



## Hillsborough Youth Athletic Association

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### Rookie League Local Rules and Playing Philosophy

The primary goal of the Rookie League is to continue teaching baseball fundamentals and building player confidence. Rookie League is a division for 7- and 8-year-olds as determined by established age scales utilizing a pitching machine. The pitching machine is used to control pitches and increase the amount of action at the plate and on the field. Fear of being hit by a pitch is diminished, making the game safer and improving the playing confidence and ability of all participants. Use of the machine removes the boredom, which is often the result of either overpowering or inadequate pitching. The game is played on a 60-foot diamond, 46 foot pitching mound, and all games are called by official umpires.

The following local rules apply to the HYAA Rookie Division. Any rule, topic or situation not specifically covered in this document will automatically defer to the Cal Ripken / Babe Ruth Baseball rule book. The league commissioner will have final ruling on any disputes.

#### **Uniform / Protective Gear**

1. Playing uniform is defined as the HYAA team jersey, pant, and hat. Jerseys must be tucked in, and hats facing forward. Uniform customization is prohibited except for a player's first name, last name or number embroidered (1/2" tall maximum) on their hat only.
2. Players must be in full uniform when playing in a league game. (Regular or Post-Season). Uniforms are not required for practice.
3. No player will be allowed to wear jewelry during practices or games.
4. It is strongly recommended that all male players wear a protective cup for both practices and games.
5. All male players crouching in the catcher's position are required to wear a protective cup.
6. The catcher is required to wear all protective gear, including leg guards, chest protector, and catcher helmet with throat guard.
7. The catcher is not required to use a catcher's glove.
8. All OFFENSIVE players are required to wear batting helmets when anywhere in the field of play or in the batting cage – runners should not remove their helmet until in the dugout.

#### **Equipment**

1. HYAA uses the spring loaded "Louisville Slugger" pitching machine for league play. The pitching machine will be placed with the spikes behind the pitching rubber which is 46ft from the back of home plate with the speed setting adjusted to 36-38 mph on the Louisville Slugger machine. The pitching machine will be sited in to deliver the ball across the middle of home plate in a youth player's strike zone.
2. The batting cages are for HYAA use only. Only one player and one coach will be allowed in the batting cage. Batting cages will be vacant during games.
3. Bat Rules
  - a. The bat may not exceed 33" in length, and the bat barrel may not exceed 2 3/8" in diameter. Only 2 5/8" maximum barrel non-wood bats marked USA Baseball will be allowed. Wood 2 1/4" barrel bats are allowed.
  - b. Only approved bats should be present in the dugout.
  - c. If a player is caught using a non-approved bat before they bat, the bat will be immediately removed from the game. d. If a player is caught using a non-approved bat during or after their at-bat, the batter will be called out, and any runners that advanced during the at-bat will return to the bases they occupied at the beginning of the at-bat. The bat will be immediately removed from the game.

#### **Pre-Game**

1. Coaches from both teams are responsible for site preparation on game days. This includes repairing any damage caused by water, gathering

player and game equipment as well as repairing/removing safety issues (fence tears/rocks/etc...). The Home team is responsible for lining the infield to specification prior to game play.

2. Players are not permitted on the field until their coach arrives and it's time for warmups. Only players, coaches, and adult volunteers are permitted in the dugout.
3. Pre-game warm up will be conducted in the outfield around assigned dugout. No batting practice in the batting cages or fielding practice on the infield is allowed prior to games.
4. No food, candy, snacks or chewing gum is allowed in the dugout or on the field.
5. Coaches must agree on pitching machine setup to reduce machine adjustments during gameplay.
6. Coaches must provide their batting order to the opposing team at least 5 minutes before game time. A team's batting order will consist of every player that is on the roster and at the game.
7. Games must start on time.
8. Each team must keep a scorebook.
9. For games played on Collins Concession field, the home team will be responsible for running the concession stand. Coaches will assign a parent volunteer to run the concession stand prior to the start of the game. No kids under 14 are allowed in the concession stand without adult supervision or commissioner approval.
10. A team may begin a game with a minimum of 7 players in uniform. If 7 players are not available at game time then that team must forfeit. If there is a forfeit the teams can play a scrimmage, however only players from the teams scheduled to play can participate. Players arriving late will be added to the bottom of the batting order immediately upon arriving no matter the point of the game. There is no "OUT" penalty for playing with 7, 8 or 9 players.
11. Practices are scheduled by the commissioner only. There will be no extra team practices allowed. Rained out practices can be rescheduled based on field availability and commissioner approval.

### **General Game Play**

1. Before the first pitch is released, coaches will agree on the game start time and the home team scorekeeper will record it. The game can be delayed or suspended due to darkness or weather conditions if the minimum number of innings have not been met. On the rescheduled game date, the game will resume where play left off, including outs already recorded, runners on base, and with the batter who was at bat when the game was called.
2. Game duration will be a minimum of 4 innings and a maximum of 6 innings. Regular season games (weekend or weeknight) cannot commence a new inning after 90 minutes as long as 4 innings have been completed. A new inning is considered "started" at the same instant that the 3rd out of the previous inning is recorded. The home team shall be entitled to complete any inning started unless leading into the bottom half of the final inning. Otherwise, the game will be called due to time limitations.
3. In case of rain, a game will be complete if four innings have been completed. Rained out games will be played as specified by the league commissioner. The game times will take the place of the first practice and take as many time slots as needed to play all rained out games from the week.
4. The home team will provide new baseballs for each game. Both teams will bat the same game ball during play. If a ball becomes unusable or is hit out of play a new ball can enter the game. If a new ball enters the game, the pitching coach for the batting team can request pitches to make sure the machine is aligned for the new ball.
5. Each team will be allowed one time out per inning with a time limit of one minute.
6. A seven run rule will be in effect for every inning. Play ends if one team is ahead by 15 runs after 4 innings, or by 10 runs after 5 innings.
7. Players must play a complete inning in the field before they can be substituted unless there is an injury.
8. Any player may reenter the game if the player being replaced has played a complete inning.
9. Players must walk behind the pitching machine when going from one side of the infield to the other.
10. Pitching machine: If a batted ball hits the pitching machine prior to a fielder touching the ball, the play will be called dead, and the batter will be awarded first base. Only forced runners advance. If a batted ball hits the pitching coach prior to a fielder touching the ball, the play will be called dead, the batter will receive a re-pitch and the pitch does not count against the batter. No runners may advance.

11. The adult coach volunteer operating the pitching machine is not allowed to interfere with the defensive teams' ability to play the ball. The adult must try to get out of the way of the defensive player, including line of sight and the throwing lane. If no attempt is made by the coach, then the batter will be called out and no runners may advance.
12. The transition between dirt and grass will be used for determining infield vs an outfield hit, and whether a player is in possession of the ball in the infield vs the outfield.

### **Offensive Game Play**

1. Offensive coaching will be limited to base coaches at first and third base.
2. A continuous batting order will be used. All players on the team roster will bat regardless of their play defensively. If a player is unable to continue playing in the game, their batting spot will be skipped without penalty.
3. The batter must have both feet in the batter's box when the ball is hit. If one foot is out of the box, the batter will be called out. 4. Any batter throwing a bat will receive a warning the first time. The second time the batter will be called out.
5. Each batter will receive 4 pitches or 3 strikes, whichever comes first – unless the third strike or fourth pitch is a fouled ball. The batter will then receive another pitch.
6. If a pitched ball is extremely high or low the coach of the batting team can request a "no pitch", and if granted by the defensive coach will not go against the batter's number of pitches.
7. No fake bunting or slash-bunt will be allowed. A player must bunt if he/she squares to bunt..
8. Base running rules:
  - b. Base runners can advance at their own peril on a ball hit into play. Time can only be called by the umpire once it is clear the defense has stopped all baserunners. Defensive players will not be granted a time-out unless the ball has left the playing field. Baserunners can be granted time once they have safely reached the base and all other baserunners are not advancing.
  - c. No lead offs are allowed. Base runners leaving before the ball is hit will be called out. Runners missing a base will be called out.
  - d. Sliding: Base runners must slide feet first on all close plays, except when running through first base. If in the umpire's opinion, if a player does not slide on a close play, the runner will be called out and the ball will be dead. A player is automatically out for sliding headfirst or for sliding into 1st base. A dive back into a base from overrunning a base is not considered a headfirst slide.
  - e. Base coaches cannot touch the base runners while the ball is in play. If the coach touches a runner, they are out. If this is the third out, any runs scored during this play don't count.
  - f. Any baserunner intentionally taking their helmet off will be called out.
9. The coach or adult volunteer of the batting team will operate the pitching machine.
10. The pitching coach must say "Ready", pause, "Pitch" prior to releasing the ball from the pitching machine. Pitching before the defense is ready will result in a "no pitch" and a warning from the volunteer umpire, ejection if continued.
11. The catcher must have a pinch runner if on base with 2 outs. The pinch runner will be the player who made the last out. If less than 2 outs, the catcher must run for him/herself.

### **Defensive Game Play**

1. Each player must play a minimum of 1 inning of defense in the infield. Players have a 2 inning maximum per position per game (Outfield counts as 4 positions: LF, LC, RC, and RF). No player can sit out a 2nd inning of defense until all players have sat out 1 inning of defense. Players can catch a maximum of 3 innings in each game. If the player's non-participation is a result of the manager's deliberate action, the manager will be suspended for one game. A second violation by the same manager will result in permanent suspension from managing or coaching in HYAA. If a coach feels a player's safety is at risk with the mandatory inning of infield play, a meeting between the coach, player parent, and commissioner is required to create an exception for that player.
2. The Defensive team is allowed 2 coaches on the field. The coaches must be in the grass in foul territory; one on the first base side, and one on the third base side. Defensive coaches are not permitted in fair territory.
3. No chatter will be allowed towards the batter at any time.

4. There will be NO infield fly rule.
5. Any ball hit out of play is live until the defensive player holds up their hands signaling the ball is out of play.
6. Each team can field ten players on defense. The tenth player will be placed in any position outside the infield. Only five players are allowed in the infield (plus the catcher).
7. If the team has 7 or 8 players, a catcher is not required. However, if the team has 9 or more players, then the catcher position must be filled with a fully equipped catcher behind home plate. No players will be permitted behind the plate unless they are seated behind the plate in full equipment.
8. There will be no defensive warm-ups between half innings.
9. Players in infield positions may not cross the plane of the pitching machine until the ball is batted.
10. The pitcher's position will be with 1 foot in the 12ft (6ft radius) circle surrounding the pitching machine. The player cannot be in front of the pitching machine until the ball is batted. The pitcher's circle is an established safe area in an attempt to prevent players from running into the pitching machine and possibly becoming injured. Defensive players may field a batted ball in the pitcher's circle.

### **Post-Game**

1. Visiting team is responsible for dragging the field after the game. Both teams are also responsible for cleaning the dugout and emptying the trash in the dumpster.
2. All coaches need to make certain that all facilities are clean and locked up before leaving.

### **Officiating / Sportsmanship**

1. All games will have one umpire. The umpire will stand in the field, not behind the plate. The umpire has authority over the field of play, and has authority to eject coaches, assistant coaches, players, and spectators at any time while at the field of play. The league commissioner or field representative may be consulted to interpret local rules; however, the umpire's ruling is final.
2. For games played without an umpire, defensive coaches will umpire the game while their team is playing defense. The defensive coach on the appropriate side of the field is responsible for the final call on a play in the field.
3. Only head coaches are allowed on the field to discuss any call with the umpire. If needed, scorekeepers, assistant coaches, and / or the league's nightly field supervisor may be called in. The umpire, commissioner and field supervisor have the authority to eject coaches, assistant coaches, players, and spectators at any time while at the field of play. Any person ejected must leave the premises immediately. The incident will be referred to HYAA Board of Directors for further action at the discretion of the Board up to and including expulsion from the league.
4. Any coach, player or spectator exhibiting unsportsmanlike behavior (verbal or physical), or throwing any piece of equipment in an unsportsmanlike manner while at the field of play will be ejected. The incident will be referred to HYAA Board of Directors for further action at the discretion of the Board up to and including expulsion from the league.

### **Weather Policy**

1. Coaches will decide the adverse weather policy for their own practices. For games, the coaches will communicate and let the commissioner know 2 hours before the game time, to allow adequate notification of parents.
2. When there is any lightning visible in the area, play will immediately stop and players will seek nearest shelter. After a minimum of 15 minutes from the last lightning strike, play may resume at the umpires' discretion, keeping safety of all the children at the highest priority.

### **Tournament (Spring Only)**

1. A pool play tournament will be held at the conclusion of the regular season. Pool play seeds for the post season tournament will be based on the draft order pulled at random at the pre-season coach's meeting. The pool play seeds shall be awarded in reverse of the draft order (1<sup>st</sup> to draft is last seed, last to draft is first seed). Upon completion of pool play, the top 2 teams from both pool A & B advance for semifinal game A1 vs B2, B1 vs A2. Winners play a championship game.
2. Pool play games will be played with time limit & slaughter rules in effect. Semifinals, finals, and world series will play, without a time limit, a regulation 6 inning game unless ended by slaughter rule, extended because of a tie score, or the home team is ahead leading into the bottom of the final inning.

3. Before the first pitch is released, coaches will agree on the game start time and the home team scorekeeper will record it. The game can be delayed or suspended due to darkness or weather conditions if the game duration has not reached the minimum of 4 innings (3 ½ if home team is ahead). On the rescheduled game date, the game will resume where play left off with remaining time limit left to play, including outs already recorded, runners on base, with the batter who was at bat when the game was called.
4. Each team will provide its own scorekeeper. The home team scorekeeper is the official scorekeeper for the game. Scorekeepers should confer between innings to make sure they have the same score. If they are different, scorekeepers must notify managers and home plate umpire before play resumes. The on-site field representative will stop game play until the discrepancy is resolved.
5. Managers are responsible to report the results of all tournament games to the commissioner at the conclusion of each game.
6. Penalty for not following rule 1 under defensive game play is forfeiture of the game.
7. If a team is ahead by 15 runs or more after 4 innings or 10 runs or more after 5 innings, the game is declared over. (Slaughter Rule)
8. A forfeited game results in a score of 5-0 for the winning team.
9. Determination of Pool Play Standings (Section 11.05 Playing Rules; Babe Ruth Official Playing Rules):
  - a. Win-Loss Record of Pool Play
  - b. Results of Head to Head Competition
  - c. Fewest Runs Allowed
  - d. Run Differential with a maximum of 10 per game
  - e. Coin Toss