



## Travel & Tournament Team Handbook

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## **1. Orono Baseball Association Mission & Philosophy**

The Orono Baseball Association (“OBA”) philosophy is to promote the growth and development of players in a fun, fair and safe environment that maximizes player participation and skill development at all levels.

## **2. Season Commitment**

Travel and tournament baseball require a significant time commitment from coaches, parents and players. The season will run from early April through July. Each team will be scheduled for 3-4 weekend tournaments and may also participate in 1-2 state tournaments. Travel league play consists of 12-16 games typically on weeknights.

Orono Baseball Association is a strong proponent of multi-sport athletes and encourages its players to participate in hockey, football, basketball, soccer and any other sports that help develop overall athletic and team participation skills. While those sports are “in-season”, we support and encourage those players that pursue off-season baseball training through OBA sponsored activities, private instructors or the various club teams that have developed in the area. Specific to club baseball, we believe it has provided solid opportunities for development of baseball players in the area and support our association players if they choose to have this as part of their baseball development.

Historically focused on the off-season, club baseball teams have now started to develop and promote programs that overlap with the association baseball season in the spring and summer. This has the potential to conflict with association practices, games and tournaments throughout the season. If a player and their parents are considering playing both OBA and club baseball during the association season, we would remind you of OBA’s commitment policy. OBA expects its players, that have committed to play for OBA, will have OBA activities take top priority during the traditional baseball season (i.e., late April through July). The commitment policy does not require exclusive time commitment to the OBA but does require association baseball be a priority for the players that have committed to the program.

OBA views club baseball as “another sport” in the context of its commitment policy and in the event that conflicts arise, OBA baseball should be a player’s top priority. It is also imperative that if a player elects to participate in club baseball in any manner during the association season, they must keep their OBA coaching staff fully aware of all club baseball activities so overall health, specifically arm management, can be considered for that player. The parents, player and coaches from both teams should be in frequent, direct contact to ensure arms are taken care of. Please note that if a player is participating in a club baseball team during the association season, his participation on a club team has the potential to have a negative impact as it relates to his playing time on the association team. Such decisions on playing time for the OBA team, when a player has, and continues to participate in conflicting club team events, will be at the discretion of the OBA head coach and playing time decisions will be supported by the OBA Board.

### **3. Levels of Play**

It is the goal of OBA to field competitive teams that are placed at an appropriate level. These will be determined by the Travel Director in conjunction with the OBA Operations Committee.

It can be expected that OBA will field one team at the AAA or AA level as well as one team at the A level. Additional teams may be added in circumstances where the participation numbers allow for a competitive team to be formed.

### **4. Eligibility**

Players participating in the Travel/Tournament programs will be asked to provide OBA with an accurate copy of their birth certificate and/or home address. The birthdate cutoff is regulated by Metro Baseball League and Gopher State Baseball League. The team (age level) for which a player is eligible is the same as the player's age on April 30. A player can "play up" to play with his/her current grade. There will be no "playing up" because player or player's parents believe he/she needs to be "at a more competitive level." The OBA President should be notified of a player wishing to "play up" with his grade. A player cannot "play down" (i.e., play on a team younger than his/her age level) for any reason, per the governing organizations.

Eligible players must reside within the boundaries of the Orono School District or attend an Orono public school. For players participating in the Travel/Tournament program, OBA may request proof of enrollment and grade level from each player's school. Players that do not fulfill either of the above guidelines must follow the waiver process outlined by the Gopher State Baseball League and/or Metro Baseball League. The OBA Operations Committee will review each waiver application and will have final discretion on determining whether that player will be allowed to participate in an OBA program.

Any player that has followed the waiver process and is accepted to play in OBA may not play on the top level of Travel/Tournament team during their first year in OBA. For example, a 13 year-old waiver player in their first year at OBA would not be eligible to play on the highest level 13 year-old team, but a player who has played a year of Major League in OBA would be eligible to play on the highest level 10 year-old team).

Any player who makes a travel or tournament team and decides not to participate on that team will not be rewarded a refund and will be ineligible to participate in the travel / tournament program the following season.

### **5. Tryout / Evaluation Process**

OBA strives to create an atmosphere that provides for player development, fun and strong competition for Orono Baseball. To that end, a yearly evaluation process is used for all players ages 9+.

Evaluations will be completed over the course of 1-2 days in March or early April in a facility determined by the Board. The Board will strive to provide the best possible environment for the athlete. Only registered players in good standing will be allowed to participate in evaluations.

- All players will participate in evaluations with their assigned or targeted league.
- Athletes will be identified by a number throughout the process and scores will be associated with that number.
- Parents will not be allowed in the evaluation areas during evaluations.
- In the event an athlete is unable to participate in tryouts, the Board must be notified before the athlete's assigned time for evaluation.

With no participation in the current year's evaluation process, the previous year's evaluation score will be used, adjusted for any systemic changes. It will not be altered in any way relative to performance (i.e., the athlete is a year older and "stronger").

In the event that no previous year's evaluation is available, the athlete may participate in OBA and may be placed on a team solely at the discretion of the OBA Operations Committee and not to the detriment of any evaluated athlete.

OBA will always strive to maintain the same group of evaluators for the entire age group. This guarantees that all scores within a session are relative to all other scores within that session. OBA will strive to eliminate any conflict of interest between evaluators and the athletes. Evaluators may be a mix of outside evaluators as well as a mix of current and previous coaches and Orono Baseball community members. Evaluations will consist of a mix of baseball skills, which may include hitting, throwing, fielding (infield and outfield), & pitching.

All player data from evaluations will be considered private data and will not be shared publicly. Information may be provided by request at the sole discretion of the OBA Operations Committee.

## **6. Team Formation**

The goal for all travel and tournament teams is to create the most competitive teams for Orono Baseball at all levels.

Teams will be formed through a combination of tryout results as well as input from coaches of the current and previous seasons. The final roster will be approved by the OBA Operations Committee and posted on the OBA website as soon as they are finalized. In the event that there are multiple teams that are participating at the same level, the OBA Operations Committee will make the determination prior to evaluations whether those teams are intended to be on parity with each other.

## **7. Uniforms & Equipment**

Players will be responsible for purchasing their own uniform package through OBA which includes a primary uniform top, alternate uniform top, pants, hat(s), belt and socks. Cleats are required for play as well. Parents should consult coaches and/or specific league ([Metro Baseball League](#) or [Gopher State](#)) rules before purchasing cleats.

Each player must provide his/her own bat, glove, helmet and personal protective equipment (except catcher's equipment). Parents are responsible for providing any additional safety equipment that they choose to use. Most leagues and the OBA require the wearing of a hard protective cup.

The travel baseball program supplies all catcher's gear, practice and game balls, and other equipment necessary for games and practices. Any damage caused by negligence or intentional abuse will be reimbursed by the player and/or parents.

Parents should consult coaches and/or specific league ([Metro Baseball League](#) or [Gopher State](#)) rules before purchasing bats. OBA does not provide bats at any level.

### **8. Coach Selection Process**

Anyone who desires to be a Travel coach (head or assistant) must fill out an application via the OBA website. The OBA Operations Committee will provide final review and approval of travel coaches.

Primary selection criteria include past baseball coaching and playing experience, personal coaching and human development philosophies, previous feedback based on OBA surveys, organizational skills, strong moral and ethical characteristics, support of travel baseball and OBA policies & procedures and the applicant's commitment to devote a significant amount of time to the program during the season. Coaches' responsibilities begin in late March or early April after evaluations and will end in late July with equipment check-in, season reviews, feedback and performance evaluations.

While it is important that a travel team coach have expertise in the sport, it is just as important for the coach to have the welfare of the individual players and the players' character and confidence development foremost in mind. Even a person of integrity, sincerity and high idealism needs other qualifications (i.e., the ability to remain even-tempered under pressure, the ability to discover ways to impart his/her knowledge to each individual player, and the ability to understand children, to relate to them, and to be sensitive to their developmental requirements).

Coach applications will be reviewed prior to player evaluations, but coaches will not be selected until after the evaluations. Interviews may be conducted in addition to the application review. OBA Operations Committee will have sole discretion for coach selection.

All named coaches will be required to complete a Trusted Coaches certification. This certification includes training in the areas of First Aid, Concussion recognition and management as well as a background check and an online version of the Positive Coaching Alliance's "Double-Goal Coach" training. The number of coaches on the bench is limited to a Head Coach and two Assistants for league play and tournament play. Named coaches will be officially rostered with the league.

## **9. Playing Time**

Minimum playing time for 10-13 year-olds will be on average four defensive innings per game. The starting lineup will provide an opportunity for every player to have a place in the batting order when continuous batting is in effect. On average the minimum playing time for 14-15 year-olds will be 2 innings defensively.

The coach will make every effort to give each player appropriate playing time. However, the coach has the discretion to play players such that he looks out for the best interest of the team. (i.e. there will be tournaments where the rules prevent re-entry, which will require the coach to be careful to not “run out” of players. Additionally, it is important that in the event of an injury sufficient players are available to continue playing.)

## **10. Code of Conduct – Coaches**

I understand that the Travel Teams are different from developmental league with more of an emphasis on competition and winning. I understand that the primary goals are similar, development of skills and ensuring a positive experience for all Orono kids playing baseball. The primary difference is that on Travel Teams learning how to compete on a higher level and a focus on winning are also part of the experience.

I will always place the physical and emotional well-being of players on both my team and the opposing team above my personal desire to win a game. I will show respect and teach my players to respect the game, umpires, team and competition in all cases.

I will train my players in the fundamentals of baseball and teach core skills; I will prepare for practices and games.

I will make safety a top priority in any activity and make sure that the team's first aid kit is available at all games and practices.

I will communicate concerns privately with players and parents as needed avoiding practice and game times. If necessary, I will escalate concerns to the OBA board.

I will always be a positive coach for my players, using positive reinforcement as my primary coaching style. When needed, I will provide kid-friendly age-appropriate criticism/suggestions. I will not yell in a negative manner or use profanity.

I will never engage in any inappropriate behavior. I will never put myself in a situation where I am alone with a player that is not my own child. I will never be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drug at any game or practice.

I will complete all requirements as directed by OBA in a timely manner including concussion training and background checks.

I will know the rules as put forth by the tournament in which we are playing and follow them.

I will expose players to multiple positions. Final playing time will be based on relative ability and trying to ensure a positive experience for all players.

I will dispute calls in a respectful manner and in a way that does not unduly interrupt the game.

I will follow all protocols as put forth by governing bodies for discussing calls and umpiring.

I will not express negativity towards my team or the other team's coach, players or fans under any circumstances. If the other coach or fans are acting inappropriately, I will remain positive, attempt to diffuse the situation and report the coach to the tournament directors as necessary.

### **11. Code of Conduct – Parents**

If my son or daughter is participating in the Orono Baseball Association, I promise to:

- Supervise our child's activities to ensure that schoolwork does not suffer as a result of baseball.
- Make sure that transportation arrangements are made to get our child to and from all games and practices in a timely manner.
- I/we will try to arrange family activities to eliminate conflicts with tournaments, games and practices.
- Where conflicts are unavoidable, I/we will notify the head coach with sufficient warning.
- Respect other participants, fans, coaches, umpires and facilities.
- Remember that my child is playing for his/her own enjoyment, not mine.
- Teach my child to always play by the rules and to be a good sport.
- Applaud good plays by opposing players as well as your own.
- Set a good example. Young people learn best by imitation.
- Show my child that hard work and an all-out effort can matter more than victory.
- Help my child improve skills and sportsmanship in every game. Your child will then be a winner, even in defeat.
- Never ridicule or yell at my child or any other teammate for making a mistake or losing in a game.
- Not argue with umpires, complain about calls or question a referee's judgment or integrity.
- Act in a manner that is respectful to the players, referees, volunteer coaches and the fans.
- Will not attempt to coach my child during games or practices as a spectator and will leave instructions to my child's coach.

Any parent or coach may report any potential violations of this code of conduct to the OBA President at [president@oronobaseball.org](mailto:president@oronobaseball.org). Parent misconduct will not be tolerated and will result in consequences including, but not limited to reduced playing time for your player or parents not being allowed to attend events. In extreme cases, OBA has the right to remove a player from a team based on a continued pattern of parent misbehavior.

### **12. Code of Conduct – Players**

- Have pride and confidence in yourself, your teammates, and your coaches.
- Be attentive and work hard in practice and games. Make your best efforts to perform the tasks as directed by the coaches.
- Be a competitor, perform up to your full ability, and contribute to team unity. Compliment teammates and let the coaches handle criticism.
- Show respect toward your coaches, teammates, and parents.
- Show respect toward opposing players, coaches, umpires, and spectators.
- Keep your (personal and team) equipment clean and in good repair.
- Maintain a responsible attitude toward your health. Be aware of, and adhere to, the OBA policies on drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.
- Remember that baseball is a game and keep it in perspective with family, school, and/or church activities and responsibilities.
- Demonstrate good sportsmanship and proper behavior.
- Remind your parents that you need to be at practices and games on time.
- Inform the coach whenever you will miss or be late for a practice or a game.

Players that are unable to follow these guidelines will be subject to reduced playing time at the discretion of their coach. In extreme cases, coaches may ask a player to leave the dugout during games or practices if they have been given multiple warnings that their behavior is not acceptable.

### **13. Grievance Procedure**

This procedure shall apply to all coaches or other persons associated with the OBA regarding incidents of poor sportsmanship or behavior including, but not limited to, swearing, throwing equipment and physical or verbal abuse directed against umpires, coaches, players or spectators. This policy applies to the above persons at all OBA sponsored or sanctioned events or activities. The goal of the OBA is to assure that its members and coaches maintain the highest standard of sportsmanship and ethical behavior at all times. Adherence to this policy and the OBA Coaches Code of Conduct shall be a condition for continued participation in the OBA program. This policy will be included in the OBA Coaches' Application and must be acknowledged in writing or electronically by all head coaches and assistant coaches.

#### General Procedure

To the extent any person wishes to communicate a grievance/complaint regarding any coach, it should be submitted in written form to the OBA Board's current President or a Board member who shall refer the matter to the Coaches Committee. If the grievance/complaint concerns the President, it should be submitted to the Secretary. No particular form is required for a grievance/complaint, but it should provide as much information as possible concerning the relevant issues and the people involved. A written grievance/complaint should also state the responsive action that is desired.

The Coaches Committee is committed to handling grievances/complaints in a timely fashion. Absent extraordinary circumstances, the Coaches Committee will communicate its decision with respect to a grievance/complaint in writing within seven (7) days of the consideration of



the grievance/complaint. The Coaches Committee shall provide the coach, who is subject of the grievance/complaint, with a copy of the written allegations and an opportunity to respond to the allegations.

A grievance/complaint shall not challenge a coaching decision. A coaching decision means all discretionary decisions not mandated by a specific rule governing league play, including, but not limited to, any decision concerning position assignments, starting assignments and baseball strategy and tactics.

- A. First Offense: Upon written notice to the OBA President and/or Board member, a grievance/complaint will be referred to the Coaches Committee who will investigate the grievance/complaint and provide the subject coach with a copy of the written allegations and an opportunity to respond to the allegations. If determined to be valid, a member of the Coaches Committee will inform the coach verbally and via email of the determination and warn the coach that a further incident will lead to a hearing before the OBA Coaches Committee. If the offense is very serious, but does not rise to the level of an Egregious Act or Behavior as set forth in Section II, the Coaches Committee may request a meeting of the complainant(s), the involved coach and the league commissioners, before rendering a determination.
- B. Second Offense: - Upon written notice to the OBA President and/or Board member, the grievance/complaint will be referred to the Coaches Committee who will immediately investigate the grievance/complaint and provide the involved coach a copy of the grievance/complaint. If determined to be valid, a second offense a special meeting to consider a motion to remove the coach from the team or other appropriate determination shall be set.
  - The Coaches Committee will call a special meeting of the Committee and invite the involved coach, any complainant(s) and the league Commissioner. All participants will have an opportunity to share information. A ballot vote will be conducted to consider removing the coach from the team or other appropriate determination.
  - The offending individual may appeal an adverse determination of the Coaches Committee to the entire Board of Directors of the OBA who shall review the Coaches Committee written determination and accept, reject or modify that determination after due hearing thereon.
  - If a Head Coach is removed from the team, the Commissioner will appoint an assistant to act as Head Coach for the balance of the season. For travel teams, the travel coach selection committee will select a replacement for the balance of the season.
  - The OBA Board President will file a report with the OBA Board of Directors that details the process and explains the reasons for removal. This report will be included in the coach's file and will be available to future commissioners and travel coach selection committees. In addition to being banned from coaching, the offending individual is banned from attending any games for the remainder of the season.

- The offending individual may provide transportation for a player to and from games and practices but is not to be within visual proximity of any games or practices. If the offending individual were to attend a game or practice, the police are to be called to remove the individual from the area.

#### Discipline for Egregious Acts or Behaviors

A. In the event any coach engages in an “egregious act or behavior”, the OBA board reserves the right to, on its own motion, review the offending individual’s conduct and administer discipline without regard to the policies and procedures described in Section I above.

B. “Egregious acts or behaviors” include, but are not limited to: 1) physical abuse or battery; 2) physical assault; 3) violent behavior likely to place another in fear for his or her own physical safety; 4) criminal acts or behaviors; 5) acts or behaviors which could reasonably be interpreted as those that create civil and/or criminal liability for the OBA or any of its members; or 6) acts or behaviors which have caused or reasonably could cause serious harm, not described by subparts 1-5 above, to: a) coaches, players, parents, guardians, members of the OBA Board or other persons associated with the OBA; or b) the achievement of the OBA’s stated goal of maintaining the highest standard of sportsmanship and ethical behavior of all members and participants at all times.

C. If an egregious act or behavior consistent with this policy occurs during an OBA sponsored or sanctioned event or activity, the senior non-offending coach or attending Board Member has the discretion to ask the offending individual to leave the field and premises. Further, if he/she deems it necessary, the coach also has the discretion to contact the local police/authorities for assistance.

D. If a coach reasonably believes he/she has witnessed or has knowledge of an egregious act or behavior consistent with this policy, the conduct shall be reported as soon as possible to the OBA President and/or a Board member or Coaches Committee member. The Coaches Committee shall determine, within 48 hours, whether the reported conduct warrants an immediate suspension of the offending individual from all OBA sponsored or sanctioned events/activities until such time as the OBA Coaches Committee concludes a final determination and specifically setting forth any discipline pursuant to this policy. The Coaches Committee shall then conduct an investigation including a meeting with the involved coach, any complaint(s) and the league Commissioner. All participants will have an opportunity to share information. This investigation shall be completed as soon as possible, and a written report shall immediately thereafter be provided to the OBA Board of Directors. The Coaches Committee shall present its findings and any recommendations for discipline to the full OBA Board for discussion, potential further investigation, and a final vote determining and specifically setting forth any discipline.

If the offending party is an OBA Officer, Board Member or Coaches Committee member, they shall recuse themselves from any vote on the matter in question.

E. The discipline available to the OBA Board includes, but is not limited to suspension from participation, expulsion from the OBA, terminations of any positions with the OBA, banning any offending individual from attendance at any and all OBA events, or other disciplinary action which the Board deems appropriate under the offending circumstances. The Board also reserves the right to vary the time period of the discipline imposed, up to and including discipline which applies to an offending individual for his/her lifetime.