

To The Families of Walpole Little League:

Below please find some questions/answers that we've developed to address the playing status of 12-year-olds and help differentiate between the Major and International Leagues.

Thanks for your support,
Eric Kraus, President

Q1: I understand Little League has a rule which states all 12-year-olds not currently in the Majors must be assigned to a Major League team, is this true?

A: Yes. Little League International instituted a rule change last season, mandating that all 12-year-olds must play at the Major League level, if they so desire. 12-year-olds can still play in the International League, at the request of their parents. That said, if a 12-year-old plays in the International League, he/she will be ineligible to pitch.

Walpole Little League urges parents to evaluate their child's skill level, as there are very big differences between the Major and International League levels.

Q2: But if the Majors are the highest level, why wouldn't I want my child to play in that league?

A: There is a significant difference in the competitive nature of the two leagues. Some players will likely find the International League a better fit for their skill level, and will likely get a greater opportunity to play, which, in turn, will lead to a more enjoyable overall experience.

Further, if your child is playing in an additional sport during the spring (lacrosse, soccer, etc.), you may want to consider playing in the International League. Time commitment in the Majors is substantial -- with average of three games and at least one practice per week; coaches expect players to attend every practice and every game, and playing time is often influenced by a player's commitment of time.

Q3: What are the playing time rules in the Majors?

A: Walpole Little League mandates all players on Major League teams must play at least three consecutive innings in the field, and get at least one at bat per game. However, Walpole Little League does not have a rule, written or otherwise, requiring older players to get more playing time. This is left to the discretion of the coaches. Typically, returning Major Leaguers get more playing time than players in their first year.

Q4: What are the playing time rules for the International League?

A: In the International League, Walpole Little League mandates that no player can sit two consecutive innings. Unlike the Majors, where teams use a 9-man batting order with substitutions, the International League uses a continuous batting lineup. This means players get to take a turn a bat even if he/she isn't playing in the field. As a result, International League players get more guaranteed playing time than those in the Majors.

Q5: Last year in the International League, my child played just about every position, and even pitched. Are coaches required to play the kids in different positions in the Majors?

A: No. There is no rule that mandates coaches move players to different positions. In the Majors, it's likely a player will play the same position for most of the season. In addition, not every player will pitch. These decisions are left to the coaches. And, most coaches at the Major League level tend to use the same lineup and batting order for most games throughout the season.

Q6: If my child decides to play in the Majors, will he/she have a chance to try out and play on the Williamsport Team?

A: All eligible 12-year-olds will be considered for the Williamsport teams. However, players are selected by the coaches, and certain Board members of the League. There are no tryouts for the Williamsport teams. Over the past few decades, very few first year players have been selected to play for the Williamsport teams. Keep in mind, all 12-year-olds who aren't selected for a Williamsport team will have the opportunity to play summer baseball and represent the town of Walpole in the Suburban Summer Baseball League.

Q7: If my 12-year-old elects to play in the Majors, can he/she pick a team where he/she already knows the coach or has friends on the team?

A: All players will have to try out and then are placed in a common pool with other players. Walpole Little League divides the Majors into two divisions: the American League and the National League. Players will be drafted by coaches and can't choose which team they want to play on.

Q8: If my 12-year-old automatically will be in the Majors, why does he/she have to tryout?

A: The players need to tryout so coaches can assess a player's skill level. This will help to ensure that players of all skill levels will be evenly distributed, making for a more competitive league.

Q9: If my child was in the Majors last year, is he required to try out again this year?

A: No. Your child will continue to play in the Major League this year.

Q10: What advice do you have for a parent of a 12-year-old (who hasn't played in the Majors before) in terms of deciding what league is best for my child?

A: Walpole Little League encourages parents to talk with other Major League parents, coaches and Board members. It is important for parents to understand which League would be best for their child.

The Major League is clearly a more competitive environment, with most players above the average skill level for their age. Playing time is not evenly distributed. In comparison, the International League is still competitive, but calls for more playing time for all players and is better suited for those youngsters still learning the game. Both leagues play games at the Walpole Little League complex on West Street and at Morgan Field, keep standings and have playoffs, and crown a champion. Both Leagues have 12-year-old graduation events, and the International League has an all-star game at the end of the season

The International League provides those players who are looking for a slightly more relaxed atmosphere with the opportunity to grow their skills at a more comfortable pace. The only other difference is that, if a 12-year-old plays in the International League, he/she will be ineligible to pitch.

At the end of the day, Walpole Little League tries hard to provide a safe, fun and rewarding experience for children playing baseball.

Q11: If my child wants to play on a Major League team, then decides after a few games he/she would rather be in the International League, can we change leagues?

A: Unfortunately, no. Once the Major League draft is held, players will not be able to switch leagues. Walpole Little League goes to great lengths to make sure teams are balanced and wants to avoid constant changing of rosters. Walpole Little League wants all players to enjoy their experience, but can't make exceptions by allowing players to change leagues.

If a player attends the Major League tryouts and then decides that he/she wants to stay in the International League, his/her parents must notify the Board immediately following the tryout and before the draft (which is usually one or two days after tryouts).

This is why it is imperative for parents to have a full understanding of each league and their child's skill level before deciding which one is best for their child.

Q12: If all 12-year-olds who want to play in the Majors are placed on Major League teams, will 10-year-olds still be able to play in the Majors?

A: Until the registration process is completed and we have a better sense of the number of 12-year-olds who will play in the Major League, we will not be able to determine the impact, if any, this rule will have on the Major League.