

Herndon Optimist Youth Cal Ripken Baseball League
Rules of Play

Machine Pitch / Instructional League

OVERVIEW

Machine Pitch (also referred to as Instructional League) games played within the Herndon Optimist Youth Cal Ripken Baseball League (HOYB) program will be played according to Official Baseball Rules 1.00 through 7.00. The HOYB is affiliated with Cal Ripken Baseball (formerly the Bambino Division of Babe Ruth Baseball), which has defined certain exceptions to the Official Rules. Accordingly, Machine Pitch League games are governed also by Cal Ripken (formerly Bambino) Rules and Regulations 0.01 through 0.05.

In addition, HOYB has established further refinements to these governing Rules and Regulations. Where exceptions have been established, the HOYB position takes precedence over Cal Ripken, which takes precedence over Official Baseball Rules. Cal Ripken and HOYB exceptions/interpretations are noted in the left margin as CR and HO, respectively.

Specific exceptions:

Official Baseball Rules

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| 8.0 | Rules specific to the pitcher do not apply to Machine Pitch League play. |
| 10.0 | Rules specific to the official scorer do not apply to Machine Pitch League. |

Cal Ripken Rules and Regulations

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| 0.04(4) | Official score books are required for Machine Pitch League games. |
| 0.06 | Pitching limitations do not apply to Machine Pitch League players. |
| 0.07 | Player eligibility does not apply to Machine Pitch League players. (However, all players must be officially registered in the HOYB for that season to play on a team or in a game.) |

TEAM COMPOSITION

The number of players on a Machine Pitch League team will be no more than 14. Actual team composition will be determined each season by the total number of applicants and number of available managers.

EQUIPMENT

- Protective headgear with facemasks shall be worn at bat and while a base runner during all practices and games. Any base runner that intentionally removes the protective headgear while running the bases shall be called out upon completion of the play.

2. The catcher during all practices and games shall wear a protective supporter cup and protective headgear, as well as chest and shin protection.
3. The bat shall be no more than 33 inches in length, with a barrel no greater than 2 1/4 inches in diameter. Metal and ceramic bats are acceptable.
4. Metal cleats or spikes are not permitted by any player, manager, coach, or official.
5. Jewelry is prohibited. Players shall not wear jewelry. Medical alert and religious bracelets or necklaces are not considered jewelry.

PITCHING

1. The manager, coach, or a designated adult of the team at bat will act as the pitcher, only in pitching machine operation.
2. The pitching machine will be positioned such that it directly in front of the pitcher's plate. Once set, the pitching machine shall not be physically repositioned during the course of the game.
3. The speed of the pitching machine shall be set at **35 MPH** for the first half of the season, gradually increasing to **40 MPH** by the end of the season. The intent is to ensure that the majority of the children are comfortably hitting the ball from the machine before increasing the speed. As skill sets improve the speed should gradually be increased to a maximum of 40 mph at the end of the season.
4. The adult/pitcher should "present" the ball to the batter by holding the ball above shoulder height and then extending the ball toward the batter just prior to placing it into the pitching machine.
5. The adult/pitcher may take a position closer than the pitcher's plate/pitching machine and deliver the ball directly to the batter. This can be done at the manager's request for a batter he/she feels will be unable to successfully bat using the pitching machine.
6. The strike zone is defined as any pitch whose height is between the bottom of the batter's knees and his shoulders, and whose width extends one ball width on either side of the plate.
7. The home plate umpire may call "no pitch" and award a batter an additional pitch if the pitching machine (or adult/pitcher) delivers an erratic pitch that is outside the batter's strike zone. However, if the batter swings at the ball, it is a pitch.

BATTING

1. Balls and strikes, as such, are not called in the Machine Pitch League. Therefore, no walks will be awarded to the batter and first base is not awarded if a pitch hits a batter.
2. Each batter will be given five (5) "hittable" pitches.
3. The home plate umpire will call a pitch that is outside the batter's strike zone and is not swung on by the batter "**no pitch**". That pitch will not count as a hittable pitch. An additional pitch will also be awarded a batter if he/she fouls off the fifth hittable pitch.
4. Bunting will NOT be allowed in the Machine Pitch League.
5. The batter and all base runners will be awarded one extra base if a fielding coach interferes with a hit ball.
6. The umpire shall take immediate and appropriate action when a batter throws a bat. **Unintentional**. On the first occurrence, the umpire shall advise the manager of the problem, allowing the manager to explain the rule violation to the batter and his/her teammates. On any succeeding occurrences by any batters on that team, the umpire

shall call the batter "out" and declare a "dead ball" situation and runners may NOT advance. **Intentional.** The umpire shall call the batter "out" and declare a "dead ball" situation and the runners may NOT advance. The batter shall be removed from the game if the umpire considers the incident to have created an unsafe condition.

BASE RUNNING

1. Base stealing will **NOT** be allowed at any time in the Machine Pitch League.
2. Play will be considered stopped ("dead ball") once the ball is under control and within 10 feet of the pitcher's plate. (NOTE: This does not mean that a player may run to within 10 feet of the pitcher's plate in order to stop play. Players are expected to make a play, i.e., throwing to a base, rather than throwing to the pitcher to intentionally end play. In addition, it does not mean that play is automatically stopped if the player/pitcher fields the ball within this radius. He/she, too, is expected to make a play.)
3. Play will be considered stopped ("dead ball") when a second overthrow is made.
4. An overthrow of first, third, or home bases shall not be considered dead unless the ball travels beyond the sideline fence, or an imaginary extension of the backstop down either sideline.
5. A base runner advancing to the next base when play is stopped will be awarded that base.
6. Obstruction shall be called on the catcher or any other player who blocks any base, particularly home plate, except when they are in possession of the ball or fielding a batted ball. In the case of obstruction, the runner shall be awarded the base to which he/she was advancing.
7. A base runner advancing to any base, particularly home plate, must attempt to avoid a collision. A base runner involved in a collision who has not attempted to avoid the collision (in the umpire's judgment) by sliding or other action will be called out for interference, even though the opponent may have been obstructing the base.
8. When a player who will be catcher in the next inning is a base runner and there are two outs, a pinch runner may be used to allow the catcher additional time to put on the equipment. This does not apply during bottom half of the last inning.

SUBSTITUTION

1. All players may play in the field when a team is on defense. The infield shall be limited to the normal positions, plus a second player/pitcher (i.e., one player/pitcher on each side of the pitching machine). All other players must be in the outfield and be situated no closer than the edge of the outfield grass.
2. Every player will be included in the batting order. A player arriving after the start of a game will be placed at the end of the batting order.
3. Managers are allowed free substitution throughout the game. Furthermore, managers are **REQUIRED** to move players around to different positions during the course of a game. No player should play the same position for more than two consecutive innings.
4. During the course of a season, each player should be given the opportunity to play the widest range of infield and outfield positions possible. At least 1/3 of each player's playing time should be spent in the infield and 1/3 spent in the outfield. The manager

will determine the balance. However, player safety and confidence must be given consideration in making position assignments (i.e., catching, first base).

5. Position assignment sheets for each game must be utilized and saved by the manager, and may be collected by the League Commissioner at any time during the season. A clear disregard of player rotation guidelines will constitute grounds for manager suspension or removal, and impact upon future manager and coaching considerations.

OFFICIATING

1. The HOYB umpires working Machine Pitch League games are the newest and least experienced umpires in the league. As a result, they are likely to make more mistakes. Managers should exercise the greatest degree of patience possible with respect to the umpires. Managers should also explain the circumstances to their players and their parents, requiring them to do the same.
2. Any problems with an umpire that a manager considers significant should be reported to the commissioner or umpire coordinator.
3. There are **NO PROTESTS** in the Machine Pitch League. Managers are expected to reach a quiet mutual resolution to rule interpretation questions at the game. If managers think that additional action is appropriate, they should refer the question to the League Commissioner or HOYB President. Remember that there are no Machine Pitch League "standings." There are no official winners or losers in any game. Each game is essentially a scrimmage.

GENERAL

1. All Machine Pitch League games will be played within a **1 hour and 30 minute time limit** and will be considered complete regardless of the number of innings played.
2. All games will be played to the full time limit regardless of the score between the two teams. In addition, games will not be continued if a tie exists.
3. Each team will be limited to four (4) runs per inning for **ALL** innings played. The home team will still bat in the bottom of the last inning even if losing by more than four runs.
4. Each team may have up to two (2) player/pitchers as long as there are enough players left to fill all of the remaining defensive positions.
5. Prior to the start of each game, a chalk circle must be drawn around the pitching machine, with a radius of five (5) feet from the pitching machine to the perimeter of the circle. In addition, the manager must position his player/pitchers at least five (5) feet to one side of the circle around pitching machine and no closer to home plate than the pitching machine.
6. A batted ball striking the pitching machine, power generator, or adult/pitcher will be declared a "dead ball." The batter will be awarded first base and each base runner will advance one base.
7. A fly ball dropping within the circle around the pitching machine will be declared a "dead ball" and the batter will be awarded an additional pitch.
8. The infield fly rule is waived in the Machine Pitch League. Base runners must advance as forced.