

Baseball PEI

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Section 2.8 of the Baseball PEI Procedures Manual, states:

“Each [“AAA”] Zone shall have a minimum of one “AAA” team in the 11U, 13U and 15U League. If a Zone fails to field a “AAA” team in a certain age category, the “AA” and “A” teams from that Zone in that age category will be eligible to participate in a Baseball PEI League and exhibition tournaments, but **will not be eligible** for any Provincial tournaments.”

Here are some questions/statements Baseball PEI has received in regards to this policy, in relation to the Eastern 15U situation in 2019, and our answers to them:

- Why do we have this policy in place?
 - o Three reasons – first, we want to make sure there are at least four “AAA” teams in each division (11U, 13U and 15U) on Prince Edward Island, in order for them to be competitive and worthwhile leagues.
 - o Second, we want to prohibit zones from not fielding “AAA” teams and then fielding very strong “AA” teams with players who would be playing “AAA” in any other zone. In other words, we don’t want associations to “stack” “AA” teams and not offer a “AAA” team, while other zones have “AAA” teams and their “AA” teams don’t have their strongest players (unlike the zone that didn’t field a “AAA” team).
 - o Third, and in our opinion, most important, is player development. While one of our major goals at Baseball PEI is to provide baseball for all, another major goal is to fully develop the skills and baseball knowledge of all players, as much as possible. This includes having players play in divisions in which challenge them and help them grow and become better baseball players. While there is no question that for some players, the “AA” and “A” categories best serve their skills, there is no question there are a number of players that would benefit best from playing at our highest skill category, “AAA.” To have these players playing “AA” does not offer sufficient challenge or development of players. At the end of the day, when players finish at the 18U/21U levels, we want them to be the best baseball player they can be.
- Why do we care about “AAA” baseball anyway?
 - o As mentioned above, while the primary goal of minor baseball has to be fun, Baseball PEI is also concerned with players developing to their fullest potential. From a developmental standpoint, it doesn’t do a player any good to dominate at a certain skill division and not be challenged or grow. By having players playing at their appropriate skill division, they are being challenged and are growing and developing. This also applies to “AA” and “A” baseball.
- Well, there isn’t enough talent in the Eastern zone for 15U “AAA.”
 - o In 2018, Cardigan and Stratford had six 15U teams, and in Cardigan, Northside and Stratford, there were six 13U teams as well. Unless numbers drop dramatically, between the four associations, there should be between four and six 15U teams in 2019. Also, in 2018, 41% of all 15U-aged players registered to play 15U baseball on PEI played on teams based out of Cardigan or Stratford (that means that the other three “AAA” zones had 59% of all 15U-aged players). While that number will undoubtedly change some this year, it’s highly unlikely that it would drop more than 10% (which, if it did, 31% of all 15U-aged players on PEI would come from the Eastern zone). Why do we tell you this? Because Baseball PEI finds it very hard to believe out of this pool of players in the Eastern zone, there aren’t twelve players that are of the talent to play at the “AAA” level. Also, last year’s Cardigan 15U “AA” was dominant, going 12-0 in the regular season and winning both the Eliminations and Provincial Championships, often in lopsided fashion. Nine of the fourteen players on that team are still 15U-aged this year (I would also note seven of the thirteen players on the 2018 Stratford 15U “AA” team, which won the silver medal at the 2018 Baseball PEI Provincial 15U “AA” Championships, are still 15U-aged this year). Combine this with the fact there are four returning players from last year’s Eastern 15U “AAA” (and nine players from last year’s Stratford 13U “AAA” team that are 15U-aged this year), Baseball PEI does not believe there is not enough talent in the Eastern zone to field a 15U “AAA” team. In fact, there should be a plethora of talent.
- Well, if this zone wasn’t to have a 15U “AAA” team, it wouldn’t affect other zones anyway.



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- Not so. Knowing of this talent within the Eastern zone, if Baseball PEI was to permit the Eastern zone not to field a 15U “AAA” team and allow 15U “AA” and “A” teams into Provincials, that would be unfair to the “AA” and “A” teams based out of the other three “AAA” zones, which have their best twelve or more players playing at the “AAA” level and not at “AA” (and by extensions, teams based out of the Eastern zone at the “A” level would have players who would be playing “AA” if there was a “AAA” team fielded). The chances are these 15U “AA” teams from the Eastern zone would be much stronger than other 15U “AA” teams from across the province, which negatively affects the experience these teams would have within the 15U “AA” league and Provincial tournaments.
- This is all great, but there are definitely reasons why my child shouldn’t be trying out for/playing “AAA.”
 - We know that there are various reasons a player may not want to try out/play “AAA,” some being legitimate (the talent level of the player and other extenuating circumstances). There is no question about this. The major one is that a lot of players do not have the skill/talent to play “AAA,” and are better served playing “AA” or “A”
 - However, some reasons given to us are not legitimate, in our opinion. Some of these reasons including stacking a “AA” team to have a chance to go to Atlantics (which we don’t see as legitimate, for a variety of reasons). As well, in the past, there have been cases of teams not going to a higher skill division because they felt they would not be one of the better teams in that league (Baseball PEI doesn’t see that as a legitimate reason). Another reason often given to us is a player wants to play with his friends. While we wouldn’t dispute the important role of friendships and social structures, we would also venture to say there is a great benefit to meeting new people and developing new friendships, so this reason is naturally met by us with some scepticism.
 - Finally, there are a lot of complaints about travel. While we acknowledge it is a 25-30 minute drive between Cardigan and Stratford, in our opinion, there is absolutely no reason game times and practice times cannot be shared amongst the various communities within the zone (also, there is nothing in Baseball PEI policy that says there can’t be multiple “AAA” teams in a zone, in the case that Cardigan and Stratford both wished to field a “AAA” team. That’s up to the associations within the zone to determine that).

This has been a long response; however, we feel it’s important to get all of our reasoning out for our policy. We want strong “AAA,” “AA” and “A” leagues, and we want players playing at levels that are challenging them and are helping them improve and grow as a baseball player (and a person). We don’t want players playing at skill divisions that are too easy for them, which also negatively affects the experience of teams they are playing against.

At the end of the day, Baseball PEI doesn’t want to have to enforce a policy that doesn’t permit a certain number of teams not to enter Eliminations and Provincials. That is the last thing we wish to do. However, the policy is in place for a reason. We hope you can understand the reasoning to our policy in this regard, and we hope that players, parents, coaches and associations can work together to ensure there are teams fielded at the 15U “AAA,” “AA” and “A” skill categories within the Eastern zone, and that players are playing at levels that are appropriate for their skill level (and not playing at a lower skill level simply for the chance to win more).

