

1. Purpose

West Winnipeg Minor Baseball Association (WWMBA) believes that every player should have the chance to develop their skills and to enjoy the game throughout the season.

The A-Ball Player Development Policy sets WWMBA's guidelines for coaches to provide skill development opportunities, manage players' game play time and assists coaches in setting expectations to players and parents.

2. Guiding Principles

WWMBA emphasizes the following principles:

- 1. Safety** - Protecting athletes and maintaining a safe, positive environment.
- 2. Skill Development** - Teaching baseball fundamentals and situational awareness. Coaches will make all efforts to get the best out of every player. All players should be given plenty of opportunity in both games and practices to develop their skills and learn the game.
- 3. Confidence Building** - Ensuring every player feels valued, challenged, and supported.
- 4. Team Cohesion** - Encouraging teamwork, leadership, respect, and a commitment to shared goals.
- 5. Competitive Growth** - Fostering a culture of healthy competition.

Program success is measured by athlete growth, retention, and enjoyment of the season.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all **11U, 13U, 15U, and 18U A teams** operating under West Winnipeg Minor Baseball Association.

4. Positional and Skill Development

11U-15U players must be given opportunities to play a variety of positions, both infield and outfield. In practice, they should be taught the fundamentals and strategies of playing most positions to get a well-rounded knowledge of the game. Positional specialization may occur as the players get older. However, a secondary position should still be learned and played by everyone.

Pitching Development

All players must receive pitching instruction and time during practices to work on pitching fundamentals. All 11U-15U players that want to pitch should get to pitch in games - some will pitch more than others based on technical ability, readiness and performance. At 18U, designated pitchers may receive most in-game opportunities, but all interested players should continue to have pitching development opportunities during regular practice sessions.

Playing Time

All players who attend practices and games, work hard, conduct themselves appropriately, and notify coaches in advance for any absences, must receive close to equal amounts of playing time on a game-to-game basis throughout the regular season.

Variations will naturally occur based on lineup needs and game situations, and the intent of this policy is not to enable families to track or compare individual players directly.

18U, players have often developed preferences in a couple of defensive areas, and usually prefer to improve their skills in their preferred areas rather than learn new defensive positions. However, any player who wants to learn a new defensive position should be given the opportunity to do so during the regular season.

Exceptions

WWMBA expects coaches to discipline the behaviour of all players both on and off the field. It is therefore acceptable for a coach to use playing time as a consequence of inappropriate behaviour. It is recommended that a summary log of when and why a player was benched for disciplinary purposes be kept. Unacceptable behaviour may include unsportsmanlike conduct, being disrespectful, inappropriate behaviour that is disrespectful of team goals, selfishness, actions that cause or have the intention to cause harm to individuals. As a last resort, it may become necessary for a coach to use benching as a wake up call if a player demonstrates an “I don’t care attitude” through a consistent lack of effort or focus on a task that is reasonable for that player’s ability.

Absences and injuries are not subject to makeup opportunities.

Under some conditions, it may be necessary for a player to receive less playing time for health or safety considerations.

5. Competitive Discretion and Postseason Play

In must-win or elimination games, coaches may exercise discretion to prioritize competitive success during close, critical games and key situations. However, in games before and after, they should make reasonable efforts to balance playing opportunities for athletes whose time may be reduced as a result of such decisions. “Shortening the Bench” must only be implemented for a short duration during the game.

“Shortening the Bench” is to be an exception, not the norm, throughout the season (e.g. implemented only when a team is facing elimination from competition – playoffs or tournaments). It is recommended that a summary log be kept of when and why the bench was shortened.

During playoffs, players usually play their stronger defensive positions and coaches often implement a fairly static batting order.

At 11U and 13U, close to equal playing time should continue throughout playoffs. At 15U and 18U, some players may play more innings than others during playoffs.

6. Conclusion

WWMBA recognizes the degree of difficulty in providing absolute equal playing time and opportunity on a game-to-game basis; however, in an effort to provide a clearer picture, the following situations will not be tolerated:

- Consistently playing the same players only on a recurring basis.
- Certain players consistently receiving longer playing time than other players.
- Benching, sitting or giving less playing time to players because of a lack of confidence or inability to execute skills and tactics.
- Giving more playing time to affiliate players (temporary promotion) over roster players.
- Consistently starting the same 9 players every game.
- It is recommended that a log of playing time be kept – in addition to the score book – so information on each player can be quickly provided if requested.

Communication and the practice of setting expectations are vital to the success of a program. The intention of the Player Development Policy is to inform coaches on how to treat players fairly so that players receive a balanced amount of playing opportunities and develop their skills over the course of the baseball season.

The Player Development Policy is one of the initiatives that the WWMBBA has developed to assist in fostering the relationships between, coaches, players, parents, and officials and to create an enjoyable and productive baseball experience for everyone.

7. Accountability

Head Coaches are accountable for implementing this policy in full. Convenors or any member of the WWMBBA Executive may ask to review development plans, review logs or scorebooks at any time. Non-compliance with this policy may affect a coach's eligibility for future appointments within WWMBBA, and, in significant or repeated disregards of policy expectations, may result in removal from their current role.