

PONY DIVISION – RECREATION LEAGUE RULES
GOVERNING RULES AND PHILOSOPHY

It is the belief of Irvine PONY baseball to offer all youth who desire to play organized baseball the opportunity to fulfill this aspiration. The Irvine PONY association believes that participating in an organized youth baseball program will implant positive attributes of sportsmanship, teamwork, self-reliance, discipline and, most of all, self-esteem. Most importantly it is believed that this participation should be a family affair. Parents may hold volunteer positions in one of the hundreds of capacities available or just to support their children at the field level.

PONY (“Protect Our Nation’s Youth”) baseball is regulated by the official baseball rules as stated in the current edition of The Sporting News. These rules are amended firstly by PONY Baseball rules as listed in their current official handbook. Due to local circumstances, the division commissioner and the Irvine PONY board may amend these rules at the local level as approved.

1. ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

- 1.1. All Managers must maintain a team notebook containing (1) a team roster complete with each player’s name, jersey number, Guardian names, home address, home and cell phone numbers, (2) copy of Irvine PONY Mustang Division rules, (3) signed medical waivers for each player, (4) copy of Parent Code of Conduct, (5) signed Managers/Coaches Code of Conduct for each manager/coach, (6) players Concussion Forms signed by parents for each player, (7) Manager/Coach Concussion Certificate.
- 1.2. A manager or coach must not leave a practice/game until parents have picked up all players. Always have the team notebook updated with parents’ contact information.
- 1.3. Be aware of weather conditions. Call the Irvine Mudd Line (949-724-MUDD) to check if fields are open for play. Do not play or practice on closed fields. First infraction for playing or practicing on a closed field is the loss of your next practice. Second infraction is forfeit of your next game.
- 1.4. Only managers and coaches who have completed Irvine PONY background checks, if applicable pursuant to Irvine PONY league requirements, and Managers/Coaches Code of Conduct Forms are permitted in dugouts or on the field during practices and games.
- 1.5. The Home team shall provide two new baseballs and the Visiting team shall provide one new baseball to the umpire prior to the start of the scheduled game.

2. ROLE OF MANAGERS, COACHES AND PARENTS

- 2.1. Managers and Coaches should realize that they are role models for the players and that the players tend to emulate all actions, positive or negative.
- 2.2. The team manager is responsible for communicating the standards of sportsmanlike conduct to the coaches and parents of his/her team and must attempt to curtail inappropriate behavior by the players, coaches and parents of his/her team. Foul language, hazing of opponents or umpires, fighting, reckless use of equipment and other unsportsmanlike actions shall not be tolerated. Problems should be reported to the division commissioner so the League can take appropriate action, per Section 20 of the PONY Regulations.
- 2.3. The umpire is the final decision-maker in all cases regarding baseball rules and on-field conduct by players and coaches. Any discussion with the umpire will be with the umpire’s permission.
- 2.4. Managers may ask for time and when time is granted, they may discuss rulings on the field. Discussing and/or arguing balls and strikes are not allowed under MLB rule 9.02(a). If a discussion is to take place, it will only be with the team manager or, in their absence, the lead coach in attendance at the game (as indicated on the game roster). Only a manager may ask for a meeting with the Umpire to discuss an issue on the field. The Team Manager will call for time, and if time is granted, walk to meet the Umpire away from the fans and players. Assistant coaches may only speak to Umpires through the team manager. Any raised voices;

outbursts of anger, parent intervention, or other team misconduct will be treated as an infraction if not immediately taken care of by the team manager. If the team manager is the source of unsportsmanlike conduct, this will immediately be deemed an infraction and that manager will be ejected from the game.

- 2.5. Ejections – If a player or a coach is ejected from a game the penalty is one game suspension for coach, one game suspension for player...in addition to game suspended from.
- 2.6. Players are generally expected to attend practices and games. Players/Parents are expected to notify managers/coaches ahead of time if players cannot attend practices, games or other team activities. Many managers have team guidelines regarding practices and arrival time prior to games. Players are expected to comply with team guidelines. Managers have the right to discipline players in repeated violation of team guidelines, subject to approval of the division commissioner or VP. The opposing coach is to be notified if playing time is affected.
- 2.7. Players will be ejected from games for behavior deemed to be exceedingly unsportsmanlike or violent (e.g., throwing equipment in anger/frustration, verbally abusing other players/coaches or Umpires, threatening other players, intentionally causing physical harm to anyone during a game or any other behavior deemed inappropriate by the game Umpire or an Irvine PONY Board Member in attendance).

3. OFFICIAL START TIME

- 3.1. A game shall start no later than 10 minutes from the scheduled time due to not having enough players to take the field defensively. A team must have a minimum of 8 players to constitute a complete team. If 8 players are not present when it is time to take the field defensively, the team with the shortage of players will forfeit the game. If 8 players are available, the game may be played and one out will be recorded every time the missing 9th player was to bat.
- 3.2. A game shall start no later than 10 minutes due to not having an umpire. If an umpire does not take his position within 10 minutes of the official start time, both managers must agree to play the game without an umpire. An unbiased person may be utilized as an umpire if both managers agree. If a volunteer is selected and the managers agree, this person will take their position behind the pitcher's mound. The calls and decisions made by this person are to be accepted as valid. No disagreements or changes will be allowed once the decision has been made to use this person as an umpire, and all decisions made by the stand-in umpire are final. However, if one manager does not want to utilize a person from the stands then the game needs to be rescheduled by notifying a commissioner.
- 3.3. The Home team shall provide two new baseballs and the Visiting team shall provide one new baseball to the umpire and if necessary, provide additional used-but-playable baseballs if initially provided balls are lost. Both teams should proactively recover balls that are hit or thrown out of play.

4. LENGTH AND COMPLETION OF GAMES

- 4.1. A Pony game shall be 7 innings and shall be subject to a time limit. No new inning shall start after one hour and forty-five minutes (1:45) from the start of the game. In accordance with this time limit, once an inning begins, that inning shall be completed.
 - 1.1. "Mercy" rule: All games, except for the championship game, will observe the following run rule. Play will end if the home team has a 15-run lead after three and one half innings (middle of the fourth inning) or 10-runs after four and one half innings or more. If the visiting team has a 15-run lead after four complete innings (conclusion of the fourth inning) or 10-runs after five or more complete innings. Managers and players shall not declare that a game is over due to the "Mercy" rule. It is up to the discretion of the umpire to invoke the mercy rule.
- 4.2. Injuries causing a substantial delay in the game may cause the umpire to add this time back to the end of the game as long as it does not affect other scheduled games, (ex. Adult Softball or another Irvine PONY game that could ultimately delay a non-PONY sanctioned game) this is at the complete discretion of the umpire. It is important that the official timekeeper note the time the game begins.

- 4.3. There are tie games during the regular season. Play-off games will be played until there is a winner, even if it is necessary to suspend play and resume the game at a later date.

5. GAME ROSTER

- 5.1. All drafted players and the name of the manager, or lead coach in their absence, must be listed on the game line-up card/roster. If a player is absent or injured and not available to play, the roster must reflect this status.
- 5.2. All rosters must be given to the opposing manager and the home team scorekeeper prior to game time with the correct game line-up. Once the game has started no changes may be made to the line-up, except for late arrivals. Late arrivals must be placed at the bottom of the active batting order.
- 5.3. The official scorekeeper shall be the home team scorekeeper unless agreed upon differently by both managers. The official scorekeeper surrenders loyalty to either team and cannot offer or intentionally withhold information in order to create an advantage for either team.
- 5.4. To the extent a player leaves before the end of a game, his position in the batting order will be treated as follows:
 - 5.4.1. Non-injury situation: An out will be recorded at that position in the batting order for the balance of the game, unless the player has been put at the bottom of the batting order, the manager has notified the opposing manager, umpire and the official scorekeeper at the beginning of the game.
 - 5.4.2. Injury Situation: His position in the batting order shall not be counted as an out.

6. BATTING

- 6.1. It is mandatory that all players in attendance at the start of the game shall be listed in the batting line-up and must be given the opportunity to bat, whether they are holding a field position or not in the inning in which they are scheduled to bat.
- 6.2. Batting out of order: Notwithstanding certain exceptions noted in rule 4.4, an out may be recorded against the batter that missed their turn after an appeal is made to the Umpire. An appeal can only be made after the improper batter has completed the at bat and before the next pitch or play. The improper batter may be replaced with the proper batter, anytime while at bat, without penalty pursuant to MLB rule 6.07.
- 6.3. Players who intentionally, in the judgment of the Umpire, throw bats or protective headgear, or discard protective headgear while batting or running the bases, may be ejected from the game following completion of any play in progress at the time the violation occurs. Such action does not constitute an out and such players shall be replaced as batters or base runners as required.
- 6.4. An intentional walk may be announced by the opposing manager. In this event the batter will be awarded first base and the pitcher will not be required to pitch 4 called balls.
- 6.5. Slash-bunting (the act of showing and/or faking a bunt then pulling the bat back with the intention of swinging) is not permitted. Any batter attempting to slash-bunt shall be called out.
- 6.6. Before the start of the game all bats shall be inspected by the coach listed on the roster to ensure they are compliant with the equipment rules. After inspection, and once the game begins, if a player steps into the batter's box using a non-compliant bat, that batter will be called out and both the player and Manager will be ejected from the game.

7. PITCHING

- 7.1. Pony pitching from 54 feet, bases are at 80 feet.
- 7.2. Balks and infield fly rules are governed by MLB rules.
- 7.3. Dropped third strike rule is in effect and is governed by MLB rule 6.05(b).

- 7.4. Pony shall use the Pitch Smart chart printed below and track innings pitched.
 NOTE: The pitcher will only be required to observe the calendar day(s) of rest for the threshold he/she reached during the start of that at-bat, provided that the pitcher is removed before delivering a pitch to the next batter.

LEAGUE AGE	DAILY MAX PITCHES	REQUIRED REST (PITCHES)					
		0 DAYS	1 DAY	2 DAYS	3 DAYS	4 DAYS	5 DAYS
7-8	50	1-20	21-35	36-50	N/A	N/A	N/A
9-10	75	1-20	21-35	36-50	51-65	66+	N/A
11-12	85	1-20	21-35	36-50	51-65	66+	N/A
13-14	95	1-20	21-35	36-50	51-65	66+	N/A
15-16	95	1-30	31-45	46-60	61-75	76+	N/A
17-18	105	1-30	31-45	46-60	61-80	81+	N/A
19-22	120	1-30	31-45	46-60	61-80	81-105	106+

- 7.5. When pitching in more than one game on the same calendar day, pitchers may pitch any combination of pitches in those games provided they do not exceed the maximum number of pitches for that calendar day. Pitchers reaching their maximum number of pitches in a day while pitching to a batter, may finish pitching to that batter before being removed.
- 7.6. Pitchers shall not pitch more than 5 innings in a game or 8 innings per week. A calendar week is defined as Sunday through Saturday.
- 7.7. When pitching in more than one game on the same calendar day, pitchers may pitch any combination of pitches in those games provided they do not exceed the maximum number of pitches for that calendar day.
- 7.8. Pitchers reaching their maximum number of pitches in a day while pitching to a batter, may finish pitching to that batter before being removed.
- 7.9. At the end of every inning the scorekeepers will record the pitch count for each pitcher each inning. When a pitching change occurs, a total pitch count will be recorded for posting on the PONY website score reporting system. The pitch count and innings pitched will be recorded next to the pitcher's name separated by a comma. Failure to report accurate pitch count and innings pitched within 24 hours of the game may lead to the forfeit of that game and can lead to manager suspension.
- 7.10. It is the coach's responsibility to monitor their pitchers pitch count. While there is a daily and weekly max, the coach should monitor the pitch count and replace the pitcher if they feel fatigued or struggle to pitch.
- 7.11. Pitchers will be logged as having pitched one full inning as soon as a pitch is delivered to a batter.
- 7.12. Once a pitcher has been removed from the mound, he may not pitch again for the remainder of the game.
- 7.13. When a relief pitcher comes into the game he will be allowed eight warm up pitches. Existing pitchers are allowed five warm up pitches between innings. A relief pitcher that enters the game because of an existing pitcher's injury will be allowed as many warm up pitches as needed.
- 7.14. A pitcher must be replaced if he hits 3 batters in a game.
- 7.15. Balks are to be called by the Umpire as in "Official Baseball Rules." Intentional Walks-If a manager elects to walk a batter intentionally no pitches need to be thrown. Manager shall inform the umpire of his intention and the batter shall take first base.
- 7.16. No player who is over league age 14, as determined by IPBA age rules, may pitch in any Pony game.

- 7.17. The home team book shall be the official record of games statistics including pitch count.
8. Base Running
- 8.1. Full stealing under MLB rules.
- 8.2. Players MUST slide or AVOID contact to injure or disrupt a defensive player. If the umpire determines that a player intended to harm the defensive player, that player will be recorded as an out and ejected from the game.
- 8.3. The catcher or other defensive player may not block any base or home plate without possession of the ball. The fielder will be guilty of obstruction as in "Official Baseball Rules."
- 8.4. With two outs and if the runner on base is the catcher for the following inning, the runner shall be replaced with the player that made the previous out. This is intended to allow the game to be sped up.
- 8.5. If a runner is injured and is unable to run or a batter is hit by a pitch and is unable to run, the runner may be replaced by a replacement runner without recording an out. The runner shall be replaced with the player that made the previous out
9. Fielding
- 9.1. There are free substitutions at the half inning. Players should not be removed during an inning unless due to injury. Defensive players on the field may be moved from position to position at the coach's discretion only in conjunction with pitching changes or at the half inning, and so long as fielding rules are not violated.
- 9.2. No player may sit out two defensive innings in a row. Exception: an issue with discipline, in which case the manager must notify the opposing manager of his decision.
- Penalty: if it is found that a manager has inadvertently, or otherwise, violated rule 9.2, the manager must immediately rectify the situation and it needs to be brought to the attention of the division VP. The affected player will swap with an unaffected player (no other defensive changes are permitted unless a pitching change is also made) and will play the remainder of the inning at that position. In addition, the affected player may not sit out for the remainder of the game unless additional innings are played at the end of seven innings or whether doing so would result in a violation of rule 9.3.
- 9.3. No player can sit out two defensive innings in a game until every other player on their team has sat out at least one inning (exception: discipline issues (see 9.2)).
- Penalty: if it is found that a manager has inadvertently, or otherwise, violated rule 9.3, the manager must immediately rectify the situation and it needs to be brought to the attention of the division VP. The affected player will swap with an unaffected player (no other defensive changes are permitted unless a pitching change is also made) and will play the remainder of the inning at that position. In addition, the affected player may not sit out for the remainder of the game unless additional innings are played at the end of seven innings or whether doing so would result in a further violation of rule 9.3
- 9.4. It is recommended that every player play at least one complete inning in the infield within the first four defensive innings and at least two complete innings in the infield within the first seven defensive innings. The catcher position will be considered an infield position. Regardless, every player must play in the infield within the first four innings.
- 9.5. Outfielders must play no closer than 15 feet behind the base paths.
- 9.6. Balks and infield fly rules are governed by MLB rules.

10. FARM TEAM

- 10.1. To avoid going to 8 players a farm system has been established. In order for this rule to take effect and be utilized without abuse the following rules will apply:
- 10.2. Only sanctioned and appointed teams by the commissioner may be utilized for farm team activity. Hierarchy for farm team status is shown below.
- 10.3. TEAM FARMS FROM BRONCO
- 10.4. A manager may not go to a farm team unless the following criteria is in place:
- 10.5. The manager has reason to believe his team will fall to 9 players or less at or during a scheduled game.
- 10.6. A Commissioner has been notified prior to game time for approval. If the commissioner is unavailable, the V.P. of the league must be notified. The commissioner has the final approval on the use of a farm team.
- 10.7. The opposing manager is notified prior to game start time that you are using a farm team player and the names of your absent players. If rules for farm team usage are not adhered to, the manager must be notified by the opposing manager and corrective actions taken. If the situation is not corrected, the game will be forfeited by the team utilizing the farm advantage.
- 10.8. As many farm players as necessary to complete a 9 person roster may be acquired through the approved channels.
- 10.9. The Divisional VP and Divisional Commissioner are the only people other than the rules committee that may assign farm team status. This must be completed prior to the first scheduled league game.
- 10.10. It is to the advantage of all concerned to attempt to supply the most talented child available when you are asked to supply a farm team player. You must discuss this with your team parents and let them know this policy is being adopted. Most kids and parents really like the opportunity to play with another team as a farm player.
- 10.11. The farm player may be brought up only after confirmation that there will be no more than 9 players at the game. If a 10th player shows up prior to game time unexpectedly, the manager will discuss the situation with the child's parents and be sure that there is an understanding of commitment to game schedules. This child may play in the game, however, he/she will not be allowed to play more than every other inning for the duration of the game. If a child shows up after the first pitch has been thrown and a farm player is in place, this child is not allowed to play for the duration of the game. Again, the child's parents need to be spoken with.
- 10.12. A farm player must play at least every other inning. However, when the number of players on the team is 10, the team manager cannot play a farm team player more than anyone else on his roster. This is accomplished by rotating the farm player in and out every other inning.
- 10.13. The farm player may not pitch under any circumstances. In addition, he may not play the infield more than two consecutive innings.
- 10.14. The sole purpose of the farm team is to avoid recording an out when batting short and to compete evenly on defense, it is not to bring in ringers and high grade talent. The positions that are to be filled should be positions that will not upset your current roster.
- 10.15. The farm player(s) must be put at the bottom of the batting order ... no exceptions. Any unresolved infractions of the above stated rules will result in a game forfeiture.

11. OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE TIME-OUTS

- 11.1. Umpires shall not permit more than one offensive time out in each half inning to allow a Manager or Coach to talk with a player.
- 11.2. One defensive time-out per inning is permitted. On the second trip the pitcher must be removed from the mound. A defensive time-out is considered to be taken when a coach/manager steps past the 1st and 3rd baseline and onto the field for any reason whatsoever except injury or to fix a uniform. If there is any delay to the game because of a manager communicating to his pitcher directly, that too will be considered a time-out.

12. ADDITIONAL RULES

- 12.1. The divisional commissioner must approve any changes to these rules. To apply any rule changes for the game(s), the commissioner or his representative must advise the managers, umpire and official scorekeeper before the start of the game.
- 12.2. All players must wear a hard protective cup.
- 12.3. Wooden, metal, graphite or ceramic bats manufactured for baseball play, which are round and not more than two and five eights (2-5/8") in diameter at the thickest part, not more than 42 inches in length.
- 12.4. In conjunction with USA Baseball and its other participating national member organizations, PONY Baseball has adopted the new USA Baseball bat standard (USABat). Effective January 1, 2018, with the exception of -3 (BBCOR certified), all other 2-5/8" minus factor bats (-5,-7,-9, etc..) and 2-1/4" bats must be certified with the USABat licensing stamp on the bat in order to be used for league and all-star play. All bats without this stamp will be illegal and not be eligible to use during league play. The new BBCOR bats bear the USABat licensing mark.

13. PROTEST RULE

- 13.1. There are no protests. Umpire is the final decision maker in all cases and those decisions are final. If a manager during a game feels the umpire is wrong under our rules, the manager has 90 seconds to produce the rule and show it to the umpire.