

## **Frequently Asked Questions about Travel Baseball:**

**What is a typical practice schedule?** Practices are usually held twice a week on a Monday / Wednesday or Tuesday/ Thursday cadence. Practice duration start / stop is up to the coaches. Players are asked to attend the majority of regular practices, which are added to the schedule far in advance. Additional practices may be added at the discretion of the coaches.

**When does the season start, how many regular season games are played?** The 2024 MBL season starts 4/22/2024 and concludes the last week of June. Over this period of time a total of 12-14 regular season games are played, half of which are home games. The exact number depends on the number of teams in the assigned MBL division. The game schedule is determined by the coaches. Games that are rained out are rescheduled.

**What tournaments do we play in?** There are both regular season tournaments (4 for 9U-12U, 5 for 13U-14U). Each team will have one home tournament. The travel program will post the tournament schedule by age and division before team assignments are posted. Each tournament will have a different game schedule, but generally there is up to one game Friday night, and up to three games Saturday. Most tournaments will have their bracket play on Sunday – meaning only those teams that advance from pool play would have games on Sunday.

**How many teams / which divisions will we have for 2023?** The total number of teams at each age level is dependent on our registration numbers and player tryout performance. The travel program will endeavor to field at least three teams at each age level.

**What do the AAA/AA/A levels mean?** These are the levels of competition that are available through MBL. 9U only has 9AAA or 9AA in MBL and in the state of MN. The other ages we put teams together for have AAA, AA, and A divisions in MBL. Generally, AAA level teams offer the highest level of competition although some associations have opted to not put together AAA teams, raising the level of competition in the AA division. AA is the next highest level. The level of competition in A is the lowest tier, but A teams are very much focused on playing the game and developing players, reflected in the same number of practices, games, and tournaments as the other divisions.

The travel board believes it is important to keep players playing baseball – the actual AAA, AA, or A divisions are less important than having the kids play the game. In travel board discussions several experienced evaluators and High school head coaches have stressed that the division played in travel is not important – rather it is picking up the rules of the game, developing player skills, playing as a team, and learning to be a good teammate. This factors into decisions made by the board where we are fielding more than three teams at an age level or where we petitioned to not have a AAA team for a particular age group. Players will move between divisions as they get older – division assignment is not a slight on a player's skill or ability, rather it is an attempt to pair the player with a like group for them to develop baseball IQ and skills as a team.

**What does the travel fee cover above and beyond the southern Minnie baseball fee?** The travel fee covers the cost of registration for the regular season baseball tournaments, including the teams' home tournament, one state tournament (being awarded a berth by placing in a regular season tournament or receiving an at large berth required), umpire costs for regular

season games, field crew costs, tryout facilities & evaluators, and fees for supporting the systems that we use for player evaluations / tryouts.

**When are MBL playoffs and the state tournaments?** Playoffs are held in July after seeding from the regular season (dates pending) – schedule for games is set by seeding, and the games are scheduled by coaches. MBT, Gopher State, and MSF (state tournaments) are held on July 12-14, July 19-21 or July 26-28 depending on the age and division. Please note the dates for the state tournaments – full team participation is encouraged for one state tournament and RYBA covers the associated registration and host association fees. Although RYBA does not pay for additional state tournaments, team participation is encouraged. Registration and gate fees for additional state tournaments would be covered by the participating players. The state tournaments occur at the end of the regular season and are an opportunity for teams to showcase what they have learned over the season. Teams are the best matched at this point of the season and it is fun to watch the kids play as a unit.

**What is planned for tryouts?** We have secured time for tryouts at the Dome. The Dome is critical in allowing for enough open space for fielding and fly balls. This year we will hold all aspects of the tryouts in the RCTC Dome. Players must attend either the main tryout (2/19/2024) or the make-up (3/17/2024). The age level reporting times for tryouts will be shared with registered families shortly after registration concludes in early February.

Players will rotate through the following stations: In-field, outfield, pitching, hitting, and athleticism. Skill assessment will be similar to tryouts last year with the addition of fly balls, use of more consistent pitching machines, and age-appropriate base distance and space for assessing fielding. Where possible we will use benchmarking from our player scores last year to ensure that we are placing players developmentally at the division level they will have success with based on RYBA travel performance last year. Please wait outside of the facilities for your players – parents and board members with players in a particular age should not be in the facility when tryouts are occurring. If a parent is in one of the facilities during tryouts they will be asked to leave.

**Preview of Tryouts for 2025 summer baseball:** The travel board voted to move our tryout process from winter up to Summer / Fall. Tryout dates will be shared with coaches and travel families around the start of the 2024 summer baseball season. Holding tryouts at this time would allow assessment of player ability around their peak performance. Additional details will be forthcoming early in the 2024 season. We anticipate the need to hold winter tryouts for new (incoming) 9U players to supplement Summer/Fall tryouts.