

Mahwah Youth Recreation Baseball

www.mahwahyouthbaseball.org.

The goal of the Mahwah Youth Baseball Recreation program is to teach kids how to play baseball in an environment that emphasizes fundamentals of the game, good sportsmanship and fun. Winning and losing are part of the game, but should never be the focus. The program is designed to promote and maintain baseball as a sport to be enjoyed in a safe and positive atmosphere.

Registration begins in late January and is done online at www.mahwahyouthsports.org, the Web site of the Mahwah Youth Sports Boosters (TMYSB). Check the Web site for registration cutoff dates. While the program strives to accept all registrants, late registrations create problems in forming appropriate sized teams that are all competitive. For this reason, a cutoff date has been established after which players are placed on a waiting list. Registrants from this waiting list are accepted as openings occur on a first-come, first-served basis.

Leagues

The recreation program is open to the children of Mahwah in kindergarten to eighth grade. The program is divided into leagues based on a child's school grade during the season. Each division is governed by a league director. The job of the league director varies - depending on division - but basically entails assigning coaches and distributing practice and game schedules and rules to coaches. League directors also distribute uniforms and equipment to the coaches and communicate important dates throughout the season. In divisions for older children, the league directors coordinate a draft process to select teams, compile season standings and coordinate post-season tournaments. In divisions for younger players, the league directors assemble the teams from the registered players. Directors also work with coaches to reschedule make-up games when necessary.

The **Tee-Ball** division is a co-ed division for children in kindergarten. Scores aren't kept so, hence, wins and losses aren't recorded. Tee-Ball games are played at Continental Soldiers Field. For the documented rules used in this league, see the baseball Web site under the Rec Leagues page.

The **Instructional** league is for children in first grade. Coaches pitch in the Instructional division. Scores aren't kept so, hence, wins and losses aren't recorded. Games are played at fields behind the Betsy Ross and George Washington schools. Some games also are played at Continental Soldiers Field. For the documented rules used in this league, see the baseball Web site under the Rec Leagues page.

The **Pee Wee** division, in which second graders participate, also has coaches pitching to the batters, but as the season progresses players begin to pitch to batters. The objective of this league is to get players comfortable with pitching off a mound and to prepare the players for the more traditional baseball rules used in the divisions for older kids. Scores aren't kept so, hence, wins and losses aren't recorded. Games are played at fields behind

the Betsy Ross and George Washington schools. Some games also are played at Continental Soldiers Field. For the documented rules used in this league, see the baseball Web site under the Rec Leagues page.

The **Minors** division is for third and fourth graders. It is the first league in which the more traditional baseball rules are used, scores are kept, standings are maintained and umpires govern the action on the field. It's also the first recreation league in which a **draft** is conducted. Children in the division attend an **assessment** in early March to give coaches a chance to evaluate the skill level of players and help them prepare for the draft. Games are six innings. A non-seeded tournament is played at the end of the regular season. Children in the Minors division play on a field with a pitching mound 46 feet from home plate and base paths of 65 feet. Games in the Minors division are played at Riverside Park, Sam Braen field and Continental Soldiers Field. For the documented rules used in this league, see the baseball Web site under the Rec Leagues page.

The **Majors** division is for fifth and sixth graders. There is no assessment in this division. A draft is held in March. A more traditional playoff tournament follows the conclusion of the regular season and is based on regular-season standings. Games are six innings. The pitcher's mound in the Majors division is 50 feet from home plate and the base paths are 70 feet apart. Games are played at fields at Fardale, Commodore Perry and Continental Soldiers Field. For the documented rules used in this league, see the baseball Web site under the Rec Leagues page.

The **Koufax** division is for seventh and eighth graders. A draft is conducted prior to the start of the regular season. A traditional playoff tournament is played at the conclusion of the regular season. Early in the season weeknight games are six innings, seven innings on weekends. When daylight savings time is instituted, games are seven innings both during the week and on weekends. The pitcher's mound to home plate is 60 feet and the base paths are 90 feet in length. Games in the Koufax division are played at Airmont Field, Commodore Perry and Continental Soldiers. For the documented rules used in this league, see the baseball Web site under the Rec Leagues page.

As noted, the recreation leagues are separated by grade. Mahwah Youth Baseball believes that using grades as a distinction in placing players in leagues enhances the enjoyment and safety of the game. Therefore, grade separation by league is strictly enforced.

Safety

Mahwah Youth Baseball has implemented various measures to enhance the safety conditions for the players. Each coach is required to attend the Rutgers S.A.F.E.T.Y. course for important information on coaching youth players. In addition, each league plays with recommended reduced injury factor (RIF) level baseballs to soften the impact if players are struck by the ball. Most leagues also have rules about bats (see the rules on the baseball Web site for each respective league). Further, field size increases as players get older so players aren't playing on fields that could be too small for them. Lastly, each field equipment box has first-aid kits and ice packs in emergency situations.

If a player does get injured during a recreation or travel baseball game, an accident report should be completed. Contact the Mahwah Youth Baseball Recreation Director or Travel Director for further information.

Coach Selection Process

Coaches in the recreation program are selected based on Appendix III in the bylaws of TMYSB. The bylaws state that if there are more head coaching applicants than there are teams/head coaching positions than the Baseball Commissioner can select head coaches based on these criteria:

- At the Baseball Commissioner's discretion, a head coach applicant may be denied because of a previous TMYSB "warning" or suspension for inappropriate conduct.
- The Commissioner or the baseball group can select certain individuals to serve as a head coach if it's determined that it is in the best interest of the baseball players. Individuals also can be removed from consideration if it's determined the individual doesn't possess the knowledge or skills to coach the youth athletes at a satisfactory level.
- If there are still more head coach applicants than head coaching positions available, head coaches then shall be selected in the order of these criteria:
 - Head coach applicants that are head coaches in another division that season shall be removed from consideration.
 - Head coaches in the same division in that sport the previous year get first priority.
 - Qualified assistant coaches in the same division in that sport the previous year get second priority.
 - Head coaches in another division in that sport the previous year get third priority.
 - Qualified assistant coaches in another division of that sport the previous year get fourth priority.
- If all applicants meeting the criteria are named as head coaches and there still remain more head coaching applicants than teams still in need of a head coach, then the final head coaches will be selected in a random process similar to picking names out of a hat.

Qualified assistant coaches are those that actively and effectively participated in team practices and games and have demonstrated they possess the minimum knowledge or qualifications to teach the skills of youth baseball. Those making this evaluation will take into consideration the head coach's opinion of his/her assistant coach the prior season.

All coaches are required to sign a Coaches' Code of Conduct prior to the start of the season.

Rutgers S.A.F.E.T.Y. training & Background Checks

To coach a recreation sport in Mahwah, all coaches must attend a Rutgers S.A.F.E.T.Y. (Sports Awareness for Educating Today's Youth) course. The course helps coaches minimize the risk of injury to young athletes, provides information on fundamental coaching concepts and provides partial protection from civil lawsuits. All recreation and travel coaches must possess a Rutgers S.A.F.E.T.Y. Clinic Certification Card. Courses sponsored by TMYSB are free and are held in Mahwah throughout the year. Other dates and locations can be found at www.youthsports.rutgers.edu.

Coaching candidates also are subject to a background check. Check www.mahwahyouthsports.org for the next scheduled dates for the S.A.F.E.T.Y. course and for the background checks.

Coaching Clinics

Prior to the season, usually in March, clinics are held to provide instruction to the recreation and travel league coaches. The clinics provide coaches with drills and techniques that can be used to teach youth baseball players. Refer to the Clinics page on the baseball Web site for dates, times and places of these clinics.

Team Selection

For the Tee-Ball, Instructional and Pee Wee leagues, teams are assembled randomly. Since wins, losses and standings aren't recorded at these levels, the league directors review requests from parents to pair players together as long as teams don't exceed a reasonable number of players. During the registration process, parents can email requests to the respective league director to pair players on the same team. See the baseball Web site under Contacts to find the email address of the appropriate league director.

For the Minors, Majors and Koufax leagues, a draft is held so coaches can select players in a manner that will allow for all teams to be competitive. This is done since wins, losses and league standings are recorded for these leagues.

Draft Process

To distribute the players equitably, two coaches whose children are projected to be first-round draft picks (a 50% chance or better as determined by the Baseball Commissioner or the baseball group) can't team up to coach together. The Baseball Commissioner will consult with the respective travel coaches prior to the draft to help determine whether or not two coaches should be allowed to coach together. The Commissioner, or designates, also may preselect drafting positions of teams based on the playing quality of the coaches' children to balance the teams as evenly as possible. The remaining draft order also may be done prior to draft day.

If a coach's child is determined to be one of the better players in the draft and the

assistant coach's child is projected to be the best player in the second round, then the Baseball Commissioner may slot that team so that it picks last in the third round. The Commissioner can't remove a team's draft pick in a given round or do further juggling of draft picks.

Each coach's child will be slotted into a certain round in the draft by the Baseball Commissioner, or designates, before the draft begins.

Recreation teams are allowed only two coaches assigned per team prior to the draft.

Field maintenance and training

The fields are prepared and maintained by the Township of Mahwah Department of Public Works (DPW). Through an agreement with the town, coaches aren't permitted to work on the fields unless they attend a field certification course conducted by the DPW and arranged through Mahwah Youth Baseball. The classes instruct coaches on how to properly address field issues without causing further damage to the fields. Coaches learn, among other things, how to maintain a field, prepare a field after rain and how to use lining equipment. Coaches who attend a class are considered "certified" and are given a key to the field maintenance sheds at fields used by the Minors, Majors and Koufax divisions. Also, certified coaches are given preference for future coaching opportunities. Coaches who aren't certified aren't allowed to work on the field without a certified coach being present.

Clinics

A baseball and softball clinic is held at Continental Soldiers Field during the Mahwah public schools Spring Break week. This clinic is coordinated by the TMYSB and registration is conducted through the TMYSB online registration process. There is a fee for the clinic.

Various pitching and hitting clinics are conducted by volunteer coaches from Mahwah prior to and throughout the baseball season either indoors or at the batting cages at Sam Braen field. The clinics are open to players of all ages. Players are separated by age group. Refer to the Clinics page on the baseball Web site for dates, times and places of these clinics.

Parade

A spring sports parade is held the first Saturday of May. The parade is coordinated by the Township of Mahwah Recreation Department. It begins at 9:30 AM and starts at Betsy Ross School and ends at Commodore Perry Field. Players and coaches in the Tee-Ball, Instructional and Pee Wee divisions participate in the parade along with representatives from other spring sports. See the township of Mahwah Web site (www.mahwahtwp.org) for more information.

Photo Day

Individual and recreation team photos are taken in May at Continental Soldiers Field. Various photo packages are available for purchase. Further information about photo day can be obtained from the recreation coaches.

Complaint Process

Despite the best of intentions in establishing and communicating the programs rules and guidelines, from time to time, infractions of league rules could occur, or coaches, parents or players may exhibit behavior contrary to the objectives of the Mahwah baseball program. In these unusual instances, complaints among players or parents and coaches should be made to the Mahwah Youth Baseball Recreation Director. If the issue isn't resolved to the satisfaction of either party, the complaint can be referred to the Baseball Commissioner or Spring Sports Agent from the TMYSB. The contact information of the Baseball Commissioner, the Baseball Recreation Director and Spring Sports Agent can be found at www.mahwahyouthsports.org or the baseball Web site at www.mahwahyouthbaseball.org.

Volunteers

Volunteers are welcome. There is always a lot to accomplish and more people are needed. Please contact the Baseball Commissioner if you are interested in participating in the administration of the Mahwah baseball program.

Feedback

Room for improvement always exists and we welcome your comments to make the experience more beneficial for players, coaches and parents. Look for the feedback form available under Forms on the baseball Web site.