

# **2026 Vestavia Hills Middle School Baseball League**

## **(MSL)**

### **13u-14u**

The mission of the MSL is to provide essential tools and fundamental training to players aiming to try out for the VHHS baseball team.

#### **Contacts:**

- VHYB Executive Board Members over MSL – Jim Cearlock
- 8 th grade MSL representative – Nathan Collums
- 7 th grade MSL representative – Cameron Dennis

#### **Key Tools:**

1. Compete to Win
2. Sound Fundamental Instruction
3. Team Development
4. Increase Baseball Acumen through Repetition and Skill based development

#### **The Timeframe:**

12/03/2025 - Deadline to sign up

02/02/2026 - 02/08/2026- Evaluation Week

02/08/2026 - Draft Selection

02/09/2026 – Rosters published and communicated

02/10/2026 - Official Practice Begins

02/21/2026 - Family Day & Scrimmages (Catered BBQ lunch for the families while boys scrimmage)

02/28/2026 – Regular Season Games begin

04/13/2026 through 04/16/2026 - Championship Tournament (single elimination) \*\*All dates are approximate and subject to change, including for unforeseen circumstances (i.e. weather)\*\*

#### **Coaching Expectations** – all head coaches will be independent (non-parent) and paid

\*Positive Attitude

\*Development of Players

\*Teach the Game

\*Competitive Nature

\*Hustle

\*Communication

\*Organized practice plans

\*Accountability and the signed Coaches Pledge (Required for both Head and Assistants)

\*Attendance during Evaluation Week Public

\*Utilize the coaching Playbook from the VHYB/VHBC Website

\*The Board has approved the use of Volunteer assistant coaches (i.e. Dads or Moms) but use of volunteer assistants will solely be at the discretion of the head coach

**MSL Format:**

- \*MSL will consist of a separate Gold & Silver division
- \*The number of teams associated with the Gold division will be determined at the discretion of the paid coaches, VHYB Executive Board Members and the 7th/8th grade MSL representatives.
- \*Gold & Silver would compete separately for MSL championship in each division
- \*Gold teams would primarily compete against other Gold teams and Silver teams would primarily compete against other Silver teams. Each team would likely compete against teams in the other division.
- \*Results from playing teams outside of the team's division will not count towards such team's seeding record.
- \*MSL is a combined league of 7th & 8th graders. Coaches will select teams based on a combined pool of registrants (ie. there are no requirements as to # of 8th or 7th graders that can be selected on a team)
- \*Goal of the MSL is to maintain a competitive atmosphere and thus registrants that would be better suited to participate in the recreational league will be encouraged to do so. Those that would prefer a less competitive option may initially register for the recreational league.
- \*There is no guarantee of playing time or participation at certain positions. Such decisions are at the sole discretion of the Head Coach for each respective team
- \*Each team will have no more than 11 players except in unusual circumstances where exceptions are necessary
- \*Each team may have 1-2 volunteer assistant coaches selected by the Head coach
- \*Each team will have the option to select a Team Manager to help with communication for the players/families
- \*For the first year under the Gold/Silver format, Gold division Head Coaches will be determined by awarding the Head Coach from the previous year MSL championship tournament with a Gold division spot and then the following Gold division teams will be allotted based on the regular season seeding from the previous year.
- \*For subsequent years, the Gold and Silver Championship team Head Coaches will be awarded a Gold division spot and then additional coaches will be awarded based on regular season seeding. As an example (Gold division tournament champion, Silver division tournament champion, #1 regular season seed in Gold division (if not tournament champion), #1 regular season seed in Silver division (if not tournament champion), #2 regular season seed in Gold division (if not tournament champion), etc.)

**MSL Evaluation Week Format:**

- \*The MSL does not incorporate a throwing program at the outset of evaluations. Each registrant needs to show up on the first day of evaluations with a conditioned arm that is ready to demonstrate skill at such registrant's desired position
- \*Monday & Tuesday – primary position evaluations
- \*Wednesday – pitcher bullpens
- \*Thursday & Friday – secondary position evaluations
- \* Saturday/Sunday – coach pitch scrimmages
- \*\*Schedule above is subject to change based on weather conditions.

Each Head Coach will be required to complete an evaluation form on each registrant where certain key metrics are graded. Each Head Coach's evaluation form for each participant will be submitted to a MSL representative who will average each participant's results. Such results will be provided back to the

Head Coaches to use during the Draft process. The evaluation form and results will be shared with each family at the conclusion of the evaluation process.

Primary position – the primary position each registrant would select as their best/preferred position (all positions other than pitcher)

Secondary position – the second choice that each registrant would select as their preferred position (all positions other than pitcher)

**MSL Draft Format:**

\*The evaluation results will be used as a guide to aid each Head Coach during the draft process.

\*All Gold division teams will be selected first using a snake draft process which will be administered as follows:

- A random draft order will be set and each Gold division team must select a registrant who selected catcher as their primary position as the first pick in the draft
- After catchers are selected in the first round, the remainder of the roster spots for Gold teams will be completed utilizing a snake draft format
- Coaches will have discretion as to who they select and various criteria will be utilized, including: result of the evaluation process, position specific needs, orientation to offensive vs. defensive priorities, etc.
- Feedback/rationale for each registrant that did not get selected on a Gold team will be available upon request

\*All Silver division teams will be selected using the same process described above.

\*Each age group (8th & 7th) will have a MSL representative (named above) at the draft to answer questions, when requested. The Director of Baseball Operations responsible for administrative duties for the MSL (Chad Long) will also attend to assist with administrative matters (eg, keep up with draft results, determine practice timing, etc.) The VHYB Board Members overseeing the MSL along with the 8th and 7th grade representatives will appoint one or more individuals who do not have a son participating in the MSL to oversee the draft process to help identify any gross negligence or poor decisioning through the draft process.

**MSL Practice Format:**

\*Once the draft takes place, teams will practice individually. Some teams may choose to practice together but that will be at the discretion of the Head Coaches

\*There will be 2 team practice per week in preseason and 1 team practice during the regular season

\*Each week (as scheduling permits) there will be an opportunity to attend a skills/development workout that may be led by the Head Coaches, volunteers, or others from the baseball community. Each of these workouts will have a teaching & reps component. These workouts will be optional and in addition to team practices. Listing of potential skills/development workouts:

- Bunting & bunt defense
- Relays (basic & tandem)
- Base running (steals, delay steals, hit and run, fly ball reads)
- Holding runners on and pick-offs (pitchers & infielders)
- Infield mechanics – basic, forehand, backhand
- Infield mechanics – V-cuts and run throughs

- Infield mechanics – double plays
- Reading signs (infield & outfield)
- Run downs
- Fly ball communication
- Outfield mechanics – footwork & run throughs (crow hops)
- Catchers – calling pitches
- Catchers – blocking drills
- Catchers – throwing to bases

\*Team Practices at LP will be 1:15 minutes on field, 45 minutes cages each, 4:45, 6:00, 7:15 (field times)

\*Team practices at Dolly Ridge and Pizitz will have 2 hour time slots for practices 4:30 and 6:30 starts

**\*Practice topics will be sent out to Head Coaches weekly as a guide on specifics to cover on the field but that is subject to change depending on the teams needs that week.**

#### **MSL Regular Season Game Format:**

\*Each Team will play 1-2 games per week on weekdays

\*Each Team will play a Doubleheader on Saturdays

\*12 Game Regular Season Schedule

\*All Games will be 7 innings or 1:45 time limit

\*There are no official “have to play” rules in this league

\*Games will be played on 60/90 fields

\*During games, the Home team is responsible for the Official Score Book and the Visitor is responsible for the Score board. (NO children under the age of 16 are allowed in Press Box)

#### **MSL Tournament Championship:**

\*After the Regular Season, there will be a Tournament played to crown a Champion in each division (Gold & Silver). Depending on the number of teams, such tournament will be single or double elimination.

\*Championship Games will be played at either Pizitz Middle School or VHHS if possible

#### **MSL Pitching Rules:**

\*Will use the standard MLB Pitch Smart guidelines

Dates	Daily Max	0 Days Rest	1 Day Rest	2 Days Rest	3 Days Rest	4 Days Rest
2/21-4/3	65	1-20	21-35	36-50	51-65	N/A
4/4-Season End	95	1-20	21-35	36-50	51-65	66-95

\*All pitch counts will be recorded after each game Verified by Coaches Initials in the Official score book. All counts must be submitted to Board/League Director within 24 hours by Head coach, Assistant coach, or team manager

\*Any result in not recording pitch counts and/or failing to follow the pitching rules may result in a forfeit.

**Pool Play Rules:**

\*Follow current VHBC/VHYB pool player rules, ***but may catch if needed***

\*Must be below 9 players to get pool player unless the injured player was your first round selection (catcher). In this case, any team may pick up a first round player from any other team as a pool player but that fill in must catch. For the avoidance of doubt, pursuant to the catcher specific rule, the Pool Player may not pitch. However, contrary to the normal Pool Player rules, the Catcher pull player does not have to bat last.

For all other pool play rules:

\*Pool Player can be any player selected in the round or later by the missing player

\*Pool Player may not pitch

\*Pool Player must bat last in the lineup

**Rainouts:**

\*Every effort will be made to make up practices & games if and when there is inclement weather

**Uniforms:**

\*2 Jerseys provided

\*1 VH Hat provided

\*Each Player will need to purchase:

-White Pants/Royal Piping

-Royal Belt

-Royal Socks

-Helmet

-Equipment (Bat, Catchers Gear, Glove, etc.)

- 13u may use -5 bat & 14u must use -3 bat

**MSL Payment Schedule:** Total Cost Per player \$725

1st Payment Due at Registration \$375

2nd Automatic Payment \$350 due February 2, 2026 – please note, this will be automatically processed on the same payment method you use for your first payment

Registration for the MSL is an acknowledgement that you are committing to participate in the league, regardless of the outcome of the draft process. As a result, no refunds will be issued once the player evaluations begin. Please contact the MSL Executive Committee if any unforeseen circumstance may arise.

**Itemized Cost of the VHMSBL**

**Where Your Money Goes: 2025 Season**

\$36,270 – Umpires, Park and Rec Fees, Scheduler fees, Coaches Pay

\$9760 – Uniforms

\$1000 – Baseballs

\$3200 – Family Day Meal

\$3200 – Administration fees, Marketing/Website fees, Credit Card fees

\$570 – Contingencies

\*\* Yearly evaluation of the cost will be done to make sure all expenses are covered\*\*