

Niskayuna Baseball Levels of Play

Recreation Baseball - Anyone player who wishes to play, will. It is an opportunity for kids to move around and play a lot of different positions. Winning is not the main goal. Coaches need to strive for equal playing time, while keeping players safe as well. The goal: teach basic fundamentals and let the kids have fun learning the game of baseball.

The season starts in late April and players are expected to commit through the end of June.

Placement Criteria: Every child registered will be placed on a team. Teams at T-Ball and Single-A are arranged by schools, for the most part. At AA, we further try to balance talent, since we introducing winning and losing, and have true playoffs. Spreading out travel-level players amongst the teams is important. The Major and AAA divisions require players to work-out and be selected through a draft. All players in the draft are selected. The Babe Ruth level will have school and non-school players evenly distributed to the maximum extent practical to minimize scheduling conflicts and ensure competitive balance.

The NBL offers the following:

Cal Ripken Levels:

T-Ball

4 to 5 year olds. Hit from tee. Emphasis on safety, skill development and fun. Mainly played on the Lower Landry Complex Field 1. Coaches will work with team parents to schedule a practice during the week. Players bat around each inning. The ball used is a soft-tee ball. The league is non-competitive; no scores are kept. Each game is kept to a one-hour time limit or three innings (whichever comes first) to match game span with attention span of the age group. Small teams are the goal and a brief, instructional period precedes each game for about 15 minutes.

A

6 to 7 years old. Utilizes parent pitching. 60' diamond. Played on the Lower Landry Complex primarily Field 2. Teams created by age, school and prior season assessments. Small teams are the goal and a brief, instructional period precedes each game for about 15 minutes.

AA

8 to 9 years old. Coaches pitch the first 2 innings and then again, temporarily, if any pitcher walks a batter. Standings are kept and there is an exciting playoff tournament at the end of the season. Each inning, a runner starts on first base which is the last batter from the previous inning. Rules on walks-allowed before having to change pitchers are also in place. Teams are created with the goal of balance and pre-season data. Played on the Lower Landry Complex, primarily Field 3. If any 7-year-old's parent(s) believe their child is advanced enough for AA, there will be a workout in late March to determine whether coaches think they are prepared for that level.

AAA

10 to 11 year olds, with prior 8U Travel/All Stars who are 9 years old. All players attend a workout and then there is a draft a few days later, yet all players are selected. Players pitch and typical youth baseball rules are in effect. Playoffs. 60' bases and 46' Pitching Distance. Played primarily on the Lower Landry Complex - Field 4 and sometimes the Majors field..

Majors

11 to 12 years olds. All players attend a workout and then there is a draft a few days later, yet all players are selected. Same as AAA but 70' bases and 50' pitching distance - leading and stealing are introduced, as well as uncaught third strikes. Played at the Upper Complex - Majors Field, and sometimes played under the lights. If any 11 year-old is more appropriately suited for AAA due to safety or experience, the league may place the player at that level.

Babe Ruth

13 to 15 year olds. 90' diamond. 60' 6" Pitching Distance. Games played on the Babe Ruth field at the Upper field complex, and many times played into the night under the lights to accommodate players playing Modified, Freshman, or JV schedules. Some inter-league games may be played against other leagues such as Halfmoon, Clifton Park, Scotia, etc.

Travel/All Stars

Cal Ripken

The Niskayuna Cal Ripken travel program participates in the Empire State Baseball league (ESBL) which is sanctioned by a different governing body than Cal Ripken. This division of play runs parallel to the Niskayuna Baseball recreation division and teams selected at this level are not guaranteed to be the All-Star teams that are selected at the end of the recreation season. There may be two divisions of play.

At 8U-10U, rather than 1-day tryouts. A four-week clinic-style instructional program will be held in January and rosters will be formed at the end of those weeks. Beginning in 2016, the following guidelines were implemented: An advanced 7YO can play 8U baseball, if selected, and can remain with that cohort in subsequent years, if the coaches and league agree they are ready. This has multiple benefits: 1) It allows a young, advanced player an appropriate start-time and level. 2) It naturally creates more opportunity for other players to play at the young levels. 3) it allows the

league to maintain a fair but firm policy with regard to “playing up.” The NBL does not permit “playing-up” outside of the 7YO moving forward as stated above.

At 11U-12U, tryouts will be held outside in the fall, and the team formed earlier in the year, to allow more time for tournament planning, fundraising, and to help compete with outside leagues for our players who also begin in the fall.

National Division - This is a level that may or may not be implemented based on player participation and their readiness. developing their skills to compete at the highest level. These are the teams that begin to introduce the importance of competition with a focus on skill development while maintaining relatively equal playing time.. Winning is important to strive for but not at the cost of injury or development. The goal of this division is to keep kids playing baseball and work on developing for future growth. However, competitive baseball requires knowledgeable, willing coaches, pitchers that can throw strikes, catchers who can prevent passed-balls, and fielders who can generally record outs. Thus, to protect players and families from being exposed to a poor experience, National Teams will only be formed if the situation allows for it.

American (East (top) or West (middle)) Division - These are players that have moved through the instructional phase of baseball much quicker. Not only are their skills advanced but their baseball IQ may be as well (at this stage). Kids may move around positions a bit but will also start to see time at specific positions based on ability. Playing time for all players will be available however is not necessarily divided equally. Usually, teams are permitted to bat up to 12 players (like rec). American Division opponents are typically All-Star teams from other towns and programs. Beginning in the 2016 season, the league introduced coaches to the option of carrying additional players (more than 11 or 12) on a roster *if 1) there is no National Team at that age level -and- 2) if these players are physically and emotionally ready for that level.* This prevents the 13th player from not being included in travel baseball, even though they were as ready as the 12th player just because rosters had limits. If coaches select >12 players, a rotating game schedule will be used since >12 is too hard to accommodate in one single game.

All-Star Baseball

This level attempts to move through the levels of tournament play offered by Cal Ripken... The District 1 Tournament, the ENY State Tournament, and the Middle-Atlantic Tournament... followed by the World Series at ages, 10, 12, and Babe Ruth. Playing time is not guaranteed nor might it be divided equally. Selection to the all-stars may naturally include many travel players, but additions from strong rec performance and new players to the area could change the rosters from travel to All-Star. All-Star teams can not bat more than 9 or 10 players and do not have free substitution, so rosters may be smaller. Rec coaches, and the Cal Ripken and Babe Ruth Committees will discuss and select All-Star rosters in June. This level will require the possibility of regional travel and hotel costs.

Babe Ruth Travel Program

The Babe Ruth travel program is structured a little differently than the Cal Ripken. The travel teams at the Babe Ruth division start in late May or early June, following the local scholastic seasons.

13U-15U Travel/All Stars – This team may participate in the 13U Babe Ruth All-Star Tournaments, along with games in the ENTYB and/or ESBL travel leagues, as well as particular weekend tournaments, all of which might include regional travel and additional hotel costs. During the course of the travel schedule managers are encourage to use games as ways to develop players at various positions and strive for appropriate playing time, realizing that at this level some kids are going to play more than others. The league has adopted a 30% minimum playing time rule at the 13-15U level. Expectations and roles of players will be discussed with kids throughout the season. Once the team enters any Babe Ruth, “tournament trail” All-Star play, playing time will not be guaranteed. At this time, players will be put in positions by the manager that gives the team the best chance to advance. There is an expectation of a large investment in time for practice and games. Schedules will be communicated prior to the start of travel play.