

## **FALMOUTH LITTLE LEAGUE Majors Operating Guide**

The purpose of this operating guide is threefold. First, it summarizes the process as has been determined by past Falmouth Little League (FLL) boards and has been implemented in the past. Second, it presents background information for future FLL boards and League vice presidents. Third, it is intended to facilitate communication with current Little League participants.

The process outlined below represents the result of countless hours of discussions and debates by past and present FLL board(s). Over the years the board has made adjustments to different parts of the process in its efforts to continually improve the overall experience of the kids.

The process has four key goals:

- Determine which players should (and should not) play majors. The goal is to attempt to place every child where he/she will have the most enjoyment and safety.
- Identify head and assistant coaches who would best fit the needs of the kids, teams, and League.
- Select teams that are evenly matched.
- Do all of above in a fair, unbiased manner without any favoritism.

### **Evaluations**

Baseball/Softball Evaluations:

Evaluations for majors baseball take place on 1 night at FMS gym. All returning majors players' ratings are compiled based upon prior season's ratings done by the coaches at the end of the prior season. All data collected, such as end of season ratings, all-star ratings, etc. should be used to attempt to accurately rate each player. **ONLY PLAYERS WHO DID NOT play majors the previous year AND are eligible to be considered for majors, need to attend majors evaluations (this includes all new players to the league).** All potential coaches should attempt to attend evaluations. A small group of players (4-8) will enter the game at a time with name tags so that the evaluators can identify them. An evaluation coordinator announces each player and facilitates the process. Generally, 4-5 FHS high school players are there to assist in the drills which last for 2-3 minutes each and consist of:

Playing catch

Fielding grounders

Fielding pop ups

Pitching

Hitting (off a tee and/or soft toss) into a net

Running (kids can race the length of the court if the evaluators choose)

The evaluators use a prepared evaluation sheet with player's names, categories, age, etc. and rank each player in each category AND provide an overall rating (1-4. A one(1) being the lowest and four(4) being the highest. An evaluator can use 0.5 increments if they so choose). All evaluation sheets are collected by the league VP or League President and kept confidential and then shredded after the draft and team formation.

### **AAA Team formation:**

AAA teams consist of 9-year-olds and any 10 or 11-year-old players who were not placed in majors.

For any 11-year-old and/or 10-year old who did not get placed in majors, the AAA VP(s) and coaches will use the player ratings from evaluations as well as the prior year's player ratings to attempt to accurately rate each player.

Nine year-olds do not need to attend any evaluations as they are placed in AAA automatically, so the AAA VP(s) and coaches will use the prior year's ratings to attempt to accurately rate these players. Any new 9-year-olds to the league should simply be placed on a team. AAA VP(s) and coaches should try to make balanced teams but, can give consideration to teammate requests, coach requests, etc. as this is an instructional level of baseball intended to be fun.

### **AA Team formation:**

AA VP(s) have the discretion to take all parent/player requests for teammates, coaches, rides, etc. in forming teams. The VP(s) should make an effort to make balanced teams but, again, this is an instructional, fun and non-results oriented league.

### **COACH SELECTION:**

Prior to team formation etc. each league VP collects coach indications of interest. The first step is the check with the coach coordinator (and, if necessary, the FLL Board, to be sure all potential coaches are in good standing with the league.). Coaches can register to be considered as head coach, assistant coach, or "either" (or "no preference"). Once a determination or estimation is made as to how many teams there will be in the respective league, the league VP compares that estimated number with the number of coaches who requested to be head coaches. There are three possible outcomes:

- 1) There are more teams than registered head coaches. In this instance, the league VP, with assistance from the player agent, needs to send out an email to the parents of that league communicating that they anticipate having more teams than they have coaches in hopes of having more parents step-up to coach.
- 2) There appear to be exactly the right number of coaches wishing to be head coach as compared to number of teams and thus, assuming all coaches are in good standing with the league, those who requested to be head coach, will be head coach of a team.
- 3) In the event that there are MORE coaches requesting to be head coach than there are teams, the league VP will send an email to those who registered to be head coaches and communicate the situation and ask if anyone, considering the situation, would prefer to be an assistant as opposed to head coach. For example, an email could read like this, "Thank you for registering to be considered as a head coach in majors baseball this year. At this time, we are estimating that we will have 5 teams and, at this time, 6 of you registered to be considered a head coach. Considering the fact that we are fortunate enough to have more than enough head coaches, would any of you prefer to be an assistant or, would any of you wish to work together as co-head coaches? Please feel free to communicate and get back to me by Friday March 12<sup>th</sup>). IF NO SOLUTION IS FOUND, the league VP will request that these coaches attend the next FLL Board meeting (or set up an impromptu meeting if needed) to present to the board why they wish to be head coach, what their qualifications, strengths, philosophy etc. is/are. The FLL board will then dismiss all potential candidates and have an open discussion

followed by a vote to select the head coaches. The FLL Board reserves the right to simply name each head coach and allow them to choose their assistants or, it can state that two coaches vying for a head coach role, need to work together and coach together in the best interest of the kids.

### **Majors Pre-Draft:**

All head coaches and 1<sup>st</sup> assistants are allowed to attend the draft. The draft should be held at least 1-2 days after evaluations (there should be no rush to draft teams! All energy should be placed on attempting to make balanced teams).

The first step is to review the rankings of all the players. Starting at the top of the list, there should be agreement on the player(s) who ranked the highest score. This establishes a top parameter upon which you can "work down" and rate players relative to that top rated player or players. The group should go player by player and be sure there is consensus agreement on where each player is ranked and rated going down the list. The group should do its best to determine where the cutoff will be for majors players. That cutoff should be based upon where the group feels each player will have the most enjoyment, safety and success. Where that cutoff is can be a challenge but, the collective group of coaches generally has a pretty good knowledge of the kids and their experience and abilities. Once that cutoff is determined, the group can decide how many teams the league will have (i.e. if there are approximately 55 kids, it would stand to reason that the league would opt to go with 5 teams of 11 players). If the numbers do not work out perfectly and clearly (i.e. it appears there are 53 majors candidates, the group can have a discussion on what the best solution is. Possible solutions could be:

- 1) Have some teams with 11 players and some with 12 and if any new players register who are placed in majors then the team(s) with 11 get that new player.
- 2) Consider the players nearest either side of the cutoff and see if it makes sense to move any up or down to make the numbers work. In this case, the group needs to be quite certain that if it moves any player up or down with the intention of that player having the best experience. If the cutoff comes between an 11-year-old and a 10-year old and/or a child in a higher grade, generally, the group will try to place the older/higher grade player in majors.

### **The Majors Draft:**

Once all of the players are ranked as accurately as possible and agreement is made among the coaches, it is time to draft teams. The group, with board approval, does have the power to attempt to evenly divide the top pitchers and/or players if the group agrees that it would help in forming balanced teams. Again, all coaches should try to maintain perspective that this is just little league AND that the goal of the group should be to form balanced teams. It does not benefit anyone to have any "stacked" teams. Every year may present unique situations (i.e. talented twins/brothers, a group of 5 stronger pitchers etc. In these situations, the league VP(s) and the coaches, have the discretion to discuss and formulate a plan and/or revise part of this to split these players or request that coach pairings be reviewed to attempt to prevent any intended or unintended "stacking" of teams.

It is very helpful to have a laptop computer and over head projector for this process (or at the very least a spreadsheet for all coaches).

The first step to is to place the coaches' kids and their rating on each respective team. The team with the lowest average would draft first. The draft is done in that order (lowest to highest) throughout the round and then recalculated after each round. If there is a tie, a coin-flip will determine the tie.

In the event that there is a wide rating difference between the coaches' kids, it is handles as follows:

Example:

Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4
Andy 10	Ben 10	Mike 9.5	Fred 9.5
Joey 4	Phil 8	Mark 8	John 9

These players are placed as coaches' kids. The first round order will be determine by lowest average to highest. In this example, Team 1 would draft first, and must select one of the highest ranked kids on the list. No team is allowed to draft a player LOWER than the coaches' son(s) if there are players on the list rated higher than them. This is to avoid any manipulation of the draft order. The player selected by Team 1 ('Alex 9') is placed AHEAD of 'Joey 4' as their 2<sup>nd</sup> player drafted. This is the only player drafted in round 1 as it balanced out the top 2 players on each team.

So it would now look like this:

Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4
Andy 10	Ben 10	Mike 9.5	Fred 9.5
Alex 9	Phil 8	Mark 8	John 9

Joey 4\*

\*Joey is now moved down the list and is not considered Team 1's 3<sup>rd</sup> pick. If this is not done then Team 1 ends up picking first each round which will lead to uneven teams. The draft order is then calculated based upon the averages of the top 2 players and thus would be: Team 3, Team 2, Team 4, Team 1

Joey does not factor in until there are no players left rated higher than Joey and thus, Team 1 is forced to list him as their player in that round.

At the end of the draft, all teams should be as balanced as possible. If there are any concerns, questions, ideas etc. this is the time for discussion. Coaches are allowed to converse and consider any changes that may help with having enough coaches, etc. All coaches need to approve any proposed team changes. There should be no discussion of teams publicly until the date that is determined by the FLL Board to announce the teams. The best date and time is generally a Friday after school to prevent any kids from hearing before others. Also, the FLL Website should post players listed in alphabetical order.

All rating sheets etc should be collected and shredded. A league VP can keep an electronic file to be used for the following year's ratings as an additional piece of data but never shared with any kids or publicly displayed.

The AAA Draft can occur any time after the Majors teams are announced. The AAA draft should follow the majors draft as closely as possible. Clearly, all players remaining on the list are to be placed in AAA so there is no "cut-off" for AAA. As stated earlier, in AAA, the coaches and league VP(s) do have more flexibility to accommodate player/parent requests. However, it is important that all AAA coaches work together to make the teams and the league, fun and fair.

### **ALL-STAR Coach Selection Process:**

The VP(s) of each respective league (AAA & majors) will collect applications from coaches expressing indications of interest in coaching all-stars. Each coach (head or assistant) who is registered with the league is allowed to enter his/her name to be considered for an all-star coaching role. Each coach should select his/her preference for which team he/she wishes to coach (i.e. 9/10 baseball) AND for which role he/she most desires to fill (i.e. head coach, assistance coach or no preference). Coaches are allowed to coach more than one team assuming there is no major scheduling conflict. The league VP(s) will then review the list to be sure that all coaches are in good standing with the league. Then the league VP(s) will compile a list of coaches who wish to be considered as head coaches. If there are two or more coaches wanting to be head coach for a particular team, the league VP(s) will communicate with these coaches and see if they can work out a solution on their own and present it back to them. In the event that no agreement/solution is reached, the FLL Board will review the applicants and may request that they make a presentation to the board as to why they wish to be head coach, what their qualification are, strengths, philosophies, what they bring to the kids, etc. After all of that, the FLL board will dismiss the candidates and have an open discussion and then hold a vote to select the coaches of the team. The MAIN goal of this process is to attempt to select the best coach for the kids. There should be no biases that enter into this other than trying to find the most suitable and qualified coach. Any FLL Board member with any perceived conflict of interest should be dismissed from that vote. The FLL Board reserves the right to select any and all coaches for that team which means they may select one of the applicants to be head coach and the other(s) to be assistant(s). Or, the FLL Board may select one to be head coach and give that coach the right to choose his/her assistant coaches from the pool of names who applied to be considered.