

AAD/USSSA Competitive Youth Baseball Programs Player / Parent / Manager Handbook: 2020



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MISSION STATEMENT: The AAD/USSSA organization has single goal of promoting, organizing, and facilitating amateur athletic competitions. This division of AAD/USSSA offers challenging baseball league and tournament programs at all levels that demonstrate a strong commitment to the development of the player and is for the competitive club teams looking to further develop the youth participants.

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Amateur

Athletic

Development

Introduction

The AAD youth baseball organization has been promoting, organizing and facilitation youth baseball to the youth of central NM for since 1995. The program started at the Albuquerque Sportsplex with five 12u teams and before the national governing body of USSSA had a youth baseball program. The purpose of the program was to provide a competitive option for players and coaches on a year round basis. We (AAD/USSSA) fully support the Little League and NMAA programs in the area and believe they do an outstanding job, based on their mission, in introducing and developing kids in the game of baseball. We purposely don't hold league competitions on weekdays or Saturdays, in ages 12u and below, so the kids can participate in both programs, without conflict.

An important purpose of this Handbook is to explain our basic philosophical approach to the youth baseball programs we offer. Another purpose of this Handbook is to provide answers to many of the frequently questions players, parents and managers might have during the course of the year.

Please use this Handbook as a reference before going to the trouble of sending e-mails or making phone calls. Just as AAD/USSSA is a work-in-progress, so is this handbook. We do value your opinions. If you find an answer to a question in the Handbook or on the web site which does not satisfactorily address your specific concerns, or if you believe the suggested resolution is incorrect, please send an e-mail with your proposal to the organizations email address – abqusssa@aol.com

Chain of Communication (problem escalation process)

We place this topic first for a reason. You have begun to read this Handbook with the best of intentions, but we realize that its length and complexity will lead some to read a little, and then scan a lot. We know that during the course of the year some will see things that are they don't understand or that seem unfair. We want you to make us aware of these issues so we can correct any wrongs or injustices (that we have jurisdiction) or, at least, offer explanations. However, we have established, based on years of experience, a means of handling these issues more efficiently.

- E-mail the source first (probably the manager). This is not always easy, but it must be the first step. Please communicate in a respectful tone, and if you have not received a reply within a few days you should proceed to the next step
- E-mail the program at abqusssa@aol.com

If there is a youth baseball related issue, the Manager is always the first person for a player or parents to approach. Not everything will run smoothly 100% of the time. A player or parent may feel uncomfortable or ill-treated by some event. We know there may be problems on every team and the organization will hear all sides of any issue (that we have jurisdiction), but many problems are easily resolved when discussed in a respectful way. The suggested method of communication is e-mail, unless time is a critical factor (if safety is involved, for example). E-mail allows a person to compose their thoughts and to think of the merits of what may be a spur-of-the-moment reaction to an event. The respondent also has time to think before giving an off-the-cuff rebuttal. Follow-up questions may be posed in a thoughtful manner when an e-mail response is sent. Phone calls and face-to-face discussions may not leave much room for reconsideration. Also, phone calls may be an intrusion on the private family or business time of the individuals involved in the resolution of an issue.

One topic that seems to come up regularly are game official's judgement calls. Save yourself the time and frustration . . . judgement calls are not open to protest or discussion. That having been said, if an official is out of position, applies the incorrect application of a rule or doesn't hustle we do want to know about those issues. If that occurs please convey your concerns to the manager of the team and have him/her complete the post game evaluation on the local web site and we will address it with the UIC and Umpire Evaluator. Please note that we can't be at every game and the Umpire Evaluator can only be at one game at a time so a thorough, unemotional accounting of the issue (from the Manager of the team) is necessary to correct the issue and provide additional training. Also, we will play more games on a given league day than the entire state of NM will play at the High School level in a week so we will contract with younger officials to facilitate these contests and they will make mistakes, as we all do – even MLB officials.

Program Specifics

Finding a team

AAD/USSSA does not place individual kids on teams. Managers are tasked with obtaining players to fill their teams and the only requirement they must abide by is that their players must fit in the specific registered age of the team. There are NO geographic boundries that players must live in. If a player is looking for a team to play on the best way is to participate in a posted team tryout listing on the local web site under the baseball link on the left-hand side of the local web site - [Current Team Try-out Listing](#) . Once the dialog starts between the parents and the management of the team it is critical to make sure the team is a good fit for the player as well as the family. This dialog should (at a minimum) include discussions and agreement on the following topics:

- Playing time
- Playing positions
- Practice times and locations
- Tournament committments
- Financial commitments and terms in the event the player is cut or quits. (Note- AAD/USSSA registers teams and not players so in the event a player leaves a team, regardless of the reason, the parents and management of the team are responsible for working out any refunds)

Participating in AAD/USSSA

AAD/USSSA welcomes any team to participate in its programs. That said, each team must comply with the registration requirements and be in good standing with the USSSA Constitution and the policies, procedures and Code of Conduct of AAD/USSSA before being permitted to participate.

Team Organizational Structure

The organization of a youth baseball team itself is built around the managment of the team. The team's management is not part of the AAD/USSSA organization other than being participants in the programs offered. As such we do not mandate any form of team structure but we have found the following structure to be the most effective from an organizational and communication perspective.

Manager: The Manager will have overall responsibility for the team, and he or she should be your first contact in the event of a problem. The Manager is responsible for team structure, policies and procedures, practices, discipline, playing time, and game tactics. The Manager is also ultimately responsible for (regardless of responsibilities delegated) the conduct of the team and the administrative aspects of the team such as finances, rosters, paperwork, uniforms, equipment, etc.

Coaches: Coaches assist with practices and game situations in many cases in the capacity of bench coach or base coaches.

Team Parent: The demands of running a successful youth baseball team are tremendous and the need to have someone to effeciently manage the admistrative and paperwork issues are critical to the effectiveness of the manager.

Game Schedules

The first week of the league schedule will be posted to the local web site (www.abqusssa.com) a minimum of 7 days prior to the start of the league. The balance of the 1st part of the schedule will be posted by the first week's games. Where the coaches have voted to split the season (based on pools) into sections the remaining games will be posted by the start of the last game in the existing schedule. For tournaments the schedules will usually be posted on the national USSSA web site (www.ussa.com). There are certain tournament formats that the national site does not support and those schedules will be posted on the local web site.

Trainer / Medical Staff

Is there a trainer or other medical personal at the fields? No, we do not have medical personal at the fields. Each team is charged with having a first aid kit to address minor issues and if there is an emergency contact 911.

League Standings / Game Results

We strive to post the Sundays game results by the following Wednesday. The results are posted on the national (www.ussa.com) web site.

Tournaments

Tournaments are encouraged for player development but not required and the determination to participate in tournaments and/or what tournaments are left to the teams to decide. Tournaments do provide the opportunity to play against different teams, many of which are highly skilled. It is essential that players see other styles of play offered and levels of competition, in the region and nationally. They are fun for players and families, as they are often strong team-bonding events, with some offering the opportunity for add-on family vacations. However, traveling to tournaments can be expensive with many costing as much as \$550.00-\$820.00 for team entry fees alone.

Most AAD/USSSA teams will participate in at least one tournament during the course of the year but know that they are not required. It is critical that the parents of the players identify the tournament plans of a team and the costs associated with these plans prior to committing to the team. We intentionally don't play league or tournaments from the end of June until the first part of August to encourage teams to participate in the various World Tournament championships each year.

Each year we offer 6-7 tournament events for the local teams as an alternative to the expense of traveling to out of town tournaments. The specifics on each event can be found on the national and local web sites. Those events are:

St Patricks Day Invitational – Usually close to the St. Patricks holiday and the tournament is a 2 day event offering a 3 game (minimum) guarantee. This event is one of the top two events (based on participation) each year as many new teams want to see how they compete prior to the start of the league program. The event is well supported by the teams from the southern part of the state and West Texas. Ages 7u-14u.

Cinco De Mayo Invitational – Close to the Cinco de Mayo holiday and the tournament is a 2 day event offering a 3 game (minimum) guarantee. Ages 7u-14u

USSSA State Championships- Usually the 2nd or 3rd weekend of June and the tournament is a 3 day event offering a 4 game (minimum) guarantee and is open only to NM USSSA registered teams. Ages 7u-18u

Dog Days Invitational – The 3rd weekend of July and the tournament is a 3 day event offering a 4 game (minimum) guarantee. Ages 7u-18u

Labor Day Invitational – Labor Day Weekend each year and the tournament is a 3 day event offering a 4 game (minimum) guarantee. Ages 7u-18u

Balloon Fiesta Invitational – The 2nd weekend of the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta and the tournament is a 2 day event offering a 3 game (minimum) guarantee. Ages 7u-18u

Veteran’s Day Invitational – Usually close to the Veteran’s Day holiday and the tournament is a 2 day event offering a 3 game (minimum) guarantee. Ages 7u-18u

AAD/USSSA Calendar

We post an extensive calendar of events, deadlines and tournament activities on our web site – www.abqusssa.com.

Insurance Coverage

There are two mandatory requirements for teams to participate in the league programs. Each team must be USSSA registered and each team must carry the national USSSA team insurance. We don’t mind volunteering to put the programs together and facilitate the league and tournament events but the only way we are covered, from a liability perspective, is to be named as additionally insured on the team’s policies.

If your child has sustained an injury during an AAD/USSSA youth baseball practice, games or tournaments, and your personal insurance does not cover costs incurred, you may be able to attain coverage through the USSSA insurance policy. If you have personal insurance, that policy will be primary and USSSA’s insurance policy will be secondary (possibly covering some of the deductibles of your primary policy after the USSSA deductible is met). If you don’t have personal insurance the USSSA policy will be come primary, for covered injuries, minus the \$500.00 deductible.

Weather / Rain-Out Procedures

General Field Condition Protocols

We receive real time updates from the officials and field supervisors as fields are affected by the weather. When we receive those updates we send out emails (assuming we can get to a computer) & texts via the local web site so if you don’t receive an update regarding the weather it is because your information (text capable cell phone and email) is not listed on the local web site. To ensure you receive this updates (and avoid the confusion or mis-information that might exist) please make sure you have cell phone numbers listed for your players or put the parents cell phone numbers on the players contact information on the roster section of the local and national web site. You will need to know the carriers for the cell phones for the texts to be sent from the local web site. If you want to add the parents separately you will need to go through the process of creating them as a member and assigning them to your team. This is a great tool that you are paying to have and makes communication with the team, for us and you, seamless. If you choose not to take advantage of this tool and games are delayed, suspended or canceled, for whatever reason and we attempt to notify you well, don't say we didn't try.

When inclement weather occurs the game officials or field supervisors are the only people that can suspend or cancel games. If we are at a field (remember we’re playing on several different complexes so we can’t be everywhere at once) we can suspend/cancel play but **only** the officials can make the determination to resume play on their field. If they choose to suspend play or cancel a game that game will, of course, be make up.

Wind - IF, the officials determine that any single game is to be suspended or canceled (because of wind), that does not mean the remaining games on that field will be canceled in a wind situation. As you know, if you don't like the weather in NM - wait 10 minutes, it could change. Each team, along with the officials,

are required to be at their next scheduled game in the event the field becomes more playable. Basically, the determination of playability, in a wind situation, is a game time decision.

Rain - This is a different situation since once a field becomes unplayable (again, this is at the discretion of the officials); it will remain unplayable for the balance of the day. If / when, the officials suspend or cancel a game due to the wet field conditions they will inform us of the situation and we will send out an update via the local web site.

Lightening - In this situation the officials are instructed to suspend the game and wait until the lightening threat has passed. In most cases, this will not result in a cancellation of games unless the delay affects subsequent games at which point we will send an update on the games affected. For example, if the delay results in a suspension that last more than an hour it may affect the ability for the last game of the day to start in time to be concluded before dark and could result in that game being canceled.

Pick Up Your Trash

As part of the Code of Conduct (Item #10) signed by each team and agreed to by their parents as part of the Player / Parent Agreement (just before the signature line) each team (and parents) is responsible to clean their dugout and stands after every game. If the program is assessed a clean up fee, that fee will be divided among all the teams that played at that facility and MUST be paid before that teams next games.

Practice Fields

If you go to one of the fields we use for league and you find the fields already prepared for games the next day DO NOT practice on that field. If you find the gates locked, DO NOT practice on that field. Because we are renting the fields for the league program DOES NOT mean we have automatic access to those fields for practice. You will need to secure practice space on your own. Little League teams have preference at the little league fields.

Post Game Results / Feed Back Survey

On the local web site - www.abqusssa.com - is a post game evaluation section for you to input scores (as a back up to the umpires scores submitted) and provide feedback on the overall game. Managers only, please take a couple of minutes each week and help me improve the program by providing relevant input.

Chanting / Cheering / Music

Teams are encouraged to cheer for their players at any time. IF, in the opinion of either game official, the volume, intensity or tone of the cheer increases once a pitcher is set, that is viewed as an attempt to distract or incite the pitcher to balk and will not be allowed. If it was an endorsed activity it would be done in High School, College, and MLB. It isn't done because it just not part of baseball at the upper levels of competition. I realize it is prevalent in the recreational programs but as teams get older and more competitive I have seen this tactic result in batters intentionally being "ear holed" and then use the excuse that the offensive teams bench or fans caused the action by distracting the pitcher.

Music played, during warm ups, is allowed as long as it is moderate in volume and does not contain offensive lyrics. No music is allowed during live ball situations and "walk up" music (during dead ball situations) must end when the batter reaches the box.

I'm not here to legislate morals or character That's not my job; it's the coaches (specific to baseball). That having been said - Is the disruptive chanting really necessary? Is it going to make the hitter a better hitter or is it really intended to just win the game. In the league program, where the focus isn't supposed to be on winning (at all costs) but rather player development is it really in the best interest of the participants or program?

Expectations of Players

While the one of the cornerstones of this program is NOT to mandate how coaches coach or players play there are a few universally accepted standards that should be followed to achieve the outcomes desired. We ask all players to understand and abide by the specific commitments that they need to make to be a competitive player. AAD/USSSA is about the player and their development. Everything we do is to make your competitive youth baseball "experience" the best it can be. As a player, you should...

- Play for the fun of it, not just to please your parents or coach.
- Play by the rules.
- Never argue with or complain about the official's calls or decisions.
- Control your temper and most of all; resist the temptation to retaliate when you feel you have been wronged.
- Concentrate on playing the game and on affecting the outcome of the game with your best effort. Work equally hard for your team as for yourself.
- Be a good sport by cheering all good plays, whether it is your team or your opponent's. Treat all players as you would like to be treated.
- Remember that the goals of the game are to have fun, improve skills, and feel good. Don't be a showoff or emulate everything you see on ESPN.
- Cooperate with your coaches, teammates, opponents and the officials.

Player Responsibility

Being a competitive player now requires that you take on another level of responsibility for yourself as a student-athlete. What follows are some practical suggestions that you can adhere to in order to make the most of your practice and game experiences

The teams will set their own policies and procedures but at a minimum each player should:

Be Ready To Play

Players should bring with them to every practice and game, the following:

- Fielding glove
- Spikes, cleats or turf shoes (ages 12u and younger are not permitted to wear metal spikes and pitchers in some ages will pitch from temporary mounds and will be required to use turf shoes void of metal or hard plastic)
- Bat (there are specific requirements on the bats depending upon the age division and event and the coaches will vote on these rules before the league program starts and posted on the local web site)
- Their own water bottle
- Athletic Supporter with plastic cup protector
- Athletic Tape
- Extra shoe laces
- Emergency phone numbers
- Appropriate outer wear depending upon weather conditions.
 - No jewelry, including watches. All Phiten style necklaces and bracelets are prohibited.

In short, you should be ready for anything! Put these items in your bag the night before your game or practice so that you do not have to hunt them down and thus be late for activity the next day!

Practicing On Your Own

The best thing that you can do is use your time wisely and work on fundamentals as well as age appropriate strength and conditioning activities in addition to working with the team. Above all, realize that is not solely up to your coach or your parents in order for you to get better. You have to claim responsibility for your own development. Once you realize how fun it is to play the game with skill, you may never want to stop!

What does it take to be a competitive Athlete?

Being a competitive athlete does not imply merely wearing the uniform and being just a member of the team. There are many more important phases to think about if you want to be a winner not only in youth baseball but in life as well. Your coaches will want to impress upon you the importance of the following qualities absolutely necessary for every good athlete.

- Are you "coach-able"? Can you take criticism without looking for an alibi?
- Are you possessed with the spirit of competition, which fires an intense desire to win? Does it bother you to lose?
- Are you willing to practice? Not just reporting and putting in the necessary time but working every day with the same zeal, speed, and determination you use during a ball game?
- Do you have two speeds? A practice speed and a game speed? The great athletes have one speed, and it is the same speed every day, every practice and every game. If you loaf in practice you will loaf in the game.
- Are you willing to make sacrifices? Conditioning to play is not fun and it's not easy. It is time-consuming and demanding. Training is designed to accomplish specific objectives; the responsibility is heavy. It is rough and includes personal denials in order to remain in game condition, but it has its rewards. Will you strive daily to improve your muscular strength, coordination, and speed?
- Do you have the desire to improve? Are you willing to practice the things you cannot do three times longer than the things you can do? Are you willing to put in long grinding hours, concentrating on a skill until you perfect it? Are eager to work diligently at the skills you lack until they eventually become your strongest assets?
- Do you have the ability to think under fire? Can you concentrate on the work to be accomplished at the moment? Can you shut out (from your mind) a previous failure, success, rule infraction, or personal insult in order to give undivided attention to what is happening now, at this moment. Good athletes play every play up to their best ability never depending on past success to aid them.
- Are you willing to be impersonal toward your opponents? Our experiences have taught us that the moment a player becomes personal he plays only to release individual grievances and ceases to play as a team member.
- Do you believe in your team and your coach? Your team is as good as you make it. Your coach has the responsibility of coaching, not his team, but your team. Are you willing to work toward the spirit of oneness so that everyone possesses the feeling of belonging through his or her contributions to the team?
- Last, but definitely NOT least - Are you willing to study as hard now as you did before being accepted on a competitive team? Youth baseball was never meant to take the place of studies. "The athletic tail must never wag the academic dog." This involves realignment in your time schedule. If youth baseball will consume two hours of your day then you must draw time, not from scholastic program, but from hours previously devoted to personal pursuits. If you must eliminate something from your schedule it must not be study time. First thing comes first, and your academics are of a paramount importance.

Expectations of Parents

Parents are vital to our organization. Support your child, your coaches, the other team, and the officials. Encourage your child to respect the officials, coaches, the other team, and 'honor the game'. All parents and players are required to sign a Player / Parent Agreement and Code of Conduct forms. You can find these forms under the forms section of the AAD/USSSA website at www.abqusssa.com and hard copies will be provided the managers.

Parental Support - The Key to Your Child's Performance

The role that the parents play in the life of a youth baseball player has a tremendous impact on their experience. With this in mind, we have taken some time to write down some helpful reminders for all of us as we approach the upcoming season. If you should have any questions about these thoughts, please feel free to discuss them with us, or with your team manager:

Let the coaches' coach

Leave the coaching to the coaches. This includes motivating, psyching your child for practice or games, after game critiquing, setting goals, requiring additional training, etc. You have entrusted them with the care of your player and they need to be free to do their job. If a player has too many coaches, it is confusing and their performance usually declines.

Support the team

Get involved. Volunteer. Help out with fundraisers, car-pool; anything to support the team.

Support and root for all players on the team

Foster teamwork. Your child's teammates are not the enemy. When they are playing better than your child, your child has a wonderful opportunity to learn.

Encourage your child to talk to the coaches

If they are having difficulties in practice or games, or can't make a practice, etc., encourage them to speak directly to the coaches. This "taking ownership/responsibility" is a big part of becoming a big-time player. By handling the off-field tasks, your child is claiming ownership of all aspects of the game - preparation as well as playing the game.

Understand and display appropriate game behavior

Remember, your child models the behaviors you set forth for them. If you are a distraction in the stands your child (and others) may display the same type of game day behavior. When possible, be quietly enthusiastic and supportive. However, for those of you whose participation in and familiarity with other sports (football, basketball, soccer and so on) have ingrained in you an irresistible need to yell and scream during a sporting event, then you must follow the Code of Conduct that you have signed in agreement of. AAD/USSSA highly encourages all parents, spectators, players, managers and coaches to cheer for their teams during any game. However, it is the responsibility of ALL managers, coaches, players, parents, and spectators to maintaining the highest standards of conduct for themselves in/at all games. Abusive and obscene language, violent conduct, fighting, and other behaviour detrimental to the game or program will not be tolerated. This behaviour includes the time prior to, during, and after the games at the fields and the surrounding areas during any AAD/USSSA sanctioned game.

What is player development?

The younger ages represent the most influential period in forming a sound fundamental base and a love of the game. Continue to make development fun while at the same time keeping it consistently challenging and competitive. Playing to win games becomes increasingly important but should never be at the expense of playing well.

Playing well means playing intelligent, patient, controlled game in which skill, technique and execution are emphasized and applied in game situations. After the game is the time to discuss why a player made a specific choice in a specific situation, but during the game, it must be left to the players to think for themselves.

Player Development vs. Winning At All Costs

Did you win your game today? What was the score? Did you play the entire game? These are the type of questions our kids, still in uniform, hear when they are in line at the grocery store after games or when they get home. Are we sending our youth the wrong message? It seems that youth sports are obsessed with winning, not learning how to play the game. This is a competitive program and learning how to win (and lose) is part of player development. Winning though, shouldn't be at the expense of a player.

Our hope is that your player becomes extremely comfortable with each game situation. So comfortable, in fact, that they can and will have the confidence and ability to respond to pressure situations not only on the baseball field but use this skill later in life. One of the best baseball minds I know explained it to me this way – and I paraphrase - “One of the greatest things about baseball, apart from the game itself, is the life lessons that can be learned from the game. Such as, finding a level headed rational approach to address challenges. Unlike football and basketball where you are taught to work yourself into a “lather” to be successful, baseball (like life) requires that you stay calm and under control to be effective.” We need to lead by example and when we aren’t I find my self asking - what are we really teaching the kids?

While it kills me, (being a Cubs fan- haha), the following link is a fantastic letter written by Mike Matheny (past Manager of the St. Louis Cardinals) that he sent to the parents of a Little League team that he managed recently - <http://www.mac-n-seitz.com/teams/mike-matheny-letter.html>

Expectations of Managers

The manager is the corner stone of the AAD/USSSA programs and much more is expected of him/her in the AAD/USSSA programs than is expected of a manager in Little League. The reason for this is the AAD/USSSA program is not run by a board of 10-15 volunteers, as is the case of most Little League programs. It’s just the Director, Officials Scheduler and the UIC that facilitate this program and this is not our “day job” so the manager is tasked with many things that the board of a Little League would normally handle. As an AAD/USSSA manager, in addition to the traditional roles and responsibilities of a youth baseball manager, you are ultimately responsible for several unique tasks...

- Locating, recruiting and signing your players.
- Completing the registration/payment requirements for the league and tournament events by published deadlines.
- Completing and submitting ALL player documents by the published deadlines.
 - If your team charges player fees to participate in your program you must document each individual player expense, payment policy and refund policy and have the parent sign that document in order for AAD/USSSA to support the payment of those debts as outlined in the Player / Parent Agreement.

Posting and keeping current your roster on the local (www.abqusssa.com) and national (www.usssa.com) web sites by published deadlines. The local web sites roster is only necessary, for league play, if a player does not appear on the national web site because he/she is frozen to another team’s national USSSA roster. Note – any player not listed on the national USSSA roster may not be covered by the teams medical and liability insurance.

- Ordering and obtaining uniforms for the team
- Ensuring that all equipment (bats, catchers gear, spikes) comply with the playing rules adopted by the league
- Attending each meeting for the league / tournament events that your team is participating in
- Adhering, and ensure all your players, coaches and spectators adhere, to the Code of Conduct
- Ensuring that you and all your coaches have completed the required background investigation requirements, complete the required concussion training through the CDC website and obtain the league ID badge

All the above is required before you ever step on the field for your first game in the program. We realize (and the parents/kids should realize also) that this illustrates a true commitment to the passion and desire to develop the team’s players.

Frequently Asked Questions

General

Q. Why is this program affiliated with the national USSSA program instead of one of the other governing bodies?

A. I have worked with other organizations in numerous other sports but as a director with USSSA for 28+ years, I have found this organization to be the best networked nationally, strongest team of directors at a state level and offer the best opportunity for the participants to compete at their level of competition. USSSA offers single year age divisions with up to 5 levels of play within each age division. USSSA also offers one of the easiest and most convenient World Tournament qualification processes for the teams to participate in.

Q. How can I get my child placed on a USSSA team?

A. On the local web site www.abqusssa.com is team tryout information where your player can contact existing teams with opening and schedule a try out. Once contacted you may be offered a spot on a team. Be sure to interview the coaching staff and determine if the team is a good fit for your child. You will be asked to sign a player / parent agreement locking your child to that team (for the purposes of league play) for the duration of that league season. Understand – there are no guarantees of playing time, positions or minimum at bats (per game) in this program.

League

Q. What will it cost for my child to play USSSA?

A. That depends on the age division the child participates in and structure of the team. The younger team's entry fees are less due to the shorter games, lower insurance costs and lower facility costs. Also, some teams are sponsored to some extent and other teams divide the entire cost among the number of kids on the team. For example, if your child plays on a 12u team and the coaches voted to play a 16-game season the cost would be around \$2300.00. On average the teams carry 12 kids so the cost (just for the league program – not counting uniforms or equipment) would be at \$192.00 per child for that season. Some teams offer additional strength and conditioning, cage time, and personalized instruction at additional costs but those activities are outside the scope or direction of AAD/USSSA and as such not subject to our jurisdiction. Know what you are committing to

Q. How is the league structured?

A. The league program is structured so that the Steering Committee and managers will make most of the decisions that will impact their participation in the league program. The Steering Committee and managers will decide the dates of play, majority of the playing rules and what services to include in the program which will ultimately decide the cost. As a general rule the managers have voted to play all league games, in the 12u and younger ages, on Sundays so as not to conflict with LL or other sports programs and they have voted to play 2 games each date chosen, for the league program.

Q. How do I enter a team into the league program?

A. 1st year teams are accepted into the league program when the manager has submitted the required registration paperwork and met the payment deadlines. Returning teams are reviewed for past compliance with policies and competitiveness of the team and are then invited to return. Returning teams must also submit the required registration paperwork and met the payment deadlines.

Q. What paperwork is required for each team?

A. All Teams - The deposit fee is \$500.00 and must accompany a completed Registration Form and completed Policies and Procedures Agreement. The balance of the fees (as determined by the managers) must be submitted before the team is included in the schedule. The balance of the paperwork (Player/Parent Agreements – one original for each participant, Medical Authorization Forms – one photo copy for each participant, Code of Conduct-original, with Manager and all Coaches signatures, Tournament Participation Agreement-original and Team Liability Waiver-original) must be completed and submitted before the team is allowed to participate. Once the team is accepted into the program, the manager (or designee) must also submit the roster on both the national USSSA web site (www.ussa.com).

Q. What does it cost to participate in the league program and what does it include / not include?

A. The cost is based exclusively on the number of games and services that the Steering Committee and managers vote into the league. Traditionally, the managers have voted to include costs of the local web site, 2 officials per game, field rental, prep and clean up, Site Directors (Where two or more fields are utilized), Umpire Trainer/Evaluator (at the complexes where the younger officials are staffed), baseballs, USSSA team registration and USSSA insurance but each of the line item expenses are presented to the teams at the first organizational meeting each league season for review and to determine what to include and what to exclude. For estimation purposes you can base the overall league cost on approximately \$139.00 (8u team) to \$253.00 (18u team) per game (depending upon age division and the facilities rented).

Once the managers have determined the total number of games they want to play, the individual line items associated with the expenses are totaled and rounded up to the nearest \$25.00. These additional costs cover indirect expenses such as bank fees, checks, 1099's, corporate filings, printing, office supplies and postage. The league registration fees do not include uniforms or equipment (except the baseballs).

Q. Is the USSSA insurance a requirement?

A. Yes.

Q. What are the payment options?

A. Payments can be made with cash, team check, cashier's check, money order. We only accept payments from one team or individual account. **We won't accept individual payments made by parents.** Please deposit parent payments into a team account and write payments to AAD/USSSA from that team account.

Q. What are the refund conditions?

A. 100% of the league fees will be refunded any team wishing to withdraw from the league **prior** to the deposit deadline date. After that date the league will process the USSSA team registration, insurance, field deposits, web site access and purchase balls out of the teams deposit / payments. Once those purchases are made they are non-refundable. Any funds not expended and associated with your team will be refunded. Once the league schedule is produced there may be no refunds since 100% of the charged costs for the program and allocated at that time.

Q. How does the player's age breakdown work?

A. The league and tournament programs use the national USSSA age protocols. Basically, the age of the oldest player on May 1st of the current year for the spring league and the next year for the fall league, will determine the age of your team. Please refer to the age calculator link found on the local web sites home page for an easy tool in determining a specific player's age. It has been proven effective to build your team attempting to keep all the players in a single year age increment but that is not a requirement of the league program. As long as you don't roster a player that exceeds your age division, you may have players on the team that are younger than your age division.

Q. How are divisions and schedules produced?

A. In the early years of this program the league was divided into 2 year age increments for 10u (9-10 year olds), 12u (11-12 year olds), 13u, 14u and HS (older than 14). With the recent growth in the league program, there have been enough teams of certain single year ages, to offer single year age league divisions. There are a couple of different philosophies when establishing the pools or divisions for the league that will be voted on by the coaches. Your team could be an established 11u team with players that have played "club" ball before and pairing your team with only other 11u teams could limit the strength of the teams you would face so, in some cases, this 11u team may choose to play in the 12u division.

Since the 11u and 12u teams play at the same base / pitching distances, with the goal of parity, it sometimes makes sense to rank teams and then place the equal teams into the same pools of play with the goal of keeping the strongest teams with the strongest teams, etc. We don't particularly care one way or another. Our only goal is to create the best parity possible so there are close games each week.

The philosophy used will be put to a vote by the managers at the Rules Meeting for each league season.

Q. What playing rules are used?

A. This is put to a vote with the managers but traditionally they have selected the USSSA rules as the foundation for the league program because those will be the rules used in tournament events.

Q. How long are the games?

A. Personally, we don't like time limits in baseball at all but with the limited facilities and the cost associated with officials and renting fields, time limits are a reality. The cost projections are based on time limits and innings played specific to each age division and in the past the coaches have adopted the following current limits:

7u-8u – 6 innings - no new inning after 1.5 hours have been played and the game ends at 1.75 hours

9u-10u – 6 innings - no new inning after 1.75 hours have been played and the game ends at 2 hours

11u-18u - 7 innings – no new inning after 2 hours and the game ends at 2.25 hours

Again, this is left to the managers to decide but if longer games are approved it will affect the cost of officials and field rental.

Q. Can we play in only ½ the season?

A. No. The fields that we rent and the officials contracted don't like a "fluctuating" usage of their resources. That having been said, hypothetically for example, if there are 24 teams in the 12u league and we schedule 5 games per day on each field rented, one additional team could be added after the season has started. That doesn't happen too often and we try to present consistent and realistic rental and officials requirements at the start of each league season. So, if you're interested in participating in the program, you need to commit to participate on all the dates voted on by the managers.

Q. What are the dates of play?

A. The Steering Committee will select the dates of the league program. We don't care if the committee votes to play 5 games or 50 games. We just need to know the dates to contract the fields and officials. Each age division will be given the option of different ending dates since the ages have different priorities. In the spring, some want an ending date that corresponds with the start of Little League All Stars and some want to play until the USSSA (or other associations) World tournaments. During the spring league, the traditional start dates for league are around the 3rd or 4th week of March (after the St. Patrick's Day Tournament) and conclude around the first part of June. For the fall league, the start date is usually the middle of August and concludes the last week of October.

We will provide a calendar of tournaments, for all associations, so the managers can select which weekends they want to take off (of league) to support those tournaments. Our commitment is not to take off two weekends in a row in support of those teams who don't want to play tournaments.

Q. What if we can't play on a scheduled league date?

A. Once the dates for league are selected you're expected to field a team for each of the league games scheduled – refer to the Managers Policies / Procedures Agreement. There will be situations where the managers voted to play and your team wants to play in an out of town tournament or you can't make games due to other circumstances – that's ok as long as we know it before the schedules are produced. We will adjust the schedules so your opponents will be scheduled games in your absence. There is no adjustment to the fees owed by your team on weeks that you choose not to participate. If you don't show for a game that you were scheduled for, you may be charged a forfeit fee that will be paid to the team that didn't get the games they paid to play.

Q. When and where are the games played?

A. We don't own any fields so we rent them for both league and tournament programs. We have arrangements with local Parks and Recreation facilities in Rio Rancho, school facilities and with Little

League programs around the area. We only schedule the league games on Sundays (for 12u and younger) and we usually start around 8am and play till dark. If you are part of a Little League program that would like to generate revenue for your program by renting your fields please contact us for further information. We always want to use the highest quality fields that are the most convenient for the teams participating.

Q. Do the league fees cover any tournaments?

A. No

Q. What equipment is allowed in each age division?

A. For insurance purposes there are minimum restrictions on some equipment that can't be deviated from. Specific restrictions are, no metal spikes below the 13u divisions, bat restrictions as adopted by the leagues managers, double flap helmets for all age divisions, etc. All bats must, at least, meet the requirements of the sanctioning body of USSSA. The rest of the restrictions are voted on by the managers and are incorporated into the league rules for that season.

Q. How can I find additional players for my team?

A. Post a team tryout notice together and email it to the league and we will post it on the local web site.

Q. Where can I find practice fields for my team?

A. Most all fields require insurance naming them additionally insured before they will let anyone (not part of their program) use their fields. Once the team's registration and deposit payment is made, the insurance is secured for each team. With the insurance company, we name APS, RRPS, RRPR, Bernalillo PR, Abq PR, all the LL districts, as additionally insured on the team's policy. With that certificate you can approach just about any field owner in the area and illustrate the coverage your team has. This doesn't guarantee anyone practice space, but it helps. . . . After that it's up to you. If you have access to a field outside the groups listed above, you will be able to add them to your team's policy by contacting the national USSSA insurance company – insurance@usssa.com.

Q. Can a kid play on more than one team in the same age division?

A. No, but kids can play on more than one team in the league if the teams compete in different age divisions assuming they are of the legal age for that age division.

Q. What are the payment options?

A. There are a couple of options when paying for league but all must be received by the league entry deadline.

1. Cash
2. Team Check / Cashiers Check / Money Order –
AAD/USSSA
PO Box 67275
Albuquerque, NM 87193

Tournaments

Q. How are tournaments structured?

A. All tournaments are guaranteed a specific number of games and bracketed with single year age increments, except for the HS division where 15u and 16u may be combined or 17u and 18u may be combined. Traditionally they are structured as a 2 or 3 game pool play and then single elimination championship or consolation bracket. Two day tournaments are normally a 3 game guarantee and 3 day tournaments are a 4 game guarantee.

Q. How do I enter a team into a tournament?

A. Refer to the tournament entry instructions posted on this web site – [Tournament Entry Instructions](#)

Q. What does it cost to participate in a tournament and what does it include / not include?

A. It varies from event to event based on the number of games guaranteed, awards package and level of the event. Some events require additional sanctioning, insurance and awards costs and are more expensive, but our commitment is to always provide as many additional games as possible after the direct expenses of the event are covered. We project the entry fee based on a minimum number of teams per elimination bracket and if there are more teams then we will provide more games or better awards / trophies, when possible. We will cover all tournament expenses out of the entry fees – you will not have to pay additional umpire fees, parking or gate fees. Balls are not included in the entry fee cost but all balls must be USSSA stamped.

Q. What are the payment options?

A. There are four options when paying for tournaments but all must be received by the tournament entry deadline.

1. Cash
2. Team Check / Cashiers Check / Money Order –
AAD/USSSA
PO Box 67275
Albuquerque, NM 87193
3. Pay with a CC on the national USSSA web site – refer to tournament entry instructions link.

Q. What are the refund conditions?

A. After the published entry deadline has passed there may be no refunds given.

Q. What playing rules are used?

A. All AAD/USSSA events will use the state approved tournament rules based exclusively on the national USSSA bylaws and rule book as well as mandated State Rules. You will be emailed a copy of the rules prior to the event.

Q. When and where are the games played?

A. We don't own any fields so we rent them for both league and tournament programs. We have arrangements with local parks and recreation facilities in Rio Rancho, school facilities and with Little League programs around the Abq/RR area. Teams will be emailed with specific field locations so they can make the appropriate lodging arrangements around 7 days prior to the event. Since most fields used for tournaments don't have lights, the games would be played from 7am to dark. If you're a team from out of town that would like to play later on the first day of the event, you will need to email me to make that request by the entry deadline.

Q. What equipment is allowed in each age division?

A. All equipment specifications will follow the national USSSA Bylaw and playing rules with additional State mandates incorporated.

Q. Can a participant in the league program play with a different team in tournaments?

A. Yes. The player / parent contracts apply to league play only.

Q. Can playing in a tournament qualify (freeze) my roster for other tournaments or league and what does that mean?

A. Per the state's protocols on rosters, no roster will be frozen during the first 5 months of the season (August through December). That having been said, a roster can be frozen after Jan 1st based on participation in any USSSA event during the USSSA calendar year. Having your team's roster qualified based on tournament play will not affect your roster for the purposes of league play in our programs. You can carry up to twenty players on either your league or tournament roster. Qualifying your roster means that

you are restricted in the player moves that you can make. See the national playing rules specific to qualified roster – www.usssa.com

GENERAL COMPETITIVE CLUB BASEBALL PERSPECTIVES

Dana Gilmer

Having done this for 28 years I have seen youth baseball evolve over 2 generations and the following is just my perspective, not program policy – take it for what it’s worth and it is not meant to be “preachy.”

When Good Parents Go Bad

“It’s quite clear that my child has special qualities that shine above the rest. I’m not just saying that because he’s my child, he really is talented! He will probably make the big leagues some day and be the next A. Rod!” – I actually hear that at least once a season.

As a parent, if your single goal for participating in a competitive baseball program is to ensure your son plays in the big leagues you will, most likely, be very disappointed. According to Wiki the odds of making it to the big leagues for the current kid’s ages 6-12 are 1 in 500,000. The odds go up as the child gets older, and obtains the proper coaching and training as long as the motivation for him to play is based in the correct foundation – I’ll touch on that later. Some general statistics:

- High school senior players who go on to play NCAA men`s baseball: Less than three in fifty, or 5.6 percent
- NCAA senior players drafted by a Major League Baseball (MLB) team: Less than eleven in one hundred, or 10.5 percent.
- High school senior players eventually drafted by an MLB team: About one in two hundred, or 0.5 percent. Drafted baseball players almost always go to a minor league team. These teams abound; there are over 150 of them, compared to 30 in the majors. The big leagues have around 750 players, yet an average draft takes 1,200-1500. Hence some estimate that only one in 33 minor leaguers ever makes it to the pros. If that's correct, the chance of a high school player making the big leagues is one in 6,600, or 0.015 percent.

If your goal is to develop memories, skills and friendships that will last his life time as well as increase his odds of obtaining a college education with the outside possibility that he may play professionally (not necessarily the big leagues) then competitive youth baseball is a great venue to pursue – as the chart below illustrates.

Student-Athletes	Basketball	Football	Baseball	Ice Hockey	Soccer
High School Athletes	549,000	983,600	455,300	29,900	321,400
High School Senior Athletes	157,000	281,000	130,100	8,500	91,800
NCAA Athletes	15,700	56,500	25,700	3,700	18,200
NCAA Freshman Athletes	4,500	16,200	7,300	1,100	5,200
NCAA Senior Athletes	3,500	12,600	5,700	800	4,100
NCAA Athletes Drafted	44	250	600	33	76
High School to NCAA	2.9%	5.8%	5.6%	12.9%	5.7%
NCAA to Professional	1.3%	2.0%	10.5%	4.1%	1.9%
High School to Professional	0.03%	0.09%	.5%	.4%	0%

I’m a normal parent (father of two girls) and bias is natural but I understand that my bias is not always confirmed in reality. As parents, we try to provide opportunities and challenges for our children that will allow them to learn, progress and achieve. In our society achievement is a primary goal. We read books to them when they are little, drive them to practice at age ten and pay for the SAT prep courses so they’ll

achieve high scores on their exams in high school. To most middle class Americans this is standard practice. You have also seen the parent who goes overboard (IMO) and make their two-month-old review flash cards. This is the parents whose goal is helping their childrens chances of getting into a good college, and ultimately being successful in life.

All children need guidance and direction, but when it comes to sports the results can often backfire if the child's needs and motivations are not recognized. If you push an adult's motivation on a child, the child will eventually resist. It is not a child's instinct to invest and therefore the motivation is low. Every year we see parents try to advance their children's sports career by changing teams or trying to manipulate the coach of his existing team. Is this a parent's need to live vicariously through their child or does the 9 year old need a coach with better technical skills? My advice to parents is to proceed with caution, as the results can be destructive. I am seeing this phenomenon regularly and witnessing the destructive process of little Johnny playing on a competitive club travel T-ball team for 5-6 year olds. I routinely field calls from parents of 6-8 year olds looking for a competitive team for their child to play on. The reality is that most kids do not develop into a competitive level player until they have played 3-4 years and the local Little League programs do a great job providing the initial exposure, skills, and motivation for players to develop into more competitive players.

This is the primary reason that we don't offer competitive programs, locally, until age 7. Some of the kids, younger than age 8, will find spots on competitive AAD/USSSA 9u teams but if they are not playing consistantly will they really be developing?

Pushing kids equals kids pushing back

You have seen children who have been told what to do their whole lives and for obvious reasons structure is critical to their development. When it comes to sports, from age 8 to 15 they appear talented and motivated. They comply with heavy parental influence until they are 16 and then with dramatic defiance, quit the sport they have loved all their lives. It's a common occurrence and many parents are baffled at their childrens choice. Every year children leave sport environments in staggering numbers. Why such a high drop out rate? One-third of all participants drop out because of the following factors: 1) constant criticism or disapproval, 2) overly competitive emphasis from adults, 3) little playing time, 4) an environment of fear. The key here is that the child has not learned to internalize motivation and this is a key to constant development and enjoyable participation.

Helping a Childs Motivation: Playing in the zone

Have you heard of the concept of flow or playing in the "Zone"? Musicians, athletes and scientists all report profound feelings of engagement when they are in the "Zone." This is a strong motivation but the key to get in the Zone is for the player to feel in control and ready for the demands of the task. In some cases, young athletes will do large amounts of work but only if the demands are right for them. The key is the work must be internally rewarding. Internally rewarding means that they have the knowledge, goals, and skills to make personal choices and regulate effort. When these choices are removed by an overbearing coach or parent the joy of playing is removed as well. Players talk about this great feeling, playing without pressure, skilled and strong.

Players talk about the zone in similar ways;

"I was mentally clear, my body pumped and I felt like a machine"

"Physically everything came to a peak my play just flowed."

"It was fun and felt good"

"I was in the zone, I wasn't thinking of anything"

"I was completely focused, like my body and mind were in perfect harmony"

You have probably experienced this feeling yourself, while you where driving from A to B. Have you ever been driving and thought "I don't remember passing that store," because driving is easy for veterans and

when you have a routine task your mind can engage in pleasant thoughts, putting you in the Zone. The key for child athletes is for parents and coaches to try and set the conditions for players to play in the zone daily. This is a very important concept for everyone, especially children. When people feel skilled and in control, they are motivated to continue that particular activity. This is how human motivation works. If children are matched to the right level of skill and focused upon a task they will have some degree of control and competence. If the skill is too difficult the child chokes; too easy a skill and they are bored. Playing in the Zone does something important; it gives motivational control to the child. That's what we want, to help players to maximize intrinsic motivation.

The Athlete Family: the Keys to Success

Have you ever totaled up the cost of all your kids baseball experiences? The fees, travel, meals, equipment, training and time really add up. If the rationale for investing your time and money is for the health and the development for your child then the logical extension is to make the home environment conducive to success as well. Healthy development for young athletes requires the family to function at high levels. When we sample and do research with successful people, we find similar patterns in their learning. Families from music, politics, art, science, and education all have similar patterns of function. Successful athletes usually have family support systems that are complex. Complex means their families are stable. Stable families are found in both single parent as well as traditional family systems. A stable home is one that allows the child to be safe, disciplined, cared for, supported, and loved. The child needs to feel wanted and encouraged while in the home. But wait, competitive athletics also requires accountability and the athletic family is also a family that holds individuals accountable while encouraging curiosity and allows the child to seek out and experience new challenges. The child is encouraged to risk, with the blessing of the athletic family. This allows the child to test, play, and explore without fear of punishment or failure. Having experienced this feeling the child is then encouraged to test their outside experiences to match their skill, and experience Flow (playing in the Zone) outside the home in activities of their own choice. This is where you hear stories from great athletes talking about training and playing as a profound source of joy. Read the stories of Wayne Gretzky, and Mia Hamm and you will recognize the contribution of stable and encouraging families.

Perhaps the most common pathway to destruction of a young player is to assume they want the same goals as their parents. Do you remember what the number one motivational factor is for children? It's not solely winning or gaining a scholarship, it's to be with their friends and have fun. The family can run into problems when the parent's authority crosses over by defending their children's motivations. The parent unconsciously usurps control and motivation away from the child. It backfires. You see this often as soon as the game is over and the parent begins to coach a child in the car. "Know the situation and don't swing at his pitch", explains the father. The child's head drops and their eyes roll back and they can't wait to get out of the car, "I know Dad." This exchange may seem harmless but think about the child's motivation. If they receive enough adult criticism they will lose control and motivation and the pathway to quitting is established. This is not allowing the child to play in the Zone.

AAD/USSSA PRIMARY AND SECONDARY PROGRAM GOALS

Our primary goal for this program is to produce better High School baseball players for the NMAA programs with our secondary goal to increase their odds of playing in college. Nothing we do will achieve the primary goal without the commitment of the player. For that player to succeed on his High School team AND play in college, talent is not enough. I believe it comes down to two words – Work Ethic. What follows is a check list from the High School Baseball website - www.hsbaseballweb.com – for student athletes that want to maximize their potential.

1. Persistence is more important than talent
2. There is a reason that the word STUDENT comes first in student-athletes
3. Respect the game as much as you want to be respected

4. Tuck in your shirt
5. Don't wear your hat backwards
6. Practice hard because you play the way you practice
7. It doesn't take any talent to hustle
8. Be a student in baseball. Learn the game - Study the history of baseball
9. Help your team win whether you play or not
10. Keep a daily diary of what you do at practice and keep notes of your observations. This will help you see the progress you have made
11. Never argue with an umpire
12. Agree to let your coaches train you
13. Don't cut class
14. Maintain the grades that keep you eligible
15. Set high standards along with knowing the steps to attain them
16. Don't tell people what you are worth, prove it to them
17. Your girlfriend is not more important than your career
18. Your parents love you, but they don't know more than your coach about baseball
19. Don't let anyone make an excuse for you
20. Maintain eye contact with all adults when they talk to you. Practice on your friends
21. It is your coach's opinion of you that counts. He makes out the lineup. Fail to understand this point and you will soon be out of the game
22. Life is not fair - Regardless of what some people want you to think.
23. Be passionate about your teammates
24. Love the game
25. Players are not the only people in the game. There are coaches, trainers, announcers, umpires, broadcasters and writers. All those jobs are honorable professions.
26. The only thing that coaches owe you is HONESTY
27. Body language screams. It never whispers
28. Balance makes champions. If you focus on hitting and ignore the defensive part of your game you will never be a complete player.
29. Be as diligent on defense as you are on offense
30. Defense wins more games than offense
31. Pitching sets the tone
32. Games are lost not won. Mistakes lead to losses
33. You can win a league with a few good pitchers. Well developed pitching staffs win the tournaments
34. Work on your game every day of the year. The guy who beat you out for the starting job did and the team that always beats you did.
35. Who you are today is a result of who you were in the past. Fill your past with smart work and good deeds and you will maximize your potential
36. You don't have to be a great athlete to be a good baseball player
37. Show off your talent to your current coach and your future coach by doing the following: (ALL THE TIME)
 - o When you jog to warm up finish first.
 - o When you stretch do it best.
 - o When you play catch, throw to a target and hit it every time.
 - o When you play catch, catch the ball or block the bad throw and keep it in front of you every time.
 - o When you are doing a drill, do it perfect, every time.
 - o Go hard all the time. Never walk on a baseball practice field.
 - o As a batter/runner run to first as though it matters that you are safe.
 - o Know the situation on defense and do the right thing.
38. Baseball reveals character it doesn't build it.
39. Character means doing the right thing when nobody's watching

Again, these are not program policies or rules. This was just my 2 cents and perspective from having done this for so long and observed the successes and failures of individuals and teams.

Thank you and best of luck this coming season,
Dana Gilmer
