

WINTER PARK OPTIMIST CLUB BASEBALL PROGRAM

GROUND RULES FOR MACHINE PITCH

Effective March 1, 2012

THE PITCHING MACHINE

Winter Park Optimist utilizes a spring arm pitching machine that is similar to the pitching machine used in district and state tournament play in eastern North Carolina. Each pitching machine will be set to pitch approximately forty-three (43) miles per hour from a distance of forty-six (46) feet which is the Babe Ruth League recommended speed. Prior to the Machine Pitch League practices, the Machine Pitch League Commissioner will calibrate each of the league's pitching machines using a radar gun and record the calibrated setting on each machine. Both managers as well as the umpire are to confirm prior to each game that the machine has been set according to the calibrated setting displayed on the pitching machine. Managers should note that the calibrated setting may not be the same for each machine; therefore, each manager should look only to the calibrated setting for the specific machine in use.

As a result of the calibrated settings, it should not be necessary for the umpire to adjust the speed of the pitching machine during a game. However, the umpire may adjust the location of the pitches as they see fit including during an at bat.

Due to wear of machine components (primarily the spring and rubber cushions), the machines will be re-calibrated periodically during the season and the new calibrated settings will be placed on each machine. Managers are responsible for notifying the Machine Pitch League Commissioner of any needed repairs to a pitching machine.

The home team will be responsible for getting the pitching machine set up for the game and putting it up when the game is completed. Only league owned machines are allowed in league play.

THE DIVISIONS

Should the Machine Pitch League field more than ten teams in the spring season, then the League will be divided into two divisions. The divisions will be divided so that each division has the same number of teams if there is an even number of teams in the League. If there are an odd number of teams in the League, then one division will have one more team than the other division. Assignment of teams to a division is made by and at the sole discretion of the Machine Pitch League Commissioner.

The post-season tournament will be played pursuant to a division format. The teams in each division will play a single elimination tournament with the winner of each division playing in the Machine Pitch League championship game.

PRE-GAME

Managers are to exchange line-ups at the pre-game meeting with the umpire. Each team's line-up should include all players who are present and provide each player's first and last names as well as each player's number. See the TEAM OFFENSE rules below regarding the continuous batting order.

There shall be no full-field batting practice on the field within one hour of the scheduled game. Infield may only be taken when there is sufficient time for both teams to take infield. Both teams are to be allotted the same amount of time (not to exceed ten [10] minutes each) for infield with the visiting team taking infield first. When possible, managers should get permission and instructions from the umpire prior to taking infield.

UMPIRES

One umpire per game. A coach or parent from the offensive team will operate the pitching machine. The umpire will ensure that the defensive team is ready and alert before the ball is placed in the pitching machine and will be especially watchful regarding the safety of the pitcher.

REGULATION GAMES

Regulation games will be one (1) hour and fifteen (15) minutes or six (6) innings, whichever occurs first. No new inning will begin if the final out of the preceding inning is recorded after one (1) hour and ten (5) minutes. The home team will complete their inning. The umpire will keep the official game time.

NO OFFICIAL SCORE TO BE KEPT IN REGULAR SEASON GAMES

It is the position of the Baseball Committee that keeping score in the Machine Pitch League regular season games is detrimental to the primary focus of teaching baseball fundamentals. While score must be kept each half inning to enforce the Five Run or Three Out Rule, no official score is kept in the Machine Pitch League regular season games. There are no regular season standings in the Machine Pitch League.

PLAYER MINIMUM PLAY RULE

All players must play at least 2 full innings in the field. Continuous batting order. A violation of the rule in the Machine Pitch League regular season will result in a one (1) game suspension for the manager. A second violation will result in the suspension of the manager for the remainder of the Machine Pitch League season including the post season tournament. A violation of this rule in the Machine Pitch League post season tournament will result in a forfeit regardless of the game score. Managers should be cognizant that the TEN RUN MERCY RULE is enforced in the Machine Pitch League post season tournament and that the PLAYER MINIMUM PLAY RULE is enforced regardless of the number of innings played.

PLAYER SUBSTITUTION RULE

Free and unlimited substitution.

TEAM DEFENSE

A team must use a pitcher, a catcher, four (4) infielders and up to four (4) outfielders. Prior to each pitch:

- A. The pitcher must have at least one foot on the pitcher circle;
- B. The catcher must be positioned behind home plate and wear protective gear including a cup; and
- C. Up to four (4) outfielders must be positioned in the outfield grass.

One (1) member of the coaching staff may position themselves in the outfield grass to help instruct and teach their players while on defense.

TEAM OFFENSE

All teams in the Machine Pitch League will use a continuous batting order. The line-up used for the first game of the season will remain the same throughout the entire Machine Pitch League regular season. The line-up may be changed prior to the post season tournament; however, the line-up used in the first game of the post season tournament must remain the same throughout the post season tournament. The next player to hit when a game ends will be the lead-off hitter for the next game. If a player is not present when the game begins then their name will not be listed in the line-up. Any player(s) arriving after a game has begun will be inserted into the line-up at their usual spot and not at the bottom of the lineup. It is the intent of this rule to equalize the number of at-bats each member of a team has throughout the entire Machine Pitch League season.

While operating the pitching machine, the pitching coach **may only** coach his team's batter. They can't coach any base runner.

If a hit ball comes in contact with the pitching machine, it is a dead ball. The batter gets first base. Other base runners can only advance if forced.

The hitter and base runner(s) may advance at their own risk one base after an infield error occurs when the ball is hit in the infield. The defensive team may attempt a play on the advancing base runner after the first infield error. However, the advancing base runner must stop at the next base even if a second infield error occurs. For example, if a hitter hits the ball to the pitcher who throws the ball over the first baseman's head, then the hitter may advance at their own risk no further than second base. The ball is dead when a throw to the pitcher is attempted or if base runners are not attempting to advance.

If a ball is hit to the outfield grass, the runner(s) may advance as many bases as they can at their own risk until the ball is controlled by an infielder while on the infield.

THROWN BAT RULE

If the batter throws the bat after swinging at the ball, both managers and the offending player will be warned. The next time any player(s) throws the bat, the umpire will call that player(s) out. This will be in effect for the remainder of the game.

STEALING/BUNTING

Stealing or leading off base is prohibited. Runners cannot leave the base until the batter hits the ball.

Bunting is permitted in Machine Pitch.

FIVE RUN OR THREE OUT RULE

Each half inning will consist of three (3) outs or five (5) runs, whichever occurs first. If the fifth run is scored while a play is still occurring then the play will continue until the play is over. Managers and coaches are encouraged to get their players on and off the field quickly between each half inning. The maximum number of runs either team can score in anyone inning is five.

TEN RUN MERCY RULE

As no official score is kept, the ten run mercy rule does not apply in the Machine Pitch League regular season.

For the Machine Pitch League post season tournament games the TEN RUN MERCY RULE will be enforced. Any team leading by 10 runs at the end of 4 or 5 innings of play or 3 % or 4 % innings if the home team is ahead, will be declared the winning team and the game will end.

TIE GAMES

As no official score is kept, there are no tie games in the in the Machine Pitch League regular season games.

For the Machine Pitch League post season tournament games ties will be broken pursuant to the rules of Babe Ruth Baseball.

PROTESTS

As no official score is kept, there are no protests in the Machine Pitch League regular season games. In the Machine Pitch League post season tournament managers may protest a game by notifying the umpire that the game is being protested prior to the next pitch after the call that is being disputed. Protests will be ruled on at the time of the protest by a Protest Committee comprised of three (3) members of the Baseball Committee. The Protest Committee may consult with both managers as well as the umpire in order to gain an understanding of the event(s) that lead to the disputed call. The ruling of the Protest Committee is final. Judgment calls may not be protested. All protests must be submitted to the Protest Committee along with a protest fee of fifty dollars (\$50.00). If the protesting team prevails then the protest fee is returned. If the protesting team loses the protest then the protest fee becomes the property of the Winter Park Optimist Club.

FORFEITS

As no official score is kept, there are no forfeits in the in the in the Machine Pitch League regular season games. If a team has fewer than eight players then the managers may agree to either not play or to share players and play a scrimmage game. For the Machine Pitch League post season tournament games each team must have at least eight players in order to have an official game. If one team is unable to field a team with at least eight players then the other team wins the game by forfeit. If both teams are unable to field a team with at least eight players then both teams are eliminated from the Machine Pitch League post season tournament.

TRYOUTS

Administration of the Machine Pitch League player tryouts is the responsibility of the Machine Pitch League Commissioner and will be conducted by the Tee Ball League Commissioner and the Tee Ball League managers under the direction of the Baseball Committee. The Winter Park Optimist Club will furnish the necessary equipment to conduct

all tryouts. Players are encouraged to wear baseball cleats to tryouts and bring their own glove(s) and bat(s).

The Machine Pitch League Commissioner will have a meeting that must be attended by the manager of each team in the Machine Pitch League immediately prior to tryouts at which time each manager will be provided with a list of all players who have signed up to participate in the Machine Pitch League. All players who are returning to the Machine Pitch League from the prior spring season will be identified on the list as a returning player as those players will not be trying out. If a team does not have a manager by the time tryouts are held, the Machine Pitch League Commissioner will appoint an acting manager to evaluate and keep a record of the players who participated in tryouts.

Tryouts will be conducted for all eligible players who did not participate in the Machine Pitch League the preceding spring season. All new players must attend tryouts to be eligible for the draft. Returning players who played in the Machine Pitch League the preceding spring season will not try out. While the sponsorship/name of a team may change, all players returning to the Machine Pitch League from the preceding spring season will automatically be placed back on the same roster that they were on the preceding spring.

PLAYER DRAFT

The Machine Pitch League player draft is designed to regulate and keep record of player assignments in each league. The Machine Pitch League player draft will be conducted at a place and time so designated by the Baseball Committee. Only a representative(s) of the Baseball Committee, managers, coaches, or others specifically authorized by the Baseball Committee or by the Board will be allowed to attend the Machine Pitch League player draft. Only managers or acting managers who have been approved by the League Commissioner will be allowed to make player selections at the player draft.

Managers will draw out of a hat to determine the draft order in the Machine Pitch League player draft. The teams will draft from top to bottom, bottom to top. The names of all non-protected players who did not tryout and who are not a returning player are put into a hat to be drawn. Once all eligible players who attended tryouts have been drafted then the team with the next selection will draw first from the hat and the process will continue in the same selection order until all the names in the hat have been drawn. The child(ren) of the manager and the child(ren) of one (1) coach may be protected in the Machine Pitch League draft. Their protection will be established at the sole discretion of the machine pitch league commissioner. The protected players must be selected before the end of their established protected round. Any child of a manager or coach who is not selected by the protected round becomes available to all teams beginning with the selection immediately following the last protected pick of the team who did not select their protected player.

TROPHIES

Participation trophies will be awarded to each player in the Machine Pitch League.

In addition to a team trophy, individual trophies will be awarded to each player on the roster of

the Machine Pitch League post season tournament champion. Immediately prior to closing ceremonies, the Machine Pitch League managers will nominate one player from their team that they believe displayed the best sportsmanship during the season.

ALL STAR MANAGERS

Managers for the Machine Pitch League all-star teams will be selected based on the criteria as set forth by the baseball committee and agreed to by the Winter Park Optimist Board. This criterion is based on overall sportsmanship and positive support of the entire Optimist club program.

ALL-STAR PLAYER SELECTIONS

Each of the Machine Pitch League managers will submit two (2) separate lists of fifteen (15) players from teams in their division to be considered for all-star selection. One (1) list will contain no players from the team they manage. The second list may consist of a maximum of five (5) qualified players from the team they manage. The lists will be tabulated by the Machine Pitch League Commissioner or their designated representative. After the lists are tabulated, the eleven (11) players with the highest vote total will be automatically selected as all-stars.

If the voting described in the preceding two paragraphs results in an all-star roster of less than thirteen (13) players then the all-star manager will select players for the remaining all-star roster slots up to a thirteen (13) player roster. **In** making the selection(s) described in this paragraph the all-star manager must pick from a list of the players who received the next eight highest vote totals.

There is no requirement that each team be represented on the All-Star team.

MAKE-UP GAMES

The Baseball Committee will attempt to reschedule all incomplete games and games that are cancelled as a result of unforeseen circumstances on the next available date. There may be occasions when games are either not rescheduled on the next available date or not rescheduled at all.

POST SEASON TOURNAMENT

The post season tournament bracket will be drawn by division from a hat by the Machine Pitch League Commissioner approximately one week before the first post season tournament game. Important rule differences from the regular season include:

- A: Managers may change the continuous batting order line-up used during the regular season, however, the line-up used for the first tournament game must remain the same throughout the tournament. The next player to hit when a game ends will lead off the next game. Players who are not present when a tournament game begins will not be listed in the line-up. Late arriving players will be added to the line-up immediately upon their arrival at the end of the lineup. If a player begins a tournament game in the line-up but is unable to hit for any reason other than injury, then an out is to be recorded when that player's spot in the line-up comes up. See TEAM OFFENSE rule above;
- B. The TEN RUN MERCY RULE is enforced in tournament games. See TEN RUN MERCY RULE above;
- C. Score is to be kept in tournament games. The home team is responsible for keeping the official score book;
- D. Violation of the PLAYER MINIMUM PLAY RULE results in a forfeit in tournament games regardless of whether the score of the game. See PLAYER MINIMUM PLAY RULE above;
- E. Tie games will be decided pursuant to the rules of Babe Ruth Baseball. See TIE GAMES above;
- F. Tournament games may be protested. See PROTESTS above; and
- G. Teams must have a minimum of eight players to participate in an official post season tournament game. See FORFEITS above.