

# Little Mountain Baseball

## Mini-Minor A House Rules

*NOTE: The Official Regulations and Playing Rules of the Instructional Divisions of Little League Canada will apply with the following modifications:*

### **Program Objectives:**

**Development of player skills and their understanding of the rules of baseball should be the primary objective of all levels of Little League baseball, but particularly the Mini Minor Divisions. Mini Minor A is intended to provide players with a gradual skill and competition progression from T-ball to Minors, while ensuring a fun playing environment for all children.**

**Although scores and standings are kept in Mini Minor A, winning should not be the primary goal for coaches in the Mini Minor A division.**

**During the regular season, the following rules are intended to be guidelines and do not need to be strictly adhered to, as long as the coaches from both teams agree. During playoffs, rules will be more strictly adhered to, keeping in mind overall program objectives.**

**IMPROVING BASEBALL SKILLS, HAVING FUN AND DEMONSTRATING SPORTSMANSHIP ARE MUCH MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE FINAL SCORE.**

Coaches from opposing teams should meet before every game to discuss rules, weather issues and set up of the pitching machine. Generally, the pitching machine should be set at a speed of 4 (the horizontal arm anchoring the spring). However, if coaches of both teams agree prior to the beginning of the game, the machine speed may be placed at a different setting. However, once the game has begun, no adjustments to the speed of the machine should be made. The operator may make adjustments for pitch height and side to side angle during the game.

### **FAIR PLAY RULES**

- Players should be rotated through all defensive fielding positions. During the regular season, players should not play more than one (1) inning of any game at the same position, and should spend approximately equal time in the infield and the outfield.
- Efforts should be made to ensure that all players play an approximately equal amount of time at each position during the course of the season.
- No player should sit on the bench twice until every other player has sat once. A player should still bat at their spot in the order regardless of whether he or she takes the field that inning or is sitting on the bench.
- Coaches may adjust rotations where a player's skill level would make it unsafe for him or her to play a particular position. However, this should not be used to create competitive advantage. Where possible, coaches should try to arrange rotations so that a player can be placed at a position without creating excessive safety risk. (For example, for a player that has difficulty catching, consider placing him or her at first base when a weaker thrower is positioned at shortstop.)

## GAME PLAY

### Defense

- There are a maximum of 6 infielders: pitcher, catcher, first base, second base, third base and shortstop. • Catchers must wear full gear when catching, including a protective cup or pelvic protector. • There should be a maximum of 4 outfielders unless both teams agree otherwise. (See Notes.) • Before each play is started, and until the ball has been hit:

- (i) Infielders (other than the pitcher and the catcher) should not be closer than 3 feet in front of the base (see Field Setup Rules).

- (ii) The pitcher must be beside or behind the pitching machine.

- (iii) Outfielders can be no closer than 30 feet behind the behind the baselines (see Field Setup Rules). •

Once a ball has been hit, fielders are free to move without regard to fielding depths.

- Fielders must keep the basepaths clear for baserunners unless (i) the fielder is in possession of the ball, or (ii) attempting to field a batted ball. (See Notes regarding “obstruction” and “interference.”)
- Fielders may NOT play balls within the dirt patch around the pitching machine, including balls in the air. Balls played within the dirt patch or the circled area will be deemed deadballs and the rules for batted balls that hit the machine/operator/bucket will be deemed to apply (see “Offense”).

### Offense

- Composite bats are NOT permitted. This includes hybrid composites where the handle is composite and the barrel is alloy (typically indicated by a rubber joiner in the middle of the skinny part of the barrel). This is a League mandated rule for all LMB lower divisions. If any player is found to be using a composite bat, that batter will be deemed to be out and all runners will be returned to the base they started from before that player batted. **To avoid issues, coaches from both teams should check each other’s bats at the time of the coaches meeting.**
- Thrown bats: Batters must drop their bats in a manner which does not endanger others. During the regular season, warnings should be given for thrown bats. However, if the batter continues to throw his/her bat, he/she should be called out. During the playoffs, after a thrown bat (umpire’s discretion), one warning will be given to the TEAM and, if a second batter from that team throws his/her bat, the batter will be declared out (even if it is that batter’s first instance throwing his/her bat).
- For safety reasons, there is no “on-deck”. All players other than the batter and the baserunners must be in the dugout.

- **For the first two weeks of the season, strike outs will not be counted. Batters will receive 5 good pitches, after which offensive coaches may soft toss 3 good pitches to the batter. After 3 good pitches, the batter may hit off a tee.**
- However, we want to encourage batters to start identifying good pitches and swinging at good pitches to get them prepared for play in the upper divisions. **Starting with Week 3, strike outs will be counted, and the following rules will take effect:**
  - (i) A batter will receive 5 good pitches or 3 swinging strikes whichever comes first. If the pitch is bad coming from the pitching machine (i.e. bouncing on the plate, up at the players chin, way inside or outside the strike zone) AND the player does not swing then a “bad pitch” should be called. A bad pitch will not count against the 5 good pitches. However, if the player swings at a bad pitch, it counts towards one of the 5 pitches and counts as a strike.
  - (ii) A player that fouls off the last pitch (either the 5<sup>th</sup> good pitch or the 3<sup>rd</sup> swinging strike) will get another pitch. The only time a player can be out on a 3<sup>rd</sup> strike (or 5<sup>th</sup> pitch) foul ball, is if the ball is “popped up” above the head of the batter, and the ball is caught by a defensive fielder.
- Any batted ball that strikes the batter shall be declared dead and treated as a foul ball. All runners must return to their original bases.
- Any batted ball that strikes the pitching machine, the operator or the ball bucket will be considered a deadball. Any balls that come to rest inside the dirt patch where the machine sits (not including the dirt patch beside the machine where the “pitcher” often plays) will also be considered a deadball. The batter will be awarded first base and only runners forced to advance may do so.
- Balls that pass through the dirt patch without touching the machine, the operator or the bucket will be considered live.
- There is no bunting, stealing or lead offs in Mini Minors. Runners may not leave their bases until the ball crosses the plate or is hit.
- There is no sliding into first base, except that the runner may slide back to first base. Sliding is permitted (and encouraged) at all other bases.
- Baserunners must avoid batted balls and fielders attempting to field a batted ball. (See Rules on Obstruction and Interference.) Baserunners may not intentionally interfere with thrown balls or fielders.
- Baserunners who over run second or third base can be tagged out, as can runners who touch first and run or turn towards second (even if attempting to return to first base).
- The infield fly rule is not in effect.
- To encourage fielders to try and make plays, there will be no advancing on overthrows.
- If a ball is hit to the outfield, baserunners may continue to run until the ball enters the infield (ie. crosses the basepaths between first base and second base, or second base and third base (including foul territory). Once the ball re-enters the infield, the following rules shall apply:

- (i) If the baserunner has passed the halfway point along the baseline, the baserunner may continue to the base he or she is advancing to. However, the baserunner is in jeopardy, and may be placed out.
- (ii) If the baserunner has not passed the halfway point, the baserunner shall be returned to the previous base before the ball re-entered the infield. If the baserunner attempts to advance to the next base, the baserunner is in jeopardy and may be placed out. HOWEVER if the baserunner advances and is safe, but the baserunner was NOT past the halfway point when the ball re-entered the infield, the baserunner must return to the previous base.
- (iii) If the play is a force situation, the baserunner may continue to the base he or she is advancing to, even if he or she is not past the halfway point when the ball re-enters the infield. However, the baserunner is in jeopardy, and may be placed out.

### Coach Positioning

- One offensive coach will operate the pitching machine. One offensive coach will be stationed at first base and one coach at third base. The coach operating the pitching machine may talk to and coach baserunners and the batter.
- The pitching machine operator must attempt to avoid batted balls. Once the ball is in play, the pitching machine operator must also be attentive to thrown balls and must attempt to move out of the way or “duck” to avoid interfering with the play.
- The pitching machine operator should not catch balls thrown to them unless the play is dead.
- One defensive coach may be located by the first base coaching box and one coach may be located by the third base coaching box.
- **All coaches should be outside the field of play, and must take care not to interfere with the ball, base runners or fielders.**

### Umpires

- During the regular season, offensive coaches (first base coach, third base coach and pitching operator) will also act as umpires. During the playoffs we will try to arrange for umpires to be provided.
- Coaches acting as umpires should act impartially and in the interests of fairness.
- Deference should be given to all umpires, including coaches acting as umpires.

### **TEAM SIZES AND GAME SET UP**

- Teams during the 2018 season consist of 12 to 13 players.
- A minimum of 7 players is required per team to play a game. If a team does not have a minimum of 7 players by 15 minutes after the scheduled start time, then that team will forfeit the game.

- Players from Mini-Minor B may be called up to complete a game roster. T-ball players are not allowed. Individual players can only be called up to a maximum of 4 times during the season, including playoffs. All call ups should be cleared with the Division Coordinator before the game.
- Game length shall be 1½ hours. No new inning shall be started if there is less than **15** minutes to go (ie. no new inning may be started after the 1 hr 15min mark).
- The last inning of a game is to be decided on a game to game basis by mutual agreement of the coaches. **DURING THE REGULAR SEASON, GAMES MAY RESULT IN A TIE.**
- An inning is over when there are 3 outs or 5 runs have been scored, except for the last inning, which shall be open (ie. no run limit), provided that the coaches mutually agreed on the open inning before the inning started (ie. before the visiting team bats). If coaches from both teams have not agreed on the open inning before start (top) of the inning, the 5 run limit should be observed.
- A minimum of 2 innings (or 1½ innings if the home team is ahead) will constitute a game in the event of rain. Rainouts will be rescheduled (if possible). ***Note:** Rain is, unfortunately, a fact of life in Vancouver. Unless safety risks are presented, teams should endeavor to play through light rain.*
- The home team will be designated by schedule, and will always be the team named second in the matchup (e.g. Away vs Home).
- The home team should occupy the 3rd base dugout and shall be responsible for setting up the field before the game, and cleaning up the field after the game.  
**The home team must take care to ensure that they arrive early enough before the scheduled game start to set up the field.**

### **FIELD SETUP**

- The pitching machine should be set up approximately 40 feet from home plate. At Riley Park, the pitching machine can be placed just after the wooden pitching “rubber”.
- As reference points for infielders and outfielders (see “Game Play – Defense”), short chalk marks (or short pylons) should be laid down along the foul lines:
  - (i) approximately three feet in front of first base and third base; and
  - (ii) approximately 30 feet behind first base and third base.  
*(If pylons are used, they should be placed in foul territory.)*

### **NOTES**

- Fielders gloves may be used by catchers instead of a catcher mitt.
- Rubber cleats may be worn (and are encouraged). Metal cleats are not permitted.
- In the interests of fairness, teams should not play more than 4 outfielders unless the opposing team has

sufficient players to field an equal number of outfielders. However, teams are always entitled to play at least 4 outfielders, even if the opposing team does not have enough players to field 4 outfielders. (For example, if the Home team has 9 players, and the Away team has 11 players, the away team may play 4 outfielders – ie. 10 fielders in total, with one bench player each defensive inning. See Fair Play rules regarding substitutions and rotations.)

- Although players are free to move once the ball has been hit, they should be encouraged to play their positions and not the positions of other players, so that all players can learn all positions. Of course this does not apply to backing up bases or covering bases for a fielder attempting to field the ball.
- **Obstruction:** If a fielder impedes the path of a baserunner and that fielder does not either have possession of the ball or is not attempting to field a batted ball, obstruction should be called. In this case, the play is dead and all runners should be awarded the bases that they would have reached without the obstruction, with the obstructed runner reaching at least one base beyond the last base safely touched by the runner.
- **Interference:** If any batted ball contacts a baserunner directly (i.e. before the ball is touched by a fielder) or if the baserunner contacts a fielder attempting to field a batted ball, this is interference unless the baserunner is safely touching a base and the contact is unintentional. During the regular season, a warning shall be given on the first incidence of interference by a team, and the play is started over at the same pitch count as before the interference occurred. Each team will have one warning per game. After the warning, interference results in the baserunner being out, and all other baserunners being returned to the last base they safely touched before the interference. If this results in the batter not reaching a base, the batter may bat again at the same pitch count as before the interference, unless the batter is the interfering runner. During the playoffs, no warnings will be given.
- Baserunners and fielders must attempt to avoid collisions, even when making plays. Take out slides, blocking the plate (or bases), intentional collisions and overly aggressive physical play are not permitted and are not to be tolerated. Safety is paramount.

### **Mini Minor “A” Coordinator Role and Contact Information**

The Coordinator’s role is to assist and support all Coaches and Players in achieving the objectives for this division. The Coordinator is there to answer questions that arise during the season, to provide guidance and support for coaches, and, if necessary to mediate conflict. Please email your Division Coordinator with your questions.

Let’s Play Ball!