

Ask Little League

Welcome to "Ask Little League." This online forum allows you to interact with Little League International officials and friends of Little League.

Scroll all the way down to see the current questions and answers!

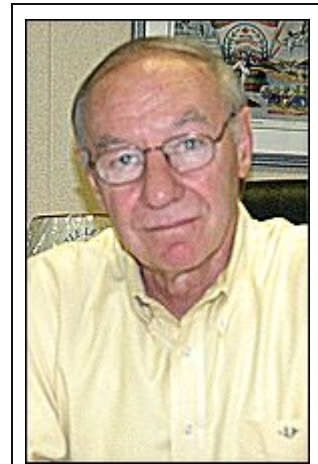
Current Session

Joe Losch

Little League Baseball and Softball vice president of operations, corporate secretary, and director of the Little League International Tournament.

May 25, 2005
(2 p.m. to 4 p.m., Eastern U.S. Time)

Joe fielded your questions about Little League rules and regulations, the International Tournament, and more.



Joe Losch
[Read Joe's Bio](#)

Hi! This is Joe... Let's get started.

Alan, a local Little League president from Peabody, Mass., asks:

Will Little League be revisiting the catcher's dangling throat guard requirement with regards to the goalie style helmets that already have the extra extended throat protection as part of the helmet? It looks like these newly designed goalie style helmets were designed with extended throat protection to eliminate the need for something to be dangling from the bottom of the mask.

Joe:

The hockey/goalie helmets have a wire extension of the helmet. Because the catcher raises his/her head, it leaves the neck exposed. For that reason, we require the dangling throat guard to help ensure there is appropriate protection for the throat area. We're always looking for new ways to make the game safer.

Joe, a local Little League coach in Pennsylvania asks:

What does a coach need to do and cancel a game?

Joe:

Since your local league board of directors establishes the game schedule for your league, the board would also be responsible

for re-scheduling or making up games, and should be approached if the need is there to re-schedule a game because of school activities, etc. The manager/coach should not assume this responsibility.

Jonathan, a local Little League umpire in Westbrook, Maine, asks:

As other baseball/softball governing bodies make the transition to a helmet fitted with a manufacturer approved face-mask, will Little League be adopting this as well, and if so, what is the timeframe when we'll be seeing this?

Joe:

Little League has always permitted the use of faceguards as an option for the local league. We're constantly looking at our database of injuries and have not determined that the faceguard should be a requirement at this time. If your league believes this should be mandated, you should lobby your District Administrator to have it placed on the agenda for the next International Congress. See here for more details on the Congress:

<http://www.littleleague.org/about/congresshistory.asp>

Dave, a local Little League president in Charleston, W.Va., asks:

Can you form an 11-12 All Star team with just 12 year olds?

Joe:

Certainly! A tournament team may be composed of all players who are all league age 12. While 11- and 12-year-olds are eligible, we find that most rosters consist mainly of those who are league age 12.

Will, an assistant district umpire consultant in Carson City, Nev., asks:

The tournament rules now allow a team to not have to have all players meet mandatory play if the game is shortened for any reason, including the 10-run-rule. What was the reason for the change?

Joe:

While mandatory play is vital to the tournament program, the reason for the change was as a result of managers making a travesty out of the game (using delaying tactics, purposely striking out, etc.) in order to get all players in before the game became a regulation game. The local league is strongly encouraged to insist that all players on their tournament teams be given proper tournament participation.

Mark, a local Little League vice president in Mesa, Ariz., asks:

In all stars, can we have a team name different then what is on the paperwork?

Joe:

Sure. There is no requirement that the team must have the

league name on the tournament uniforms. We even have some leagues that use regular season uniforms for their tournament teams. Just remember, every uniform must have the proper Little League shoulder patch affixed.

Steve, a local Little League vice president and umpire in Santa Barbara, Calif., asks:

Can a manager stop a game during an inning and fix the mound with a rake if his pitcher is having trouble with his footing? Or should that be done between innings?

Joe:

This should only happen between innings after consulting with the umpire. Ultimately, it's the umpire-in-chief's call.

Bob, a board member of a local Little League in Rhode Island, asks:

We have a player turning 11 in August. He is in our Minor League system. He was called up to the Major League division because of his skill and age. We have a by-law that states if a player doesn't move up, he/she can not play in Minors. His parent said if the player has to move up, he won't play anymore. What can we do?

Joe:

First, let me explain that parents have a right to register their children in the program, but as you mention, age and ability are the determining factors regarding where the child will be placed. To allow parents to determine the level and team a child plays for can only create chaos, because if you allow one parent to make this decision, you will more than likely have many other requests. Regulation VIII (b) indicates that the local league should establish a policy regarding this, which your league has done.

Howard, a local Little League president in Kalamazoo, Mich., asks:

Each year we are required to verify player residence and birth records. If a league makes a copy of the official birth certificate and maintains in its files, why must we re-verify the birth certificate again?

Joe:

As it stands now, the parent still has to present the original each year. Even though you might have a copy, that means the parent does have the original, which should be readily available. After the document is verified, it should be returned to the parent. While in some states it is illegal to copy a birth certificate, it is required that once the original is verified, a copy must be carried with the tournament team. While some people have concerns about copying birth records, in checking with notaries, we have found that as long as the copy is for internal use, it is acceptable. Keep in mind that the personnel at the local league change often, so having a copy from four years ago does not necessarily mean the original was properly verified.

Marc, a local Little League officer in Stamford, Conn., asks:

My question is about the age change next year. My understanding is that the 12's that normally would have been 13 have an option door to try out for Juniors or to stay in Little League. The 4's that would have been 5 under the old rule, but still 4 based upon the new rule can enter Tee Ball, but what about the 8's that would have been considered 9 and eligible to tryout for the Majors? Have they been forgotten?

Joe:

No, we didn't forget them. We have some leagues that only allow 11s and 12s in the Majors, and others that allow 10s, 11s, and 12s, and those like yours that allow all four ages into the Major draft. Because of this, cases like these (if the board desires) can be referred to the District Administrator as a Charter Committee waiver request. (See page 11 in the rulebooks.)

Michelle, a local Little League team mom and "involved parent" in Yucaipa, Calif., asks:

My son is playing in the Majors as an 11-year-old for the first year. Last night he was called out on an "infield fly rule." I've never seen it used before and don't understand it. Three players on the opposing team tried to catch the pop up and were unsuccessful. My son reached first base when their pitcher picked up the ball and overthrew it to first but he was still called out by the home plate umpire. I don't understand the infield fly rule and when it is appropriate to use it.

Joe:

Great question Michelle. The infield fly rule is there to protect the runners already on base. Without it, the defense could intentionally drop the ball, and get an easy double play (or even a triple play). It's a judgment call on the part of the umpire as to whether the ball should have been easily caught by an infielder. Your son is not alone.

Matt, a local Little League board member in York, Pa., asks:

I have heard that several league presidents are upset at the change to Regulation I stating that they are now ineligible to coach or manage a tournament team. Several presidents have resigned thinking that they will now be eligible to coach or manage. What happens if a previous president (who was president of record at season's beginning) manages an international tournament team? Also, if this would happen, what would be the ramifications, if any on our team, the manager, or the local league?

Joe:

Regulation I (b) stipulates that a president MAY manage, coach or umpire, provided he/she does not serve on the protest committee, nor serve as a tournament team manager or coach. For many years, the president could not do this. However, we have found that many outstanding volunteers who possess leadership qualities are willing to serve as president if they can manage, coach or umpire. We restrict this to the regular season only. In prior years, if it was determined that a person stepped down as president just before the tournament in order to manage the tournament team, rather than penalize the

players, we have removed that individual as manager or coach.

Izzy, a parent of a Little Leaguer in Princeton, N.J., asks:

I understand that players are only eligible to play for a Little League tournament team OR a team in another program, not both. Is this correct?

Joe:

We allow dual participation during the regular season. However, at tournament time we require the players (Majors and below) to make a commitment to Little League, or the other program. In the teenage programs, dual participation is permitted, subject to availability and the wishes of the local league board. In the past, teams would no-show because players were participating in other baseball/softball programs, which created chaos in our tournaments.

Chuck, an assistant district administrator in Lower Merion, Pa., asks:

Under Regulation VI (c,) a Junior, Senior or Big League pitcher "remaining in the game but moving to a different position, can return as a pitcher anytime in the remainder of the game." Suppose a pitcher pitches for three complete innings but plays the fourth inning at first base, then sits out for a substitute in the fifth and sixth innings...He returns in the seventh inning under Rule 3.03. Can he pitch in the seventh inning under Rule 3.03(3)?

Joe:

No. The key to this rule stipulates that the pitcher must remain in the game (not substituted).

John, a local Little League president in Danvers, Mass., asks:

What can you tell us about the age change next year? How many 12s will be allowed on each team? How will this impact the 11s looking to play in the Majors?

Joe:

The Little League International Rules Committee will be addressing that issue soon, as well as the number of 12-year-olds that can pitch in a week (Regulation VI (c)). [Check back here](#) for details often. Keep in mind that an abundance of players in this age group should result in a league expanding its Major Division!

Raymond, a local Little League umpire in Perryville, Md., asks:

Is there a listing of approved for use bats in LL? Does mere certification by another organizations allow use?

Joe:

Bats used in Little League divisions must meet the specifications in Little League Rule 1.10. We know any bat marked "Little League" has been tested and approved, so we recommend their use. A bat designated for use in baseball

must not be used for softball, and vice-versa.

Glenn, a former Little League coach in Taylor, Pa., writes:

I just wanted to congratulate you and the whole Little League organization for the great job that you do. I have great memories coaching in the Little League organization. I had the great pleasure to coach at all levels of the organization from Tee Ball up through Big League. Your organization was a great help any time we needed your guidance. Keep up the good work.

Joe:

Thanks for the nice words, Glenn, but it's people like you at the grass roots level who really make the program successful.

John, a local Little League information officer and coach in Canton, Mich., asks:

Can a batter switch around(left/right) during the same turn at bat? When does he/she have to stick with one or the other?

Joe:

There is not limit in the rules to the times a batter can change from right- to left-handed. However, the batter must mnbe ready when the pitcher is ready to deliver the ball.

Ray, a district umpire in Virginia, asks:

I know the rule for leaving a base early for 12 and under baseball was voted on again at last year's Little League International Congress (to be the same as softball) and was voted down again. Why is there such dissent in making the rule the same for both Little League Baseball and Softball?

Joe:

As an organization, we like to have consistency in the rules, but we need to realize that baseball and softball are two different sports. The same issue has been on the Congress agenda many times over the years, and each time it has been voted down by the delegates, who are locally elected District Administrators. We're bound by the vote of the Congress, relative to rule changes. It's one of the great things about our program...it gives a strong voice to volunteers at the local level.

Mike, a local Little League umpire-in-chief in Wallingford, Conn., asks:

This is about the issue of throwing bats, not in anger or frustration but an "involuntary" release during or just after the swing by a batter. As an umpire, if I remove a player as a safety precaution because of throwing a bat in this manner, should he/she be suspended for the next game also? How about if a coach removes a player because of this?

Joe:

The answer to the first question is yes. If you eject a player (in this case, technically, it would be unsportsmanlike conduct), the player must sit out the next game. But, if the coach removes the player before an ejection, then it's just a simple

substitution. Coaches must work with their batters in practice to control the involuntary release of bats when they swing.

Stephanie, a parent of a Little Leaguer in Fitchburg, Mass., asks:

I was wondering how the league teaches kids, is the priority point to win or to learn the game?

Joe:

Good question, Stephanie. Little League should be an educational experience for youngsters. Baseball and softball are merely the vehicles for teaching the values of sportsmanship, fair play and teamwork. For this reason, we have mandatory play, as we are concerned with all the players, not just the elite players. However, you realize that everyone keeps score, and that even in losing, lessons can be learned. Some of the very best players in Major League Baseball played Little League (Tom Seaver, Nolan Ryan, Jim Palmer, etc.), but that should not surprise anyone. Our goal is not to produce Major League players, but to create a wholesome program based on community and family participation.

Mike, a coaching coordinator in a local Little League in Oregon, asks:

In the Majors and Minors baseball divisions do the runners have to slide when involved in a close play?

Joe:

It depends, Mike. Rule 7.08 (a) is often misunderstood and misnamed as the "must slide rule." The key to this rule is that the fielder must have the ball, and is WAITING to make a tag. Then, the runner must either slide, OR attempt to get around the fielder. If the fielder does not HAVE THE BALL, the runner does not have to slide or attempt to get around the fielder. (If the fielder is in the way, the umpire could call obstruction.)

Lisa, a local Little League president in Saylorsburg, Pa., asks:

With the new "cut-off-date" being applied for the 2006 season, how does that affect fall ball? Is it safe to say that those league age "12" this year can participate in Juniors fall ball program, yet chose next spring (as league age 12 again) to stay in the Major division?

Joe:

The new regulation takes effect on Jan. 1, so if a player who is league age 12 this year participates on a Junior team during the fall (a training program), that player would still be eligible to play in the Majors in 2006.

Don, a local Little League president in Belle, W.Va., asks:

Come All Star time, who is responsible for getting all the information the is needed to the District Administrator - the president or the managers of the team?

Joe:

The president and player agent should facilitate the process (since they need to sign to affidavit), but the responsibility is ultimately the manager's.

Raymond, a local Little League umpire in Perryville, Md., asks:

Why is the use of a batting donut not allowed if it is always on a bat and not on the playing field?

Joe:

A number of years ago, Little League "outlawed" the use of the traditional batting donut because of the number of injuries resulting from the donuts flying off the bat. Those injuries have all but disappeared. In Little League divisions and below, remember, the on-deck batter position is not permitted.

Bobbi-Jo, a vice president in a local Little League in Dudley, Mass., asks:

With All-Stars approaching, the question has come up in regards to the minimum number of players required on the player affidavit. What is it?

Joe:

Bobbi-Jo, that's a great question. We've wrestled with that one for years. We would certainly prefer and encourage leagues to place 14 players on the affidavit, giving as many players as possible the wonderful experience of participating in tournament. We'd like to mandate having 14 on every affidavit, but we realize that youngsters might become ill or not show up, which would make such a requirement impractical. However, with the advent of mandatory play, we find rosters being restricted to 12 or even fewer. There is no minimum number required for a tournament affidavit. But leagues should keep in mind that by operating with fewer players, they risk the chance of having to forfeit a game if they are unable to place nine players on the field.

Mark, a Little League fan in Ontario, Canada, asks:

In the interests of moving the game along, why can coaches not warm-up the pitcher?

Joe:

Little League is designed for players to participate in the game. Therefore, we should try to involve as many players as possible. We've had injuries to managers and coaches who have ignored this restriction, and these should never have happened.

Bruce, a local Little League president in Berkeley Springs, W.Va., asks:

Our league has been having problems with travel teams. They are trying to take over the league and change it to a different program.

Joe:

Excellent question. "Travel ball," is contrary to the Little

League philosophy of a community-based program. Our desire is to have all the children play, not just the elite players. Parents need to understand that scholarships and pro contracts are not won when a child is 12 years old. We often find that youngsters involved in travel ball, because of the number of games played and the extensive travel (plus the expenses), often get burned out. Also, it becomes burdensome to the family. Injuries because of over-use can be a problem, too.

Ramon, a local Little League president in Manati, Puerto Rico, asks:

When will Little League adopt pitch count rules?

Joe:

Little League is currently involving approximately 50 leagues in a pitch-count study to determine the feasibility of replacing the innings-pitched rules. We have noted that even with the inning restrictions, many pitchers could exceed 100 pitches in a game, which is of concern to us. There have been reports of increased arm injuries for younger players. However, it is clear that in recent years, "travel ball" or so-called "elite" programs have increased. In many of these, there is no restriction on the number of innings (or pitches) in a game, day or week. We didn't seem to have this problem 10 years ago! It's only been since travel ball has become more prevalent.

Joe:

Thanks for all the questions. Hope the rest of your season is most enjoyable and rewarding.

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