

2024 Optimist League Objectives, Goals, & Rules

Performance Objective of the Optimist Program

The performance objective for the Optimist baseball program is for our children to participate in coach assisted baseball games that will be used to develop individual player skills in a competitive environment. The team objective is to score runs on the other team while preventing the opposition from scoring. The dimensions of the Optimist diamond are smaller than regulation baseball. The rules are simplified to accommodate young beginner players. The program emphasizes skill development and sportsmanship over winning.

Performance Goals of the Optimist League Program

- Familiarize players with the concept of teamwork and with the responsibilities of a team-member. Players will know and address all teammates by name.
- Familiarize players with the concept of sportsmanship. We will not run-up the score on any team. We will shake hands with the opponent after the game. Etc...
- Players will demonstrate knowledge of baseball rules.
- Players will demonstrate knowledge of basic offensive and defensive strategies.
- Players will be able to identify parts of the baseball diamond.
- Players will be able to identify the positions played in the game.
- Players will be able to identify equipment used in baseball.
- Players will be able to assume a proper batting position in the batter's box.
- Players will demonstrate knowledge of the strike zone.
- Players will be able to hit a ball off live pitching when at bat.
- Players will be able to run the bases and score runs.
- Players will be able to assume the baseball ready position on defense.
- Players will be able to field a ground or fly ball.
- Players will be able to make a throw to the appropriate base or cut-off man.

Rules of the Optimist Baseball Program

Safety

- 1) Safety is always first.
- 2) All batters will wear a batting helmet while both at bat and on base.
- 3) Players can slide into bases.
- 4) **Players cannot steal bases.**
- 5) Shoes with metal spikes are prohibited.
- 6) No jewelry will be worn.
- 7) Throwing the bat by the batter constitutes an OUT. Speak with the player first, point out the danger that is caused by throwing the bat, but if the problem continues the player will be forced to lose an "at bat turn".

Start of Play

- 8) Boys and girls baseball ages of 9 - 11 years old are eligible to play.
- 9) A team should field a minimum of 7 players to start/complete a game.
- 10) If a team has 7 players and the opposing team has 10 or more player, then the coaches will select 1 or 2 players to play with the team which is short.
- 11) A team should appear at the field, ready for play, 15 minutes prior to the scheduled start of the game.
- 12) **Each game will consist of 6 innings or 1 hour 50 minutes. Teams can only score 5 runs per inning. At the 1 hour and 35 minute time the last inning will be called and teams will have unlimited runs allowed the last inning.**
- 13) **MERCY RULE: If one of the following occurs during the game, the game will end in favor of the team that... a) is ahead by twelve (12) or more runs after the team that is behind has batted 4 times, or... b) is ahead by ten (10) or more runs after the team that is behind has batted 5 times.**
- 14) All players present will be placed in the batting line-up and will bat in the order listed. Please have all players listed; any player arriving late will be placed at the end of the batting order.
- 15) **Round Robin Batting and Free substitution will be used along with a courtesy runner.**
- 16) Games will be cancelled when light or other conditions make it to dangerous to continue. Games will be cancelled when lightning or thunder is observed. A decision to cancel once a game is started should be made by both coaches.
- 17) The BPRD shall supply new balls for the game.
- 18) The home team will sit on the first base side.
- 19) The Parks & Rec Dept is responsible for lining the field and for setting out the bases.
- 20) Protest will not be allowed. Judgment calls by the umpire are not to be protested.
- 21) Each coach shall be responsible for the conduct of his players and fans/spectators.
- 22) Both Teams are responsible for cleaning up the area after each game.
- 23) No animals/pets of any kind are permitted on the fields during practices or games there is NO exception to this rule.
- 24) All teams (coaches, players, spectators) must follow school policies. No use of tobacco products and/or alcohol/drugs will be permitted on school premises. Anyone breaking school or BPRD policies will be asked to leave. Teams that are not compliant with these policies may result in forfeiture.

Players and Positions

- 25) If a player is hurt, they may be removed from the game and at a later time return to the game. They may return only to the batting position that they held prior to being injured.
- 26) A fielding team will consist of 10 players; the extra player will be placed in the outfield. Outfield - LF, LC, RC & RF. (4 outfielders)
- 27) On defense, the players will be positioned at 1B, 2B, SS, 3B, Catcher and 1 pitcher. All other players will be positioned evenly in the outfield area.
- 28) No player will play the same position for more than three innings, exclusion of the catcher and/or pitcher.
- 29) Coaches will ensure that all players will play at least half of each game.

Coaches and Assistants

- 30) The Parks & Recreation Department will provide an adult to be an umpire (which can be a coach or a parent willing to assist).
- 31) The 1st and 3rd base coaches are restricted to the area of the coach's boxes. Coaches are not allowed to physically assist base runners; e.g. pushing the runner or helping the runner off the ground, while the ball is in play.

Play of the Game

- 32) Make the game fun.
- 33) Teams will keep score; the home team is the official book.
- 34) During the game, all players must remain in the designated team areas and on benches, except the batter at the plate.
- 35) In Optimist League, the play is considered 'over' when the ball is returned to a player at the mound or any base and time is granted per the umpire.
- 36) When the umpire calls the ball dead, it stays dead until the umpire calls the ball in play again.
- 37) Runners may advance to the next base on an overthrow out-of-bounds. Runners cannot advance on any foul ball.
- 38) The runner may not leave the base until the ball has left the pitcher's hand. In the event of the base runner leaving early, the umpire may call the base runner out.
- 39) Leading off is not permitted.
- 40) **Base stealing is NOT permitted.**
- 41) An inning is three outs.
- 42) **Base runners CANNOT advance on a passed ball or wild pitch from any base.**
- 43) The outfielders may not play on the infield until the ball is hit. Once the ball is hit, the entire field is then in play, and any player may then attempt to field the ball.
- 44) Force-out: A legal force-out is made when a base runner must advance to allow the batter to achieve 1st base and the ball reaches the next base in the possession of a fielder, and the fielder while in possession of the ball, touches that base before the runner touches it.
- 45) Runners Overrunning a Base: First base and home plate are the only bases a runner may touch and run past. If a runner should overrun 2nd and 3rd base, and an alert fielder who is in possession of the ball touches the runner while off the base, the runner shall be declared out. A fielder may not push or force a runner off the base that a runner has gained in an attempt to tag him out. First base is treated like second and third bases when a runner makes a turn toward second base after touching 1st base. Should a runner make a turn around 1st base toward 2nd base and then tagged by the fielder, while in possession of the ball, prior to returning to 1st base, the runner shall be declared out.

Play of the Game (continued)

- 46) Tagging-Up: A base runner will be allowed to tag-up after a fly ball out (base runner leaves base after fly ball is caught) only if the ball is caught in the outfield grass. Tagging-Up is not allowed on infield fly outs.
- 47) **There will be no infield fly rule.**
- 48). **Pitching Recommendations: pitchers can pitch 55 pitches per day - finish the batter or 100 pitches per week or 75 pitches per day with a 5 day rest period – coaches please track your own pitches / All pitching will be tracked by day/player and total pitch count per day. Sunday – Saturday. These are recommendations based on a study by Little League Baseball. The Parks & Rec Department will not collect pitching charts but would suggest following these guidelines for the participants long term arm health.**
- 49) **Dropped 3rd strike rule: If the catcher drops the ball, the batter is automatically out. Base runners cannot advance on wild pitches.**
- 50) Games are scheduled on a Tuesday and Friday night basis 6:00 & 8:00 pm at Southside Park; makeup games could be played on other nights.

The Diamond

A regulation diamond has the following dimensions:

Batting Box: These are two squares on each side of home plate from which the player must stand to hit the ball. The pitcher may not throw the ball until the player is ‘ready’ in the batting box.

Foul Lines: Lines extending from home to first base and home to third base and beyond to the outfield. The area between the foul lines is considered fair territory, while any ball outside the lines is in foul territory.

Infield: The area generally covered in dirt rather than grass, or an area extending just behind first, second and third bases (collectively, the bases).

Outfield: The area behind the bases that is generally grass is called the outfield.

Pitching Rubber: A rubber strip in the middle of the pitching mound from which the pitcher releases the ball.

The Belleville Parks & Recreation Department reserves the right to alter any and all playing rules as it deems necessary. **Please remember the fields belonging to School District #118 and players, coaches and spectators can’t have tobacco products, alcohol, or drugs on the property at anytime**

The NFHS / IHSA rule book will govern the league.

Optimist Field Dimensions

Range	Home Plate to Middle Field	Foul Lines	Home Plate to First & Third	Home Plate to Pitcher Plate
Optimist Age	200-250 feet	200-250 feet	65 feet	43 feet
9-11				