



8-Under League Meeting

Medina Entertainment Center
500 Highway 55, Medina, MN 55340
Tuesday, February 18th, 2020 - 6:30 PM

Agenda

- ▶ Introductions
- ▶ Overview
- ▶ Web site
- ▶ Equipment and field play
- ▶ Rules (general)
- ▶ 8-Under game play
- ▶ State tournament
- ▶ Nationals
- ▶ Q & A

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Minnesota Softball

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8-Under Meeting

- ▶ This is our sixth official season and we appreciate any feedback that you can provide.
- ▶ Even if you are not currently participating, we want to hear your opinion.
- ▶ Our goal for this year is to have more than 70 teams participate.

2020 Season

- ▶ Last Summer we had 67 teams participating in the Metro Area 8-Under League.
- ▶ Summer league participation increased 8.9% from the 2018 season.
- ▶ Last Fall we had three (3) regions and 48 teams participating. Those numbers are up from two (2) regions and 36 teams in 2018.

League Website

- ▶ The 8-Under Metro Area League will be hosted on the mnsoftball.com website.
 - ▶ A major update to <https://www.josoftball.com> might replace this.
- ▶ 8-Under will be listed as a league of their own.
- ▶ Each team will have their own team page.
- ▶ Each coach will update their own scores.
- ▶ The league will do the scheduling and upload the initial schedule.

Equipment

- ▶ We will use a Dudley SBC11 eleven (11) inch softball with an ASA or USA Softball stamp.
- ▶ Pitching will be handled by a blue Louisville Slugger Pitching Machine and set at 30-34 mph.
- ▶ **The power setting shall not be altered after the start of the game.**
 - ▶ **EXCEPTION: Unless agreed upon by both head coaches.**
- ▶ These machines require routine maintenance. Visit <http://www.ultimatepitchingmachine.com/> for more information.

Field Dimensions

- ▶ The pitching plate will be placed at 35 feet.
- ▶ Base distances will be 60 feet.
- ▶ Outfield fences should be placed at 200 feet but are not required.
- ▶ A recommendation was made that IF state sites are capable to place fences at 120 feet that this would be allowed and encouraged.

8-Under Fast Pitch Rules

- ▶ The initial rules were created by Minnesota Softball Staff after consulting with many other states about how they conduct 8-Under softball.
- ▶ The idea is to get kids playing short games, learn how to play the game properly, and to enjoy playing the sport.
- ▶ The premise of this is not to develop pitchers. You can and should work on pitching during every single practice, with every single kid.
- ▶ Your association is strongly encouraged to divide your 8-Under teams evenly if you have more than one team. If you have a kid that is an advanced player for that age, place them on a 10-Under team if feasible.

8-Under Fast Pitch Rules

- ▶ The league fee per team will be \$100 for the 2020 season.
- ▶ The State Tournament will be held on July 11 and 12th in Bloomington.
- ▶ A \$100.00 gate fee check will be made payable to BFA and paid during team check-in.
- ▶ If a team can demonstrate geographic hardship and keeps them from playing in the league, they may apply to play in the State Tournament. However, all teams must play by the same eligibility rules.
- ▶ Total fee to each team if they play in league and state is \$200.00.

8-Under Fast Pitch Rules

- ▶ Teams will play single games on Wednesday night starting on May 6th.
- ▶ Each team will play nine (9) play dates on consecutive weeks concluding on Wednesday, July 1st. If there is an odd number of teams on a given night, there may be a few teams scheduled with 8 league games.
- ▶ The last two league games will be double headers as a transition to 10U travel ball. The league will be combined with Big West and Tri County associations.
- ▶ The league will be hosted on one web site and teams will be divided into multiple regions to keep driving and costs down.
- ▶ Eligible Players: A player is defined as any youth of the proper age as of December 31, 2019 for their division of play.
- ▶ We will not use umpires during league play.
- ▶ Youth (Cadet) umpires will be used at the State Tournament.

8-Under Game Play

- ▶ Games will be played on Wednesday night.
- ▶ Games start at 6:00PM.
- ▶ Home team supplies two (2) new game balls per night.
- ▶ Defense will have nine (9) players on the field.
- ▶ It is strongly encouraged to rotate players into multiple positions during a game.
- ▶ Each batter gets three (3) swings or five (5) pitches unless last pitch is a foul ball. The batter will continue their at bat on foul balls keeping in line with the rules of the other age groups.
- ▶ Bunting is not allowed.
- ▶ The Infield Fly Rule will not be applied.

8-Under Game Play (Pitching)

- ▶ The pitcher must stay in the pitcher's circle and behind or on side of the coach until ball contacts the bat. For clarification, draw a line at the 35' mark across entire circle and use that line for the pitcher to stand behind.
- ▶ The pitcher may lineup on either site of the pitching machine.

8-Under Game Play (Base Running)

- ▶ Runners will not be allowed to advance after a dropped third strike.
- ▶ Stealing is not allowed.
- ▶ Designated players (DP) will not be allowed.
- ▶ Leading off is not allowed.
- ▶ Runners may not leave their base until the ball contacts the bat.

8-Under Game Play (Base Running)

- ▶ Outfielders must start the play standing on the grass at the edge of the infield. If the infield is cut for baseball create an arc 15 feet behind the bases and the outfielders must start behind that. Runners may not move until the bat has contacted the ball.
- ▶ Players and runners will stop when:
 - ▶ A ball that never leaves the infield: Once a fielder has control of the ball the runners should stop at the next base. This encourages the infielder to throw the ball to the appropriate base with out the fear of runners advancing to the next base because of an overthrow.
 - ▶ Ball fielded on the dirt or in the arc equals one (1) base per infield hit.

8-Under Game Play (Base Running)

- ▶ A ball hit to the outfield: If no outfielder has control of the ball the runners may continue to advance. Once the outfielder gains control of the ball and throws it toward the infield the runners will stop at the next base. Even if the ball doesn't make it to the "dirt" on the throw, the act of throwing the ball in is the attempt at making the correct play. Players must stop at the next base.

8-Under Game Play

- ▶ Teams will bat all their players.
- ▶ **Half** innings are complete after 3 outs or 5 runs.
- ▶ A game will be stopped if a team is ahead by 15 runs after 3 innings, 12 runs after 4 innings, 8 runs after 5 innings.
- ▶ Games will be 5 innings or 65-minute time limit.
- ▶ On double-header nights there will be a no longer than 10-minute break between games.
- ▶ The teams may engage in a kid pitch scrimmage following the completion of the game. This scrimmage must be agreed upon by both head coaches and last no longer than 20 minutes or 1 inning.

8-Under Game Play (Coaches)

- ▶ The defense will have three (3) coaches. One (1) will run the pitching machine.
- ▶ The offense will have three (3) coaches. Two (2) will be base coaches. One (1) will assist the catcher with returning balls to the pitching coach.
- ▶ The coach assisting the catcher may comment to their batter but should make any comments short and quick in nature.
 - ▶ The point of the new offensive coach is to move the game along quickly.
 - ▶ The new offensive coach should wear a glove to protect against foul balls and stay to the back off the batter.
- ▶ Coaches are part of the field of play and need to make every effort to stay out of the player's way.

8-Under Game Play (Coaches)

- ▶ The coach feeding the pitching machine must keep a maximum of two (2) softballs in their possession, and not laying on the ground around the machine.
- ▶ Prior to the pitch, the pitching coach must verbalize and check that the defense is in the ready position and ready for play to begin.
- ▶ Coaches need to operate the game with the highest amount of integrity. At all times keep the kid's best interest in mind.

State Tournament

- ▶ ALL teams that have played in the league do not have to qualify for State, **you are automatically entered**. The State Tournament will be played over two days on July 11-12, 2020 in Bloomington at Dred Scott Playfields.
- ▶ The \$100.00 gate fee will be **made payable to BFA** and turned in at check in. There is no tournament registration form. Every team in the league is entered in the tournament.
- ▶ 2020 format: Pool play on Saturday in to bracket play on Sunday.
- ▶ If you are unable to participate please email Tom Bye by July 6th, 2020 at tbye@josoftball.com.

National Tournament

- ▶ Is there interest in conducting an 8-Under National Tournament? Anyone interested in hosting please contact dan@josoftball.com.
- ▶ Which community would like to host the event?
- ▶ We would like to run the tournament on July 24-26, 2020. If you would like to host on a different weekend, let's talk.
 - ▶ July 24th would be reserved for opening ceremonies.
- ▶ Any enhancements to the rules you would like to see?
- ▶ What tournament format should we use?
 - ▶ How many games guaranteed?
 - ▶ Format of the schedule? (pool play into two game guarantee)

Questions and Comments

- ▶ The following two slides are ideas shared by Bloomington and Minnetonka on how they have grown their 8-under program.

Bloomington:

1. We have an In House Fastpitch Program. First year was last year. Started because of a need for structure and skill development that players were not getting in BAA, our rec slow pitch city team. Parents want structure and skill at 5-8 ages but not expense, travel and time commitment. We had 4 teams last year and are hoping to grow to 6 at least this year. That age group is k-3.

2. We also have 4 try softball for free events leading up to the season which we promote heavily on social media, through current membership and peach jar.

3. We have a referral program. All players who bring in a new player get a Dicks gift certificate and a BLAST spirit ware athletic head band.

4. We market at events like open houses, our big city festival (Heritage Days), on line etc.

5. We provide all the support a team

Needs to be successful from team managers to head coaches along with equipment. We also utilize indoor elementary gym space. All of these factors together along with making it VERY affordable have attracted the younger families.

6. We also work with opposite season sports like hockey to get the word out. I bet nearly half of our girls play hockey. We have a good partnership.

7. Most important - we relationship build and include the younger families in decision making. They will be the future of our program's success so it would be silly not to involve them.

Bloomington is unique to all other large programs like Lakeville, Eagan, Eden Prairie, Minnetonka, Prior Lake.... we have much wider demographic, culturally and economically. So we have to keep our prices manageable and not price young girls out. We also offer financial assistance to families in need. To keep this possible we put a lot of effort in fundraising and corporate sponsorships. I am happy to help anyone who needs guidance in this. Above all it's talking to people. Programs need a leader who's willing to take the bull by the horns. It takes a hefty amount of work on the front end but it is so worth it. If you don't put in the work at 8u, programs begin to dwindle, and Richfield is a great example of that for softball and hockey. I'm sure here's more we do but last year we had 4 8u Traveling teams and 4 In House teams- that's 84 girls alone in Bloomington learning fastpitch and this year we hope to reach at least 100!

Minnetonka:

1. Peach Jar- I'm guessing most school districts use something like this. It's an electronic flyer system. Once approved by the district flyers are emailed out to all families each email notification. This has been very effective.
2. Minnetonka has a large t-ball machine pitch program. They promote to those players and ask them to try fastpitch.
3. Invite them all (in baseball program) to try Fall ball. Less of a commitment but a great way to give fastpitch a try.
4. They work hard at mirroring 8u with their 10u program in training, competitiveness etc.
5. Encourage players to promote softball via Instagram. Gets their friends interested.