

# **Brad-Mar-Pine Baseball**

## **What to Expect in Mustang Baseball**

As our young baseball players grow and develop, they move up to higher leagues. While every new league presents a challenge, the transition from Pinto (Manager Pitch for 7-8 year olds) to Mustang baseball is, perhaps, the most challenging. This is, in part, because of the significance of the rules changes that come into play at the Mustang level and in part because of the substantial differences in how the leagues are organized and structured. Among them:

- Mustang players have their first opportunity to pitch and steal bases.
- Mustang consists of separate American and National Leagues—and children are evaluated and assigned to teams in those leagues based upon skill level.
- The Mustang schedule involves interleague play with McCandless Athletic Association, including some games at the Vincentian baseball complex in McCandless.
- All teams participate in a post-season playoff.

This document is intended to assist our baseball players and their parents understand what to expect when they move up from Pinto baseball to play Mustang baseball for the first time. Read on for more information about these and other aspects of the Mustang baseball experience.

### **What are the Significant Differences Between Pinto and Mustang Rules of Play?**

- Mustang baseball introduces the Pitcher position. Any player who wishes to pitch and who demonstrates sufficient control (by passing a specific pitching drill with their coach in practice) will be given an opportunity to pitch during the season.
- Mustang baseball uses traditional rules for at bats and pitch counts—called balls and strikes; three strikes and the batter is out; four balls and the batter is walked.
- Stealing is permitted in Mustang baseball. However, lead-offs are not permitted.
- Unlike Pinto, where play on a ball hit to the outfield ends when the outfielder throws the ball to the infield, play remains live in Mustang baseball until the ball is secured by the pitcher.
- Scores are kept and game winners and losers are determined each game. There is a playoff at the end of the season for which all teams qualify.
- Mustang baseball games are staffed by umpires supplied by Brad-Mar-Pine. These are often young men—many of whom are still playing baseball for Brad-Mar-Pine in our

Pony and Colt leagues. Coaches may discuss rules interpretations with umpires but League rules prohibit any commentary on, or challenges to, the calls made by our young umpires. This applies to our players, coaches, families and other spectators.

### **How is the League Structured?**

Mustang baseball is split into two divisions—an American League and a National League. The intensity of play and competitive level of the American League is greater than that of the National League.

In addition, there are some differences in the rules between the two leagues. For example, the American League uses three outfielders and the National League uses four outfielders. The strike zone in the American League is the traditional zone between the knees and shoulders. The National League strike zone is somewhat broader.

Rosters in the American League are constructed with a primary purpose of ensuring competitive balance. Requests to play with friends or neighbors are generally not taken into account. Rosters in the National League, while also constructed in an effort to ensure competitive balance, are formed with greater flexibility to more readily accommodate roster requests.

Players in both leagues are required to play a minimum of four innings—at least two in the infield and two in the outfield—and every rostered player is in the batting order throughout the game in both leagues. However, lineup and batting order decisions in the American League are generally made primarily on the basis of players' respective abilities. Those decisions in the National League tend to be made with a view to ensuring that all players have an equal opportunity to play (and bat) in all positions.

### **Will My Child Play in the American or National League?**

Parents may elect to have their children play in the National League. That election can be made by communicating it to the Mustang Commissioner directly. No player can automatically elect to play in the American League. All players that have not elected to play in the National League are assigned to the American or National League based upon competitive abilities, as determined by League management. League management uses two Mustang league skills clinics scheduled during the month of March to assist in making those determinations.

### **How Do I Decide Whether to Elect that My Child Play in the National League?**

Many children (and many parents) prefer to play at the most competitive level possible. Advanced baseball players may, if they qualify, appreciate the higher level of play and increased competition of the American League. However, we believe that for many children who might otherwise qualify to play in the American League, an election to play in the National League may be entirely appropriate. A “good” baseball player, when placed in the more competitive American League, may be an average or below-average American League player with limited opportunity to play preferred positions and a limited opportunity to play with friends and neighbors. But, that same player can be a standout National League player with an opportunity to play everywhere alongside friends and neighbors. More skilled National League players often

become team leaders, which can accelerate their baseball development and foster personal development and growth. That said, the decision whether to elect to play in the National League is entirely yours. If you do not elect to play in the National League, your child will be assigned to the American or National League based upon competitive ability.

### **Can a National League Player Try Out for a Tournament Team?**

Yes. Brad-Mar-Pine sponsors tournament teams at various age levels, including 9-year-old and 10-year-old tournament teams. Players qualify for tournament team membership on the basis of their performance at tournament team tryouts, which are typically held in May. It makes no difference whether your child plays for an American League or National League team. Historically, many National League players have qualified to play on tournament teams, particularly at the 9-year-old level.

### **Where Do We Play?**

The Mustang “home” field is the lower field at the Whitey Soergel baseball complex in Knob Park in Marshall Township.

Mustang American and National League teams also engage in inter-league competition with teams in the McCandless Athletic Association. Approximately half of American League games and about 25% of National League games are played against McCandless teams. Some of those games are played at McCandless’s home fields in the Vincentian baseball complex off of Peebles Road in McCandless.

### **Is there Off-Season (Fall) Mustang Baseball?**

YES! Brad-Mar-Pine has a Mustang Fall Ball league every September and October. Children who will be 9 and 10 years old the following Spring are eligible for Mustang Fall Ball. The Mustang Fall Ball league is not separated into American and National League divisions and plays National League rules. This gives rising Pinto baseball players a perfect opportunity to try out Mustang baseball in a low-pressure, reduced-competition environment and to hit the ground running the following Spring. We encourage any 8-year-old who will be a 9-year-old Mustang player in the Spring to register for Mustang Fall Ball.