

## ROOKIE RULES 2018

- 1) Games are 4 innings long. Scorebooks are not kept. Game results are not called into the Enterprise. The best response when asked, is to tell the kids that they are responsible for the score. Coaches don't keep the score. Coaches are not permitted to be the catcher. Only coaches approved by the Hastings Little League Board of Directors may assist with the games or practices. Base coaches at first and third are not recommended.

While on offense coaches should arrange themselves as follows:

- one coach pitching to his line-up
- one coach off to the side at home plate to assist with batting stances and picking up loose balls and errant bats
- one coach in the dugout assisting the players in preparing to bat and keeping order on the bench

While on defense, a single coach may be stationed in the field behind second base and "walk the field" to ensure that his team remains properly positioned.

- 2) Roster batting completes an inning not three outs. If three outs are reached the bases are cleared of runners.
- 3) Each coach pitches to his own team. It is recommended to pitch overhand from one knee to simulate the angle that a kid would pitch from. Coaches may pitch from any distance within the guidelines of common sense safety.
- 4) Coaches do not field batted or thrown balls. Coaches should use communal common sense in placing runners on balls that have been thrown out of play.
- 5) Neither team uses a catcher. Each team places a fielder next to the coach-pitcher to field all balls hit back to the mound or in front of the plate. That player is also instructed to cover home on plays to the plate. It is imperative that while the coach is pitching, such player remains within the pitching circle until the ball is hit. Coaches who are pitching should continually check to see if that player is focused. For his own safety and to avoid confusion on the part of the fielders, once a ball is hit fairly the coach pitching should strive to remove himself from the field of play until the play concludes.
- 6) Each batter has **SEVEN** pitches to put a ball in play before the tee is used. The seven pitches includes both the pitches that the batter swings at and pitches he takes. The coach-pitcher utilizes a bucket with seven balls in it to keep track. When a tee is used full contact must be made with the ball by the hitter otherwise another attempt is made.

*Any ball that advances forward of the tee into fair territory because of bat contact with the ball must be considered a fair ball that must be played by the defense (not a “do-over”).* full contact must be made with the ball by the hitter otherwise another attempt is made.

**This section is perhaps the key to the whole experience – players should be instructed to view the tee not as a demotion but as an instructional opportunity to hit the ball squarely. More importantly it is the manner in which the games moves along at a pace that permits focused players and avoids fatigue and embarrassment in batters who are struggling to make contact at the plate.**

- 7) All players play the field on defense. Extra players are placed in the outfield. Players must be stationed at all the appropriate positions except for catcher. Regardless of the batters’ level of development it is not permissible for extra players or outfielders to be stationed in the infield.
- 8) It is recommended that coaches switch outfielders with infielders every inning so kids get to experience both over the course of the game. It is also recommended that the batting order is reversed each inning so that no child feels that they are always batting first or last.
- 9) Only one bat on each side is permitted for safety reasons. No on-deck hitters or stray bats.
- 10) Only wood bats are permitted. (26” is best)

Some thoughts:

It is important to remember that the kids have much lower expectations than adults for the entire experience. Often, kids have much greater patience for delays and process than adults. We tend to get frustrated quicker than they do when things don’t go as **WE** imagined. What seems chaotic and disorderly to adults is often a great deal of fun for kids. Avoid imposing yourself onto the game. Let the kids dictate the tone of the game and simply make sure that things remain safe and fair. Yelling instructions from the sidelines might seem helpful but the athletes rarely hear or respond the way we hope. Console and encourage when necessary, move the game along when there seems to be an impasse. Other than that, the best coaching is often no coaching. Save your coaching agenda for practice and just let the kids play in the games. Follow the simple rule: **practice belongs to the coach but the game belongs to the players** and you will rarely go wrong.