

Minnetonka Big Willow Baseball Parent Handbook

Introduction

This handbook is designed to answer questions parents and players may have regarding Minnetonka Big Willow Baseball and to serve as a reference guide during the season. For information regarding events or rules for specific player divisions please visit our website at <http://www.bigwillowbaseball.com>.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide a fun recreational baseball program for players between the ages of 4 and 12. Players of all skill levels are welcome, and will be encouraged to develop a love of baseball through quality instruction that emphasizes friendship, teamwork, good sportsmanship, respect for self and others, development of baseball skills and strategies, and family involvement. Every player is given an equal opportunity to play and learn in a healthy environment. Big Willow makes baseball fun. Games are played at beautiful Big Willow Park, just west of the intersection of Minnetonka Boulevard and Hopkins Crossroads.

Board of Directors

Minnetonka Big Willow Baseball operates as a volunteer, non-profit organization run by a Board of Directors. We are continually looking for other motivated volunteers to help make Big Willow Baseball a special experience for the families that participate. A complete list of the current Board of Directors and open positions are available on our website at <http://www.bigwillowbaseball.com>. If you have questions not directly answered in this document, please contact the individual board member responsible for the area which you have a question.

Season Calendar - 2014

Big Willow Baseball typically begins with practices in April (weather permitting) and ends with Championship games around the 4th of July.

Registration: Beginning January 15 and late fees assessed after March 1st

Voluntary Free Player Clinics: February 22th and March 2nd

Travel/Tournament Tryouts March 1

Player Evaluations, Majors: March 8th

Player Evaluations, Farm: March 15th

Makeup Day for Player Evaluations: March 18

Teams Formed: Late March

Opening Day Ceremonies: May 3rd

Mites/Juniors End of season Jamboree: TBD

Majors/Farm Championship Games: end of June/early July

Divisions of Play

Big Willow baseball offers 4 divisions of play. Players generally play at their grade level, but may elect to play at their "league age" level, based on their age on May 1 of each year. Big Willow enforces "equal playing time" for all players at all levels/divisions of play.

MITES (T Ball): Fun introduction to baseball and team play for first year players (typically 4-, 5- and 6-year olds). Teams are organized around schools and neighborhoods. Games are played using a soft baseball. Each team bats through their entire order without regard to outs or runs scored.

JUNIORS (Coach Pitch): Emphasis on developing basic baseball skills, knowledge and game situations. Teams organized around schools and neighborhoods. Games are played using a soft baseball. There are no balls/strikes, but outs are recorded and there is a 5-run rule per inning. Juniors players have typically completed at least 1 year of T-ball and are 7- and 8-years old.

FARM (Player Pitch): Emphasis on building hitting, fielding, pitching skills, and participation in games. Teams organized by draft to provide balanced competition. Teams are typically 9- and 10-year old players. Games are played with a regulation baseball.

MAJORS: Players continue to develop and apply baseball skills in a more competitive, but fun, environment. Emphasis is on developing consistency and well-played games. Teams organized by draft to provide balanced competition. Teams are typically 11- and 12-year old players. Games are played with a regulation baseball.

League Costs

In addition to the registration cost, team parents traditionally collect \$1 per game per player to cover the cost of post game concessions from the Big Willow concession stand.

Player Evaluations

All Farm and Majors players must participate in the player evaluation prior to the draft unless they contact the division manager with an explanation from a parent/guardian for not attending. All registered players are placed on a team.

Eight year-olds may try out for the Farm Division and must finish in the top 1/3 of all participants to qualify to play in the Farm Division.

10 year olds may try out for the Major Division and must finish in the top 1/4 of all participants to qualify to play in the Major Division.

Player Draft

Coaches draft players for their teams after evaluations. Players are selected during the draft based on their evaluation rating and previous season feedback, if available. The purpose of the draft is to ensure that every team includes players of differing skill level. Coaches will contact players after the draft to inform them of their selection and practice schedule.

Uniforms

All players are supplied with jerseys and caps. Majors and Farm Division players are also given baseball socks. Players must supply their own baseball pants and should check with their coach prior to the regular season regarding the pant color.

Rubber-cleat baseball shoes are preferred but are not required.

No metal cleats are allowed.

Equipment

With the exception of a fielder's glove and helmet, Big Willow provides all equipment to the teams in a team equipment bag (bats, balls, catchers gear, etc). Players may bring their own bats so long as it is a model approved for League use (please refer to the specific rules for the player's division).

Note: It is a good idea to mark all of your child's personal equipment clearly with their name.

Team Parent

Each team is required to have a team parent. The team parent is responsible for assisting the coach in communications and administrative duties such as maintaining the team's web page on the Big Willow website, reporting scores, communicating concession duties, coordinating team pictures and organizing end-of-season activities. Questions regarding the team parent responsibilities should be directed to Big Willow's Volunteer Coordinator.

Opening Ceremonies

Opening Ceremonies are traditionally held on the first Saturday of May. All players and their families are encouraged to attend. Activities include the National Anthem, guest speakers, team photos, drawings, and games for some teams. The concession stand is open throughout the day.

Pictures

Individual and team pictures are taken during Opening Day Ceremonies. Please arrive 15 minutes before your scheduled time.

Concessions

Each family is responsible for providing help in the concession stand during the season. Concession stand shifts are posted under the DIBS section of our website. A \$150 deposit check (or \$300 for multiple players) is required with registration and will be forfeited if you fail to show up for your assigned shift.

Managers / Coaches Evaluations

Each year Minnetonka Big Willow will solicit feedback from parents regarding the effectiveness of the coaches that season. A survey will be available to all participants at the conclusion of the season. The Board of Directors will review the returned surveys.

Post Season Play

Mites and Juniors Divisions will have an end-of-season Jamboree.

Farm and Majors Divisions will end their seasons with pool play tournaments with qualifying teams moving to bracket play.

Tournament Teams

Big Willow's Tournament Teams provide an opportunity for players and families to enjoy additional baseball and participate in 3 or 4 competitive weekend traveling tournaments in the Twin Cities area. Separate teams are formed for 10, 11 and 12 year olds. Players build their baseball skills, make friends and have fun.

Tournament Team participation is contingent on continued participation and good standing with each player's Big Willow house teams. Tournament teams will also have scheduled practices and scrimmages, in addition to house team practices and games. Big Willow Tournament Teams have earned reputations as strong competitors and good sportsmen.

These teams are self-funded, with estimated costs ranging from \$200 -\$300. Scholarships are available. Please contact Big Willow's Tournament Team Coordinator with questions or comments.

Travel Program

This year Big Willow will have a travel baseball program available at the Majors level for players 11 and 12 years of age. The team will play in the Minnesota Baseball League and players on this team will not play on a house team at Big Willow. The season will consist of 16 regular season games played Monday-Thursday and will be played at fields throughout the metro area. The travel team will also play 5-6 weekend tournaments throughout the summer and may potentially qualify for state tournaments as well. Tryouts for the travel program will be held on along with the tryouts for our tournament teams. To be eligible to tryout for the travel team, the player must be registered as a Majors division player. If a player is not chosen for the travel program, the player may be selected to play on one of our tournament teams.

Safety

- Batters must wear approved protective helmets during all practices and games.
- All batters and base runners are required to wear helmets.
- Catchers must wear a catcher's helmet, mask, protective cup, chest protector, and shin guards.
- Players cannot wear watches, rings, pins, jewelry, or other metallic items.
- Everyone should be alert for foul balls.
- Parents should watch their children closely near the parking lots and park area.
- No one is allowed on top of the dugouts.
- Parents of players who wear glasses are encouraged to provide "safety glasses".