

# Hollis Brookline Cal Ripken Rookie League Guidelines

## Teams:

- The optimal number of players per team is 12 but teams may be formed with 10 – 13 players.
- The optimal player-to-coach ratio is 4:1. Teams should have a Head Coach, 1-3 Assistant Coaches, and a Team Parent.
- Head Coaches may select 1 Assistant Coach. Additional assistants will be assigned to teams as a result of player allocation. Teams are created fairly by balancing abilities and ages to make the games as competitive as possible.
- All coaches will participate in rookie assessments. In addition, all coaches must volunteer at least once during the season. Possibilities are player assessments, spring cleanup, volunteer at SVI tournament, etc.
- All head and assistant coaches will complete background checks and submit results to the HBCR board prior to Opening Day. No exceptions.

## Website:

- Head Coaches and Team Parents will have access to the HBCR website.
- The website is the preferred method of communicating with your team.
- Home team Head Coach will post final results of games on the website but not final scores. All games will be entered into the website as 1-0 finals.

## Pitching Machines & Baseballs:

- HBCR has 3 Louisville Slugger UPM-45 pitching machines for which games have priority over practices. Machines should be located at RMMS, Mountain Road, and Little Nichols. A machine may be moved to Town Field during the off-season.
- All Coaches should know how to operate the machine before the first practice. Contact the Rookie Coordinator if you are unable to attend the pitching machine demonstration. Pitching machines should never be operated without a ball properly placed in the machine – this will damage the spring.
- Rookie Coordinator will calibrate the machines prior to the start of the season. Once calibrated, do not change any settings other than the fine adjustment. The front feet of the pitching machine should be placed 46 feet from the front of home plate, directly in front of the pitching rubber. If pitches don't seem to be traveling far enough make sure the operator is fully depressing the foot pedal throughout pitch release.
- Only Reduced Injury Factor 5 (RIF-5) balls are used during all practices and games. Mark all RIF-5 balls with your team name.

## Head Coach Self-Introduction to Parents/Players:

- Rookie league is developmental and winning is not the goal. Your goals are player development, player confidence, a fun and supportive environment, team building, friendship building, sportsmanship, etc.
- During practice and games only the coaches coach. Tell parents to cheer their kids but not coach from the stands. If parents want to coach during practice/game they can join your coaching staff.
- All players write their name on all equipment: bats, gloves, helmets, water bottles, etc.
- Gather all health forms including emergency contacts. Share your cell number with parents and bring your cell to all practices and games.
- Preach bat safety. During games and batting practice, only the batter and the on-deck player touch a bat. Only swing when a coach tells you it is OK. Never touch a bat unless you have a helmet on.
- Coaches will never be alone with a player other than their own child. Other coaches and parents must stay at field until all children are with their parents. Encourage parents to stay at practice – this is not babysitting.

## Practices:

- Practices shall not last longer than 90 minutes. Rookie league children are still very young and week-night practices begin as late as 5:45 PM while school is still in session.

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- When possible practices will be held on recurring days of the week. Head Coaches may swap practice days but must use the website for updates and inform the Rookie Coordinator.
- HIGHLY ENCOURAGE that practices focus on “clinic-style” drills to develop good baseball mechanics.
  - Break up your team into smaller groups (3 groups of 4 players) which will keep the players involved. Each group constitutes a “station” which develops a different mechanic – fielding ground balls, throwing, catching, etc.
  - Suggest 5 to 10 repetitions per player for each drill.
  - Several drills can take place at one time by splitting the players up amongst the coaches.
  - Head Coach oversees the drills after demonstration of skill.
- Emphasis should be placed on teaching good form in all phases of play.
- Have players run through first base bag to an orange cone or coach.
- Starting in the middle of the season, begin teaching limited situational awareness (i.e. 1 out, base-runner on first base, grounder hit to third base, what is the correct play?).
- Introduce player pitching mid-way through the season to prepare some to pitch during the “step-up game.”
- Have players run the bases after practice.
- Plan something fun for your final practice: game with moms vs. kids, home-run derby for dads, etc.

## Games:

- Home team assistant coaches prepare the field before and after the game. Rake the area around the bases and home plate (60 foot separation), chalk the foul lines and batters boxes, and set up the pitching machine.
- Teams should arrive early for warm-up and games should start as close as possible to scheduled start time.
- There is a 2-hour time limit for all games with a maximum of 6 innings. No full inning may be started after 1 hour 45 minutes. Innings end after 3 outs or after 4 runs are scored.
- The final inning shall be declared prior to the start of the full inning, but you must consider the time limit. If you complete the 3<sup>rd</sup> inning after 1 hour and 30 minutes, most likely the 4<sup>th</sup> should be declared the last inning.
- Each team will keep its own scorebook and opposing coaches are encouraged to agree on the number of runs that scored at the end of each half inning.
- The coach closest to the play makes the call, and the coach operating the pitching machine will have the final say on any disputed call.
  - Take time during games for “teachable moments.” For example if a runner is doubled off since he/she ran on a pop-up, stop the game and explain the rule to all players.
- All players will be placed in the batting order. Suggest you use the same batting order for the entire year – whoever is on deck at the end of the game leads off the next game.
  - You may “stack” your batting lineup during the playoffs but all players still bat.
  - ONLY DURING THE FIRST TWO GAMES if a batter misses the ball 5 times then quickly place the batting tee and let the player hit off a tee. This keeps batting morale up and involves the infield.
- Teams may field up to 11 defensive players: 4 outfielders, 4 traditional infielders, 2 on either side of the pitching machine, and a catcher in full-gear. Suggest you use the same defensive order for the entire year – while rotating defensive positions every 1-2 innings: RF to 1B to RCF to 2B to LCF to SS to LF to 3B to C to P then back to RF.
  - You may “stack” your defense during the playoffs.
  - You may skip defensive positions in favor of safety. If player cannot safely catch well-thrown balls don’t put them at first base. Or put assistant coach at first base to protect and keep player focused.
- The team in the field may place coaches among players for instructional purposes.
- Players should not be on the bench for more than 1 inning per game. Exceptions include injury, unwillingness, or discipline. Rookie Coordinator must be informed when a player is benched for more than 1 inning.
- There are no walks but there are strikeouts. Each batter gets 5 pitches, so it is essential that the pitching machine be operated properly so that the batter receives quality pitches. Coaches pitch to their own team. Make sure defensive team/coaches are ready before pitching.

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- Any batted ball which strikes a coach or pitching machine is ruled dead and the batter/runner gets one base.
- The pitching machine should be used for all games. You may coach pitch only if the machine is unusable and the home team Head Coach must contact the Rookie Coordinator immediately after the game.
- Players may take extra bases (doubles, triples) on hits but not on overthrows.
- No stealing or leading off and players may only leave their base after pitch crosses plate.
- Feet first sliding is discouraged but may be introduced late in the year. Never teach/allow head-first slides.
- After the game players and coaches line up at home plate to shake hands.
- Games that are rained out may be made up at the agreement of the Head Coaches and Rookie Coordinator. Coaches will decide together if a game is to be canceled due to weather – the home team Head Coach makes the final decision. Home team Head Coach is responsible for rescheduling the game (can be during a designated practice time) and must inform Rookie Coordinator of any cancelled/rescheduled games.
- Final game of season is “step-up game” with minors rules in effect: player pitching with walks after 4 balls and outs after 3 strikes.

## Guidelines/Suggestions:

- All players (male and female) are required to wear groin protection.
- Start each practice/game with stretching exercises – touch their toes, arm rotations, jumping jacks, etc.
- ALWAYS BE POSITIVE and keep it fun. If a player makes a nice throw, tell them “nice throw” otherwise tell them “nice try.” NEVER belittle or embarrass your players or use negative language like “strike him out!”
- Help the opposing teams coaches if you see something that they may not see, or lend a coach or player to their team if they are shorthanded.
- Keep players interest in the game while on the bench – cheer the batter, guess where the play will be after the ball is hit, etc. Do not let players horse around. All players are inside the bench area except the batter and the on-deck batter. If possible assign a bench coach.
- If a ball gets by the fielder make sure they hustle after it and throw it in.
- When playing catch always make sure the other player is ready to receive the throw before throwing.
- Emphasize the “TEAM” concept and that no one player is more important than another.

Updated by Joseph Connelly, January 2014