BASEBALL RULEBOOK
PONY DIVISION

I. INTRODUCTION

A. 78 Youth Sports recreational leagues are structured to provide fun, fair, educational, and organized athletic competition for players of similar ages. The primary focus of each program is recreational enjoyment of a sport, coupled with player development (both individually and as part of a team). Competitive spirit, while understandable, is secondary to enjoyment of the game and learning fair play and sportsmanship.

B. Coaches' first responsibility is to help our participants attain these goals safely and joyously. Players are primarily motivated by the desire to have fun and be successful. Coaches should structure their teaching toward those ends and must treat each player with dignity and respect, regardless of athletic ability. To be successful, we expect our coaches to know and study the fundamentals of the sport; know the rules of the game; stress effort; keep their ego out of coaching; foster teamwork and sportsmanship; give all players a chance to become well rounded and to find their place in the sport by allowing them to play as many different positions as possible; and set performance goals that are related to the fundamentals of the game without regard for won/loss records or individual statistics. Moreover, coaches are not alone. Our organization is here to provide advice, help, encouragement and support.

II. CODE OF CONDUCT

A. Sportsmanship. Coaches, players, parents and other spectators are expected to display proper sportsmanship in accordance with the objectives and spirit of the program (as set out above) at all times. No coach, player, parent or other spectator may act in an unsportsmanlike manner at any time. This includes, but is not limited to, excessive screaming; trash-talking; use of obscene language; abusing equipment; being disrespectful toward officials, players, coaches and/or spectators; and inappropriate physical contact.

B. Positive Cheering. Players, coaches and spectators may not taunt, negatively criticize nor distract players on opposing teams. Root for your team, not against the opposition. Only positive cheering for one's own team is permitted.

C. Ejections. Improper behavior by coaches and players is grounds for ejection from a game. Excessive bad behavior or multiple ejections are grounds for suspension or removal from the league. Improper behavior from spectators may also result in an ejection. Excessive bad behavior from fans may also result in forfeiture of a game. Anyone ejected from a game, including fans, will be banned from attending the next scheduled game.

D. Fighting. Fighting between players warrants an automatic ejection from a game for all involved parties.

E. Further Discipline. Anyone ejected from more than one game in a single season will be addressed by the Commissioner and potentially subject to further discipline, up to and including a permanent ban from all 78 Youth Sports programming.

F. Crowd Control. Coaches must assist the umpire in controlling fans who are disruptive, use foul language, or otherwise act in a manner that is contrary to the rules or spirit of the goals of our organization.

G. Umpire Discretion. The umpire has the power to suspend or cancel a game if coaches, parents, or spectators become abusive or hinder the playing of the game.

H. Physical Contact. Physical contact by any participant (including any spectator) with respect to a 78 Youth Sports official, coach or league referee will result in the offender's suspension from attendance for the remainder of the season and the filing of personal assault charges with the New York City Police Department.

I. Handshakes. Players and coaches must shake hands in Stanley Cup style after each game.

J. Field Access. No parent is ever permitted on the field of play or in the dugout area for any reason, unless otherwise specified in our rules.

K. Injuries. Except in the case of injury, touching of players by coaches can only be above the waist (pat on the shoulder, back, or head). In case of injury, the parent or guardian responsible for that player should be contacted and should take control of the situation.

III. DIVISIONS

A. Age Divisions. 78 Youth Sports recreational baseball is separated into multiple age divisions with player ages determined as of December 31st of each season. This Rulebook applies to the Pony (8-year old, co-ed) division.

B. Age Exceptions. Players may play up one birth year (in the next older division), and the registration system allows this automatically. Any other request, including playing down or playing up more than one birth year, is discouraged and requires the Commissioner’s approval.

IV. UMPIRES

A. Respect. Coaches, players and spectators shall show respect for umpires at all times. All discussions with the umpires shall be carried out in a courteous voice and manner. Only the head coach may discuss calls with an umpire.

B. Rules Interpretations. An umpire's judgment call may not be challenged. Coaches may only discuss interpretations of the rules.

C. Umpire Responsibilities. Prior to the start of all games, umpires and coaches shall confer to review the ground rules. The umpire shall:

1. Ask the coaches and parents to inspect and clean the field for dangerous objects (glass, etc.) before the start of the game;
2. Upon completion of the game, direct the teams to clean their dugouts and leave quickly so subsequent games can start on time;
3. When calling balls and strikes, do it from behind home plate wearing at least a catcher's mask and shin guards;
4. After a ball is hit into play, clear the bat from the home plate area to eliminate tripping hazards;
5. Require all players to be properly attired (wearing their team hat and jersey, with their jerseys tucked in and their shoelaces tied).
6. Warn all first basemen not to put their foot across the base, but on the corner closest to the field;
7. Ensure that all areas in-play are clear of spectators. On the Van Voorhees field, the spectators can sit on the concrete to the left of third base, but no one or equipment should be on the artificial turf to the right of 1st base – the ball is live in that whole area.

D. Stand-In Umpires. If an umpire is late or fails to appear, the opposing managers will together agree and designate the game's umpire(s).

V. COACHES' RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Certifications. Coaches must successfully complete a background check and AED/CPR certification, both of which are valid through the end of the season.

B. Defibrillator. All teams must have their organization-provided defibrillator present, with an AED-certified coach, at all practices and games on New York City Parks Department fields. Practice safety first.

C. Supervision. Coaches must notify each player of practice and game schedules. They must ensure that neither games nor practices are held without the supervision of an adult who specifically assumes such responsibility.

D. Safety. Use best efforts to reinforce safe practices and continuous play by doing things like ensuring the catchers are not resting on their knees, thereby exposing their upper thighs to pitched balls, and asking parents to back up the catcher and speed the game.

E. Game Day Equipment. Ensure that umpires are properly managing and storing equipment (e.g., catcher's gear, pitching mound, thin rubber bases, and backstop for Prospect Park Field A) on game days.

VI. GENERAL RULES

A. Official Rules. All games are played under the "Official Baseball Rules" as "adopted by the professional baseball playing rules committee," unless specifically excepted here.

B. Universal Batting. All players must bat each time through the order, whether the player has played a defensive position in that inning or not. Latecomers must be placed at the bottom of the batting order. If a batter bats out of turn, and it is appealed to the umpire by the opposing team before that illegal time at bat is complete, the batter is out. Otherwise, the order continues from its proper place without penalty.

C. Playing Time. All players must play in every game they attend, provided they have been to at least one practice. Coaches must inform the Commissioner, umpire and opposing coach whenever a player might be sitting out a game. No player shall sit out during playoff games unless approved by the Commissioner. Decisions may be appealed to the Commissioner.

D. Defensive Substitution. Unlimited free defensive substitution is allowed; however, every team member must play a defensive position at least one full inning of the first two and two full innings of the first four innings. If convinced by one coach of another's non-compliance of this rule, the umpire shall have the power to require a player to take the field for as many innings as the umpire shall deem proper. Prior to a game, coaches must inform the Commissioner, umpire, and opposing coach whenever a player might not fully participate in the game. Decisions may be appealed to the Commissioner.

E. Player Positioning. Coaches are encouraged to allow players to try different positions. However, minimal skill is necessary for all positions to avoid being hurt, such as catcher, pitcher and first base. Coaches therefore have the discretion to put players at specific positions. However, they must allow players to prove in practice that they are skilled enough to play in a position they desire. The coach shall use objective criteria at practices to determine if players are skilled enough to play different positions. For example, to pitch a player must be able to throw a minimum number of strikes (such as five) out of ten attempts; to catch a player must be able to keep a minimum number of balls from getting behind him/her and must be able to make long accurate throws (even if on a bounce).

F. Permitted Footwear. No metal cleats are permitted to be used by a player. Rubber soled athletic shoes with or without rubber cleats are permitted.

G. Lineup Cards. Coaches must exchange a written lineup card, including names, jersey numbers and batting order before each game.

H. Throwing the Bat. Throwing the bat is not permitted. A player receives one warning and is called out for any subsequent violations. It shall be the responsibility of both coaches, not the umpire, to track the players who have received such warning.

I. Food and Drink. No food or drink (except water or sports drinks) is permitted on the field of play. No food is allowed in the dugout area during game time. No parents or spectators are allowed in the dugout area. No coach, parent or spectator may smoke or consume alcoholic beverages at any practice or game.

J. Uniform Code. All players shall wear a league-issued uniform (hat and jersey). Hats should be worn with the bill facing forward and jerseys shall be tucked in.

K. Protective Gear. All batters and base runners must wear protective helmets. Catchers must wear a mask, a helmet, a chest protector, protective cup, and shin guards. Protective cups for boys and pelvic protectors for girls are recommended, but at the discretion of the parents or coach.

L. Sliding. Head first sliding is prohibited except when diving back to a base that had already been acquired. A player violating this rule shall be called out. The umpire will decide whether a runner has stumbled head first (and thus safe) or slid head first (and thus out). The slide or surrender rule shall be in effect when there is a play. A player must either slide or avoid contact when there is a play at any base, except for a play at first base. If a player fails to slide or avoid contact as required by this rule, the player shall be called out. If a base runner initiates a dangerous play, the runner will be called out. In addition, the following from the "Official Baseball Rules" will be strictly enforced: "The catcher, without the ball in his or her possession has no right to block the pathway of a runner attempting to score. The base line belongs to the runner and the catcher should be there only when he or she is fielding a ball or ... already has the ball in his or her hands." If contact is made intentionally the player will be ejected from the game. The coach-catcher shall at no time block home plate if a runner is attempting to touch home from third base.

M. Time Out. Only the umpire can call time out.

N. Official Ball. The official ball is a soft baseball provided by the organization. Only that ball can be used.

O. Rescheduled Games. When games are cancelled due to weather, the contest may be rescheduled subject to field availability and the consent of the Commissioner and both coaches.

VII. DIVISION RULES

A. Field Dimensions. Bases shall be fifty (50') feet apart. Coaches shall pitch from no less than twenty feet (20') from home. The pitcher's plate for players shall be thirty-seven feet (37').

B. Team Size; Defensive Positions. Teams may field ten (10) players, the standard nine (9) baseball positions plus one (1) additional outfielder (stationed at the discretion of the coach). All outfielders must be at least fifteen (15') feet beyond infield base line.

C. Forfeits. A team failing to field at least seven (7) players at game time, after a ten (10) minute grace period, shall forfeit. Teams then choose up sides and play among themselves and the umpire shall umpire the game.

D. Time Limits. Regular season and non-championship tournament games last six innings or one hour and fifty minutes (1:50), whichever comes first. No new inning of play may begin after one hour and forty minutes (1:40) have been played. The umpire shall inform the head coaches when an inning is the last. Tied games may be played until a winner as long as no new inning of play begins after one hour and forty minutes (1:40) from the scheduled start time. During tournament championship games, there shall be no time limit and games shall be played until a winner is declared.

E. Fall Pitching. The fall Pony division is coach pitch only. All fall games follow the coach-pitch rules in Section VII.F below.

F. Spring Pitching (Games 1-2). For the first two games of the season, pitching shall be done by a coach from the offensive team. Pitching must be overhand and may be made from a standing or kneeling position. The defensive team shall also field a "pitcher" whose responsibility is to play any ball hit to him or her. Balls and strikes are not called. Each batter is entitled to look at ten (10) pitches (excluding foul balls from the tenth pitch on). If the batter has not struck out after three swings nor gotten a hit after looking at his or her 10 pitches, the at bat shall be terminated, but no out shall be recorded. A pitch that hits a batter shall be a no-pitch which will not count against the 10 pitches nor will it permit the batter to go to first base. If the "coach-pitcher" is unintentionally hit by a batted ball the ball is dead, it is no pitch, the hitter is awarded first base, and the base runners advance one base.

G. Spring Pitching (Games 3-4). For the third and fourth games of the season, coaches shall pitch the first two innings of each game, in accordance with the Game 1 and 2 rules described above. Thereafter, from the third inning on, players on the defensive team will pitch to the opposing team the balance of the game. Each player-pitcher in these games is limited to one inning of work, where an inning of work is defined as any number of pitches thrown to any number of batters in one defensive half of an inning or until the pitcher is removed from the mound; any portion of an inning counts as one complete inning.

H. Spring Pitching (Games 5 and later). Beginning with the fifth game, players will pitch to opposing batters in all innings and each pitcher is limited to two innings of pitching per game, including during playoffs. If, however, a playoff game goes to extra innings,

pitchers will be permitted to pitch a third inning. No pitcher may pitch more than six (6) innings in any seven (7) day period, except during playoffs.

I. Balls and Strikes; Intentional Walks. Whenever players pitch, balls and strikes are called by the umpire according to the rules of baseball with only the following exceptions: (i) it will require six (6) balls for a walk unless the bases are loaded, in which case it will require eight (8). The strike zone shall be a rectangular area vertically defined from the batter's kneecap to a line connecting the batter's armpits and horizontally defined by the width of home plate. A strike shall be called when any part of the pitched ball goes across the strike zone directly on a fly.

Intentional walks are prohibited. Determining whether a walk is intentional shall be a judgment call of the umpire. A pitch determined to be intended to walk a batter shall be deemed a "no pitch". Continued violation of this rule shall subject the pitcher to removal and/or the coach to ejection, either at the discretion of the umpire.

J. Hit By Pitch. A pitcher who hits two batters in the same inning must be replaced and cannot pitch for the rest of the game. (That means that when a pitcher is allowed to pitch two innings in one game, the following would apply: If a pitcher hits one batter in each of two innings, that pitcher may continue to pitch until he or she hits a second batter in that pitcher's second inning of pitching). The batter must make all attempts to avoid being hit. The umpire shall rule the batter was hit by a pitch if, in the judgment of the umpire, the batter could not have avoided being hit; otherwise, it shall be called a ball. A ball thrown in the strike zone which hits a batter is a strike and the pitcher cannot be charged with hitting a batter.

K. Mound Visits. Coaches are permitted one mound visit per inning without removing the pitcher. A second visit in the same inning requires removal of the pitcher. Visits for injury checks do not count.

L. 5-Run Limit Rule. In games where coaches pitch all the innings, no team may score more than five runs in their offensive half of their inning, except in the last inning, when a losing home team may only score enough runs to tie the game. In games where players pitch, for the first three innings, no team may score more than five runs in their offensive half of their inning. Thereafter there shall be no limit on the amount of runs either team may score.

M. Dead Ball; Advancing Bases; Out of Bounds and Ground Rules. The following applies to all games, including playoff games:

1. Batted balls hit to the outfield: The ball is dead once a ball thrown from the outfield crosses an imaginary straight line that connects the bases, except for throws to a base (or if the outfielder runs to the base carrying the ball) in an attempt (in the judgment of the umpire) to make a play at that base. Where a throw is made to a base (or the outfielder runs to the base carrying the ball) in an attempt to make a play at that base, the ball is live until the player releases the ball in a throw back to the pitcher.
2. Batted balls thrown from within the infield: The ball is dead once the infielder releases the ball in a throw back to the pitcher. (It shall be in the discretion of the umpire to determine if it was the intent of the player to throw the ball back to the

pitcher.) It is irrelevant whether the ball actually reaches or is caught by the pitcher. A player cannot field a ball and throw it directly to the pitcher to stop a play. A good faith attempt to make a play must occur first.

Under this section, once the ball is dead, a base runner may continue to the base to which he/she is already headed, as long as he/she was at least halfway to that base at the time the ball became dead. Otherwise, the base runner must return to the prior base without risk of being put out. No new bases may be taken. Base runners should also know that they are not guaranteed the base, and that they may be put out anytime the ball is live and they are off the base. They should always play as if the ball were live and let the umpire return players to their last legal base after "time" has been called.

Tagging up is permitted and required but subject to the above rules relating to when the ball is dead.

Balls hit into fair territory are live and in play until (i) they land out of bounds, (ii) they cross the imaginary straight line that connects the bases from the outfield but not directly to a base to make a play, (iii) when a batted ball that remained in the infield is thrown to the pitcher, or (iv) the umpire declares a time out. A baserunner who runs while the ball is dead is in effect attempting to steal a base, which is prohibited. In such case, the umpire shall require the base runner to return to the originating base. A player cannot field a ball and throw it directly to the pitcher to stop a play. A good faith attempt to make a play must occur first.

On the artificial turf fields, a ball is out of bounds once it touches concrete, goes into a dugout, or goes beyond the outfield fence; hence a ball that otherwise touches a fence is not out of bounds. In Prospect Park grass fields, a ball is out of bounds when it passes a line drawn on the field to indicate when out of bounds begins – which lines shall be 20' from first base and third base and parallel to the respective foul lines.

If a ball goes out of bounds, the base runners are entitled to the base to which they were heading and one additional base.

N. Mandatory Courtesy Runners. To conserve playing time, when the catcher is a base runner and his or her team is assessed a second out, the catcher shall be replaced on the base path by the teammate that made the last out (at bat or on the bases) so that the catcher may put on the equipment. This rule is not optional.

O. No Balks, Bunting, Leading, Stealing, Dropped Third Strike or Infield Fly Rule. There will be no balks, bunting, leading, stealing, dropped third strikes, or infield fly rule.

P. Displaced Bases. If a base has moved from its proper position, a base runner cannot be tagged out as long as he/she is touching that base.

Q. Boundary Lines. An out of play line shall be drawn for each game that is ten (10') feet from third base and parallel to the left field foul line. An overthrow at first base shall be dead and shall not entitle the runners to an extra base. An overthrow that goes beyond the out of play line off third base entitles all base runners one additional base.

R. Maximum Number of Coaches. Only players, coaches, and scorekeepers, no more than four (4) in total, are to occupy the dugout area. Relatives and friends must watch the

game from out of bounds and may never enter the field of play or dugout area during the game.

S. Permitted Coaches. The offensive team will have first and third base coaches plus a coach-pitcher any time there is coach pitching. Defensive coaches are only permitted (i) for two minutes prior to the start of an inning, solely to position defensive players and (ii) one defensive coach is permitted in the outfield of the first game to provide defensive instructions to the players. Coaches may not physically assist base runners or touch the ball while the ball is in play (if they do, the runner will be called out).

T. Home Team Duties. The home team occupies the first base dugout, and supplies the bases and the game ball (and keeps it at the end of the game).

U. Backstop and Pitcher's Mound Lockup. The coaches of the first game shall assist the umpire in obtaining and placing the portable pitcher's mound and backstop and the coaches of the final game of the day shall assist in storing both items. If they forget and either is stolen or damaged, they will be expected to bear the costs of replacement.

V. No Amendment. These rules may not be amended by coaches at game time. Suggestions for rule changes should be brought to the attention of the Commissioner.

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For Schedules, Fields, Rules, FAQs and to Register for all our sports and other information:
www.78youthsports.org

To reach someone to ask a question, make a comment, or report an incident.
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