

Welcome to Rookie Senior

Get ready to enter an exciting new division: Rookie Senior.

Real Competition

Until this year, there wasn't much difference between Rookie 7 and Rookie 8 (now known as Rookie Junior and Rookie Senior). However, starting with the 2007 season, Rookie Senior is a more disciplined and competitive division.

For one thing, the score of each game will be recorded and team standings will be posted on the MSL web site. NOTE: It's up to *the home team coach* to submit the score to the Rookie Senior Coordinator the night of the game. The Coordinator will then pass on the score to our web master.

The League looks on Rookie Senior as a preparation for AA, a division that is more competitive still. It's our goal, by making Rookie Senior a more advanced division, to improve the caliber of players entering AA so they can enjoy an even greater baseball experience.

Regular Practices

Rookie Senior coaches are expected to hold at least one team practice each week. It is vitally important to the development of baseball skills among our players that they have an opportunity to practice outside of a game situation.

It's easy for most 8 & 9 year olds to lose interest in any one sport. To keep baseball fresh for them, try to have at least one day's break between a practice and your next game.

To ensure good attendance at practices, keep them moving at a good pace and limit their length to the players' attention span. You'll likely find that you can keep your players interested for about an hour before mental and physical fatigue set in.

Always start and end practices right on time. If parents see that a practice is under way when their child arrives late, they'll be more inclined to get him or her there on time in future. Ending the practice at the promised time is just as important, to avoid parents having to stand around waiting to pick up their child.

Before you call your first practice, let your players and their parents know how important practices are. Inform them that those who attend diligently advance more quickly than those who don't, which helps them perform better during games. And that results in more fun and a greater sense of accomplishment.

There's a wealth of material available on how to conduct fun yet productive practices. As a start, check out the Coaches Resources section of the MSLI web site: www.eteamz.com/msll

IMPORTANT: One final but extremely important note regarding practices – *under no circumstances may a coach conduct a practice without at least one other adult present*. If you are the only adult present, the practice must be cancelled. It is important to communicate this to your parents, so that they do not drop off their kids and leave before it has been determined that at least one other adult will be able to attend the practice.

2 Tips to Get You Started

(i) Many players coming out of Rookie 7 tend to run a runner down instead of throwing the ball to a base for an out. Part of the reason is that they're not yet confident that they can throw accurately (you can remedy that at practices). Another is that they think they can run faster than they can throw.

To prove that throwing is the fastest way to transport a baseball, line up your players 8 or 10 yards from a fence. With a stopwatch in hand, have a player throw the ball at the fence as hard as s/he can. Then instruct the player to run to the fence and time the run.

When all players have taken part in the exercise, announce the difference between how long it took each player to throw the ball to its destination vs run it. They'll discover that a thrown ball travels twice as quickly.

NOTE: to avoid embarrassing less accomplished players, don't read out their times (e.g. 4 seconds to run it and 2 seconds to throw it); rather, tell them that their throw got the ball to the fence in half the time of running it.

(ii) Young players have a tendency to pick up the ball with their glove instead of their hand. You can point out that, with the ball already in their hand, they can throw it more quickly. You can also tell them that it's easier and more reliable to use their hand. If they don't believe you, the following demonstration should convince them:

Line up 10 baseballs about a foot apart. Then station a player a few feet opposite each ball. Start your stopwatch and have a player, as fast as possible, pick up the first ball with his/her glove and throw it to the player opposite to the ball, then quickly move onto the second ball and throw it to the player opposite that ball. After all 10 balls have been scooped up in their glove and thrown, announce how long it took to complete the exercise.

Next, have another player go through the same exercise, but have that player use her or her hand. When the 10 balls have been thrown, announce how long it took the player to complete the task. It will have required about 1/3 the amount of time taken by the glove-using player.

For extra excitement and drama, have the two demonstrations take place at the same time so that the with-glove player and with-hand player are racing against each other.

Girls Can Compete With Boys

MSLL has always had a number of girls playing T-ball, Rookie 7 and Rookie 8 but many of them drop out before entering AA. That's a shame, because a good percentage of these girls are athletic and can compete with boys at this age. (Last year, an 8 year old girl excelled in AA and won a regular spot on the 9 yr old All-Stars team. This year, based on her Assessments, she was invited to the Majors Tryout.)

The League is working to encourage more Rookie girls to continue with baseball. You can help by making certain that they get as much attention in training as the boys on your team do. As with boys, the better they get, the more success they enjoy. And the more success they enjoy, the more likely they are to stay with the game.

Counting on the Parents

Rookie Senior is more demanding on a coach's time and energy than R7/Rookie Junior, so it's important that parents provide you with help whenever you need it. If you don't receive the help you require, remind them that they agreed in writing, when they enrolled their child, that they would offer their time to help out with the team.

Final Words

While Rookie Senior is a more competitive division than R7, the prime objectives are still for players to develop their baseball skills and have fun while doing it...because that will have them coming back to baseball year after year.

HAVE A GREAT "ROOKIE SENIOR" SEASON!