

Arrowhead Fast Pitch League Association
Board Meeting Minutes
May 3, 2020, 6pm
Tele-Meeting via Zoom

Meeting called to order at 6:00pm

Present via Zoom: Dennis Peterson, Theresa Leopold, John Stevens, Kelly Goeb, Melissa Stevens. Guests: Adam Maslowski, Jim Sonnenson, Brad Beranek

1. COVID update.

What we know:

- POSSIBILITY EXISTS WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO PLAY THIS SUMMER, WE WILL FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES OF OUR STATE GOVERNMENTS. BUT IF WE ARE ABLE TO PLAY, HERE ARE OUR THOUGHTS.
- Minnesota has stay at home order in place until at least May 18
- Wisconsin has stay at home order in place until at least May 26
- Duluth fields are believed to be unavailable until July 1 (and will start construction after our season is over)
- Superior School fields are unavailable until July 1
- Proctor fields are not available until at least school is out (first week of June), and other communities may be the same
- Esko likely does not have fields available due to construction
- USSSA has sent return to play guidelines (attached)
- Minnesota Softball/USA, MYAS, Gopher State Baseball, etc, have formed a coalition and have come up with similar guidelines (attached)

Further discussion:

- Seems highly unlikely that we will be starting any games prior to July given field closures/availability
- Guidelines include
 - umpires are behind the pitcher
 - disinfecting equipment and dugouts between use by players
 - not sharing equipment (helmets/catcher's gear/bats)

- wear batting gloves
- face masks are encouraged/recommended depending on guideline
- no more than 3 to 5 people in dugouts
- minimize number of coaches (3)
- no handshakes post game, instead “hat tip” or salute
- fans are limited and are spread out to keep social distancing
- separate entrance and exit at parks
- no sunflower seeds
- consider extending time between games to minimize overlap and traffic flow
- pregame meeting with umps and coaches only, no players, or consider not having it at all
- Much discussion regarding timing of season with the above guidelines and knowledge

Plans for upcoming season: (If we have a season)

- Start on July 6
- No playoffs
- Possibly playing two nights per week some weeks to increase games
- End of season August 7 for older age groups to allow for autumn school sports which start August 10
- End of season August 7 or 14 for younger groups if no conflicts
- Will adjust registration fees
- We will need two weeks for preparation...one week for registration and one week to create schedules
- June 15 is our absolute final deadline. If we do not know at that time if we are OK to play, then we will cancel the season
- Consider not having 8U play, as they may have difficulties following the guidelines. More discussion to follow when more info is known.

2. Umpires. Kelly will check with last year’s umpires to see what their interest level would be for umping this season with the COVID-19 pandemic, and knowing they would have to be behind the pitcher.

3. Kelly will also reach out to Shawn Northey from Quad City Baseball to let him know our decisions.
4. Kelly will send out an email to coaches and community leaders to let them know our decision.
5. Next meeting. June 7, 6pm, likely via Zoom. Will call earlier meeting if more information is available prior to that date.

Meeting adjourned at 6:40pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Kelly Goeb, secretary



2020 Back to the Diamond

COVID-19 Proposed Safety Guidelines

subject to change

The coronavirus pandemic is first and foremost a human tragedy, affecting hundreds of thousands of people. It is also having a growing impact on the child and parent activities as well as the youth baseball and softball industry, our employees, and the dedicated umpires who officiate games. The guidelines below are intended to provide legislators and decision makers with information about how we intend to alter youth baseball and softball in a joint effort to loosen restrictions, while implementing strict safe and healthy social distancing guidelines. Being mindful of the factors of public health, social distancing, and societal well-being will allow thousands of youth baseball and softball players the opportunity to establish some semblance of normalcy as we continue to move forward in safely adjusting the dials in Minnesota.

The safety guidelines listed below are proposed additional measures to be taken before, during, and after a youth baseball and softball game. All other key prevention strategies by the CDC and Minnesota Department of Health will be strictly followed, in order to promote safe and healthy social distancing.

PHASED APPROACH FOR RETURN TO PLAY

PHASE I

Groups of 10 will need to follow appropriate physical distancing. Baseball/Softball is an outdoor sport with our participants occupying natural positions that are greater than social distancing standards.

This will allow for youth baseball and softball teams to start practicing.

PHASE II

The cap on the number of people at gatherings rises to 50, which would be enough for games, likely without fans. Vulnerable populations should continue to follow stay home guidance.

This will allow for baseball and softball teams to begin conducting games.

PHASE III

There are no limits on group sizes. The sports go back to normal participation and operation. Vulnerable populations can resume public interactions, but should practice physical distancing, and continue to take precautionary measures.

GAMES PLAYED IN PHASE II

Entering or Exiting Parks: If possible, all players, coaches, and umpires will enter through one entrance and exit through another, observing state guidelines for social distancing. This scenario replicates the path of travel through grocery stores. In the event there is only one entrance to the park, teams will need to be cautious and courteous at the point of entry, observing all social distancing rules.
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Social Distancing: Parents and spectators have separate seating away from the backstop or dugout. Spectators will not be allowed around the area of the backstop or dugouts. Only players, up to three coaches per team, and the umpire(s) are allowed on the field of play. Spectators are only permitted to view the game from the outfield. This means the game may be viewed along the foul lines starting at 1st/3rd base extending to the outfield and in the outfield area.

Proposed Spectator Options:

1. One Parent/Guardian is permitted/allowed to spectate the game in the designated area as described above. Social distancing guidelines would apply (for example, must be 6 feet from the next group/spectator).
2. Only immediate families/households of the players will be allowed to spectate the game (for example, must be 6 feet from the next group/spectator).

Dugout (Team Personnel): The dugout will be extended to behind the dugout to the backstop for both teams. This is to allow rostered players and up to three coaches per team to practice social distancing throughout the game while their team is up to bat. Hand and equipment sanitizing between innings is recommended.

No more than 3-5 individuals are permitted in the dugout at any given time (this is dependent on the size of the dugout). These individuals (players, coaches or any combination) must maintain all social distancing guidelines throughout the game. All other team personnel must practice social distancing in the extended area of the dugout, as referenced above.

Game Protocol: At the pregame meeting and throughout the game, coaches and umpires will not be allowed to shake hands or have any physical contact with each other. All parties must maintain social distancing guidelines. No physical contact or touching is permitted.

Players and coaches are asked to refrain from high fives or any other physical gestures of celebration. All team personnel must always maintain social distancing guidelines.

At the conclusion of the game, players will be asked to forego the sportsmanship line at the end of the game. Instead we are asking for each team to line up on their respective foul line and "tip their cap" as a salute to the other team to promote sportsmanship.

Equipment: It is highly recommended that team personnel carry hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes with you to be used before, during and after the games, whenever appropriate, such as if/when you come into contact with the ball or any other players, coaches, or shared equipment (bases).

Please wear your batting gloves as much as possible, especially when handling a bat.

Refrain from sharing equipment in general. This includes but is not limited to bats, helmets, and catcher's equipment.

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Each team needs to provide their own baseballs/softballs for when they are in the field. Each team is responsible for switching out their baseballs/softballs each inning or sanitizing their baseballs/softballs as best as possible. Again, hand and equipment sanitizing between innings is recommended.

CDC approved face masks are recommended for everyone attending and playing. This includes spectators, players, coaches, umpires, and field crew.

Umpires: Umpires will be asked to officiate the game from behind the pitcher's mound, while practicing social distancing with all fielders. This will limit the number of people around home plate and will still allow the umpire to call the game and see the whole field.

Umpires should wear a CDC approved facemask. Umpires should not handle baseballs/softballs, and should wear gloves if they intend to handle baseballs/softballs. Change gloves after each use when handling baseballs or softballs.

Authors:

- Minnesota Youth Athletic Services (MYAS)/Gopher State Baseball (Dawson Blanck & Patrick Reese)
- Metro Baseball League/Minnesota Baseball Tournaments (Kim Eul & Jeff Eul)
- USA Softball Minnesota/Minnesota Softball (Dan Pfeffer & Tom Bye)

Supporting Author:

- David J. Jewison, MD CAQ, Sports Medicine Physician, University of Minnesota & M Health Fairview

M Health Fairview/Institute for Athletic Medicine is the official medical partner of the MYAS.

Resources

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/mass-gatherings-ready-for-covid-19.html>

Applicable Information/guidelines from the state of Montana:

https://406mtsports.com/baseball/legion/following-reopening-guidelines-montana-american-legion-baseball-teams-can-start-practicing/article_77549909-7349-538c-8547-a9062a0ecd28.html





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This document will be posted and available at www.usssa.com/coronavirus.

It will also be posted in the DC2 system for all event directors.



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POST COVID-19 100.1: Role of Task Force

A Task Force was assembled within USSSA. The Task Force features the national program directors for baseball, basketball, fastpitch, golf, slowpitch and soccer. The Task Force has developed return-to-play models for the entire association as well as for directors and sports.

POST COVID-19 100.2: Sport-Specific Language and Processes

Each USSSA-sanctioned sport has created its recommended best practices for return to play. Please note that all guidelines from local and state officials supersede USSSA's recommendations and guidelines. All sports, directors, and events are required to gain approval from their local and state officials when returning to play.

POST COVID-19 200.1: Event Procedures – ALL SPORTS

1. Follow all local and state guidelines for facilities and events.
2. Prior to any events taking place, each State Director must submit the requested information to the National Program Director. Once a decision has been determined the State Director and Sport Chairperson will be notified.
3. A team and event e-mail must be sent to all teams, team managers, coaches, players/parents, and officials/referees in the week leading up to an event of play. The e-mail should 1) encourage all event attendees to practice social distancing; 2) explain that any person who is experiencing symptoms of sickness will be prohibited from attending the event/venue of play; and 3) make clear that all posted and published local- and state-regulated guidelines shall be followed.
4. Take proactive steps in creating social distancing environments, where possible.
 - a. Inspect designated seating and viewing areas for fans.
 - b. When using a tent, please restrict it to family members only.
 - c. Minimize the use of fields at facilities to remain within the current mass-gathering limitations of the local jurisdiction, if necessary.
 - d. Create one-way entry and exit gates where possible, to direct foot traffic.
5. Minimize player contact by eliminating team/player handshakes and team/player high fives. No group prayers between teams on the field. Create plan to keep social distancing between teams in effect beyond the field of play. Suggest other means of game celebrations and team sportsmanship at the end of games (e.g., ask players to tip their caps/visors, or have teams bow to each other from across the field).
6. Directors, players, umpires and spectators must adhere to the guidelines from CDC, state and local authorities regarding potential state travel restrictions and stay-at-home orders.
7. In dugouts, discontinue use of water coolers that are provided by tournaments, parks or teams. Players should bring their own, personal cooler instead of using a team cooler. Players should plan on bringing an individual water bottle.



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POST COVID-19 201.1: USSSA Baseball & Fastpitch Return to Play

Recommended Best Practices for the Field-of-Play:

1. Follow all local and state guidelines for facilities and events.
2. The managers meeting at home plate should be limited to one coach from each team plus the umpires. No players at plate meeting. Eliminate the meeting if possible.
3. Where possible, consider options for limiting both the pitching and the scorecard exchanges, in order to reduce person-to-person contact.
4. Allow teams to spread players out; expand the dugout area when room permits and only if player safety will not be compromised. Expansion of the team dugouts should not be done into foul ball areas. Attempt to limit bench personnel to essential team personnel.
5. Encourage parents to supply their players with antibacterial wipes and hand sanitizer for disinfecting shared playing equipment and cleaning hands between innings/quarters/periods.
6. Allow players to wear PPE items if they choose, as long as the items do not compromise the safety of any and all participants in the game.
7. Require teams to clean their dugout of all trash and other items after each game, and to wipe down (clean) hard surfaces such as benches, bat racks, etc.
8. Upon arriving at a dugout for the first time, teams are to disinfect hard surface areas (benches, bat racks, etc.). *Procedures #7 and #8 here will comply with the CDC recommendation of a two-step process for cleaning and disinfecting.*
9. Directors should consider adjusting the playing formats and increasing the amount of time between games, to minimize overlap and traffic flow where needed.
10. Ban the use of sunflower seeds.



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POST COVID-19 201.6: USSSA Sport Not Named in This Document Return to Play

Recommended Best Practices for the Field/Court/Venue-of-Play:

1. Follow all local and state guidelines for facilities and events.
2. In using this manual of protocols, submit your standards and guidelines to the national office for your event to be approved.

POST COVID-19 202.1: Recommended Best Practices for Returning to Team Activities

1. Follow all local and state guidelines as well as facility and event guidelines for all team activities.
 2. Encourage all attendees to practice social distancing.
 3. No team/player handshakes, no team/player high fives, and no group gatherings between teams on the field. Try to keep social distancing between teams. Ask team members to tip their caps to the other team – from across the field – after a game.
 4. The managers meeting at home plate should include just one coach from each team plus the umpires. No players at the plate meeting.
 5. Allow teams to spread players out; expand the dugout area when room permits and only if player safety is not compromised. Expansion of the team dugouts should not be done into foul ball areas.
 6. Encourage parents to supply their players with antibacterial wipes and hand sanitizer for disinfecting shared playing equipment and cleaning hands between innings.
 7. Limit person-to-person contact as much as possible.
 8. Allow players to wear PPE items if they choose, as long as the items do not compromise the safety of the game.
 9. Teams should clean their dugout of all trash and other items after each game. Teams are encouraged to disinfect hard surface areas (benches, bat racks, etc.) upon first arriving at a dugout.
 10. In dugouts, discontinue use of water coolers that are provided by tournaments, parks or teams. Players should bring their own, personal cooler instead of using a team cooler. No sharing of water bottles. Each player must have their own water container, or teams should provide disposable cups for their players and coaching staff.
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POST COVID-19 203.1 Recommended Tournament Best Practices within Facilities

1. Follow all local and state guidelines, including those for the exchanging of money at the gate, concessions, vendors, and potential cashless payment processes, where feasible. Ensure all staff are equipped according to protocols.
2. Reduce event staff to maximize event participants, if restrictions about gatherings are in place.
3. Direct all teams to clean dugout/bench area when departing after their respective games.
4. When entering a dugout/bench area, the arriving team is required to sanitize this area.
5. Ensure there are sufficient communications and signage within the facility regarding safe practices for all attendees. Post laminated signage throughout the facility reminding people to practice social distancing. Display signage about safe and healthy practices at entrance and in applicable locations throughout the facility.
6. Maximize social distancing at larger facilities; have multiple one-way traffic entry and exit points where possible and feasible.
7. Follow city, county and state requirements for crowd gatherings and concession stands.
8. Regularly clean restrooms, following local requirements.
9. Stagger the start times of games to enable separation of teams and prevent their interaction as they arrive at or leave the facility. One-way directional signage will help further reduce interactions.
10. Spectator fees: Evaluate and follow local state guidelines for cash exchange systems or other ticket systems. Spectators must enter and exit at separate locations where possible. Events are advised to follow the local and state government guidelines for event/facility capacity.
11. Minimize the number of coaches and bench personnel in dugout/team bench areas.
12. Award ceremonies shall be contact-less, with a team representative designated to receive and distribute awards to players. Submit pictures and the names of award recipients to event designee via e-mail or text message.



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POST COVID-19 204.2 Changes to USSSA Youth Waivers

POST COVID-19 USSSA Official Youth Roster Waiver, as found at: www.ussa.com/coronavirus

PLEASE READ BEFORE SIGNING:

In consideration of being allowed to participate in any way in the UNITED STATES SPECIALTY SPORTS ASSOCIATION, INC., athletics/sports program whether involving team or individual sports and related events and activities, the undersigned acknowledges, appreciates, and agrees that:

1. The risk of injury and/or illness from the activities involved in the program is significant, including the potential for permanent paralysis and death, and while particular rules, equipment, and personal discipline may reduce the risk, the risk of serious injury does exist;
2. The risk to have direct or indirect contact with individuals who have been exposed to and/or diagnosed with one or more communicable diseases, including but not limited to COVID-19 or other medical conditions, diseases, or maladies, and/or any mutation or variation thereof does exist and it is impossible to eliminate the risk that I could become infected through contact with or close proximity to an individual with a communicable disease;
3. I KNOWINGLY AND FREELY ASSUME ALL SUCH RISKS, both known and unknown, EVEN IF ARISING FROM THE NEGLIGENCE OF THE RELEASEES or others, and assume full responsibility for my participation; and,
4. I willingly agree to comply with the stated and customary terms and conditions for participation. If, however, I observe any unusual, significant hazard during my presence or participation, I will remove myself from participation and bring such hazard to the attention of the nearest official immediately; and,
5. I, for myself and on behalf of my heirs, assigns, personal representatives and next of kin, HEREBY RELEASE AND HOLD HARMLESS THE UNITED STATES SPECIALTY SPORTS ASSOCIATION, INC., its officers, officials, agents and/or employees, other participants, sponsoring agencies, directors, sponsors, advertisers, and, if applicable, owners and lessors of the premises used to conduct the event (collectively, the "Releasees"), WITH RESPECT TO ANY AND ALL INJURY, ILLNESS, DISABILITY, DEATH, or loss or damage to person or property, WHETHER ARISING FROM THE NEGLIGENCE OF THE RELEASEES OR OTHERWISE.

I HAVE READ THIS RELEASE OF LIABILITY AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK AGREEMENT, FULLY UNDERSTAND ITS TERMS, UNDERSTAND THAT I HAVE GIVEN UP SUBSTANTIAL RIGHTS BY SIGNING IT, AND SIGN IT FREELY AND VOLUNTARILY WITHOUT ANY INDUCEMENT.

PARENT'S/GUARDIAN'S SIGNATURE SHOULD BE ON THE SAME LINE AS PLAYER'S NAME WHERE IT APPEARS ON THIS ROSTER. By signing this roster, parent or legal guardian agrees to the above statements and verifies that the player's date of birth is correct. Parent or legal guardian of each youth player must sign below. FOR PARENT/GUARDIAN OF PARTICIPANT OF MINORITY AGE: This is to certify that I, as parent/legal guardian with legal responsibility for this participant, do consent and agree to his/her release as provided above of all the Releasees, and, for myself, my heirs, assigns and next of kin, I release and agree to indemnify the Releasees from any and all liabilities incident to my minor child's involvement or participation in these programs as provided above, EVEN IF ARISING FROM THEIR NEGLIGENCE.



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POST COVID-19 205.1 Protocol for Changes to This Document

Due to the uncertain aspects in return to play, this document is expected to change based on new procedures and feedback from our directors. You should always follow your local and state guidelines. USSSA Directors are advised to revisit this document found at:

www.ussa.com/coronavirus prior to a sanctioned event. In the event of any conflict in language between any printed version of the POST COVID-19 Return to Play Guidelines, Procedures and Recommendations and the www.ussa.com/coronavirus online version, the www.ussa.com/coronavirus shall prevail.

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