RSF Little League A ("Rookie") Division Rules of Play

OVERVIEW of DIVISION
A ("Rookie") Division is a developmental league guided by the philosophy of creating a fun and positive baseball learning experience for players, parents and coaches. It should be the goal of all volunteers and others who come into contact with the game, to promote an encouraging learning environment. Participants should attempt to guide, instruct and encourage players on all teams. Baseball skills and game fundamentals should be introduced and practiced with an understanding of the various skill levels of all players in an effort to create a positive baseball experience.

GAME PRELIMINARIES

- Little League International Regulations and Rules shall Govern all play, except as noted below
- Games are played at Solana Santa Fe in either of the two fields behind the school.
- Duration: Games are 5 innings or two hours, whichever occurs first. No new inning can commence after 1 hour 45 minutes of play, but once an inning starts it must be completed. If the last inning extends beyond the two-hour limit, the inning will be considered complete if the Visiting team has a lead of >5 runs. If the Home Team is ahead they do not need to bat. If the Home Team goes ahead in the last inning the game will end (walk-off).
- **Minimum Players:** A team must have a minimum of six rostered players present to begin play. A 10 minute grace period from game time is allowed to avoid a forfeit. If the shorthanded team is the Visiting team the game can start, but cannot proceed into the bottom of the 1st until the Visiting team has 6 players on the field.
- Coaches are encouraged to prepare a batting and fielding line-up prior to the game to facilitate play and teach positioning.

FIELD SETUP
Coaches should arrive sufficiently early to ensure the field is ready by game time, including set-up of the pitching machine and bases. Prior to each game both Coaches are responsible for "walking the field" to ensure it is safe for play.

- The field should be available 30 minutes prior to game time. Teams can use this time for infield practice, with each team taking infield for the first for 15 minutes. If teams want to take batting practice before the game, as time permits, they can arrange between themselves.
- **Field Lay-out** – the pitching machine should be placed approximately 3 ft. in front of the pitching rubber on the mound. Total distance between the pitching machine point of release and the back of home plate (A ("Rookie") Division uses the 'front' plate) should be approximately 46 ft. Use the colored cones to delineate the right and left field foul ball lines if they are not clearly marked with chalk/paint.
- Pitching machine speed should be set between 35 and 37 mph (to avoid 'arcing' of pitches) and may be adjusted as needed between full innings but not for individual batters.
- Prior to the game, both head coaches should confer and clarify/confirm understanding of these 'Ground Rules.'

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Home Team:

- The home team is responsible for prepping the field prior to the game.
- The home team will occupy the first base dugout.

Visiting Team:

- The visiting team will be responsible for the field breakdown and ensuring all equipment is properly stored and secured.
- The visiting team will occupy the third base dugout.

RULES of PLAY

Batting:

- All players must wear a helmet while batting and when on-base.
- Little League rules do not permit an 'on-deck' hitter. For player and spectator safety, please ensure that players do not take practice swings until at the plate. Only the player at bat should be holding a bat. There is no other swinging practice permitted
- All players present will bat (even if not in the field the inning prior), resuming the order from the prior inning, when the team returns to offense. Any players arriving late must bat at the end of the order.
- The hitting team will have a coach on the field to operate the pitching machine when at bat, unless a League umpire is present, in which case the umpire will operate the pitching machine.
- When batting, assistant coaches should be in the dugout first, then at 1st and/or 3rd base coach positions as available.
- **Each batter is allowed up to <u>7 strikes</u> during an at bat.** If a batter fouls the 7th strike (and any subsequent strikes) he/she will continue batting until the ball is put in play, or a missed strike (either swinging or looking). Pitched balls do not have to be 'perfect' strikes but should be in the strike zone as determined by the umpire.
- Bunting and 'half-swings' are not allowed. A batted ball is considered <u>foul</u> if it doesn't cross the painted 18-foot arc around home plate. A 'check-swing' is acceptable, if the ball crosses the arc. The umpire has discretion on this call.
- Bat throwing will not be tolerated. Players that cannot properly drop their bat after hitting create a safety hazard to other players on the field. A player throwing a bat will receive one warning from the umpire. If the same player throws the bat again during the game he/she will be declared out.
- Runners must touch all the bases when running the bases and must also stay on the base if a play is being made at the base. If a player overruns a base (other than 1st) they may be called out if the defensive team makes the play.
- There will be no automatic extra bases. Players must run out every base if the ball is in play.
- Once a batted ball has been returned to the infield, the runners cannot advance and the ball is dead. "Returned to the infield" means ball is in the possession of an infielder in roughly an infielder position or the ball reaches the infield grass. At that time, all runners must return to the last base touched unless more than halfway to the next base. Returning the runners to the previous base is at the discretion of the Head umpire. The intent is not to allow the runner to 'force the action.' Runners are 'live' at all times and liable to be tagged out.
- **Pitching Machine:**
    - If a batted ball makes contact with the pitching machine (or any other equipment), a dead ball is <u>immediately</u> declared, and the Head umpire shall determine the outcome of the play (i.e. the batter is awarded a base, or a 'no-pitch' is declared). A base shall be awarded if,

in the umpire's judgment, the batted ball would have *reasonably* resulted in a base hit. If there is no reasonable expectation of a base hit, a 'no-pitch' shall be declared.
    - A line drive or other hard hit batted ball that enters the Pitching Machine area, but does not make contact with any equipment, shall be considered a live ball and play shall continue, unless if in the umpire's judgment, player safety may be compromised
    - A slowly hit ball or 'pop-up' that approaches or enters the Pitching Machine area, shall immediately be pronounced a dead-ball, and a 'no-pitch' declared. The intent is to ensure player safety around the pitching machine area.
    - **The decision to award a base hit or 'no-pitch' will be at the discretion of the Head umpire.** We want to encourage the players to drive the ball up the middle.

Base Running:

- Players are not allowed to lead off bases. Players cannot leave a base until the pitched ball crosses home plate, or when the batter makes contact.
- Stolen bases are not allowed.

Defensive Field Makeup and Positions:

- Each team is allowed up to two coaches on the field when their team is fielding.
- Each team will play 10 players in the field:
- Infielders must play a 'normal' infield position when the pitch is delivered (i.e. no more than 5 feet *in front* of the baseline). Pitcher is excepted. The pitcher position must stand to the 1st base side of the machine, away from the exposed wheel on the pitching machine and no closer to home plate than the pitching machine.
    - The 4 outfielders should be equally spaced across the outfield, and must be positioned on the outfield grass when the pitch is delivered. Outfielders are allowed to charge a ball, and are allowed to throw out a runner (either by force or tag), but are not allowed to force a runner by running to the base.
    - There are 5 infield positions (1B, 2B, 3B, SS & P). Catcher is not considered an infield position in A ("Rookie") League.
- A 'short' centerfielder or Rover (positioned directly behind 2nd base) is not allowed (we are trying to teach kids to hit up the middle and do not want these hits turning into force-outs at 2nd).
- Efforts should be made to ensure all players should receive equal playing time, and should have opportunity to play multiple positions (as their skills dictate) over the course of the season (A ("Rookie") is a developmental league).
- Players should rotate to all positions to provide opportunities to learn different fielding positions. All players must rotate between the infield and outfield. Please allow your players to try various positions within the range of their ability.
- No player can play a single position more than two innings in a game. No player should sit out more than one inning on defense unless it is disciplinary related.
- No player can play more than **three innings** in the infield unless a team is playing with < 10 players. **Every player** must play at least one inning in the infield in a 3 or 4 inning game and two innings in the infield in a 5 inning game. **Every player** must play at least one inning in the outfield in a 3 or 4 inning game and two innings in the outfield in a 5 inning game.
- Catcher can be positioned either behind the screen, or if the player wants to wear catcher's protective gear, can play the standard position.

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Scoring:

- 'Mercy' Rule: A team can score a maximum of 5 runs in an inning. Once the fifth run has scored in any inning, the hitting team's turn at bat has ended. The 5 runs per inning rule will not be in effect during the last inning of playoff games.
- If a team is down by more than 5 runs going into the 5th inning, or by more than 10 runs going into the 4th inning, the game is officially over. If the coaches mutually agree, the teams can play out the final inning(s), if time permits.
- Every game will consist of a minimum of 3 innings
- In the event of a tie after 5 innings, an extra inning is allowable, provided the above noted time requirements are met. Games can end in a tie
- Home Team will be responsible for keeping score using the flip and/or electronic scoreboard, but both teams should verify the score after each inning
- **Make-up Games** – If games are rained-out or otherwise delayed, rescheduling of games is the responsibility of the affected team's coaches to coordinate with the A ("Rookie") Division Coordinator to schedule an alternative date/time to play the game.
- Upon conclusion of the game, final score should be conveyed to Division Coordinator for posting.

Playoffs:

- All teams will quality for a playoff, to be played in late May and early June.
- The playoff format (i.e. double or single elimination) will be determined based on field availability.
- Playoff seedings will be determined by regular season records, and if needed, by head-to-head results.
- During playoffs, all of the rules noted above will apply, with the following exceptions: the last inning will be unlimited runs for both teams, there will be no 2 hour time limit, there will be no 'Mercy Rule' in effect, and in the event of a tie at the conclusion of five innings, extra innings will be played until a winner is determined.
- The league will provide trophies for the top finishers in the playoffs.

GENERAL and ADMINISTRATIVE RULES

Field and Equipment:

- Pitching machine, cords, poles, and bases should always remain in the Beige box located behind the backstop at Solana Santa Fe The remaining equipment including balls, bats, helmets, catcher's gear, first aid kits should be put in the metal storage box located behind the backstop.
- Please use the storage boxes for "LOST AND FOUND" items.
- Baseballs: Only Regulation Little-League balls are to be used. Game balls will be provided by RSF LL.
- All players are responsible for providing their own glove, bat and helmet.
- Each player should be in team jersey, cap and long pants (no shorts) for games. Cleats are recommended, but metal cleats are not allowed. Jerseys should be tucked in and caps are required in the field.
- The fields are made available to RSF LL through the school district. Please have your players and fans clean-up your half of the stands and your dugout. We must remove all trash from the property after every game! By respecting the field, equipment and grounds we can ensure they are available for future seasons

Safety:

- Prior to start of a game, the home team coach must confirm a First Aid Kit is present and accessible. If additional kits or ice packs are needed, contact the Safety Coordinator/Equipment Manager.
- Only LL approved bats, 2 ¼" inch in diameter and having a Bat Performance Factor (BPF) of 1.15 or less are allowed per LL International Rules. Big Barrel Bats are NOT allowed. A player using a big barrel during an at-bat, will be declared out for that at-bat.
- All equipment (bats, helmets, bags, etc.) must be confined to the dugout area and may not be stored near or on the field of play.
- An adult must be in the dugout area while a team is at-bat. His/her function is primarily to ensure safety, but should also keep players in batting order and maintain order.
- Coaches are responsible for understanding and enforcing both LL and RSFLL safety protocol. A copy of the RSFLL Safety Plan is available on the RSF web site.
- Safety violations should be reported to the Division Coordinator and/or the RSFLL Safety Officer.
- If an injury occurs to a player during practice or a game, the RSFLL Safety Officer and the Division Coordinator must be notified
- Parents or visitors should not be in the bench area unless directly assisting with the play of the game

Rules Enforcement:

- Coaches will be responsible for all on field rule enforcement as well as dugout rule enforcement. Register all formal complaints and problems to the Division Coordinator and the RSF Little League Board.

Umpires/Officiating:

- The Umpire operating the pitching machine is the Head umpire and will be responsible for all calls on the field. A second umpire may be stationed on the field and will be responsible for the foul-lines and calls at Homeplate. The Head umpire can (but is not required to) solicit assistance from other coaches where required. The Head umpire's ruling is final. Umpires should remember that their role is as umpire and that it should be controlled and unbiased.

Behavior:

The league will not tolerate any unsportsmanlike behavior by coaches, players, or parents. This includes hitting, grabbing, pushing, swearing or any other behavior that disrupts the games. Disciplinary actions will be taken at the discretion of the Board of Directors.

- Coaches should be constantly aware of field decorum and insist that their fans demonstrate good sportsmanship at all times.
- Under no circumstances shall Coaches, or other adults criticize any calls made by the umpire(s) during the game, or do anything that would be considered counter to the philosophical principles and objectives of Little League.
- Games are to be played in a relaxed, marginally competitive atmosphere. Parents and coaches should make every effort to restrain behavior and control emotions. **Any parent/coach/spectator deemed to be a detriment or disruption to the game, will have their child removed from game and will be asked to leave the field.** This determination will be at the sole discretion of the respective head coaches and Head umpire. Coaches please monitor your own parents and fans.
- The Division Coordinator should be informed of any egregious behavior in relation to sportsmanship.

Volunteers:

- Any parent having regular and consistent contact with team players must submit a Little League Volunteer Application and a copy of a current Driver's License or other state issued identification for the purpose of undergoing a background check.
- No parents or other adults will be allowed to participate in field practices or games if they do not have a Volunteer Application on file.
- **With the exception of the registered Coaches, please keep all parents off the playing field and out of the dugout while the game is in progress.** Exceptions are made for parents who need to assist a child due to injury or illness.

Parking:

- Cars must park in the Solana Santa Fe parking lot or on adjacent public roads. Please do not use the business parking lot across the street for games or practices.