



HEAT BASEBALL and SOFTBALL

ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How is Heat different than playing Mequon Thiensville Little League (MTLL)?

Our MTLL leagues are open to all interested youth between K5 and 8th grade. You do not need to necessarily reside in Mequon to participate in MTLL and/or Heat. MTLL activities are limited to Monday through Thursday starting in late April through mid-July, depending on the age. MTLL also offers a few open gym and clinic opportunities in the winter. Those players who play Heat are not required to play MTLL, but it is optional and a player may play both if they choose.

Heat is a program that is geared for kids that are interested in playing competitive baseball and committing more time to improving skills. The intention of Heat is certainly be a fun environment, but it is also intended to be a competitive program structured to win games and be highly competitive in tournaments. Teams are selected based on a tryout process and coaches are volunteers, similar to MTLL. Teams are formed typically in July/August for the following year's season that runs between April to mid-July. Weekday practices vary from team to team, but in general there are practices in the late summer/fall with indoor practices starting in January to March/April. Practices occur during the week with games/tournaments typically scheduled on the weekends.

What is the cost of participating in Heat?

Heat is entirely self-funded and costs vary by team. The fee is structured to include a \$150 Field Usage Fee (this fee is in lieu of MTLL and is waived if your player signs up for MTLL), the Player Registration Fee which ranges between \$350 - \$550 and certain teams will also have professional indoor training sessions during the winter for about \$150. In addition, uniforms can be purchased for \$125 to \$150 and can be used for more than one season. Many families do elect to also purchase the optional items including bat bags, sweatshirts, etc. Since coaches are volunteers, the primary costs included for Heat are for tournament entry fees, umpires, and off-season indoor practices.

What is the time commitment?

As a Heat participant, you can expect to be offered some fall practices and/or participate in fall baseball. Teams also have indoor practices 1-2 times per week during the winter months that include skill building and batting when possible. Starting in April, weather permitting, teams move practices outside 2-3 times per week and play games/tournaments Friday through Sunday. With approximately 12 weekends during the season, teams generally have games/tournaments on 9 or 10 of those weekends. Teams will try to schedule around the Fun Before the Fourth and Fourth of July weekends. Some teams may also choose to participate in a local weekday league. As an organization, we do believe in multi-sport players and understand the commitment to other sports during the off season. However it is expected that during the season, April-July, baseball is a priority. The cost per player remains the same.

How many games do Heat teams play?

The number of Heat games is generally between 20 and 35 with younger teams and between 30 and 45 with older teams.

Are all Heat games played in tournaments?

Both younger and older teams participate in both tournaments and individual or league games against other local communities. The advantage of tournaments is the players enjoy the opportunity to play in a tournament format, teams have the opportunity to play against teams from a wider geographic range, and the competition is generally tougher. The disadvantage of tournaments is the initial weekend schedule is typically not known until one or two weeks in advance. If teams do well, they can continue to advance in the tournament and potentially play through to a championship game. Having fun is the priority, but that is the goal!

When are tryouts typically held?

Tryouts are generally held in late July to early August for the following spring season.

Why are tryouts held in the summer prior to the Heat season?

Holding outdoor tryouts gives the evaluators a better chance at seeing the players true skill level compared to watching them in the controlled environment of a gym. Holding summer tryouts also makes it more likely that a player is closer to “in-season form” compared to not having played baseball for an extended period of time. Finally, since practices begin for certain teams in late summer/fall, we need our team rosters set early. This tryout schedule is typical for most select teams.

How are teams selected?

Selection is based on the players performance at tryouts. Our goal is to select the most skilled players and to assemble the best team. Having previously played on a Heat team is not a guarantee for making the team the following season. It is rare that our rosters do not experience some level of turnover each season.

When are teams announced?

Our goal is to announce teams as soon as possible after the conclusion of tryouts. The coaches need time to assess the evaluation scores and determine which players will be invited to their respective team.

How are coaches selected?

Coaches are parents of selected players. Once the players are selected, parents interested in coaching should contact the Heat Director. A head coach is selected based on consultation with others who have been involved with that individual in the MTL leagues or at the Heat level. The head coach is generally responsible for selecting the rest of the coaching staff, setting the practice schedule (indoor and outdoor), and deciding which tournaments to enter.

How many different age levels are there for Heat?

We currently field teams at U9 through U14. U9 means 9 and under, not under 9. Depending on the number of skilled, interested players, any age level could have multiple teams.

What is the cutoff date for age determination?

The cutoff date is age as of April 30 for the season being played. For example, the 2022 season will be based on age as of April 30, 2022. To be eligible to play U9 in 2022, players must be 9 or younger as of that date.

Are 8 year-olds allowed to tryout for U9?

Yes. We have had 8 year-olds selected to play U9. However, if we determine two players to be of similar skill, we will favor a 9 year-old over an 8 year-old. Depending on the number of skilled, interested players, U9 could have multiple teams.

Are players allowed to play above their age level?

This is most common with 8-year olds playing U9 since that is the youngest age we offer. Our preference is for players to play at their age level. We realize this is not always preferable for the players as the Heat age groups do not align with school grades, or the MTLL leagues, and players often want to “play up” if it means participating with more of their classmates. Unless a player is considered to be one of the top players on the age above, we prefer that they play at their age level. Typically, this is better for their baseball development as they are more often a key contributor, including pitching, if placed at the appropriate level.

Is there any consideration to starting a team at the U8 level?

Currently, the Heat program does not have a U8 team. At the U8 level the number of interested players and tournament possibilities are very limited. At this point, we believe that U9 is young enough to begin playing select ball.

What if a player can only make one, or none, of the tryouts?

There are typically several tryout dates per age group to accommodate schedules. If a player can't make either tryout, we can try to arrange an individual tryout. Individual tryouts are discouraged as it is preferred to evaluate players when they can be directly compared to the others. Contact the Heat Director with questions or to make a request.

Can a player attend both tryout dates?

It is not necessary to attend both, but players frequently do. If a player has a solid first tryout, it is not necessary to attend the second. However, if a player has a poor first tryout, they are encouraged to attend the second so the evaluators have a second chance to assess the skill level.

How are evaluators selected?

Evaluators are experienced or former Heat coaches from other age levels and ideally attend both tryout dates. These coaches typically do not know the kids at that age level to remove all biases.

How much travel is involved?

Most tournaments are played within a 1-hour drive of Mequon. For example, popular locations are Waukesha, New Berlin, Germantown and West Bend. Some of our teams chose to play a tournament in Wisconsin Dells or the Fox Valley area and limit the schedule to involve only 1 overnight weekend/stay. This cost is an additional cost to questions above, but is a great way to bond as a team and Heat family.

What is the expected attendance requirement?

Our rosters are limited to 12-13 players per team to ensure players receive appropriate playing time. Due to this, it is the expectation that players will make the vast majority of games and tournaments. Players who expect to miss more than 1 or 2 weekends from April through mid-July should not participate in Heat.

Can a player participate in another sport, or another baseball team, during the season and still be eligible to play Heat even though there may be conflicts?

Please read the question above. Our expectation is that Heat will be the player's primary activity during the baseball season. Playing on another baseball team besides the player's MTLL team is not acceptable.

My child participates fall or winter sports that conflict with off-season practices. Are they still eligible to play Heat?

We encourage kids to be involved in multiple sports. Specialization at a young age is discouraged as there is greater risk of repetitive stress injuries and overall burnout of the sport. Our expectation is that players make their baseball activities a priority during the baseball season. We understand that other commitments will take priority over indoor baseball practices. Be sure to communicate conflicts with the coach.

We hope to have answered any questions you may have about our Heat program.

If you have additional questions, please contact the Heat Directors.