

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is GRPA?**

Many of the youth athletic programs in our area already fall under the Georgia Recreation and Parks Association (GRPA) umbrella. Our local parks and recreation program runs GRPA leagues for multiple other sports including basketball and football.

### **Does this mean that the Habersham Youth Baseball Program will be run through the recreation department?**

No. The current board of directors for the baseball program is committed to running a quality baseball program before, during, and after this transition. While we will gain the advantage of having more support from the parks and recreation department, Habersham Youth Baseball and Softball will be run by an independent board of volunteers who are committed to the baseball and softball programs.

### **The board was just elected in October - are they rushing into this decision?**

It's true that some of us are new to our positions (although some members have been serving for several years), but this idea isn't completely new. Transitioning to GRPA has been on the radar of the league's leadership, and the outgoing leaders discussed those thoughts with the new board near the beginning of our tenure. We listened to their thoughts, consulted with local professional coaches, and did our own research before concluding that this was a direction that we wanted to suggest to the general membership.

### **Why are we making this change?**

It goes without saying that dissolving the Little League charter and moving in a slightly different directions is a very big deal for us. The outgoing leadership ran a great program, and it isn't always easy to change something that has been such a positive part of the community. In the end, we want to be able to do what is best for our players, our community, and our own children, and we feel like GRPA will give us the flexibility that we need to accomplish that goal. With GRPA, we will have more autonomy to make more of our own decisions and we will not have to look to an organization that is run outside of our community when making decisions for our players. We were able to adopt a set of rules for each league that we felt will be good for our players. Those rules are nearly identical to the rules in the GRPA manual, so we will not have the drastic differences that some leagues have had in the past when they were involved in interleague play and all stars.

We also hope to save money by not having to pay Little League dues every year. This will keep more money in our program and in our community.

## **What changes should parents, volunteers, and coaches expect to see?**

The program has been run very well and, for the most part, we hope to continue running the league as our predecessors ran the program. We don't see any reason to make major changes in the day to day operations of Habersham Youth Baseball and Softball, so we hope that you don't immediately notice any major differences. Sure, we are different people with different styles and that will undoubtedly affect the program, but we don't anticipate making drastic changes.

Depending on the league, you may notice changes, some small and some large, as your son or daughter starts to play. Under GRPA, the base paths and pitching distance increase as players grow up. This means that ten year old pitchers will be closer to the plate than twelve year old pitchers. GRPA also doesn't have a player pitch league for the eight and under boy's league because kids at that age have a very difficult time throwing strikes. Another difference is that the twelve and under boys league will be able to take leads and steal bases. Overall, these changes should be developmentally appropriate for younger players while better preparing older players for the next level. Because other leagues follow an almost identical set of rules, we won't have to ask our players to make major changes when we play teams in other leagues.

## **How will the leagues be structured?**

We will use the following league structures for our 2021 spring season:

*8U Machine Pitch Baseball* - we've already been doing this for part of the season. The difference is that we will not transition to player pitch at all in this age group. Many of the GRPA leagues in our area use 8U coach pitch, but we opted to continue using the pitching machines.

*10U Live Pitch Baseball* - this league will be nearly identical to the Little League 10U league

*12U Major Baseball* - this is going to look more like real baseball than the previous 12U league. Runners may leadoff and steal; pitchers will learn to hold runners on base.

*Older Age Groups* - Programs for baseball and softball players who are older than 12 will probably look a lot like the Little League programs.

*8U Coach Pitch Softball*

*10U Player Pitch Softball*

*12U Softball*

## **What about t-ball and the challenger program?**

T-ball isn't addressed in the GRPA rule book, so we will have a lot of autonomy when structuring our t-ball program. We are still making decisions regarding the particulars of the t-ball program, but we definitely will be offering t-ball in the upcoming spring season.

The challenger program will continue to operate as it has operated in previous seasons.

## **Going forward with this decision who will hold the board of directors for this new league accountable? Who will ensure that there are rules in place such as pitch counts to protect the pitchers.**

The league's accountability to its membership, parents, players, and community has always superseded its accountability to any other organization. The membership voted for this change because they believed that it was the best thing for our community, so we take our accountability to that community very seriously. If you feel like we are not taking our accountability to our community seriously enough or are implementing rules and procedures that put our players at risk, please start by contacting Jarrod Bingham, league president, by emailing [jarrodbingham1984@gmail.com](mailto:jarrodbingham1984@gmail.com). Kurt Cooper at the recreation department is our local GRPA contact, so you may contact him if a board contact fails to yield results. Finally, the GRPA organization may be contacted directly by emailing [grpa@grpa.org](mailto:grpa@grpa.org) or calling 770-776-1403.

In most aspects of gameplay, we will be following the GRPA rulebook. We have a few added local rules to distinguish our local play from tournament play because the rulebook was designed for tournament play. Those rules include things like the implementation of a continuous batting order (like we've always had). The GRPA rulebook addresses pitch count, but the given pitch counts apply to weekend tournament play. We decided on a local level to use the same pitch count rule that we have always used. Those rules are listed in the local rules section of our website [www.hcybs.org](http://www.hcybs.org).

## **What will stop a coach or this league from loading up a team with all of the talent to where one team dominates and the other teams cannot compete?**

The board is in the process of discussing how we will evaluate and draft players this year. The t-ball group will not go through evaluations (this isn't a change from previous years). Youth in ages 7-12 will be evaluated just like they have always been evaluated. We have been discussing evaluations with community partners who may be able to help us make our evaluations more process and less subjective than they have in the past. This means that when coaches go into a draft, they should have an even better understanding of players' abilities.

An unfortunate part of all youth sports with which I've been involved, including this program over the last few years, is that there is always a chance that one team will draft better players and dominate the other teams. We can, however, decrease the possibility that this happens in our

leagues. It will start with objective evaluations and a fair draft format. Right now, we haven't discussed changing the draft format from what it has been in the past. If you know of a way to draft players that decreases the likelihood of having more good players on one team, please email your suggestion to [info@hcybs.org](mailto:info@hcybs.org).

**In the 8u division where in your video you state that kids arms aren't developed at this stage to throw the pitching distance are you going to shorten the base paths and the outfield dimensions because the throw from short and third base to first is further than the pitcher to catcher just like the throw from the outfield is as well.**

We will be following the GRPA rulebook when creating our field dimensions (pitching distance, base distance, and distance that the outfield stands from the pitcher). Those dimensions may be found in the GRPA rulebook, and parts of those rules may be found in the local rules section of our website. It is very unlikely that we will be able to completely remove all long distance throws from the game. It will be difficult for most 7 - 8 year old players to throw from third to first just like it was difficult under the last program. Likewise, it will be difficult for outfielders to throw deep-hit balls back to the infield. The difference between those throws and the pitcher's throwing is that difficulty with a pitcher throwing strikes holds up play on a consistent basis for all players on both teams. When a pitcher constantly throws balls (as often happens at this age), play slows down for everyone. Kids become bored and lose focus. When a third baseman throws a ball incorrectly to first, play continues and the defending players remain involved in the game.

**Instead of a pitching machine why not have coach pitch where the coach kneels down to be more the child's height and the batter can see the ball come from an arm motion instead of popping out of a machine with the same location every time.**

Under GRPA, our league had the option to choose between coach pitch and machine pitch. Many of the leagues in our area use coach pitch in that age group, and our board considered implementing coach pitch, in part, for the reasons that you gave in your question. Here are a couple of reasons that we decided to go with the pitching machine this year.

- Many (probably most) coaches don't kneel when pitching to players which creates a very difficult pitch to hit because the pitch is coming at a difficult angle.
- Pitches from coach to coach vary considerably. Having five coach pitches from a coach that can't throw strikes to one team and five coach pitches from a coach who can consistently put the ball into the strike zone for the other team creates inequity in the game that isn't a result of players' abilities. While the pitching machine isn't perfect, it is, in general, more consistent than coach pitch.
- The league has been using a pitching machine for several years now. When I coached 7 - 8, we used a pitching machine part of the year and transitioned to player pitch. By keeping the pitching machine in this league, we are able to present a program that isn't drastically different than what we have had in the past. We just won't be transitioning to player pitch.

### **What about bat rules are you going to allow big barrels bats?**

The GRPA rulebook stipulates that all bats must have the “USA” symbol stamped onto them. This is the bat rule that was used in the past for our league. We will continue to follow that rule. The full list of bat rules may be found in the GRPA rulebook.

I’ll note one possible exception here. We have talked about hosting travel ball teams in a separate travel ball only league to give those teams mid-week games against other travel ball teams. If we go through with that plan, then those teams would be able to use the bats that they already use in tournament play.

### **Will the teams only play inner league games or will there be options to play teams outside of habersham.**

Our older age groups will, most certainly, need to play against other teams in our area. For our younger groups, it will depend on the number of teams that we form and, possibly, the needs of other programs near us. White County, Banks County, and Jackson County are all GRPA programs in our area. I believe that there are more nearby GRPA programs, but those are probably the closest to us.

### **Will there be all-stars?**

Yes. We also hope to eventually host all star games as well, but we will definitely send kids to all stars this year.

### **What is different from this league and travel ball rules?**

I honestly don’t know all of the travel ball rules. You may view our complete local rules on our website to see the way in which we plan to play next season.