

# **Sonoma Little League**

## **Bylaws & Local Rules**

Sonoma Little League is a fully chartered Little League program open to boys and girls between the ages of 5-16 living within the boundaries of Sonoma Little League as determined by Little League Baseball. Our league plays in District 53 of the Western Region of Little League Baseball.

**The following bylaws and local rules were reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors on April 3, 2023.**

### **1. DIVISIONS OF PLAY-**

Divisional alignment and number of teams will be adjusted based on enrollment.

#### **Single A (Coach Pitch)- Ages 5-7**

Players who are league age 5-7 are eligible to play in the Single A Coach Pitch Division. Coach Pitch is our most developmental division designed to teach players basic skills of the game, such as: hitting, running to the bases, and throwing. The most important aspect is that the players have fun and hopefully develop a love for the game. Coaches will pitch approximately 6 balls to the players then if needed players will hit from a tee during games. Scores and outs are not kept in this division, teams bat through the order and play 2 to 3 innings per game. We try to build self-confidence in a non-competitive environment for the players hoping to develop a love for the game. Only adult managers/coaches are permitted to pitch in this division. Teams are selected by the Player Agents. This division falls under Little League Baseball Rules for Tee Ball.

#### **AA- Machine/Player Pitch- Ages 6-9**

Players who are league age 6-9 are eligible to play the Double AA Minors Division. League age 6 year olds must have played one year of Single A (Coach Pitch) and be assessed by the league as capable of participation before playing in the AA division. This division of minors remains highly instructional and introduces players to specific positions and game scenarios. Strikes, Balls and Outs are recorded but no score is kept. A Mechanical pitching machine is used for the first 2-3 innings of each game and then player pitching may be utilized. Players will take part in evaluations to ensure they are in the proper division for their skill level. Teams are selected by managers in a draft under the supervision of the Player Agents and President.

#### **AAA- Player Pitch- Ages 8-11**

Players who are league age 8-11 are eligible to be selected to the Triple AAA Minors Division. This division of minors is still instructional but introduces the elements of competition. Players pitch every inning at this level, scores are recorded and the season ends with every team participating in a double-elimination tournament. All 11-year olds are required to participate in AAA if not drafted to a majors team. Player tryout/ evaluations will take place before the start of the season to ensure players are in the proper division for their skill level. Teams are selected by managers every year in a draft under the supervision of the Player Agents and President. League age 7 year olds may request an evaluation to play

AAA. Players league age 7-9 that are not selected for a AAA Team during the draft will be placed in the AA division. All returning AAA players not moved to majors will be selected for a AAA Team.

### **Majors- Ages 10-12**

Players who are league age 10-12 are eligible to be selected to the Majors Division. This is our most competitive division of play. All 12-year olds must participate in the Majors division. Players are drafted by managers each year and become “property players” for that team until they age out of the Majors division. Players League Age 10-11 that are not selected to a Majors team through our draft process will automatically be placed in our AAA Minors Division (does not apply to returning Major players). Some travel for inter-district play is required for the Majors Division. League age 9 year olds may request an evaluation and Board of Director approval to play Majors.

### **Juniors- Ages 13-14**

Players who are league age 13-14 are eligible to play in the Junior Division. This is a competitive division of play using a conventional 90-foot diamond with a pitching distance of 60 feet, 6 inches. Travel is required for interdistrict play. Teams are selected by managers every year in a draft under the supervision of the Player Agents and President.

The Board of Directors may evaluate players on a case-by-case basis to place individuals in divisions that more accurately represent their skill level, regardless of age. However, the placement of any player MUST remain consistent with Little League Rules and Regulations.

## **2. DRAFT METHOD**

- **Majors Division-** The Little League Baseball Draft Plan A, conventional draft is used by Sonoma Little League. Below includes specifics to our league used with ‘Plan A’.

The draft order is determined by the final placement of teams from the previous season based on overall record/winning percentage. (Exception: The first-place team is always determined by the outcome of the playoffs, regardless of record, and that team will always pick last in each round of the next year’s draft). If two or more teams are tied, it will be broken by the results of the head-to-head games between the teams involved. If still tied, the tie will be broken by calculating the runs allowed per inning played on defense in all games played by the teams. The team having the lowest ratio receives the higher placement. Every effort will be made to play all games scheduled. However, it may be necessary to use winning percentage to determine placement, even if there is an uneven number of games played.

Property players from the prior season will be placed on the draft board starting in round 2 until all returning property players are placed back on their team from the prior season..

Each round except 1 and 7 will be assigned a player age which must be selected in that round. If no one in that age category is available managers may select up 1 year then down 1 year. The player ages eligible for majors each season shall be determined by the President and Player Agents after the tryouts and before the draft.

The Draft Board shall be approved by the Board of Directors via email prior to the draft. The Official Draft Board will be shared with all Majors Managers via email within 24 hours of the draft meeting.

Practice field selection will be based on reverse draft order. Every effort will be made for practice field selection to take place immediately following the draft.

- **Juniors, AAA/AA Divisions-** Draft order is determined by a blind draw prior to the draft. A snake method of drafting will be used in these divisions. The Team Manager and 1 predetermined coach shall have their players placed in rounds 1 and 2 before the draft begins. For AA division Coach or player requests will be taken by player agents but are not guaranteed. We shall accept requests of players to the same team for carpool reasons. Practice field and Team Name selection will be based on reverse draft order. Every effort will be made for practice field selection to take place immediately following the draft. Returning coaches will have the first option to the same team name. If a different name is desired it will be based on the reverse draft order .
- **Coach Pitch Only-** The Player Agents are responsible for player placement, with final approval from the League President. Managers may request up to 4 players on their team; all other players will be placed by the Player Agents to make the most even teams based on age and experience.  
Team names will be selected by coaches, order will be pulled from a hat. Practice field selection will be the reverse order of team name selection.. Every effort will be made for practice field selection to take place immediately following the draft. Returning coaches will have first option to the same team name. If a different name is desired they will be placed in the hat draw.

Draft selections are confidential; at no point should anyone involved discuss when players were selected or not selected in the process. Anyone suspected of breaking confidentiality will be subject to disciplinary action by the Board of Directors.

### 3. ALL-STAR SELECTION PROCESS

Little League allows each local league to determine the method used to select All Star teams. Sonoma Little League has adopted this recommended method for selection of its All-Star teams. The details of the process used by Sonoma Little League are provided below.

**All-Star Manager Selection** - A Manager or rostered Coach is eligible to manage an All-Star team if he/she has adequately fulfilled all Manager and/or Coach responsibilities during the regular season and is approved by the President. All candidates must submit a request in writing stating an intent to manage an All-Star team by the date set forth by the Board. Any/All Manager/Coaches must be in good standing with the League in order to manage or coach an All Star Team. If multiple Managers intend to manage an age group, the All-Star Manager will be selected at an in person meeting with vote by ballot. Eligible voters for the 10/11/12 team will include each rostered Major Division Manager and rostered Major Division Coaches (2 per team). Eligible voters for the 9/10/11 and 8/9/10 teams will include each rostered Major and AAA Division Manager and rostered Major and AAA Division Coaches (2 per team). In the event each managerial candidate receives the same number of votes, the League President, in consultation with the Board, will make the final decision on All-Star Manager Selection.

- 8/9/10 and 9/10/11 Division Manager and Coaches- The manager and coach(es) shall be regular season team managers and/or coaches from the AAA or Majors Division.
- 10/11/12 Division Manager and Coaches- The manager and coach(es) shall be regular season team managers and/or coaches from the Majors Division.
- Junior Division Manager and Coaches- The manager and coach(es) shall be regular season team managers and/or coaches from the Junior Division.

Each All Star Manager will select his/her rostered coaches within 48 hours of being selected as an All Star Manager.

No manager or coach may be selected for more than one All Star Team.

All Star Managers and Coaches must be approved by the SLL Board of Directors before announcements are made.

**Player Eligibility-** A Major or AAA player is eligible to be placed on an All-Star Team if he/she meets the Little League age, residency, and participation requirements.

- **Age:** A player must be prepared to supply an approved proof of age document as required by Little League.
- **Residency:** A player must live within the Sonoma Little League boundaries and be prepared to supply the Little League required proof of residency documents.. Players living outside of the boundaries must have had a Little League II (d) or IV (h) for filed during the season.
- **Participation:** A player must have participated in more than one-half the regular season games. Players selected for the All Star team(s) will be asked to return a “commitment” letter signed by their parent/guardian in order to be added to the final roster.

**Ballot -** The goal of this election and selection is to build teams that will be competitive in our District’s All-Star tournament and will proudly represent Sonoma Little League.

**Voting and Selection -** The President and Player Agents shall be responsible for managing the balloting and vote-tallying and manager meeting process. Sonoma Little League has zero tolerance for any player, coach, manager, League official, or parent campaigning for a player or interfering in the player selection process. If approved by SLL’s Board, any player, coach, manager or parent interfering in any way with this process may become ineligible for tournament play. If a player does not participate in the voting at their team’s designated time, no makeup period will be provided.

**Process for Voting and Selection of the Junior All Star Team:**

- The first 9 Players selected to the All Star Team will be based on a vote of all players in the Junior Division. On the ballot for the players vote will be all players in the Junior Division. Each Junior player will receive a ballot and they will select 9 players that they believe should be on the All Star Team. Ballots will be counted and tallied by the Player Agents and President.
  - Any ballot containing more or less than 9 players will automatically be discarded.
- The next 3 players will be selected at a meeting of ALL Junior Managers. Eligible players will include all players in the Junior Division. If a manager is unable to attend they may send a rostered coach in their place. It is expected that managers will confer with their rostered

coaches prior to the meeting in order to get their input. If the managers cannot come to a consensus of the players in a reasonable amount of time (approx. a half hour) a vote will take place. If a vote is needed each Managers will vote for the 3 players they believe should be placed on the All Star Team.

- Where more than one player has an equal number of votes to qualify for the last position or positions, final selection will be made by the All Star Team Manager but must be approved by the President and Player Agents.
- The final 1 to 3 players will be selected by the All Star Team Manager with approval by the President and Player Agents.

#### **Process for Voting and Selection of the 10/11/12 (12's) Year Old All Star Team:**

- Each Majors team manager will submit a list of 5 players for consideration for the All Star team ballot. Managers shall ensure the players eligibility and commitment to the tournament prior to submitting names. It is expected that managers will confer with their rostered coaches prior to submission in order to get their input. Completed commitment letters must be submitted to the Player Agent(s) prior to the ballots being formed.
- The Player Agent(s) will combine all eligible players onto a ballot.
- The first 6 Players selected to the All Star Team will be based on a vote by all players in the Majors Division. Each Majors player will receive a ballot and they will select 9 players that they believe should be on the All Star Team (the top 6 highest votes will automatically be placed on the roster). Players may vote for themselves and players on their own team.
  - Ballots will be counted and tallied by the Player Agents and President. Any ballot containing more or less than 9 players will automatically be discarded.
- The next 3 players will be selected at a meeting of ALL Majors Managers led by the Player Agent(s) and the President. If a manager is unable to attend, they may send a rostered coach in their place. It is expected that managers will confer with their rostered coaches prior to the meeting in order to get their input. The goal of the meeting is to have an open discussion resulting in an agreement as to the next 3 players from the ballot. Taking into consideration the next highest vote getters. If a consensus can not be reached in a reasonable amount of time there will be a vote for the remaining spots. The managers will have an open vote tallied by the Player Agent(s). If there is a tie in the vote for the final players those players who received the same number of votes will be re-voted on. In the event of an unbroken tie the final decision for tied players will be determined by the All Star Manager.
- The final 3 to 6 players will be selected by the All Star Team Manager prior to the completion of the meeting with approval by the President and Player Agents. The All Star Team Manager may select any player with a league age of 10, 11 or 12 in the Majors Division. Their selections should take into account the discussions with managers at the meeting and specific needs for each All Star Team
  - Players getting high votes but not making the cut should be (privately) considered as alternates as needed. Or if they are under 12 they should be strongly considered for placement on an age appropriate team.

#### **Process for Selection of the 8/9/10 (10's) and 9/10/11 (11's) Year Old All Star Teams:**

- The first **6** Players selected to the All Star Team will be based on a vote by all players in the Majors Division. Each Majors player will receive a ballot and they will select **9** players in each age category (9/10 and 11) that they believe should be on the All Star Team (the top 6 highest votes will automatically be placed on the roster if not already on another All Star Team).
  - Players may not vote for themselves and players on their own team.
  - The ballots for this vote will include all players age 11 in the Major Division on one ballot and all players age 9 and 10 in the Major Division on another ballot.
  - This player ballot vote will take place at the same time players vote for the 10/11/12 All Star Team.
- The next **3** players will be selected at a meeting of ALL Majors and AAA Managers led by the Player Agent(s) and the President.. Eligible players will include ALL players that fit the age category who played in either the Major or AAA Divisions. If a manager is unable to attend they may send a rostered coach in their place. It is expected that managers will confer with their rostered coaches prior to the meeting in order to get their input. The goal of the meeting is to have an open discussion resulting in an agreement as to the next 3 players. Managers should take into consideration the next highest vote getters as well as AAA recommended players. If a consensus can not be reached in a reasonable amount of time there will be a vote for the remaining spots. The managers will have an open vote tallied by the Player Agent(s). If there is a tie in the vote for the final players those players who received the same number of votes will be re-voted on. In the event of an unbroken tie the final decision for tied players will be determined by the All Star Manager.
- The final **3 to 6** players will be selected by the All Star Team Manager prior to the completion of the meeting with approval by the President and Player Agents. The All Star Team Manager may select any player that fits the age category in the Major or AAA Division. Their selections should take into account the discussions with managers at the meeting and specific needs for each All Star Team.
  - Players getting high votes but not making the team should be (privately) considered as alternates as needed.

Any player that declines All Star Team participation declines participation on any District All Star Team.

All Star selections are confidential; at no point should anyone involved discuss when players were selected or not selected in the process. Anyone suspected of breaking confidentiality will be subject to disciplinary action by the Board of Directors.

All players selected will have their names posted on the Sonoma Little League website and Social Media and will be notified by their All Star Manager in accordance with the dates set forth by Little League International.

All ballots shall be shredded immediately after official counts take place. Player ballots will be stored in a sealed envelope with the manager's signature across the tape until the official count takes place. Player Agents will be responsible for holding ballots at all times.

**Replacements** - Players voted to an All-Star team must be able to attend All-Star practices starting as early as May 15th and must be available to play in the All-Star games (generally beginning and during the end of June or beginning of July).. If a player cannot devote the necessary time due to injury, scheduled vacation or other commitments, that player will be replaced on the All-Star team. The manager for the team, in conjunction with the league President and Player Agents will make that determination. No alternates will be chosen in advance of the need to fill a roster spot.

#### **4. IN SEASON PLAYER REPLACEMENT POLICY-**

The following local rules are established as a supplement to Little League Regulation III (d):

- If any player misses (2) consecutive games, or that player is consistently absent from practices, the manager must notify the Player Agents immediately. Failure by the manager to immediately report consistent absences at games or practices will result in disciplinary action by the Board of Directors.
- Managers should do their best to communicate with the players parents/ guardian about absences and any concerns before reaching out to the Player Agents.
- If continued absences are expected for reasons other than illness or injury, that player may be removed from the team by action of the Player Agents and with the approval of the Board.
- Under no circumstances should the manager take action to remove a player without consulting the Player Agents first. The Player Agents, will contact the player and his/her parents to determine the reason(s) for the continued absences and/or the player's decision to stop participating.
- If a replacement player is needed the Player Agents shall first determine if there are any eligible players on a waiting list. If there are no waiting list players at the time a replacement is needed then the Player Agents will gather a list of eligible minors players that may be selected to move up to the majors.
  - Replacement players must be the same age as the player that was removed from the Majors team. If no player of the same age is eligible then a player 1 year older may be selected if none exist a player 1 year younger may be selected.
  - Every effort must be made by the Player Agents and Board of Directors to ensure the replacement player move is not disruptive to the minors division nor does it give any draft benefit to the majors team for the next year.
  - All replacements must be approved by the Board of Directors.
- If a Minor Division player declines to move up to a Major Division team, that player will forfeit their eligibility to the Major Division for the remainder of the season.

NOTE: The replacement of players from the Minor Division into the Major Division during the last two weeks of the regular season schedule is prohibited.

#### **5. FIVE-RUN/LAST INNING**

The following rule shall apply to Minor AAA division games only (Minor AA games will be played with the five-run rule in every inning, no exceptions):

- A five-run limit will be imposed in every inning but the last inning. The last inning will be the defined as follows:
- The first new inning that starts after the 1 HOUR and 40 MINUTE mark and before the 2 HOUR mark will be determined the last inning.
- This last inning will end when a team bats through the roster, obtains three outs or the home team takes the lead (no five-run rule). If this inning only takes 10 minutes it is still considered the last inning regardless of the score or any remaining time left within the two-hour time limit. Games ending in ties will be considered regulation games and will not be continued.
- If a new inning begins before the 1 HOUR and 40 MINUTE mark it will be played under the five-run rule. If that inning takes 40 minutes (which puts it past the two-hour time limit) the game is over and neither team will benefit from the “last inning” rule, regardless of the score.
- It is critical that the games start on time and the official scorekeeper documents the time of the first pitch. The umpire will be responsible for monitoring the game clock and inform both teams when the “last inning” is in effect.

## **6. PLAY-OFF STRUCTURE / DISTRICT TOURNAMENT OF CHAMPIONS-**

***Majors and AAA DIVISION*** - All teams will participate in a double elimination tournament following the completion of the regular season. Seeding for this tournament will be based on regular season record. Ties will be broken by the results of head-to-head games between the teams. If still tied, it will be broken by calculating the runs allowed per innings played on defense in all games played by the teams. The team having the lowest ratio wins the tiebreaker.

If two teams represent Sonoma Little League in the District Tournament of Champions. Team One will be the team with the best record from the regular season (Regular Season Champion) and Team Two will be the team that wins the postseason tournament (Postseason Champion). In the event that the Regular Season Champion and the Postseason Champion are the same team, the runner-up in the postseason tournament will be the second team to represent the league in the Tournament of Champions.

If one team will represent Sonoma Little League in the District Tournament of Champions, the team selected shall be the Postseason Champion.

## **7. PLAYER POOL GUIDELINES**

The league’s Player Agents will create and run the player pool. The league’s Player Agents will use the pool to assign players, on a rotating basis, to teams that are short of players for any particular game(s).

- Managers and/or coaches will not have the right to randomly pick and choose players from the pool.
- Pool play must not conflict with players' regular team games.
- When a player participates in a game on a team other than his/her own team, such player will not be permitted to pitch **or catch** in that game.
- Pool players that are called and show up at the game site must play at least nine consecutive defensive outs and bat once.
- A separate player pool shall be used for Majors and AAA.



- Pool players may only be used during the regular season.
- Managers may only request a pool player if they are certain to have nine or fewer regular team players. The manager may request as many pool players as necessary to field a team of ten (10). By way of example:
  - Team “A” only has nine (9) players - the manager may request one (1) pool player.
  - Team “A” only has eight (8) players - the manager may request two (2) pool players.
  - Team “A” only has seven (7) players - the manager may request three (3) pool players.
- The manager should provide the Player Agents with at least 24 hours notice in the event a pool player(s) is needed.
- If a manager becomes aware of being short players at the last minute they should contact the “officer of the day” ASAP.
- Under no circumstances shall a manager, coach, or player approach a prospective pool player to enquire about their availability to play for another team.
- Players electing to participate in pool play shall never be subject to approval by their team nor shall they be punished for pool playing. Any manager suspected of this behavior will be subject to discipline by the Board of Directors.

**Procedure for assigning Pool Players:**

- Players will complete a “Pool Player Interest” at the beginning of the season. Players will be added to the pool in the order their interest emails are received.
- As the Player Agents are notified of a shortage of players for an upcoming game, the pool players will be contacted by the Player Agents on a rotating basis.
- If a pool player is asked to participate in a game and is unable to do so on that date, that player will be bypassed and the next available pool player will be invited to participate.
- If Player Agents are unable to make contact with a pool player after multiple attempts they will move to the next pool player on the list.