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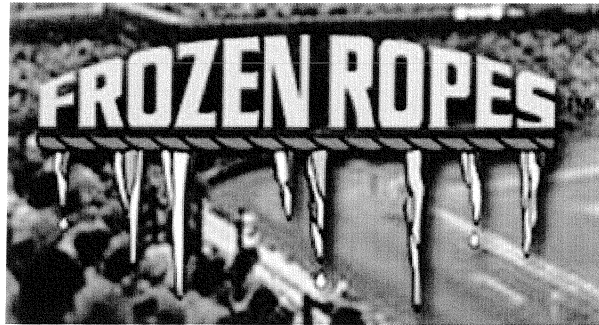
Softball, baseball players hit line drives with Frozen Ropes

By Travis Summers, McKinney Courier-Gazette

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There isn't much to look at after driving past the housing developments on County Road 161. There are fences separating the unpaved road from the fields of agriculture and cattle that populate the area.

But once the road forks into either CR 124 or 161, one can begin to see the multiple light posts hovering above the trees and over the 28 acres of baseball and softball fields at the Triple Creek Complex.



Past the ball fields rests the Frozen Ropes baseball and softball facility. After almost four years and two different homes, Frozen Ropes has set up shop in McKinney, all with the hopes of providing the necessary resources for building better ballplayers.

"We were built as an instructional service that can serve any age," said Chris Anderson, one of the founding partners of Frozen Ropes. "We start as early as 3- and 5-year olds. We've got professional ball players like Tori Hunter and Craig Monroe who come here in the offseason. One of our motto's here is 'Preschool to the Pros,' as far as what we have programs for."

No matter what area of your game needs work, Frozen Ropes has a training regimen that can help improve performance.

Frozen Ropes is a national company that Anderson and business partner Danny Florence have brought to McKinney. While technically a franchise, Anderson looks at McKinney's facility as a different animal to its company siblings.

"We offer a completely different experience than the other Frozen Ropes training centers," Anderson said. "If you were trained here and then went to the Frozen Ropes in Rockwall, I don't think you would really see too many similarities."

The McKinney training center has eight softball and as many as 12 baseball instructors working at the complex.

"Right now, we have five instructors that play minor league baseball, so our staff is down to seven," Anderson said. "But in the offseason, when most players are looking for that edge in the spring, we have 12 on staff."

The crown jewel of training devices at Frozen Ropes has to be the two video batting cages. Instead of the usual machine, the video batting cages have video images of a pitcher projected into a screen that hangs just in front of the machine. A hole is cut at the release point for both the machine and pitcher's image allowing the batter to emulate the

surroundings of facing live pitching.

"It's much more realistic than just hitting against a machine," Anderson said. "It gives the hitter a better sense of timing which is something that isn't worked on very much as far as hitting instruction."

The primary video batting cage utilizes a machine that has the ability to throw a variety of pitches. From curve balls to sliders to sinkers, the machine can simulate the pitch selection of any opposing pitcher.

While the other video batting cage doesn't have a machine that throws a different pitch types, it does offer something rarer. It is equipped with a softball pitching machine and a softball pitcher's video.

"The softball machine has been huge for us," Anderson said. "It's the only one I know of around this area. The way the popularity of softball has grown in this area has only made it even more important for the development of players."

It doesn't hurt that the video machines are indoors and the recent weather has forced many baseball teams to find cover.

The Frozen Ropes facility has a total of nine batting cages and four bullpen pitching stations; all of which have roofs over them.

But Frozen Ropes isn't just about improving batting and pitching technique. The company also hosts camps and fields select teams.

The Titans have become the official select program to come out of the facility. There are 15 different Titan teams separated by age group, with the U-12 and U-14 Titans able to participate in United States Super Series Association state championships.

Frozen Ropes has begun a new partnership with the AXE Fast-pitch Softball Club in Allen in an attempt to find a softball equivalent to the Titans.

"Softball is a tough area to break into because a lot of the coaches rely on reputation as the deciding factor in where to train their players," Anderson said. "We've always been a baseball/softball facility, but Danny Florence and I don't have the traditional softball background. I think a lot of people were a little timid or passive about jumping in."

Anderson believes the resources available at Frozen Ropes and the new partnership with AXE will help solidify the program's reputation among the softball community in North Texas, even though they don't likely need it.

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