



## Waconia Area Athletics traveling Baseball Handbook

**Mission:** Our mission is to provide a positive experience for baseball players seeking a competitive level of play with a focus on skill development as a player and teammate. WAA Traveling Baseball is intended to help prepare players for future levels of high competition while strengthening the future of Waconia Baseball.

**Organizational Structure:** WAA Traveling Baseball, is a program within Waconia Area Athletics (WAA) and Waconia Community Education (WCE), organized and overseen by the Directors and Coordinators of Waconia Community Education and Waconia Area Athletics. WAA Traveling Baseball will follow the rules and policies set forth by WAA and WCE, in conjunction with the League in which our teams are competing, currently Metro Baseball League (MBL).

**Waconia Baseball Advisory Board:** WAA Traveling Baseball has an advisory board that assists with many aspects of the baseball program. Advisory Board members attend meetings periodically throughout the year, assist with tryout organization, team organization, and advise on issues and situations that occur during the year. Advisory Board members are volunteers who donate between 20 and 40 hours of their time each year. There is an application process to become an Advisory Board member. Applications are sent out by WAA periodically based on need. Applications turned in are reviewed by WAA and the current Baseball Advisory Board members. New Board Members are selected based on qualifications such as honesty, trustworthiness, selflessness, and experience. WAA is looking for members who want to assist in making decisions that benefit every single player in the program. Advisory Board members are encouraged to share their ideas while finding common ground with other board members. Knowledge of the game of baseball or other sports, either as a player or coach, is ideal but not a requirement.

**Registration and Eligibility:** WAA provides a competitive traveling baseball opportunity for children ages 9 through 15. Participants must either live in the Waconia School District limits or attend ISD 110 schools. Programming is for youth in 3rd grade and up who fit the birthday cut off according to league requirements. Players in grades below 3rd grade are not eligible to try out for a WAA traveling baseball team. WAA provides other baseball opportunities for those in grades below 3rd. Any player who is past the 15-year-old birthday cut-off is ineligible to tryout for a WAA Traveling Baseball team. WAA asks that players register according to birthdays; however, if you have a summer birthday, you can register with your peers in the same grade. Registration opens in July/August of the current year for the following summer based on our evaluation process.

**Evaluation Process:** WAA Traveling Baseball uses an evaluation process to create the most competitive teams possible. Fall evaluations are normally done outdoors in August/September. No Advisory Board member is permitted to score their own child's age group. They are, however, allowed to assist with drill facilitation that their child may be involved in. During fall evaluations, players are scored on different categories related to baseball ability. After fall evaluations, scores are tallied by WAA and stored privately until team selection. Teams are decided based on scores from fall and the coach's evaluations of each player from the previous season. The coach's evaluation is the final piece of the evaluation process. After each season players are graded by their coach on many aspects of the game from ability on the field to ability to be a teammate and intangibles within the game.

**Team Selection Process:** The goal of WAA is to place as many players on a team as possible while allowing players to have a productive opportunity. It is not the goal to cut players, but sometimes cuts need to be made to ensure a positive and competitive experience for all. WAA believes it is not in the best interest of every player to always fill the maximum number of players on a team. If cuts are made, it is for the benefit of the players that did not make a team, as well as the players on that team. Every player who does not make a WAA Traveling Baseball team still has a place to play Baseball in Waconia. WAA wants to encourage baseball participation for every player that wants to play but we also realize that some players are at different skill levels than others. Baseball is also a different sport than many others in the sense that there is less playing time to go around. WAA and the Baseball Advisory Board believe that having teams with more than 13 players are not conducive to player development. WAA and the Baseball Advisory Board believe that the optimum roster size for traveling baseball teams is 12. We do realize that not every team or situation is the same. If registration numbers and evaluations dictate, there could be between 10 and 13 players on a team. Having enough players to create multiple teams does not always mean that multiple teams will be created. These are competitive leagues, and there are many aspects to consider when forming teams. The leagues we play in have restrictions on how many teams from one community can play at each level.

WAA works hard during the team formation process. We do feel that we get the teams correct as a whole. We realize that there maybe 1 or 2 kids at each age level that are "out of place" and might be better than a player on the team above them. However, this is unavoidable with any sport where evaluations are done especially with such a subjective sport as baseball. The baseball board is making decisions based on information presented to them and must make the best decision they see fit for every single player in the program, not just one player.

**Team Competition Levels:** WAA Traveling Baseball teams currently play in the Metro Baseball League (MBL). Metro Baseball League has established levels of competition for each age level. It is the job of WAA and the Advisory Board to determine where WAA teams should be placed. These levels are listed as such; AAA or (Triple-A), the highest level that any team from any community can compete. AA (Double-A), the second or middle level of competition at each age level. A (Single-A), the base level at any age level. Depending on registration and evaluations, WAA is typically able to place 2 to 3 teams within each age group but the MBL level at which they compete is determined by previous years' performance and evaluations. WAA usually has only 1 AAA team at each age level. In some age levels, Waconia may not have enough ability to compete at AAA. Each age level typically has an AA team, and A teams are common in Waconia as long as numbers allow for it. The Metro Baseball League does have a rule stating that if a community wants to field two teams at the same ability level in an age group, they must field at least 1 AAA team.

**Core Philosophies:**

- **Aptitude (Baseball IQ)**
- **Ability**
- **Effort/Competitiveness**
- **Team Player/Player Participation/Attendance**
- **Sportsmanship**
- **Enjoy the game/fun!**

**Identification of AAA, AA & A:**

- **Competitive (11AAA - 15AAA):** Athletes selected to this team should have an understanding of the core philosophies above. Coaches will continue the education of these virtues and select lineups accordingly. Schedules and Tournament play throughout the season are competitive and are mandatory for participation at this high level.
- **Developmental (9AAA, 10AAA, and all AA teams):** Athletes selected to this team will be learning the core philosophies above. Coaches will be teaching the core philosophies as well as baseball fundamentals, including fielding, hitting, pitching, and game situations. Coaches will use their best judgment to position athletes to be sure of success and opportunity. Lineups and positions may vary from game to game as athletes further their knowledge of baseball.
- **Instructional (All A Teams):** Athletes selected to this team are introduced to baseball fundamentals and game situations. Athletes will work on fielding (proper stance and approach), hitting (stance/hand position), pitching (mechanics), and game situations, including (base running, force outs, team play). Coaches will allow athletes to learn new positions/batting order as well as experience how fun the baseball game situations can be. Athletes will also grow their baseball knowledge and are introduced to the importance of the core philosophies above.

**Coach Selection:** Anyone who is interested in coaching a traveling baseball team with the WAA Traveling Baseball team is to fill out a coaching application. Applications are generally sent via email before the second evaluations take place. WAA and the Advisory Board review the requests, and coaches are selected after teams are decided. WAA Traveling Baseball's current policy is to assign 3 to 4 coaches per team. This number is subject to change depending on the

situation, at the discretion of WAA and the Advisory Board. Metro Baseball League has policies regarding how many coaches can be in the dugout during a game. Head coaches for each team are selected first. The coaches that applied to be a head coach are considered first for the head coach position. If nobody asked to be a head coach, then all assistants are considered. Head coaches are selected based on previous coaching experience, knowledge of the game, ability to manage players and parents, positive interactions with WAA, and a willingness to contribute positively to Waconia Traveling Baseball and WAA. The Advisory Board selects head coaches once teams are set. The Advisory Board reviews the remaining coaching applications. Assistant coaches are held to similar criteria as head coaches. WAA and the Advisory Board will also consider how well a potential coaching staff would work together. If more than 2 assistant coaches are approved by the Advisory Board, the head coach will in certain circumstances have the opportunity to select the 2 assistant coaches from the approved applicants. If there are only 1 or 2 remaining applicants for that team, then they automatically are selected as coaches for the team. All coaching selections are dependent on passing a background check. Coaches are listed once their background check is confirmed.

**Scheduling Process:** The scheduling process for practices, games, and tournaments is listed below. Each method is unique and complex.

- **Practices:** Practices for traveling baseball generally start the Monday after spring break in Waconia. This can vary from year to year as the spring break schedule sometimes changes. Gym practices will start the first or second week of March, depending on schedules and gym openings. WAA schedules all practices that are in the gym. Due to limited gym availability and the need to share with softball, soccer, and lacrosse, WAA must schedule these practices so they fit within the complicated matrix of all those teams. Teams should not expect more than 1 or 2 practices a week while in the gym in March. Gym practices are generally 1 hour long. Priority for practices is given to teams with an earlier starting date on their season. Some teams do not start their game schedule until May, and therefore, they will be offered fewer practices if gym space is full. Gym practices will continue until WAA is given okay by the school district and the City to use their respective fields. If grass space is available, but dirt fields are not yet ready in the spring, WAA will continue to schedule those grass space practices. As soon as fields are completely accessible, coaches are responsible for contacting WAA and scheduling practices as they feel necessary. The reasoning for this is coaches know their teams and communicate with their parents the most. They can keep track of their one team better than WAA can keep track of all teams. If parents have questions about the number of practices, they should contact the coach first to discuss a change in frequency. WAA and the Advisory Board suggest 1 to 2 practices a week during the weeks that games are played. This is a guideline as all coaches are encouraged to structure their practices and meeting times to fit their teams' needs.
- **Game Schedules:** Game schedules vary depending on the age level. Currently, ages 9-14 play 16 league games. They may start playing games the 3rd week of April pending field conditions. Their regular season ends the first or second week of July. To respect their high school season, 15-year-old teams can start playing games in the middle of

May, and their regular season ends at the same time as the rest of the age groups. 15-year-olds currently play 12 league games.

- **Regions:** Each team is placed in a region based on all the other communities that place a team at that age level and competition level. For example, if there are only eight teams in the 9AAA region, there will only be one region, and Waconia must play all those teams in that region. If there are 50 teams in 12AA, there would generally be five regions with ten teams, and Waconia would have to play the other nine teams in the region they are placed. Due to Waconia's unique location, regions can vary from year to year. Since travel to the NorthWest metro and South metro are very similar, Waconia can be placed in either location. Sometimes this creates more of a journey for some Waconia teams than others. This is something that is primarily out of the control of WAA.
- **Game Nights:** Games can be played on any day of the week throughout the season. WAA encourages coaches to schedule Monday through Thursday nights for league play games. Due to opponent field availability and rescheduling needs, teams must be prepared to play on Friday nights or weekends. Parents can expect about two games a week throughout the season, but as stated before, field availability and rescheduling can affect the number of games in a week.
- **Playoffs:** Each team is eligible for playoffs once the regular season concludes. Playoffs are a single-elimination tournament that is played throughout the week, and games function just like regular-season games. There is typically only one game per night unless otherwise noted. Teams continue advancing until they lose. The higher seed is the host for playoff games. Playoff games can be played against any team in the entire league, not just within the regular-season region. Seeding is based on standings created by regular season play. Travel can be especially challenging for playoff games due to non-region play. Championship games are usually at a neutral site somewhere in the West Metro (This changes from year to year).
- **Tournament Schedules:** WAA registers each team for two tournaments during the regular season. These tournaments are included in the cost of registration. If teams prefer to play more than two regular-season tournaments, the team/parents are responsible for finding, scheduling, registering, and paying for any additional tournaments. Generally, each regular-season tournament functions as a state qualifier. Depending on the tournament results and final standings, each team has the opportunity to qualify to compete in one of 3 state tournaments. If teams qualify and want to compete in the state tournament, it is treated as an additional tournament and teams must pay their own costs. Not all Traveling teams qualify or want to compete in the state tournament so WAA does not include it in the 2 tournaments covered with registration. WAA attempts to schedule tournaments in relatively close proximity. Due to tournament availability and other restrictions such as cancellations and weather, some tournaments can be much more of a significant drive than others.

## Personal Conduct

- **Players:** Each player must sign a code of conduct before each season. The player code of conduct outlines rules and guidelines that WAA and the Advisory Board have set forth for players to follow. Players must follow those rules, or they are subject to the penalties listed on the code of conduct. If there are issues following the player code of conduct, it is up to WAA and the Advisory Board to rule whether or not the code of conduct was broken. If it is determined the player code of conduct has been broken, the player, the parents, and the coach will be notified via email from WAA. Each situation is independent of the other. WAA and the Advisory Board have the right to enforce penalties above what is listed on the code of conduct if they feel it is necessary and justified. Coaches are asked to use their best judgment on how to handle players. These are children, and they make mistakes sometimes. Some situations may allow for coaches to work through the issue with the players, without penalty enforced by WAA. Coaches may also have their own team rules in addition to the code of conduct. If players refuse to sign the code of conduct, they will not be allowed to play until they do so.
- **Parents:** Each parent must sign a code of conduct before each season. The parent code of conduct outlines rules and guidelines that WAA and the Advisory Board have set forth for parents to follow. Parents must follow those rules, or they are subject to the penalties listed on the code of conduct. If there are issues following the parent code of conduct, it is up to WAA and the Advisory Board to rule whether or not the code of conduct was broken. If a parent is found to have violated the parent code of conduct, the specific parent will be notified via email from WAA with the coaches included. Each situation is independent of the other. WAA and the Advisory Board have the right to enforce penalties above what is listed on the code of conduct if they feel it is necessary and justified. There will be no leeway with parents. The game is for the children, and if parents are found unable to follow the code of conduct, they will be penalized. Coaches may also have their own team rules for parents in addition to the code of conduct. If parents refuse to sign the code of conduct, they will not be allowed to attend any team events until they do so.
- **Coaches:** Each coach must sign a code of conduct before each season. The coach code of conduct outlines rules and guidelines that WAA and the Advisory Board have set forth for coaches to follow. Coaches must follow those rules, or they are subject to the penalties listed on the code of conduct. If there are issues following the coach's code of conduct, it is up to WAA and the Advisory Board to rule whether or not the code of conduct was broken. If a coach is found to have violated the coaching code of conduct, the coach will be notified via email from WAA. Each situation is independent of the other. WAA and the Advisory Board have the right to enforce penalties above what is listed on the code of conduct if they feel it is necessary and justified. There will be some leeway with coaches as they are essential to run our program, and there is a lot of judgment with coaches' situations. The game is for the children, and if coaches are found unable to follow the code of conduct, they will be penalized as appropriate. If coaches refuse to sign the code of conduct, they will be removed from coaching the team.

**Uniforms:** All players must wear the official team uniform for each contest.

- Hat (Provided with registration)
- Purple & Gold Jersey (Provided with registration)
- White Pants (Available for purchase in apparel store)
- Purple Belt (Available for purchase in apparel store)
- Purple Socks (Available for purchase in apparel store)

Pants, Belt, and Socks do not have to be purchased in the apparel store, but it is an excellent option if you are already ordering from there.

**Attendance:** It hurts an entire team to have players with other priorities. If a parent (or guardian) knows that their child will miss numerous games or weekend tournaments during the season due to vacations or other commitments, then please consider participating in one of our recreation leagues. This will allow another player who does not have any attendance limitations an opportunity to make the team. When missing a practice or a game, the player is not fulfilling his responsibilities to his team or teammates. WAA understands that life happens and that everyone has busy schedules. Missing practices or games once in a while happens. If attendance is a persistent problem, coaches are to address it with the family first. If the family is not able to rectify the situation or does not make a concerted effort to improve, coaches may bring the issue to WAA. If the problem is not able to be resolved between WAA and the family, then WAA and the Advisory Board will consider having a meeting at the end of the season with the family. If the Advisory Board feels that it is a situation that can not be reasonably improved, they may ask that family to not participate in Traveling Baseball, moving forward. There are quite a few players that compete in spring and summer/fall baseball outside of Waconia. Spring baseball can take up a lot of time and can conflict with indoor practices in March. WAA is understanding of this and asks coaches to work with players competing in spring baseball. Since the spring season concludes as the Traveling baseball season starts, players should be in full attendance once games begin in Waconia. Any players competing in summer and/or fall ball must prioritize WAA Traveling Baseball (summer) as their top commitment until the season ends.

Community Education and the Waconia Baseball Board want to support kids in their baseball development as they experience a competitive level in our Metro program. With recent changes to the Metro Baseball League rules. MBL states that “club ball and double rostering is now the responsibility of each individual association.” Associations are now asked to develop expectations concerning these rules changes. If families decide to train or play on other teams along with being on a Waconia Metro team. Community Ed supports that decision as long as those families put Waconia first. Heading into the upcoming season we expect the mindset for families to be that if there are any conflicting dates, the priority goes to your Waconia Metro Baseball team.

**Playing Time:** Playing time is allotted at the discretion of the coaching staff, under guidelines and recommendations. WAA and the Advisory Board encourage coaches to give each player a minimum of 40% of the innings throughout a season. With that said, no player shall sit more than four innings in one game except for disciplinary reasons. 15-year-old age groups have a different standard since they only hit nine batters. 15-year-old teams are encouraged to

compete at a high level while still allowing all players fair playing time. Fair playing time does not necessarily mean equal. Fair playing time is what each player earns according to their abilities and commitment to the team. This is at the discretion of the coaching staff. While coaches work to rotate players into games, there are no guarantees on positions each player will play. Coaches are encouraged to rotate players through infield and outfield, but, this is also a competitive level baseball league. Coaches should put players in the best position for the team to succeed. Baseball is a team game, and players will have different contributions to the success of their team. Parent questions about playing time should be addressed with coaches politely and positively. Coaches and WAA will not tolerate rude and harassing behavior. Any parent/coach interaction regarding playing time must follow the 24-hour rule. Parents must wait at least 24 hours from the previous game or practice to contact a coach regarding their athlete's playing time. When contacting a coach, WAA recommends that inquiries be made in a face to face manner as these types of conversations tend to be much more positive and productive. Parents are also strongly encouraged by WAA and the Advisory Board to have players talk with coaches first about playing time and positions before parents get involved.

**Conduct during games/tournaments:** WAA asks that players, coaches, and parents represent Waconia in the highest manner at all events. This includes practices, games, tournaments, and even in between games. It is up to all of us to positively represent our community. Showing great sportsmanship and professionalism to other teams (coaches, players, and fans) and umpires is the top priority. Any conduct that WAA finds inappropriate will be handled accordingly.

**Handling Concerns:** WAA understands that there are times when parents do not agree with the approach or methods of a coaching staff. WAA asks parents to be partners and to attempt to help their athletes understand it as well. However, there may be situations that can not be understood and worked out. WAA recommends that these issues should first be addressed between the parents, player, and coaching staff. These discussions should take place in person, at least 24 hours after the last team event, while engaged in a professional atmosphere with the goal of a mutually agreed upon outcome. Any rude or negative behavior will not be tolerated by the coaching staff. If parents contact WAA first, they will be asked to discuss with coaches before returning the manner to WAA. If the conflict can not be reasonably resolved between the parents and coaching staff, then it should be brought to WAA via email. WAA asks that parents outline the situation, give details on the conversation with the coaches, and submit a reasonable request they would prefer to see as an outcome. WAA, with the help of the Advisory Board, will investigate these inquiries, including talking with the parents and the coaching staff, and will help to resolve the issue positively.

Please keep in mind that it is a privilege to play. Not a right.

**\*At any time, WAA reserves the right to change anything in this handbook for the benefit of the programming as a whole at any time.**

**\*Please note: due to COVID-19, some guidelines, rules, practices, games, and timelines of activities. May need to be altered or changed at any time throughout the season.**