

## CAL RIPKEN BASEBALL

To: Players and Parents of boys and girls ages 9 – 12 (age as of May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021)  
From: Wahpeton Parks and Recreation  
Re: Cal Ripken Teams

Wahpeton Parks and Recreation Department is trying to figure out the best way to get a quality Cal Ripken baseball program started in our community. This letter is going to give you some information on Cal Ripken baseball and what we are hoping to accomplish in our community.

Cal Ripken baseball is a division of the Babe Ruth League. Keeping baseball FUN, especially in the early stages of youth baseball is a primary concern of Babe Ruth League's Cal Ripken Division, which is comprised of the following divisions.

**Major Division:** This is the most experienced level of Cal Ripken Baseball, recommended for 11 and 12 year old players. Cal Ripken Baseball is played under the Official Baseball Rules, but implements some special rules as necessary for the development and welfare of this young age group. Under the Major Division, there are two formats, games consist of six innings. In order to encourage the league to train more pitches, there are rules that set the maximum number of innings a pitcher may pitch in a calendar week.

**Major/70:** This division features a 50' pitching distance and 70' base paths. This division is offered as an option to the major division format and includes a tournament trail from District competition through the World Series in Branson, MO at Ballparks of America featuring 8 International Champions.

**Major/60:** This division features a 46' pitching distance and 60' base paths. Special base running rules are also in effect. This division is offered as an option to the major division format, and includes a tournament trail from District competition through the World Series. North Dakota does not offer a tournament trail for this division.

**Minor Division:** This division is recommended for ball players ages 9-10. Players build and refine their fundamental skills while beginning to understand game strategy and teamwork. In most regions, participants first experience post-season tournament competition in this level, leading to the 9 or 10 Year Old World Series.

**Rookie Division:** This division is designed primarily for ball players ages 7-8. This division makes use of a pitching machine to allow for more hittable balls at the plate and more action in the field. Fear of actually being hit by a pitched ball is diminished. It makes the game safer and improves the playing confidence and ability of all participants. Starting the summer of 2018, there is now an 8 year old World Series with two different options, an 8 year old player pitch and an 8 year old machine pitch World Series.

**T-Ball:** Ball players ages 4-6 learn hitting and fielding fundamentals in a supportive team environment. Young athletes hit the ball from a batting tee which is height-adjusted for a level swing, batting in order through the line-up for the entire game. The primary goal is to begin to instruct young players in the fundamentals of baseball in a supportive team environment.

In the past Wahpeton has had Cal Ripken teams from 10 year olds on up. And we have hosted state tournaments for 10's, 11's and 12 year olds. In order for us to host a state tournament, it is necessary that we have a host team in the state tournament as the parents of that state team help to run the tournament. So having a host team is almost essential to host a state tournament.

Before Twin Town baseball was started, Wahpeton had a great baseball program that took place in the mornings and offered up fundamentals and games for our youth. Numbers in the morning program were good enough for us to have 4-5 teams in both the minor and major divisions. Breckenridge then approached us to have a joint league because they did not have the numbers to allow for a local league. The Twin Town baseball program was formed and has been a very successful league that allows for a competitive league without having to travel out of town.

What the Twin Town baseball league doesn't allow for is a competitive Cal Ripken team to participate in a tournament trail that leads to the World Series. This is where Wahpeton would like to make a change and work toward having the competitive Cal Ripken teams so we are more prepared for the Babe Ruth League and beyond. Ideally, we would start these Cal Ripken teams at the age of 9. (This may move down to the age of 8 if North Dakota decides to offer an 8 year old state tournament). We want to develop these teams so that our teams can be competitive at a state tournament with opportunities to advance even further. In order to develop these competitive teams, it would be difficult for players to participate in the Twin Town program due to practices and games overlapping with that program.

Cal Ripken State tournaments are usually held around the first or second weekend in July. For instance, this year's Cal Ripken state tournament are July 10th - 14th. The state tournaments are on a rotating basis between several cities, Wahpeton being included in cities that can and do host state tournaments and we will actually be hosting the 12 year old North Dakota State Tournament this summer.

So we are now taking a look at how we form these teams and this is where this letter comes in. We want to get the word out there early enough to offer all Wahpeton youth ages 9 – 12 this opportunity to sign up to participate in our Cal Ripken program. In order to offer these age groups, we need someone to step up and say they will volunteer to coach a particular age, usually a dad or two that have a vested interest because their son loves baseball and wants to play. We hope to give everyone an opportunity to play if they so choose but again, that depends on the number of volunteers that step up. Once the coach is in place and youth have signed up to participate, a tryout session will take place and players will be placed on an A or B level team. **Once again, we can only do this if we find volunteers to coach.**

We are committed to offering this opportunity to players, and offering it to them again each year. We do not want to deny opportunity to players, and will do everything we can to see that enough teams are formed to accommodate those who want to play. For the Cal Ripken baseball program we would like to see 11-15 athletes per team. (The Babe Ruth League limits the maximum number of players that can be on a roster at 15). A tryout will take place and players will be placed on teams, both A and B level. If your child does not choose to play this year, but next year has increased interest and ability, there is another opportunity to sign up each year. Sometimes waiting until the player is ready is wise. If a player signs up who we do not think is ready, we may visit with you and encourage that player to wait a year.

**This is a higher level of baseball that requires a higher level of commitment, both from player and family. Again, if a player and family aren't prepared to follow this, it is best not to sign up and to participate in the Twin Town program instead. These are the keys.**

1. Attend **ALL** practices and tournaments, unless an excused absence is clearly communicated with the coach. (Attendance cannot be sporadic or occasional - **you need to be there.**)
2. Listen, pay attention, and work hard. (If the young person currently is unable to do this, they may need to wait until next year - **please do not sign them up until they are ready.**)
3. Be realistic about your child's skill level. This is tough. At this higher level equal playing time is **not** required. We ask the coaches to do their best to try and play everyone but unlike the Parks and Rec program or Twin Town, this is not required as this is a higher level and the coaches may play to win.
4. Have the support of the parents. (There are costs – entry fees, uniforms, driving to tournaments, meals, equipment etc. so we need to make sure the parents has committed to paying for costs.)

Young people develop differently, and we acknowledge that we cannot predict this. A young player who is not very skilled currently may improve dramatically as growth occurs, or if he/she commits to work at the game. For now, that player may struggle with basic skills and make coaching decisions very difficult, then later blossom. Others might enjoy the game but struggle and never find that their bodies and skills develop the way they might wish. For this reason, a player who doesn't sign up as an 9 year old needs to be able to have an opportunity later on, and we will make this possible.

Anger. The greatest threat to any program is anger. Coaches to players, coaches to officials, parents to players, parents to officials, parents to each other, parents to coach, and it can occur. We can't have people in this program who are given to anger, and we will be active in speaking with those who are prone to such outbursts. Competition has highs and lows, great joys and great disappointments, and we adults must be encouraging or silent, rather than lashing out at each other. We make this very clear to coaches and we encourage them to make it clear to those involved with their team. By signing up, you are committing to join with us in keeping anger out of this program.

**Everyone, please return this form with either a yes or a no answer to the Parks and Rec department by Monday, April 19th 2021.**

Player's name \_\_\_\_\_

Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_ Age as of May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 \_\_\_\_\_

Parents/Guardian signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parents Email (required) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Yes means that you would like to play on a Cal Ripken baseball team outside of Twin Town. (This doesn't mean they cannot participate in Twin Town as well).

No means that you do not want to participate in Cal Ripken baseball

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

Any special concerns? Schedule issues?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If you are willing to be a volunteer coach, please provide us with your name and phone number.

\_\_\_\_\_

If you have questions or concerns, please contact Keith Blattenbauer at Wahpeton Parks & Recreation – 642-2811.

Date form returned: \_\_\_\_\_