Scotch Plains-Fanwood Raiders



Travel Baseball Program Handbook

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Table of Contents

Welcome - Introduction 3
Mission 3
Team Designations 4
Eligibility and Tryouts 4
One (1) Fall Tryout for Both Spring and Summer Travel Seasons 4
Post-season Evaluations 5
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) 5
Date-of-Birth for Travel Age Eligibility Details 8
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) 9
Travel Seasons 10
Goals & Objectives 11
Program Goals 11
League-Play / Tournament-Play 11
Playing Time Expectations 12
Practice/Game Schedule Expectations 12
Commitment 12
SPF Raiders Travel Baseball Post Season Trip (12u) 13
Safety Issues 14
Participant & Spectator Behavior 14
Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Philosophy for Freshmen & JV Programs 14
Travel Committee 15
Manager/Coach Selection 15
Manager/Coach Evaluation 16
Manager/Coaches Code of Conduct. 16
Player Code of Conduct. 17
Middle School Travel Baseball 18
Try Outs 18
Schedule 19
Playing Time 20
Appendix A: 21
Scotch Plains-Fanwood Travel Baseball Registration, Commitment and Statement of Understanding 21

Welcome - Introduction

Welcome to the SPF RAIDERS TRAVEL BASEBALL PROGRAM!!

This is the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Raiders Travel Baseball Program Handbook. It is intended to provide an overview of the SPF Raiders Travel Baseball program, including our:

- Mission
- Overall Philosophy
- Selection guidelines for managers/coaches
- Selection guidelines for players/teams
- Player eligibility
- Sponsorship & fundraising
- Timeline of key events/dates
- Codes of Conduct (Managers/Coaches, Parents and Players)

We have done the best we can to capture and encapsulate the essence of how the SPF Raiders Travel Baseball Program works across all ages. The SPF Raiders Travel Baseball Committee reserves the right to update this handbook as required, including (but not limited to) updates and amendments to address the special needs of a specific age group or program.

It may also be necessary in some instances to waive certain provisions. It is the job of the Travel Director and/or Travel Committee to look out for the best interests of the league and its youth ballplayers in all its dealings.

Mission

The Mission of the SPFBL Raiders Travel Baseball program is to provide youth ballplayers in both Scotch Plains and Fanwood more intensive skill development and a higher level of competition on an additive basis to the traditional house league program. SPFBL Raiders Travel Baseball is an extension of the SPFBL recreational youth baseball program, which is designed to promote the development of strong character, a right attitude, a sense of responsibility and citizenship in youngsters, using the game of baseball as a vehicle. It is the intent of the SPFBL Raiders Travel Baseball program to achieve this goal through fair play, good sportsmanship, congenial fellowship, and a level of competitive baseball that meets the needs of a select group of kids and their families.

SPFBL Raiders Travel Baseball provides an opportunity for kids to experience competitive baseball at a level beyond the recreational leagues. Developing players

in terms of baseball knowledge, skill, character, love of the game and sportsmanship remain our top priorities. The travel baseball program is a highly competitive program allowing our players the ability to compete against other baseball teams both in and out of New Jersey.

Team Designations

The SPF Raiders Travel Baseball Program recognizes that travel baseball incorporates a number of players at differing abilities. Ultimately, it is our goal to foster a love of the game while preparing players for "the next level". Recognizing this, we use the following team designations for each age group:

- **Futures:** Members of the Futures team would typically be the league's "A" team. Players on this team typically play in a Spring league and may participate in outside tournaments. They also participate in the Cal Ripken District 12 Tournament at the start of the summer season. This team also has the ability to choose between playing in a summer league or a summer tournament schedule.
- **Select:** Members of the Select team would typically be the league's "B" team. Players on this team typically participate in lower division tournaments and will compete in a spring and summer league.
- **Prospects:** Members of the Prospects team may be either "B" or "C" level teams based on the composition of players in a particular age group. In some cases, and if the talent pool is comprised of comparable players, the SPF Raiders Travel Baseball Committee may elect to have two balanced "B" teams. This is an annual decision and is based on the level of ability of the players in any particular year.
- **Middle School:** Players in grades 7 and 8 are eligible to play on the middle school teams. These 2 teams are highly competitive and will be comprised of the top players in Scotch Plains and Fanwood. These teams will compete in a typical middle school league playing teams from other middle schools in both Union and surrounding counties.

The number of teams that are operated at each age designation vary from age to age and in some cases grade to grade. *We do not make any claim to guarantee that at any age group we will operate more than one team.* Typically, we run two teams; Futures and Select, however that may change during any year. Travel teams are selected and operated based solely on the ability and talent of the players during that year.

Eligibility and Tryouts

One (1) Fall Tryout for Both Spring and Summer Travel Seasons

- There will be a single tryout for each age group for both the spring and summer season.

- Tryout dates will be communicated to the league as early as possible. We intend to hold the tryouts in mid to late October for players trying out for 7u – 12u. Tryouts for the Middle School program take place in early January.
- Once tryouts occur and selections are made, the intent is for the selected teams to go into winter workout sessions together. They will be tailored by age group, staffed with professional instructors and may occur in any of a number of partner indoor facilities (depending on the age group).
- The selected teams will then play together for the spring travel season.
- These teams will go right from the spring into the summer season. The Travel Director and Travel Committee will conduct periodic reviews with the spring managers to see how things are going.
- The plan is to have the teams stay intact, however, there may be reasons to shuffle players around. Player movement may occur to balance rosters in case of injury, players dropping out for the summer (i.e. part-time spring players), or if there is strong evidence that a player may be misplaced. Those decisions must be approved by the Travel Director and the SPFBL Travel Baseball Committee.
- In cases where an independent manager is introduced for the summer program, that will still take place as it has in the past at the earlier possible time (based on independent manager availability).

Post-season Evaluations

A portion of the selection criteria shall be the post-season evaluation as provided by the prior travel manager on the post-season evaluation form. This form is submitted to the Travel Director and shared with the Travel Committee. The purpose is to allow a component of the scoring to include the ballplayer's performance in live game circumstances to be factored in. The live component is something that is difficult to realistically ascertain from an abbreviated tryout process.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: How is my player going to be evaluated during tryouts?
A: Typically, players are evaluated on both offensive and defensive skills. Normally, stations are established where players are evaluated on both infield skills (ground balls, double plays, etc) and outfield skills (fly balls, relay throws, etc.). There are also stations set up for pitching and batting (hitting and bunting). Players are evaluated by both coaches and independent evaluators (high school players, outside evaluators, etc.). NOTE: Pitching is an area of baseball that changes and gets more specialized as the ballplayers get older. As such, there may be changes to this part of the tryout process at the older age groups.

<u>General Information for "TRYOUT DAY"</u>

Parents will be allowed to accompany players to register and get them safely into the facility. Parents MUST complete and submit the SPF Raiders Travel Baseball Commitment Statement of Understanding BEFORE their child begins. There will be a small waiting area to pick-up your player after tryouts. No parents will be allowed into the tryout space with the players.

Q: Why is the SPFBL Raiders Travel Baseball Program using the single tryout procedure?
A: Spring travel baseball has become fairly mainstream. Some towns do not participate in it, but the trend has clearly gone towards "the more baseball the kids can play, the better they are likely to get".

As a byproduct of spring travel growth, is some contention with (a) the spring "house league" program, and (b) the beginning of the summer travel season. The house league always comes first for Babe Ruth sanctioned leagues, so that is something we try to make sure we schedule spring travel around as much as possible.

That said, spring travel playoffs are likely underway at the same time that the summer team might normally have been practicing and perhaps kicking off their season. There is the possibility that team rosters could be completely different depending on the tryout results. This has the potential to cause disruptions and "hard feelings" for the summer teams, noting that the overlap may not include every player. Most major movements between A and B take place year to year (as opposed to season to season), as kids hit their growth spurts or otherwise achieve a higher skill level.

There is a component of this that positions the travel program for our most committed ballplayers. This is similar to the postures of other youth sports in town (soccer, football, etc.) that require a full commitment from their traveling players during their respective seasons – in this case the spring and summer baseball seasons.

In summary, a single tryout system provides the league the following benefits:

(1) Continuity between the spring and summer season, with teams basically staying in tact for the most part, and the winter training flowing into the spring travel season, and the spring travel season flowing into the summer travel season.
(2) One set of tryouts (and accompanying administrative complexity) to plan for, coordinate, get volunteers and independent evaluators for, and to execute.
(3) One set of tryouts for SPFBL parents to get their ballplayers to.
(4) One set of tryout costs rather than two, all of which is passed through to travel participants.

(5) Eliminates additional redundant processes that had previously been done for spring and summer, i.e. only need 1 tryout per age group, 1 uniform sizing date, 1 uniform ordering process, 1 uniform delivery and payment process, etc.
(6) Puts the focus on our most serious ballplayers, the kids who are really committed to maximizing their learning and playing of the great game of baseball – again, not unlike some other sports programs in town.

Q: What are the downsides of using a single tryout procedure?
A: 2 issues that could be considered possible downsides, depending on your perspective:
(1) There is likely to be little to no movement between spring and summer teams. So unless the Travel Committee feels that a mistake in team placement was made for the spring season that should be corrected in the summer, most teams will basically stay intact, barring any Travel Committee concerns.
(2) Ballplayers who only intend on playing either the spring or the summer, but not both, will be affected. Those players will be considered "part-time" travel players. Part-time players must tryout with everyone else during their assigned tryout session, and they will be placed on a "waitlist" for their age group for the appropriate season. If roster spots are available for spring or summer, they may be assigned to a team at that time. The part-time process is expanded on further below.

Q: What happens to a youth ballplayer who wants to play in the spring, but not the summer?
A: That player will be considered "part time" and must:
(1) Declare themselves as a part-time SPRING-ONLY travel player.
(2) Tryout with everyone else during the assigned tryout period.
(3) Accept placement on the waitlist for a SPRING team.
(4) Assignment to a team will be based on the travel committee recommendation based on availability.

Q: What happens to a youth ballplayer who wants to play in the summer, but not the spring?
A: That player will also be considered "part time" and must:
(1) Declare themselves as a part-time SUMMER-ONLY travel player.
(2) Tryout with everyone else during the assigned tryout period.
(3) Accept placement on the waitlist for a SUMMER team.
(4) Assignment to a team will be based on the travel committee recommendation based on availability.

Q: What if a part-time player is a really good player for his/her age? Will he/she have to play B? Or is there a chance to move to A?

A: The assignment of a part time player to a team will be based on the recommendation from the travel committee. Normally, the A team begins practicing during the winter and works toward being a team over many months. Bringing a new player into the mix in June may be challenging. That said, there are circumstances that may open a position on the A team (i.e. family moving out of town, injuries, etc.) which would create a vacancy, however, that is on a case by case basis. Our recommendation would be that if a ballplayer is a dedicated A-level travel player, that he/she should become a full-time travel player so that this placement issue is not a problem.

Q: What does "wait list" really mean? I mean my kid is going to try out, only wishes to play one season (either spring or summer), but not both. But he/she really wants to play! So will he/she be able to play or not?
A: We respect the fact that there are some players, although a minimal amount, that are "baseball lovers" but only wish to play one season. We are calling it a wait list, but really what we're saying is we will try to maximize participation in the travel baseball program as we always have. However, we will be giving deference to travel players who commit for full program, which includes both spring and summer. This is not dissimilar to other youth sports in town. So a part-time player is going to be subject to availability of available roster slots.

Q: Will there be any exceptions made to any of these policies?
A: SPF Raider Travel Baseball policies will be adhered to. Any exceptions would be rare, and have to be approved by the Travel Director and the Travel Committee.

Date-of-Birth for Travel Age Eligibility Details

- The overwhelming majority of towns in our district operate under an Age-based eligibility system, which falls right into Babe Ruth/Cal Ripken guidelines.

- The Grade-based system has put our travel teams at a built-in disadvantage to most other towns. It's not that we believe "winning is everything" however, being able to compete with our surrounding towns is important.

- The key to understanding this is the cutoff birthdate, which is April 30th. It is used in this fashion:
    - Whatever age the ballplayer is on April 30th, that's the age group they are eligible for.
    - For example: A ballplayer that is 9YO on April 30th (typically a 3rd grader) is eligible for 9U (which means "9YO and under").
    - However, a player who is 8YO on April 30th is eligible for 8U, even if though they are also in the 3rd grade.

- Additional Example: A 4th grader who is 10YO on April 30th is eligible for 10U. However, a 4th grader who turns 10 after April 30th (like on May 2nd for example) is eligible to play 9U.
- Additional Example: A 6th grader turns 12 on March 10th. He/she is 12 on April 30th, so he/she is eligible for 12U. Had that 6th graders birthday been on May 10th, he/she would have been eligible for 11U.

- Players trying out for a particular team must declare that age group prior to tryouts. In some cases, we allow a player age eligible to "play up" to try out for that team. If that player is placed on a particular team it is for the entire spring/summer season regardless of being an A or B team. Once the declaration is made, it cannot be undone until the following year.

- Since we do not have a full 6U travel program, SPFBL will permit 1st graders who are 6U age eligible (i.e. turn 7YO after April 30th) to play 7U travel baseball, PROVIDED THAT they acknowledge that they will also be 7U age next year.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: Are there any special situations or exceptions?
A: YES, there are 3 special situations for SPFBL:

- 7U example – A 1st grader who is 6U age-eligible may try out for a 7U team. HOWEVER, that player must acknowledge that they understand that they will also be 7U next year. 6U (and younger) kindergartners are not permitted to try out for 7U.

- MIDDLE SCHOOL TEAM exception – 7th graders who make an SPFBL Middle School Team who are technically 12U eligible, are eligible to play SPFBL 13U in the summer. We imagine this would be desired anyway as we don't recommend high-caliber players who go to the 90' diamond in the Middle School program go backwards to 12U 50/70 diamond in the summer.

- This only applies to 7th graders who make one of the two Middle School teams. Other 7th graders who are 12U age eligible may exercise their option to play 12U should they so desire.

Q: Okay so let's say my kid, who is really good, doesn't make the 9U-A team because of what you mentioned previously. But I know that he can make the 8U-A team again. Can he be put on the 8U-A team instead of a 9U-B team?
A: Unfortunately, the answer is NO. The reason is simple: All of the teams will have been selected and announced already. That's why the pre-declaration of what age group the ballplayer wants to be in is crucial. Trying to accommodate a move like this after selection has been done would mean displacing kids that have

already been notified they are on a certain team. We will absolutely not be doing that. We need to know in advance, and the commitment the ballplayer makes by declaring an age group in advance is that they will stay in that travel age group for the year, regardless of the tryout outcome.

Q: SO, my son is a young 5th grader who is technically 10U eligible. However, he played 10U-A last year in the grade-based system. I'd like to see him play 11U-A travel this year so that he can move up and stay with his grade. What should I do?
A: Unfortunately, we can't make that decision for you. All we can do is lay out the scenarios, because it depends. If he moves up to 11U this year, the risk is that there will be 6th graders trying out also. That doesn't mean that your son will not make the A team, it just means that it's a possibility depending on what that 6th grade 11U talent pool looks like. And we don't know that either. In reality, even if your kid declares 10U, if the 10U age group is particularly strong, it's possible he won't make that A team either. And at the same time, he might be capable of making both the 10U and the 11U A teams. So really anything is possible. You should consider what your son would like to do, perhaps what you know about both age groups, and then help your son make the right decision for him.

Travel Seasons

SPF Raiders Travel Baseball operates the following seasons:

- ***Winter Training*** – Practices/winter workouts start in the January/February timeframe. Leads up to the spring season. Typically organized by age group for travel players in the travel program the previous summer. Professional trainers are used at nearby indoor facilities. Focus solely on player development, skills training, etc. in a clinic environment.
- ***Spring season*** – Preseason practices will be scheduled once fields are made available. Games usually begin end-of-March / beginning-of-April timeframe through Memorial Day (May). The spring travel program typically runs ancillary/secondarily to the SPFBL House League recreational program, usually on days when the house league program is not playing. Focus on player development and getting players their "reps", often at multiple positions. House league games should take precedence over spring travel, spring travel teams are encouraged to schedule around the house league.
- ***Summer season*** – Of the travel seasons, summer is typically the longest and most competitive. The games usually begin right around the end of the spring travel season, around the end-of-May / beginning-of-June timeframe, and continue through the end of July. Focus on player development and getting players their "reps", often at multiple positions – especially in league play. Tournaments and playoffs are more competitive.
- ***Fall season*** – The fall season is optional for any and all of our travel baseball players. It has no bearing on tryouts for any team, it just adds an

extra time for players to continue to play and develop skills. The fall season practices begin in the August timeframe. The season usually goes through the end of October, possibly into the beginning of November with the playoffs. Focus on player development and getting players their "reps", often at multiple positions.

Goals & Objectives

Program Goals

SPFBL Raiders Travel Baseball provides a unique opportunity for kids to experience competitive baseball at another level beyond the recreational leagues. However, developing players in terms of baseball knowledge, skill, character, love of the game and sportsmanship remain our top priorities. The common goals and objectives across all age groups in the travel program include:

- Competitiveness
- Skill & confidence building
- Player development
- Baseball intelligence ("Baseball IQ")
- Teamwork at a higher skill level
- Breaking the bad, learning the good
- Sportsmanship
- Fun

SPFBL intends to accomplish these goals and objectives with the following formula:

- Quality instruction
- Opportunity management
- Patience and encouragement

League-Play / Tournament-Play

For the summer season in particular, SPF Raiders Travel Baseball has chosen to have all of our Select and Prospects teams compete in league play, with tournaments optional. We are providing an option to our Futures teams allowing them to choose either league play or a tournament option. Most of the time, the Futures team in an age group will compete in some tournaments, including the Cal Ripken/Babe Ruth District Tournament for that age group. The Select and Prospects teams may compete in tournaments also, but they will compete in B-tournaments as they are available and deemed appropriate on a team by team basis. For the spring and fall seasons, league play will be the primary direction.

Playing Time Expectations

Every player should have an equal opportunity to participate and develop. This does not necessarily equate to equal playing time. Actual playing time may vary based on positions played, age level, roster size, and other circumstances such as attendance at games (i.e. a player who misses frequently will never end up with the same number of plate appearances as someone who was at every game). Managers must use judgment in balancing the needs of individuals and the needs of the team. Player development is #1. League play facilitates that. Tournaments tend to stress winning more. Winning is a factor in tournaments and the playoffs, but only within the context of individual and team development.

Practice/Game Schedule Expectations

The SPFBL stresses attendance at all practices and games so that the ballplayer gets the most out of their travel experience. Skill building often builds on itself – meaning that skills taught later will be built on top of foundational skills covered earlier. So being there and being focused is important at every travel level of play. Teams will typically start practicing after the teams are selected (after tryouts) during winter training and/or alternate practice fields/ facilities. Practice schedules will vary, but you can expect there will be 1 – 2 practices per week leading up to the start of the season, and then 2 – 3 practices from there on. For games, you can expect a season of 10 – 16 league games (varies by age, league), plus playoffs (if applicable) and any tournaments the team may have entered during that season.

Commitment

Regardless of the level of a travel team, a certain level of commitment is required from the player (and therefore the player's family):

- "Baseball As A Priority" - The SPFBL Raiders Travel Baseball Program caters to ballplayers at a higher level of skill, and who place BASEBALL FIRST, only after school and family emergencies.
- Attendance expectations – Every attempt should be made to be at every game.
    - For example: A ballplayer who knows he/she will be on vacation 3 weeks out of the summer season should consider reconsidering summer travel.
    - The expectation is that every ballplayer will be at every practice and game as they all build on each other. Any absences must be entail notification to the manager, and much like a classroom the ballplayer may need to "catch up on their homework".
    - We understand that family comes first so conflicts may arrive with family commitments during the season. Reach out to your manager as soon as possible to allow them to make any needed lineup changes.
- Conflicts with other travel/club teams

    - It is the position of the SPFBL that SPF Raiders Travel Baseball teams come first, and other teams that ballplayers may play on should be a supplement to SPFBL.
    - Players who prioritize a private or club team over their SPF Raiders Travel Team, may be removed from that team or moved to another team by the Travel Committee.
    - Any other arrangement that is different than that should be discussed in advance with the Travel Director.
- Mindset and commitment expectations – When you're at the field, you are focused on baseball… not any other distractions. Mind on baseball.
- Sportsmanship expectations – No throwing equipment. No deriding the other team, the umpires or players on your own team. If you don't know how to be a good teammate, you may not belong in the SPF Raiders Travel program. The Travel Director works with the Managers regarding the commitment to teaching. But for that to work, each ballplayer must be committed to learn!

SPF Raiders Travel Baseball Post Season Trip (12u)

Our program invites our travel teams to participate in one of three Cooperstown venues at the conclusion of their 12u season. Our teams have competed at All Star Village, Dreams Park and the Cooperstown Experience at the University of Oneonta. At these venues our teams compete against other teams from the United States and, in some cases, the world. Our travel program views this as a culminating experience for our youth players before they move on to the larger field in middle and high school. Alternatively, we have had some teams participate in the weeklong Ripken Baseball Experience held in Aberdeen, Md.

NOTE: Beginning with the 2024 teams, in order to be eligible to be a participant on the 12u Cooperstown team, a player must try out for and make that year's 12u roster and be a full time player competing over the summer. Additionally, any player that SPF Raiders Travel Baseball program is sponsoring for the Cooperstown experience must have been in the league during their 10u AND 11u seasons prior to trying out for the 12u team.

Players who had not been a participant on both their prior 10u and 11u teams may try out for and make the 12u team, however they may NOT be on the roster for the Cooperstown trip.

To clarify, in order to be placed on the Cooperstown roster for one of the 12u teams, the player must have played for the 10u and 11u teams previously. Exceptions to this rule are as follows:

1. A player new to Scotch Plains or Fanwood the previous year

2. A player who would have played but sustained an injury or illness that prevented him/her from playing
3. A player who tried out for a travel baseball slot during the 10u or 11u seasons prior to the 12u season and was not offered a slot by the league.
4. Other unspecified reasons (In this case, a family may submit their exception to the travel committee for review. It does not guarantee that the committee accepts the reason).

Safety Issues

The SPF Raiders Travel Baseball Committee will use its judgment relative to legitimate safety issues. This is a very sensitive subject having to do with a real concern with a particular player whose skills lead to a conclusion that allowing the child to participate in the travel program could be a significant risk to the child's safety. In making these determinations, we do not take this responsibility lightly. Our goal is to be able to offer travel level baseball to players at both A and B levels. But in either case, this program is intended for the more highly skilled players in the house league. In some cases, players may not be ready to play at a higher level.

Participant & Spectator Behavior

It is strictly against the policy of SPFBL Raiders Travel Baseball program for any person, either as a participant or a spectator, to engage in arguments, to use abusive language, to harass umpires, or to exhibit any behavior not in concert with the general intention of this policy statement. Furthermore, we will be asking our parents to go a step further and refrain from "coaching from the sidelines", in order to give our SPFBL managers and instructors unfettered access to the team, both as individual players and as a whole. Parents are required to remain out of the dugout and off the playing field unless their presence is requested by the manager.

As representatives of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood community, team coaches, players and parents are required to abide by this policy statement as well as additional codes of conduct since we represent our Scotch Plains-Fanwood community across Union County, as well as elsewhere in and outside of the state of NJ throughout our various seasons.

Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Philosophy for Freshmen & JV Programs

To keep the SPF Raiders Travel Baseball program's philosophy in perspective relative to the balance between player development and winning, listed below is a summary of the current Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School philosophy for Freshman & Junior Varsity sports programs. As a feeder program into the high school program, it is desirable to ensure a smooth transition into the school program's philosophy:

- Freshmen & Junior Varsity (JV) athletics are an integral part of the success of the varsity program.
- Transition from recreation sports to a High School sport that requires 6 days of practice per week as well as an increased amount of games.
- Enables student athlete to mature in competition with other athletes who are in similar physical and mental conditions.
- Designed to allow for student athletes to grow and mature in their sport through a coaching philosophy that IS NOT FOCUSED ON WINNING CONTESTS. The primary purpose is to foster the growth of the student athlete in competition.
- Teams that have a sub varsity level are encouraged to create situations that allow for all of the students to have game experience throughout the season. The Administration encourages all sub varsity programs to follow a plan to ensure that student athletes have game experience.
- For Freshmen and JV sports, the season should be divided into three (3) parts. The first part allows all athletes to have significant playing time. The second part begins to limit the playing time based upon effort in practice and games, talent level, and game situations. The final part will see more playing time for athletes who have maximized their effort in practices and games, their talent, and their knowledge of the strategies of the coach.

Travel Committee

A travel committee is assembled by the SPF Raiders Travel Baseball Director along with the SPFBL President to oversee manager, coach and team selection and operate the travel program day-to-day, as well as make recommendations to the improve the program to the SPFBL board on major issues and decisions.

Manager/Coach Selection

1. All SPFBL Raiders Travel Baseball teams from the youngest (7U currently) to the oldest (middle school) shall come under the purview of the SPF Raiders Travel Baseball Committee. Managers and Coaches are selected/confirmed annually and shall be viewed as “custodians” of the team for each season. These positions are 1-season positions only, and should not be construed as long-term assignments. In other words, every SPF Raiders Travel Baseball team belongs to SPFBL, the Managers and Coaches must follow the guidelines and procedures that are set forth annually during the Managers Meeting.
2. Managers and Assistant Coaches must adhere to the guidelines set herein and by the SPF Raiders Travel Baseball Committee in regards to playing time, managing all of the individual player’s opportunities, and the overall

philosophy of player development over winning. This is mandatory, violations are subject to disciplinary action including removal.

3. Manager and coach candidates (including managers/coaches currently coaching SPFBL travel teams) will submit a notice of interest and will be interviewed annually to determine individuals who will benefit the program and teams they may coach.

Manager/Coach Evaluation

Periodically, a review of each team will take place by the Travel Director and the members of the Travel Committee to ensure that the philosophy of the program is being instituted. At the conclusion of the summer season, parent surveys will be distributed to parents whose child participates in the program to elicit feedback regarding the program and the team. Feedback from parents and observations of teams will be collated and reviewed by the Travel Committee. Anonymous feedback may be shared with managers and coaches as appropriate with any and all names redacted.

Manager/Coaches Code of Conduct.

Managers and Coaches will to the best of their ability:

1. Come prepared to every practice. Lead by example, be present for all practices and games (less family emergencies). Be available and follow through on practicing frequently as per the guidelines set forth by the Travel Director and according to this Handbook and other related documentation. Manager presence at all practices and games is crucial.
2. Be organized and communicate frequently with the parents regarding expectations, practice and game schedules, changes to schedules due to bad weather, etc. Communicate courteously with individual parents and the parent group when issues arise that require discussion, either on an individual basis or for the team as a whole.
3. While winning is desirable, continually stress in words and practice drills that player development is primary, and that it is through that player development, learning and teamwork that the team's share of wins will come as a result of solid development and improvement.
4. Carryout and execute according to the philosophies and directives contained in this SPF Raiders Travel Baseball Handbook and in other documentation/curriculum that will be made available to the Manager.
5. Continue to learn as much about the game (including outside instruction) to be a more effective coach.
6. Not use profanity, embarrass, or humiliate players (or parents).
7. Not use tobacco or alcohol products while on the field, dugout or anywhere around players.

8. Not pitch private lessons to ballplayers or their parents during a season for which they are coaching/managing in the age group for profit. We encourage individualized instruction when available.
9. Publicly praise player performance whenever possible.
10. Strive to make the season a positive and enjoyable learning experience.
11. Enforce discipline for unsportsmanlike conduct, lack of hustle or disrespect for coaches, teammates or opponents (extra conditioning activities and/or loss of playing time during the next game).
12. Maintain an open line of communication with parents and coaches.
13. Prepare players so they are not put in game situations they are not prepared for.
14. Provide players with proper conditioning and exercise.
15. Teach and enforce proper warm up techniques
16. Prevent overuse injuries to pitchers by monitoring number of pitches thrown and providing pitchers with ample rest.
17. Lead by example, through good sportsmanship at all times.
18. Instruct and coach players in a way that encourages them to embrace the game of baseball.

It is mandatory that all Players, Parents and Managers/Coaches sign their respective Code of Conduct agreements prior to their participation at any SPF Raiders Travel Baseball sanctioned event. Persons refusing to sign the agreement may be withheld from competition. Any violation of the Code of Conduct may result in temporary or permanent banishment from SPF Travel Baseball events.

Player Code of Conduct.

The expectation is that all players conduct themselves appropriately on the field and at any times wearing their uniforms.
Players agree that:

1. I will not use profanity.
2. I will not throw equipment.
3. I will encourage good sportsmanship by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches, game administrators, volunteers and umpires at every game.
4. I will not berate the umpires or “trash talk” the opponents or their fans.
5. I will treat other players, coaches, fans and umpires with respect.
6. I will demand a sports environment that is free from drugs, tobacco, alcohol and will refrain from their use at all games.
7. I will express my concerns through the proper channels in a dignified manner.
8. I will respect and adhere to the rules governing eligibility and competition.
9. I will take responsibility for my guests and ask they adhere to the above.
10. I will come prepared to focus and play hard at every practice and game.

11. I will give full attention when the coach is teaching or addressing the team.
12. I will be a leader in the dugout, on the field and in the classroom at school.
13. I will do my best at all times on the field and in the classroom at school.
14. I will make parents, coaches, friends and neighbors proud of the way I conduct myself while wearing the SPF Raiders Travel Baseball uniform.
15. I will practice at home to improve my skills.
16. I will compete hard, and win or lose, hold my head high and congratulate opponents.
17. I will exercise good sportsmanship and composure on the field and in the dugout and treat all umpires, coaches and players with respect.
18. I will cheer teammates when they are having difficulties fielding or batting.
19. I understand that when I am at the ballfield for a practice or game, that I can only take direction from my Manager or Coach, not from anyone in the stands.

Middle School Travel Baseball

SPF Travel Baseball oversees the Middle School baseball program. A number of years ago, Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools made the decision to cancel all middle school sports in order to reduce the school district's budget. Local sports organizations elected to pick up the sports and offer them to the community in lieu of them being provided by the Board of Education.

Our Middle School baseball program is open to players in grades 7 and 8 currently attending either Nettingham or Terrill Middle School. This competitive program combines players from both middle schools into two teams that compete against other middle schools in both Union and some surrounding counties. These teams use independent managers to coach the teams. Fees for the middle school program are traditionally higher than the 7u – 12u program. Players must purchase uniforms and equipment as well as pay a portion of the fee for the independent manager. Also built into the fee structure will be the winter training. Typically the annual fee for the middle school program will be between $750 - $800 annually.

Try Outs

Our league operates 2 middle school age baseball teams (Nettingham Middle School and Terrill Middle School) that are open to those who play baseball through SPFBL. This includes being a participant on one of our travel baseball teams or playing in the recreational baseball program. Tryouts are open to players in seventh or eighth grade and are attending either of the schools above. Our Middle School program is not affiliated with the SPF BOE.

NOTE: Beginning with the 2024 teams, in order to be eligible to tryout for one of the teams, players must have been a participant the previous year in one of the following SPFBL baseball programs:

1. Played the previous year on one of the Middle School teams;
2. Played the previous year on one of the 12u Travel Baseball Teams;
3. Played in the recreational baseball division

To clarify, in order to tryout for one of the Middle School Baseball teams, the player must have played for SPFBL the previous year (during the 2023 season to try out for the 2024 Middle School Teams). Exceptions to this rule are as follows:

1. A player new to Scotch Plains or Fanwood the previous year;
2. A player who would have played but sustained an injury or illness that prevented him/her from playing;
3. A player who tried out for a travel baseball slot (i.e. 12u or Middle School) and was not offered a slot by the league;
4. Other unspecified reasons (In this case, a family may submit their exception to the travel committee for review. It does not guarantee that the committee accepts the reason).

Players interested in trying out for one of these two teams will be notified of the time and date for tryouts. Typically, these tryouts are run in mid-January so teams are created by the start of February. These teams are very competitive and typically not all players trying out will make one of the teams. Tryouts and team selection is done in line with the high school system and players exhibiting the greatest talent/skill base will be selected for the team. While not set in stone, teams are capped at around 15 – 16 players each.

Schedule

Middle school teams will be provided opportunities to engage in winter training both in a partner facility and with their Spring manager. The league is shifting focus to increase the number of practices that take place during the season however we are limited by field availability.

Games in the Spring begin at the start of April and run through the week of Memorial Day. There are no weekend games. Weekday games are scheduled during the week and begin at 4:00 pm. There is no bus as the middle school program is privately run through our organization and not the Board of Education. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the parent to transport the player to both games and practices. Typically, we play surrounding towns such as Westfield, Cranford, Garwood and Kenilworth, however we have had games in Bridgewater and Green Brook in the past. We encourage families to plan ahead

and carpool to ensure players are able to arrive on time for a game and have sufficient time to warm up and stretch to reduce the potential for injury.

Playing Time

Playing time on a middle school team is the decision of the manager. Skills at the middle school have developed over time. Some players show affinity to play certain positions and may have an increased ability to compete in specific roles. For example, a player who is a pitcher and throws a considerable number of pitches may not play the following day in order to rest appropriately. Playing time is not necessarily equal, but the philosophy to ensure that all players participate over time is our directive.

Appendix A:

Scotch Plains-Fanwood Travel Baseball Registration, Commitment and Statement of Understanding

SCOTCH PLAINS FANWOOD
BASEBALL LEAGUE

Scotch Plains-Fanwood Travel Baseball Registration, Commitment and Statement of Understanding _____ Season

Player Name Please Print	
Age Group Trying Out for (Circle only one): **7u 8u 9u 10u 11u 12u**	

The SPF Raiders Travel Baseball Program, a division of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Baseball League, is designed to provide youth baseball players the opportunity to play at a more competitive level. The Travel Program works with the baseball league to provide a comprehensive baseball program for select players who are dedicated to baseball and possess the skill set.

The cost for our program varies from year to year as costs for supplies, leagues and tournaments change. This year we are anticipating a BASELINE cost of between $400 - $500 per player which will include a Spring League (typically USABL), Summer League (typically USABL or NPGL), entry into one additional tournament, baseballs and other team supplies. Additional tournaments are at the discretion of the manager and the associated costs will be passed on to the members of the team. Your manager will communicate with you on the leagues and the tournaments. Teams have the option in the summer to withdraw from the summer league and participate in weekend tournaments only. In these cases, any additional costs will be communicated to families.

We also plan winter training that takes place at our partner facilities that concentrates on developing fundamental skills. This is an additional cost and will be communicated with those who make the travel teams. Your manager will instruct you on where and when the training will occur and you are responsible for the cost (most standard training is in the range of $200 to $300).

Not included in the above fee is the cost of uniforms. This year we are instituting a new uniform package for the players. The basic uniform consists of: A Home and Away Jersey, Practice Shirt, Cage/Warmup jacket and bat bag. The cost for the uniform package is approximately $200 per player. Those who make a team will be provided the information regarding the uniform. Players and families will be able to purchase additional items though the online store. Your manager will instruct you on when apparel try-ons are and when the online store will be open. Above and beyond the uniform package, individual players will be responsible to purchase the following: white baseball pants, a royal blue batting helmet, an appropriate USA Baseball bat and glove.

We cannot over-emphasize the commitment on behalf of both the player and the parents. Attendance at practices and games are a crucial component to a successful team. Parents are expected to clear their child's schedule to avoid conflicts. Poor attendance is unfair to teammates and may result in reduced playing time or a player's dismissal from the program.

Parents are expected to plan family vacations with the SPF Travel Baseball Program's commitment in mind. Additionally, in the event of a conflict between the Travel Program's games/practices and the recreational league's game, rec games always take precedence. Players and or coaches violating this rule may be subject to disciplinary action.

Players and parents must commit to be available for the program beginning late March through July, committing for Spring and Summer with a consideration for winter training. Please avoid booking week long vacations in June and July. August is considered 'vacation time'. Sleep away camp in summer usually breaks the commitment of a player. Players who cannot commit to both the Spring and Summer seasons may be placed on teams after other full time players have been assigned.

The SPF Raiders Travel Baseball Program places players on teams based on their overall skill set and team position requirements. A tryout is conducted yearly which typically is graded by coaches and managers in the organization along with independent evaluators, high school and college players and others the league deems appropriate. Managers within a particular division will not rate players in that division. We reserve the right to place players on teams based on team need and discretion. We also take into account past performance and commitment to both seasons. The decision of the SPF Raiders Travel Baseball Program is final as to placement of players. Typically, a Futures and Select team is in place for every age group. For some age groups, a Prospects team also exists.

Players that are on a SPF Raiders Travel baseball team should not play on any other travel baseball teams. If a player does play on another club team, they MUST make SPF Raiders Travel Baseball team the priority (for both practices and games). If a player is found to play on another team and is attending that club over the SPF Raiders Team, we reserve the right to remove the player from the SPF Raiders Travel Baseball Team without refund.

Being chosen and accepting to play on the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Travel Baseball program is accepting the responsibility of participating in all practices, games and tournaments, and acknowledging and agreeing to the following:

- **Participation in our program takes precedence over any other baseball clubs/organizations you may belong to.**
- **While we encourage children playing multiple sports, commitment to the Travel Baseball program takes priority in the Spring/Summer.**
- **Playing time as well as position play is earned based on skillset and dedication to the team. Playing time is at the discretion of the team manager and is not necessarily equal.**
- **Missing practices for recreational baseball games or other family commitments is permitted. Missing practices for other reasons may result in reduced playing time at the discretion of the manager.**
- **No parent should enter the dugout during a game or actively provide coaching instructions to their son during a live a game.**
- **Parents agree to a 24-hour time period between a game and contact with a manager.**
- **No badgering umpires or opposing coaches.**
- **No distracting or negative comments from the stands.**
- **Clean up after yourselves after games or practices.**

Welcome and we look forward to an enjoyable & successful season.
Joe Trivisonno
Director of Travel Baseball
SPF Raiders Baseball

Please sign to acknowledge your understanding of the SPF Raiders Travel Baseball commitment.

Parent- signature	
Parent- printed name	

Date: