

**Herndon Optimist Youth Baseball Cal Ripken League**  
**Rules of Play**

## **Major, Minor, and Rookie Leagues**

### **OVERVIEW**

Major, Minor, and Rookie League games played within the Herndon Optimist Youth Baseball Cal Ripken League (HOYBCRL) program will be played according to Official Baseball Rules 1.00 through 7.00. The HOYBCRL is affiliated with Cal Ripken Baseball (formerly the Bambino Division of Babe Ruth Baseball), which has defined certain exceptions to the Official Rules. Accordingly, Cal Ripken Rules and Regulations 0.01 through 0.05 also govern HOYBCRL games.

In addition, HOYBCRL has established further refinements to these governing Rules and Regulations. Where exceptions have been established, the HOYBCRL position takes priority over Cal Ripken, which takes precedence over Official Baseball Rules. Cal Ripken and HOYBCRL exceptions/interpretations are noted in the left margin as CR and HO, respectively.

### **TEAM COMPOSITION & REQUIREMENTS**

- CR 1            Each team in the Major, Minor, and Rookie Leagues shall consist of no less than twelve (12) nor more than fifteen (15) players, a manager, and two coaches.
- CR 2            Each Major League team shall have no more than eight (8) and no less than six (6) twelve-year-olds.
- HO 3            To be eligible to play in a game, a player must conform to a uniform dress code which includes league-issued uniform jersey, solid gray pants, and team cap.
- HO 4            In the Major, Minor, and Rookie Leagues, a team must have eight (8) or more players to play a game. A team's players must be present and ready to play within five (5) minutes of the start time of the game. Failure to meet either of these conditions will result in the game's forfeiture.
- HO 5            In the Major, Minor, and Rookie Leagues, at the conclusion of a game, each manager must sign the opposing team's score book.

### **PITCHING**

- CR 1            A pitcher, regardless of age, may pitch not more than six (6) innings per calendar week. If a pitcher delivers one (1) pitch in an inning, that pitcher shall be charged for one (1) inning pitched.
- CR 2            The calendar week is Monday through Sunday.
- CR 3            A pitcher must have two (2) calendar days rest between pitching assignments if he/she pitches in more than two (2) innings in any one game. (Example: A player pitching more than two (2) innings on Saturday cannot pitch again until Tuesday.)
- CR 4            The balk does not apply to Major, Minor, and Rookie Leagues.

- HO 5 No pitcher shall pitch more than six (6) innings in any (3) consecutive days.
- HO 6 A Minor League pitcher shall not pitch more than three (3) innings in a game.
- HO 7 A Rookie League pitcher shall not pitch more than two (2) innings in a game.
- HO 8 In the Rookie League, each player who wants to pitch should be given the opportunity to pitch at least one (1) complete inning during the course of the season. However, player safety and confidence may be given consideration in making position assignments.
- HO 9 **All innings pitched** by a player -- whether in regularly scheduled games, rainouts, make-up games, in-house tournament games, other leagues played in concurrently, or all-star games -- shall count as innings pitched under the above pitching rules.
- HO 10 Games in which an ineligible pitcher has been used as specified in the preceding rules shall be declared forfeited.
- HO 11 In the Minor and Rookie Leagues, on the third trip to the mound by a manager or coach in the same inning to the same pitcher, the pitcher will automatically be removed from the game as a pitcher only. In the Major League, a manager or coach must remove a pitcher on the second trip to the mound.
- HO 12 **Use of pitches that involve a twisting motion of the arm or wrist is prohibited.** These pitches include curveballs, sliders, and screwballs. Use of any pitch that involves a twisting motion of the arm or wrist will result in a one-time warning to the player and both managers. If that player or any other continues to throw breaking pitches after the umpire's warning, the player will be ejected from the game. The commissioner of the league in which the violation occurs may impose appropriate penalties (up to and including suspensions) upon players and/or coaches for throwing breaking pitches.

## BASE RUNNING

- CR 1 When a pitcher is in contact with the pitcher's plate and in the possession of the ball and the catcher is in the catcher's box ready to receive the ball, base runners shall not leave their bases until the ball has been delivered and has reached the batter.
- HO 2 **Rookie League Exception.** In the Rookie League, all base runners must return promptly back to their bases once a play has been completed and the pitcher has control of the ball, regardless of where the pitcher is standing. The purpose of this rule is to prevent exaggerated leads off a base designed to "taunt" the pitcher into making a throw over to a base.
- HO 3 **NO Stealing Home.** In the Rookie League, stealing home plate on a pitch or a throw back to the pitcher by the catcher after a pitch is prohibited. Upon a passed ball or a wild pitch the runners may not advance home but may steal any other base. A runner may not advance home from third base if the catcher attempts to throw out another runner stealing second base. If the throw is mishandled at second or sails into the outfield, the runners must stay at second and third and do not advance further. (This rule is intended to allow catcher an opportunity to stop the runner moving to second without concern for the runner at third scoring). However, a base runner stealing third may advance home upon an overthrow by the catcher trying to throw out the runner stealing third.
- HO 4 Headfirst sliding is prohibited. The two exceptions are when a player is caught in a rundown and when a player is returning to a base to avoid being picked off.

- HO 5 When the catcher is a base runner and there are two outs, a pinch runner may be used to allow the catcher additional time to put on equipment for the next half inning, except in the bottom half of the final inning. The runner substituting for the catcher should be the player who made the second out.

## BATTING

- CR 1 The batter is out whether a third strike is caught or not.
- HO 2 Immediate and appropriate action as outlined below shall be taken by the Head Umpire when a batter throws a bat: **Unintentional**. On the first such occurrence the Head Umpire shall advise the manager of the problem, allowing the manager to take appropriate action (usually an explanation to the child of what happened and an admonition to him/her and other players not to repeat it). On any succeeding occurrence, the Head Umpire shall call the batter "out" and declare a "dead ball" situation. Runners may not advance in a "dead ball" situation. **Intentional**. The Head Umpire shall call the batter "out" and declare a "dead ball" situation. The batter shall be removed from the game if the Head Umpire considers the incident to have created an unsafe condition. The decision is the Head Umpire's alone to make. He/she may consult with his/her partner, but no managers, coaches, players, or parents should attempt to influence the Head Umpire's decision. A second occurrence of an intentionally thrown bat by the same player in the same game is cause for automatic expulsion..
- HO 3 When there is a play at the plate and the batter is still present, as in the case of a runner stealing home plate, the batter must remove him/herself from the immediate area of home plate so as not to interfere with the fielders' attempt to make a play. If, in the view of the umpire(s), the batter did not attempt to move away from the plate and/or interfered with the play, the runner may be called out at home plate. Other runners may advance at their own risk.
- HO 4 Players are prohibited from swinging a bat in the dugout or dugout area.

## EQUIPMENT

- CR 1 Protective headgear shall be worn by the offensive player when on deck, at bat, or while a base runner during all games and practices.
- HO 2 Any base runner who intentionally removes the protective headgear while base running shall be called out. For scoring purposes, the out shall be ruled as if the runner had been tagged out.
- HO 3 In the Major and Minor Leagues, all protective headgear, HOYBCRL issued or personal, must have a face guard or a "C-Flap." In the Rookie League, all protective headgear must have a face guard.
- HO 4 Any player warming up a pitcher must wear a mask and a protective cup. Any adult warming up a pitcher must wear a mask. During all games and practices, the catcher must wear a protective supporter cup and protective headgear. A throat protector is considered part of a catcher's mask and must be attached.
- HO 5 The bat shall be no more than 33 inches in length, nor have a bat barrel in excess of 2 1/4 inches in diameter.

- HO 6 Metal cleats may not be worn by any player, manager, or coach.
- HO 7 No jewelry of any kind may be worn. No hard plastic or metal may be worn in the hair.
- HO 8 Pitchers are not permitted to wear white on their forearms or wrists. (For example, long sleeve white shirts or wristbands.)

## SUBSTITUTION

- HO 1 If a pitcher is removed from the mound at any time during the game, he may not pitch again during that game.
- HO 2 **All players will be included in the batting order at all times during a game.** Players may be moved to or from a defensive position at any time, subject to Substitution Rules 3 and 4. Exceptions may be made for disciplinary reasons or illness and the opposing manager must be notified promptly when the player is both removed and reinserted. The affected player may return to his/her place in the batting order once he/she has recovered or the punishment has been lifted. The player's team will not be penalized during his/her absence by having that player's spot count as an out.
- HO 3 In the Rookie and Minor Leagues no player will be kept from playing defensively for more than one (1) consecutive inning and not more than twice (two innings) during a six-inning game. In leagues where a run limit is being used, when the offensive team reaches the designated run limit, it will be considered three (3) defensive outs. Exceptions may be made for disciplinary reasons or illness.
- HO 4 In the Major League, all players must play defensively in at least four innings of a six-inning game. Exceptions may be made for disciplinary reasons or illness.
- HO 5 A player who arrives after lineups have been exchanged must be placed at the bottom of the batting order.
- HO 6 In the Rookie League, a fourth outfielder may be positioned on the field at equal depth with the other outfielders.
- HO 7 In the Rookie League, during the course of the season, each player should be given the opportunity to play one or more of the six infield positions (1B, 2B, 3B, SS, P, C) for at least 1/3 of the total innings played. Each player should also play at least 1/3 of the total innings in one or more of the four outfield positions (LF, LC, RC, RF).
- HO 8 In the Minor League, each player shall be given the opportunity to play an infield position for at least one inning in every game.
- HO 9 The only exceptions to rules HO 7 and HO 8 above are for player injury or illness, or due to a manager's concern for a player's safety. However, if a manager feels a player's safety is involved should he/she play certain positions (e.g. infield), then the manager must consult with the player's parents and receive approval from the league commissioner for an exemption to the rule.

## INTERFERENCE/OBSTRUCTION

- HO 1 Obstruction shall be called on any defensive player who blocks, or attempts to block, a runner from reaching a base, including home plate, without having full possession of the ball.

- HO 2 An advancing base runner must attempt to avoid a collision by sliding or some other action. If the runner does not attempt to avoid a collision with the fielder, even if they are obstructing the base, the runner will be called "out" for interference. A batter/runner running from home to first within the 3-foot restraining line or a runner in a rundown and unable to see the defensive player cannot be called out for interference unless he/she takes a flagrant or intentional action.

## PROTESTS AND RULE INTERPRETATIONS

- HO 1 Notice that the game is being played under protest must be filed with the Head Umpire (the home plate umpire) by the team manager immediately at the time of the disputed decision and before the next pitched ball. A protest arising on a game ending play may be filed until noon of the following day to the League Commissioner.
- HO 2 A written report setting forth all the facts of the protest must be filed with the League Commissioner within forty-eight (48) hours of the date of the protest.
- HO 3 The League Commissioner shall appoint three (3) members of the League not associated with the teams involved and the HOYBCRL President or his delegated representative to serve on the Protest Committee.
- HO 4 Final decision of the protest shall be made by a majority vote of the Protest Committee, reviewed by the HOYBCRL President and League Commissioner. The League Commissioner will advise the managers and umpires involved of the final decision within 72 hours after receipt of the written report setting forth the facts of the protest.
- HO 5 No protest shall be recognized on a judgment decision by the umpire (For example, calls of balls and strikes, or safe or out on a play at a base.) Only when a manager claims that the umpire's decision is in violation of the rules will a protest be recognized.
- HO 6 There are no protests in the Rookie League. Managers are expected to reach a quiet mutual resolution to rule interpretation questions at the game. If managers think that additional action is appropriate, they should refer the question to the Rookie League Commissioner.
- HO 7 Should a dispute arise during the course of a game, managers are expected to act responsibly and respectfully toward the umpire(s) as well as members of their own team and the opposing team. Also, the manager is responsible for all those affiliated with his/her team (coaches, players, parents) acting in the same manner. Any person who is judged by the umpire(s) to be acting in an inappropriate manner is subject to expulsion.

## GENERAL

- CR 1 A regulation game shall consist of six (6) innings, or four (4) innings if the game is called, or 3 1/2 innings if the home team has scored more in three at bats than the visiting team has in four at bats when the game is called.
- HO 2 Any game called because the time limit has been reached becomes a regulation game with the score reverting to the last complete inning regardless of the number of innings played. The HOYBCRL president may waive this rule if significant time was lost due to injury or a rain delay.
- HO 3 A game not considered a regulation game must be replayed in its entirety as a new game.

- HO 4 Major League games will be considered complete, once becoming regulation, if one team is ahead by ten (10) runs and has equal times at bat or the home team is leading.
- HO 5 **LINEUPS SHALL BE EXCHANGED 10 MINUTES BEFORE GAME TIME.** Only players present at that time may be included in the lineup. Players arriving later will be added at the bottom of the batting order in order of arrival. Any position in the lineup card containing the name of a player not present 10 minutes prior to the start of the game, shall cause an out to be declared each and every time that position in the lineup would have come to bat. (Note: The player will still bat at the end of the order. The penalty is assessed to the team because of the manager's failure to submit a proper batting order.)
- HO 6 Any delay in beginning a game at the Scheduled Start Time that is due to either team (and not the umpire), shall be considered lost time and will not be made up by pushing back the Scheduled Start Time. An exception to this is for the second game of back-to-back evening games played on weeknights. In this case, the umpire will decide on an appropriate start time.
- HO 7 **No New Inning** For all weekday games (Monday-Friday) no new inning shall start after one hour thirty minutes (1 hr 30 min) of play has been completed. For all weekend games (Saturday & Sunday), no new inning shall start after one hour forty-five minutes (1 hr 45 min) of play has been completed.
- HO 8 **Last Inning** In the Minor and Rookie Leagues the home plate umpire should declare Last Inning just prior to one hour thirty minutes (1 hr 30 min) for weekday games and one hour forty-five minutes (1 hr 45 min) for weekend games. Once the no-new-inning time has passed, the umpire may declare Last Inning at any time. (Note: If the game is in the middle of an inning when Last Inning is declared and the visiting team has completed its at bat by reaching the regular run limit, the home team will be held to the same run limit. However, if the visiting team's at bat ended with three outs, then the home team will be able to score up to the full amount of runs allowed in the Last Inning for its league.)
- HO 9 **Drop Dead Rule** For all weekday games (Monday-Friday), the umpire will stop play at two hours (2 hrs). For all weekend games (Saturday & Sunday), the umpire will stop play at two hours fifteen minutes (2 hrs 15 min). If an inning is still ongoing, the score will revert to what it was at the end of the previous inning.
- HO 10 In the Major League, there will be no run limit per inning.
- HO 11 In the Minor League, there will be a four (4)-run limit per inning. In the sixth or declared Last Inning, there will be no run limit.
- HO 12 In the Rookie League, there will be a three (3)-run limit per inning. In the sixth or declared Last Inning, there will be a six (6)-run limit.
- HO 13 League standings shall be determined as follows:
- a. The team with the most total points is ranked first. Each win is 2 points, each tie is 1 point, and each loss is zero points.
  - b. If two or more teams are tied, the first tiebreaker is total wins.
  - c. The second tiebreaker is head-to-head competition.
  - d. The third tiebreaker is total runs scored in head-to-head competition.
  - e. The fourth tiebreaker is total runs allowed in head-to-head competition.
  - f. If the teams are still tied, rankings will be determined by coin toss.
- HO 14 All Major League playoff games will be six (6) innings in length, unless tied, with no time limit. The ten-run rule shall be in effect.

- HO 15 All Minor and Rookie League playoff games shall be six (6) innings in length, unless tied, with no time limit. Regular season run limits shall be in effect.
- HO 16 All game scores shall be reported to the League Commissioners by the **winning manager** within 24 hours of the completion of the game.
- HO 17 **All** rescheduled games will be scheduled by the League. The manager of the home team is responsible for contacting the umpire coordinator in a timely fashion to obtain umpires for the rescheduled game. The home team manager should also notify the league commissioner of all rescheduled games.
- HO 18 Deliberate action taken to delay a game is considered unsportsmanlike conduct and should be reported to the League Commissioner. If it occurred, such conduct could result in the game being forfeited by the offending team.
- HO 19 The home team will occupy the third base dugout and be responsible for keeping the official score book.
- HO 20 Only rostered players of the competing teams are allowed in the dugouts during the game.
- HO 21 Any individual ejected from a game by an umpire must leave the field area for the remainder of the game and stay at a distance no closer than the parking area of the park where the game is being played. Failure to leave in a prompt fashion or continued unsportsmanlike behavior may result in the forfeiture of the game by the team affiliated with that person. (Note: If a parent is not with the ejected player then the team manager shall designate a coach or seek a parent volunteer to contact the player's parents for transportation or wait with the player until transportation arrives.)
- HO 22 Prior to the start of a game, the home team manager shall decide if the field is in playable condition.
- HO 23 Once a game has begun, the two managers shall be jointly responsible for calling for any suspension or cancellation of play. If the two managers cannot agree, then the home plate umpire's decision will be final. In case of ongoing or impending weather conditions such as **lightning**, rain, high winds, or severe cold, either of the managers or umpires may call for a meeting at home plate to discuss if play has become unsafe. A prompt decision should be made about whether to suspend (and for how long) or cancel play. If play is suspended or cancelled, the managers will direct everyone in attendance to proceed quickly and in an orderly fashion to their automobiles or to some other safe haven.
- HO 24 The Infield Fly Rule is in effect for the Major and Minor Leagues, but not for the Rookie League.
- HO 25 Violation of rules could result in forfeiture of a game, suspension of a manager, or other penalty to be determined by the HOYBCRL President.