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New Regulation on 12-Year-Olds Goes Into Effect

One of the agenda items voted on by District Administrators at the 24th Little League International Congress in Houston earlier this year, was a regulation requiring that all league age 12-year-olds must be placed onto a Major Division team.

The measure was enacted, with 68 percent of District Administrators (delegates) voting to approve it.

The new Regulation V. 1. reads:

"The selection of players for the various teams within a league shall be in compliance with the Little League Draft Selection System as detailed in the Operating Manual. NOTE: All candidates who are league age twelve (12) must be drafted to a Little League Major Division team, or to a Junior League team. Exceptions can only be made with written approval from the District Administrator, and only if approved at the local league level by the Board of Directors and the parent of the candidate."

The purpose of the new regulation is to ensure that local leagues are using the Minor Division as a training ground, and not keeping capable 12-year-olds from "moving up." For those 12-year-olds who may lack the skills to play at the Major Division level, there is a process for allowing them to play in the Minor Division, provided certain conditions are met. (However, the prohibition on 12-year-olds pitching in the Minor Division remains.)

Recently, questions have been asked about putting this new regulation into effect. We have listed the answers below.

Question 1: If a league age 12-year-old does not tryout as required, is the league still required to place him/her within the Majors Division?

Answer: If a player/candidate does not attend 50 percent of the tryouts, the local league board of directors has two choices:

- 1. Accept the player's excuse for missing the tryout(s) and make the player eligible for selection to a Major Division team, or,
2. Decline the excuse and the candidate would not be eligible for participation in any division within the league for that entire season. Little League would encourage leagues to be lenient in accepting 12-year-olds' excuses in an attempt to provide as many opportunities as possible.

Question 2: Based on the response above, how do local leagues deal with late registrants who are league age 12?

Answer: A late registrant would be assigned to a Major Division team if the local league board of directors chooses to accommodate him/her. If this results in an unequal number of players on the Major Division rosters, the league can follow procedures for requesting a waiver from the Charter Committee to allow it. However, if the league and parents determine that the player's skill level would dictate that he/she should be assigned to the Minor Division, they would go through the process of obtaining a waiver from the District Administrator as noted in the regulation.

Question 3: Who will review requests for 12-year-olds to be retained in the Minor Division?

Answer: The parent(s) or legal guardian (as assigned by a court of





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jurisdiction) of the player in question, in conjunction with the local league board of directors, must submit a request to the District Administrator for final approval. As noted in the new regulation, final authority on requests of this nature rests with the District Administrator.

Question 4: Will there be a form for the parents to complete and submit to leagues and District Administrators if they are requesting that their child not be placed in the Majors Division, so that this process can be expedited?

Answer: Yes. The form is now available in PDF format at http://www.littleleague.org/media/12yroid_waiver.pdf. This simple form allows the league and District Administrator to maintain records of these approvals.

Question 5: Is there any recourse if a league age 12-year-old is drafted, practices, and even participates in Major Division games – and then the player, parents, and/or league realize the player is not capable of playing in that division?

Answer: Little League encourages local leagues to conduct a thorough assessment of each player at tryouts to avoid this situation. In cases where a player's assessment causes concern about participation in the Major Division, league officials should review the assessment with the parents to identify what is in the best interest of the child. However, when situations above arise, these matters should be forwarded to the District Administrator for a final decision.

Question 6: If the player is drafted onto a Major Division team, what if the parent's assessment and the manager's assessment of a player differ?

Answer: If the parent's assessment is that the player should be moved to the Minor Division, but the manager believes the player should remain in the Major Division, the local league board of directors has two choices:

1. Support the parent's assessment and forward the request to the District Administrator for final approval.
2. Support the manager's assessment and inform the parents that the player will remain on the Major Division roster. (The parent may then choose to allow the player to continue in the Major Division, or remove the child from the league.)

If the manager of the Major Division team believes that the player should be moved to the Minor Division, the local league board of directors needs to review the assessment with the parents. If the parents do not support the assessment, the player must remain in the Major Division.

Question 7: Is the limit of eight league age 12-year-olds per team going to increase?

Answer: Not at this time. The intent of this rule change is NOT to create a Major Division that is essentially made of all league age 12-year-olds. Little League International conducted a survey of all District Administrators via e-mail to see if this limit should be eliminated. The result showed that 60 percent of DAs were in favor of it. But because the number falls short of the two-thirds required to make a change at the International Congress, the limit will remain and Little League will monitor the rule for adjustments in 2009 and beyond. (As with any rule or regulation, the local league board of directors may request a waiver using the method described in the rulebooks under "Charter Committee/Waivers of Rules and Regulations.")

Question 8: Is the 10-team limit in the Major Division going to remain for 2008?

Answer: Yes. However, if a local league has more than 10 Major Division teams, it does not automatically mean the league must split, or to field two tournament teams in that division. The 10-team limit will be considered, along with population, player enrollment in all divisions,

competing programs and other factors to determine when or if a league must split into two leagues or divisions. With almost all 12-year-olds playing in the Major Division, the Charter Committee will have a more accurate gauge of the size and scope of the league through team registration.

Question 9: Could a local league only accept those 12-year-olds it believes are capable of playing in the Major Division, and "cut" the rest to avoid processing these waivers?

Answer: Absolutely not. That would be completely contrary to the policies and goals of Little League. Any child who is eligible by age and residence to play in the league should be given that opportunity, without regard to playing ability. A league in which children are completely turned away because of playing ability is doing a disservice to those children, their families, and their community.

Question 10: Could a District Administrator have a policy to refuse to sign any waivers allowing a 12-year-old to play in the Minors?

Answer: No. The District Administrator must take each case on its own merits and make what he/she believes to be a fair judgment each and every time.

Question 11: Could our league create two divisions within the Major Division (in effect a "Major A" and a "Major B" division), and place the lesser-skilled 12-year-olds in the "Major B" division?

Answer: No. There can be only one group of teams classified as "Majors" in any chartered local Little League, and all league age 12-year-olds must be placed into that division, subject to the provisions of this new regulation. (All teams within the Major Division of a local Little League must play a common schedule in which each team plays all other teams in that division.)

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