way to stay down. Throw it hard over the top, don’t sling it from the side.”

Locksley coaches a softball team that includes his twin 13-year-old daughters, Morgan and Sydney. In between jostling and laughing, the players respond to his near-constant chatter during an infield warm up. “Okay, everyone take an easy lap together,” says Locksley, an HHMI investigator at the University of California, San Francisco.

“If the girls are goofing around, throwing their mitts at each other, I know they’re ready for a game,” Locksley says. “It’s when they’re sitting too quietly or looking to me for what to do next, that I know that they’re too uptight about the game. Then it’s time to stop coaching, diffuse everything, and get them comfortable. Then they’ll do fine.”

Locksley hasn’t always been so clear about his coaching style. But after seven years, he’s come to realize that a well-coached team is one that knows the fundamentals of the game—and has fun. “At the beginning I took it much more seriously if we won or lost. Now I’ve let that go a little bit.”

Maybe a little, but daughter Sydney says he still takes it seriously enough to review the game during the car ride

home. And Morgan smiles: “Sometimes he gets mad when we forget his signs; he thinks they have to be all complicated so the other team can’t figure them out.”

When the twins started playing soccer and softball as young kids, Locksley, who played competitive baseball and soccer through college, was content to help the girls’ soccer coach and watch softball from the sidelines. But after one season, that changed. Their first softball coach pitched to the girls with a baseball-style overhand, instead of using the underhand style required in softball. “It bugged me that someone wouldn’t take the game seriously enough to even learn how to throw the ball right to the girls.”

So he took a couple of coaching clinics led by a former U.S. Olympic softball coach. And when he registered the girls for softball the next spring, he signed on as coach.

Before long, his team was learning the basics and doing pretty well. Many of the same girls come back each year—and they continue to win. In 2007, Locksley became the first softball coach to win the San Francisco Little League’s Best Coach of the Year Award.

Next spring, the girls will have to choose whether to switch to their high school team or keep playing with their dad as coach. When the inevitable happens and they move on, Locksley says he’ll miss his time with them. “It is so fun working with all these girls—not just my daughters—watching them develop, seeing how happy they are when they win, how collected they are when they lose.”

Right now, however, all three Locksleys are focused on what’s happening on Ketcham field. In the bottom of the third, Morgan hits a long fly ball to right field for a grand slam. As she rounds second base, Locksley hollers from his third-base coaching position “Morgan, get on your horse!” The SF Angels, as Locksley’s team is called, won the game, and they finished the season undefeated. —*Rabiya Tuma*

