



Playing Levels, Player Evaluations, and Team Formation

This document is meant to be used as a guidance document for coordinators to determine how the teams at all levels are formed. This is to be used in conjunction with the document "FNWLL Draft Procedure". This document will help determine the approximate number of teams for planning and to provide guidance as the number of players who are 7, 9, and 10 for advancement to elevated playing levels. The suggestions here do not have to be adhered to exactly but will provide a more enjoyable experience for the players and parents if they are followed. Annual league survey results will adjust this guidance document and how it is used and this document could be changed and made into rules if the guidance in this document is neglected by coordinators.

Playing Levels and Player Ages

The natural expectation is that –

- 12-year-old play at the Majors level
- 11-year-olds play at the Majors or AAA level
- 10-year-olds play at the AAA level except for those 10-year-olds that are drafted into the Majors level
- 9-year-olds play at the AAA or AA level
- 8-year-olds play at the AA level (or at the AAA level in rare circumstances)
- 7-year-olds play at the AA or Coach Pitch level
- 6-year-olds play at
 - a. Coach Pitch level (with 1 year of experience)
 - b. Tee-Ball level (if they have not played before)
- 5-year-olds play at
 - a. Coach Pitch level (with 1 year of experience)
 - b. Tee-Ball level (if they have not played before)
- 4-year-olds play at the Tee-Ball level

Player Evaluations

FNWLL holds player evaluations for two reasons: 1) to assess the skill level of players for placement on a team at an appropriate league level to foster success, and 2) to evaluate 10-, 11-, and 12-year-old candidates for the Major League draft. An evaluation group as designated by the FNWLL Board will determine potential playing levels for 7-, 8-, 9-, 10-, and 11-year-olds. Parent requests for playing below expected playing levels need to be discussed with the player agent before team assignments are complete.

Player Evaluations are Mandatory For: All 12-, 11-, and 10-year-olds who did not play last season on a FNWLL Major League team, those players that played previously at the Majors level and want to reenter the draft, 9- and 8-year-olds who wish to be evaluated to move up to the AAA minor league level and 7-year-olds who wish to move up to the AA playing level need to complete player evaluations.

Player Evaluations Will Not Be Held For: 12-, 11-, 10-year-olds who played last season on a FNWLL Major League team. 7-year-olds who do not wish to play AA minors. All 5- and 6-year-olds (they play at the Tee Ball or Coach Pitch level for the season).

Age-specific Guidance

12-year-olds who have not been drafted onto a Major League team are required to be evaluated for placement in Majors. Only in special circumstances will a 12-year-old not be placed in Majors if the League managers or evaluation group with the parents' permission feel that the player would have safety issues at the Major League playing level.

11-year-olds who have not been drafted onto a Major League team are required to be evaluated for placement in Majors and AAA. Those 11-year-olds that show sufficient skills by the evaluation group will be drafted into the Major League playing level. All other 11-year-olds will be placed in AAA. Those 11-year-olds that are not evaluated will also be placed in AAA. Only in special circumstances will an 11-year-old not be placed in Majors or AAA if the evaluation group and parents feel that the player would have safety issues at the AAA League playing level with those 11-year-olds placed in AA minors.

10-year-olds are required to be evaluated for placement in Majors and AAA. Those 10-year-olds that show sufficient skills as determined by the evaluation group are eligible (but not assured) of being drafted into the Major League playing level. Most other 10-year-olds will be placed in AAA. Those 10-year-olds that are not evaluated will also be placed in AAA. Only in special circumstances will a 10-year-old not be placed in Majors or AAA if the evaluation group and parents feel that the player would have safety issues at the AAA League playing level with those 10-year-olds playing in AA minors.

9-year-olds are required to be evaluated for placement. Those 9-year-olds with the desire to play AAA must be evaluated and show sufficient skills as determined by the evaluation group. Those players who show sufficient skills are eligible (but not assured) of being placed into the AAA League playing level. All other 9-year-olds will be placed in AA.

8-year-olds are required to be evaluated for placement. Those 8-year-olds with the desire to play AAA must be evaluated and show sufficient skills as determined by the evaluation group. Those players who show sufficient skills are eligible (but not assured) of being placed into the AAA League playing level. All other 8-year-olds will be placed in AA.

7-year-olds are NOT required to be evaluated for placement. Those 7-year-olds with the desire to play AA must be evaluated and show sufficient skills as determined by the evaluation group. Those players who show sufficient skill are eligible (but not assured) of being placed into the AA League playing level. All other 7-year-olds will be placed in CP. Those 7-year-olds that are not evaluated will be placed in CP.

6-year-olds who have played one year of Tee Ball are encouraged to sign up for CP. Those parents that feel that their children are not ready for CP can be placed in the Tee Ball League. Those 6-year-olds who have not played one year of Tee Ball are requested to sign up for Tee Ball unless the parents request the player to play at the CP level.

5-year-olds can request to play CP. Those parents who feel that their children are ready for CP are required to assist the manager of the team. A parent of a 5-year-old playing up is asked to be at all practices and games for the team.

Fraternal Northwest Little League
Midland, Michigan
District 1
4-year-olds will only play in Tee Ball.



Late Registrations

Generally, players will be allowed to sign up into the League through March 15th and will be assured of placement on a team with the following exceptions.

- Majors – Players in this division will be set once the draft is completed and no 12-year-olds may sign-up after the draft is complete.
- AAA – The teams will be set around mid-March but once the teams are set, no additional 10- or 11-year-olds may be added unless a coach in AAA is willing to take on that player and there is an opening on one of the teams.
- For all other players, they will be placed in the appropriate level based on age if they sign-up by March 15th.

Any player that signs up after March 15th and prior to the uniform order being placed (typically end of March – beginning of April) will only be allowed on a team if there is an opening for the appropriate age level. Players can be added for all levels except for Majors if an opening occurs. Majors shall fill openings from eligible players drafted from the AAA program according to the rules set forth in the League's rules and bylaws.

Team Size Guidelines

The number of teams is determined at the Majors level of play follow by a progression down to the AA Level. The Coach Pitch and Tee Ball teams are generally formed independently of the upper divisions. The number of players at each playing level maximum is usually:

- Majors – 11 or more
- AAA – 12 players per team
- AA – 10 to 11 players per team
- Coach Pitch – 9 to 10 players per team
- Tee Ball – 8 to 9 players per team

Except for the Majors and AAA levels, the teams could have 1 less player than the maximum but should not have 2 or more players less than the maximum.

Team Formation Guidelines

A board designated evaluation team will evaluate all players desiring to play at the AA, AAA, or Majors levels. The evaluation group will provide guidance as the 10 and 11 years old eligible for Majors (see "FNWLL Draft Rules Major – AAA" for additional details). The evaluation group will rank order the 7-, 8-, and 9-year-olds that came for player evaluations. The evaluation group will also determine natural breaks in the rankings for 7-, 8-, and 9-year-olds if those breaks occur.

As a guideline, the number of 10-year-olds should not exceed approximately 2 per number of teams in Majors. Ex. If there are 6 majors' teams, then 12 or less should be the number of 10-year-olds at the Majors level. This could be raised by 1 or 2 players but that is only in cases shown exceptional ability at that age. The number of 10-year-olds should only be enough that it would only make up 1 additional

team – i.e., there is probably no less than 5 to 6 of the 10-year-olds to place but rarely more than 12 (and only in exceptional years). The number of players to be considered for filling this pool at the draft should be 3 to 4 more than the number to be drafted (if there are 10 spots open to 10-year-olds in Majors, then 14 ten-year-olds should be in the draft pool).

As a guideline, the number of 10-year-olds playing down in AA should not exceed the number of 9-year-olds playing in AAA. In addition, the number of 9-year-olds should not exceed approximately three per number of teams in AAA. Example – if there are four AAA teams, then there should be 12 or less 9-year-olds at the AAA League level. This could be raised by one or two but that is only in cases of exceptional ability at that age. The number of 9-year-olds should only be enough that it fills out the numbers at the AAA level to give equal sized teams – i.e., there is probably no less than four to five of the 9-year-olds to place, but always less than 15.

As a guideline, the number of 8-year-olds should not exceed approximately one per number of teams in AAA. Example – if nine AAA teams, then nine or less should be the number of 8-year-olds at the AAA division level. This could be raised by one or two but that is only in cases of exceptional ability at that age. The number of 8-year-olds should only be enough that it fills out the numbers at the AAA division level to give equal sized teams. There should not be more than two 8-year-olds on any one team.

As a guideline, the number of 7-year-olds should not exceed approximately one per number of teams in AA. Example – if nine AA teams, then nine or less should be the number of 7-year-olds at the AA division level. This could be raised by one or two but that is only in cases of exceptional ability at that age. The number of 7-year-olds should only be enough that it fills out the numbers at the AA division level to give equal sized teams. There should not be more than two 7-year-olds on any one team.

The Player Agent will connect with the parents of all 7-, 8-, 9-, and 10-year-olds being considered for elevated play if there is a discrepancy based on registration. This includes all players who are on the list for consideration but not in the top ranking by the evaluators in case a player who is identified to move to an elevated level, decides to stay at the lower level. For all 10-year-olds being considered for playing down in AA, those parents should be contacted by the Player Agent if there is an issue based on registration sheets. If a parent wants their child to play at excepted level rather than be moved to a level below, then the pool of available openings from the next younger group will be reduced by one.

AA, Coach Pitch, & T-Ball Team Formation

AA: Teams at this level are formed according to the general guidelines below. Every effort is made to grant all requests at these levels, but there are instances where some requests may not be granted (i.e. after sorting by coach and teammate requests, a team with 13 players will be split to fill out teams and for playing time considerations).

1. Coach Requests
2. Teammate Requests / siblings
3. School – players are paired with other players from the same school
4. Teams are filled with remaining players. The following may be taken into consideration:
 - a. Teams should be competitively balanced as much as reasonably possible
 - b. Teams with girls should have a minimum of 2 girls, if possible



- c. It is preferable to avoid putting 2 or more kids with same first name on same team to avoid confusion at these lower levels, if possible

Coach Pitch and T-Ball: Teams at these levels are formed according to the general guidelines below. Every effort is made to grant all requests at these levels, but there are instances where some requests may not be granted (i.e., after sorting by coach and teammate requests, a team with 13 players will be split to fill out teams and for playing time considerations).

1. Coach Requests
2. Teammate Requests / siblings
3. School – players are paired with other players from the same school
4. Teams are filled with remaining players. The following may be taken into consideration:
 - a. Teams with girls should have a minimum of 2 girls, if possible
 - b. It is preferable to avoid putting 2 or more kids with same first name on same team to avoid confusion at these lower levels, if possible