



Handbook

**BRAINERD LAKES AREA BASEBALL
ASSOCIATION, INC.**

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MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY

The mission of this corporation shall be to: Provide Brainerd Lakes Area students/athletes the opportunity to play competitive baseball.

Our purpose, in conjunction with the Brainerd Parks & Recreation Department, and the Brainerd Lakes Area Schools, is to develop students/athletes into productive citizens of the community in which they live though the emphasis of education, improving baseball skill-sets, building interpersonal skills through friendships, and utilizing good sportsmanship.

Brainerd Lakes Area Baseball Association (BLABA) Current Board Members

Chairperson	Troy Rushmeyer	218-820-9341	rushtk@nisswa.net
Vice Chairperson	Derek Owen	218-330-4574	derek@brainerdindustrialcenter.com
Secretary	Ann Scheinost	320-360-2604	tsbyann@yahoo.com
Treasurer	Michael Eidenshink	218-831-1366	mfeidenshink@hotmail.com
Director	Zach Heidmann	218-513-5112	zachary.r.heidmann@gmail.com
Director	Joel Kubesh	218-838-4864	joel_kubesh@yahoo.com
Director	Jon Toft	218-330-3073	Jtoft1231@gmail.com
Director	John Schafer	218-764-2549	schafer@Brainerd.net
Director	Brian Scheinost	320-630-2624	brianscheinost@gmail.com
Ex-Officio Board Member	Trent Grams	612-281-0667	trent.grams@isd181.org
Supporting Member	Tony Sailer	218-828-2320	tsailer@ci.brainerd.mn.us

Coordinators

Charitable Gambling Manager
Umpire Coordinator
Volunteer Coordinator
Tournament Coordinator
Fundraising Coordinator
Equipment Coordinator
Tryout Coordinator
Communications and Media
Coordinator

Board Member Selection / Responsibilities / Job Descriptions

The Board will hold open elections in October each year. **(See BLABA Bylaws Article 6 for details)** For those who are unopposed for an elected position, a simple majority vote from existing Board members is required to continue in that position. Voting will be done using confidential ballots. A simple majority will win the vote.

Those selected to the Board are making a commitment of time and effort to improving the quality of baseball for the community of Brainerd. Board members are expected to attend at least 75% of monthly meetings. They are expected to be active participants in discussion and voting, and are

expected to keep the best interest of the association in mind when making decision. Board members are expected to attend association functions to provide guidance and assistance to other association members and volunteers. Board members are expected to hold themselves to high ethical and moral standards in all situations. Board members who are not meeting these standards will be dismissed from the Board.

Board Member Compensation

At this time no Board member will receive a monthly or yearly stipend of any kind.

Board Meetings

Board Meetings will be held once per month. The date, time and/or location of the meeting may be changed as needed to facilitate greater Board member or association attendance. Date, time, and location of the Board meetings will be posted on the association website. Board meetings are open to the public.

Voting

During monthly meetings, voting will be held using parliamentary procedure. Each Board member in attendance may cast a single vote for the topic on which the Board is voting. A Board member may abstain from voting, and is encouraged to do so if he/she has a conflict of interest. A simple majority will carry the vote.

There may be time sensitive situations that require a Board vote which arise outside of the Board meetings. If a vote is required sooner than the next Board meeting, a vote may be conducted by e-mail or other forms of messaging. All Board members will be copied on all emails or messages to ensure transparency throughout the Board.

If an association member petitions the Board, a closed vote will occur to allow the Board to vote freely outside the presence of the petitioner. Only Board members will be allowed in the room for discussion and the vote on that topic. Closed-door discussion and voting is considered confidential.

Chairperson — The Chairperson is responsible for organizing and conducting monthly meetings, including the development of the monthly agenda. The Chairperson is also responsible for responding to questions and concerns from the association members and either addressing the concern or directing them to the appropriate person. The Chairperson is encouraged to attend functions (games, tournaments, fundraisers, volunteer opportunities) for various age levels and to solicit feedback from association members. **(Reference BLABA Bylaws Article VII, Section II)**

Vice Chairperson — The Vice Chairperson will assume all duties of the Chairperson in the event the Chairperson is not able to fulfill the duties of the Chairperson. The Vice Chairperson is responsible for any duties delegated by the Chairperson. The Vice Chairperson will conduct the monthly meeting in the event the Chairperson is not able to attend. **(Reference BLABA Bylaws Article VII, Section III)**

Secretary — The Secretary is responsible for taking minutes during meetings, compiling those minutes, distributing them to the other Board members for approval, and to the Communications and Media Manager for publication on the association website. The Secretary will also distribute a copy of the meeting minutes for approval at the following monthly meeting. The Secretary also creates and provides the ballots for yearly elections and compiles election totals upon completion of voting. The

Secretary will also complete and submit any applications for grants/donations from outside organizations (Lions Club, Jaycees, Twins Community Fund, etc.). **(Reference BLABA Bylaws Article VII, Section IV)**

Treasurer — The Treasurer is responsible for managing the associations financial accounts. This includes collecting and depositing various fees (registration, clothing, etc.), sending payment for equipment, uniforms, clothing, umpires, insurance and field maintenance supplies, reconciling monthly bank statements, entering transactions into a computer system, and keeping the Board updated on the association's financial status. The Treasurer will provide an update to the Board at each monthly meeting by providing a report of the previous month's financial activity and status. The Treasurer also keeps an updated list of all registered players. The Treasurer is also responsible for tracking Volunteer hours. **(Reference BLABA Bylaws Article VII, Section V)**

Directors

Each Director shall head and be responsible for a minimum of one (1) Committee of the Brainerd Lakes Area Baseball Association. Duties include:

- Ensuring compliance of their respective Committee within the rules and regulations as outlined by the BLABA standards and ethics.
- Communicate progression and issues of their committee to the BLABA Executive Board at scheduled meetings or through direct communications to the Executive Board Members on urgent issues.

A Director may head a maximum of two (2) Committees as directed by the BLABA Executive Board.

Coordinator Groups/Committees of BLABA can be as follows or as outlined and directed by the BLABA Executive Board:

- Charitable Gambling Manager
- Umpire Coordinator
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Tournament Coordinator
- Fundraising Coordinator
- Equipment Coordinator
- Communications and Media Coordinator
- Tryout Coordinator

Charitable Gambling Manager — The Charitable Gambling Manager (as defined by the Minnesota Gambling Control Board) will be responsible for organizing, maintaining and auditing all gambling operations for the association, including meat raffles and pull tabs for multiple locations. The Charitable Gambling Manager must receive all necessary training prior to being allowed to hold this position. The training will be paid for by the association. The training will educate the Charitable Gambling Manager on all applicable rules, regulations, laws and statutes related to the associations gambling operations. The Gambling Manager will work with the association's accountant to coordinate all necessary audits of the gambling operations and to ensure they are in compliance will all regulatory mandates.

Umpire Coordinator — The Umpire Coordinator is responsible for being the contact person from the association for the umpire scheduler. The Umpire Coordinator will relay information to the umpire

scheduler related to all home games for all BLABA teams ages 9-18. The Umpire Coordinator will maintain the associations Arbiter account and will update Arbiter any time a game is cancelled or postponed. If a home game is cancelled, postponed, or moved, the head coach for the Brainerd team will contact the Umpire Coordinator to alert him/her to the change so the schedule can be updated.

Volunteer Coordinator — The Volunteer Coordinator is responsible for relaying volunteer opportunities to the members of the association and for tracking the volunteer hours worked by each family. The Volunteer Coordinator is responsible for deciding which volunteer opportunities are available for the association members and communicating those opportunities to the Communications and Media Manager to be posted on the association website. The Volunteer Coordinator is responsible for alerting the Treasurer of those who have not fulfilled their volunteer requirements.

Tournament Coordinator — The Tournament Coordinator is responsible for coordinating the tournaments in early June each year. This includes posting/advertising the tournament on appropriate websites, obtaining state tournament berths, fielding communication from interested teams, lining up umpires for tournament games, obtaining medals and/or trophies for winning teams, determining needs for concessions, identifying necessary volunteer spots, and acting as Tournament Director. The Tournament Coordinator needs to have good communication with the Communications and Media Manager and Volunteer Coordinator to ensure volunteer positions are filled for field maintenance, concessions and welcoming.

Fundraising Coordinator — The Fundraising Coordinator is responsible for seeking out and organizing various fundraising opportunities for the association. The Fundraising Coordinator will communicate with the Volunteer Coordinator and be the primary contact person for fundraising events.

Equipment Coordinator — The Equipment Coordinator is responsible for managing the procurement and distribution of equipment, keeping track of inventory, replacing broken or worn out equipment, and being the primary contact with the equipment provider. The Equipment Coordinator is also responsible for uniforms and clothing and apparel, including distributing uniforms to travel teams, obtaining jersey sizes for players and shirt sizes for coaches, relaying sizes to the clothing provider, and distributing the jerseys and shirts to the appropriate teams. The Equipment Coordinator will be the only person able to authorize the equipment provider to release equipment to association members/coaches and bill the association. The Equipment Manager position is not a separate position on the Board. It is a responsibility assumed by an existing member of the Board.

Communications and Media Coordinator — The Communications and Media Coordinator is responsible for maintenance of the BLABA website. Other responsibilities include general electronic communication via mass emails to the members of the association and maintaining access for coaches to Quick-Scores, Rainout, etc. The Communications and Media Manager will organize the year-end parents' survey and will be responsible for distributing information sheets to all schools within the boundaries of the association to recruit players to play baseball for BLABA.

Tryout Coordinator — The Tryout Coordinator is responsible for the overall organization and execution of the tryout process. This includes soliciting and selecting evaluators, volunteers and location of tryouts.

GENERAL POLICIES

Equal Opportunity

We will not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, gender or national origin

Registration

Players may register either by completing online registration on the BLABA website (preferred), or by completing a paper copy of the registration form and submitting it to the Board. Paper registration is available at tryouts and at the spring Parent's Meeting. A \$25 non-refundable deposit will be required at the time of registration.

The Liability Waiver/Insurance form must be completed & signed by parent and/or guardian prior to player participating in try-outs

The age level for which a player is eligible is his/her age on April 30th of the year in which he/she will be playing. Players in their respective age groups must not reach the next age before May 1. With the permission of the Board, a player may be allowed to "play up" with his/her grade level even if his/her age indicates he/she should be playing at a younger level. A player cannot "play down" at a younger age for any reason.

Fees

- Ages 9-18 Travel Ball \$250
- Volunteer Deposit \$200
- Field Usage Fee* \$57

A player may practice with his/her team after receipt of the initial deposit, but no player shall play in a game until full registration payment and the volunteer deposit fees are received.

A player/parent volunteer deposit fee of \$200 will be required prior to player playing his/her first game. If the minimum of 5 hours of volunteer work has been met within the specified time limit noted under *VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES*, the deposit will be returned in full.

*For players not registered in the Brainerd Parks and Recreation baseball program, a \$57 field usage fee must be paid. (Fee increases to \$67 after April 15th of each year.)

Coach Selection

All coaches in the association will coach on a volunteer basis. Coaches for each team will be chosen from among eligible volunteers. Priority will be given to those who have coached in the past, unless significant concerns exist related to legal or behavioral issues, or if the coach has coaching philosophies found to be inconsistent with those of the association.

A background check must be reviewed each year for all applicants. Applicants will not be allowed to coach until they have completed a background check and the results have been returned to the Board. Applicants will not be allowed to coach if their background check returns a history of misconduct involving children, sex-related crimes, repeated violence, or a pattern which demonstrates consistent poor decisions. The applicant will receive notification from the Chairperson

that he or she has not passed the background check and will not be allowed to coach. The applicant may appeal the decision by appearing before the Board. After a closed discussion of the situation, the Board will hold a closed vote to determine if the applicant will be allowed to coach. The Board's decision is final. Further appeal will not be heard. The head coach for the team which the applicant's child(ren) play(s) will be notified that the applicant will not be allowed to coach.

There will be a maximum of three registered coaches for each team. The head coach for each team is responsible for determining who his/her registered coaches will be and notifying the Board of his/her decision. Registered coaches will be exempt from the required volunteer hours (see *VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES*) as the Board realizes and appreciates the time and commitment each coach is providing to the association.

Primary selection criteria include past baseball coaching and playing experience, personal coaching and human development philosophies, organizational skills, strong moral and ethical characteristics, support of traveling baseball, and BLABA policies/procedures.

While it is important that a traveling team coach have expertise in the sport, it is just as important for the coach to have the welfare of the individual players and the players' character and confidence development foremost in mind. Even a person of integrity, sincerity, and high idealism needs other qualifications such as the ability to remain even-tempered under pressure, the ability to discover ways to impart his/her knowledge to each individual player, and the ability to understand children, to relate to them and be sensitive to their developmental requirements.

The Board will seek volunteers to coach at each age level. The Board will select the head coach from the list of eligible volunteers and will issue final approval of the coach selection. Head coaches will be selected prior to the rosters being completed as each head coach will need to make the final selections for their team. Coaches' responsibilities begin upon Board approval of coaching position. Responsibilities of tournament selection and registration, parent meetings, and organization of practices begin in January. Responsibilities end in August with equipment check-in, season reviews, recommendations/feedback, and performance evaluations.

Coach Removal

Removal of a team coach is a very serious situation and must be dealt with in a fair and open manner. Reasons for a coach removal may include, but are not limited to:

- Failure to perform duties
- Conduct detrimental to the player, the team, the organization, or the parents
- Abusive behavior, whether physical or psychological towards players, parents, opposing players, coaches, spectators, umpires, volunteers, or league officials.

In order to remove a coach, a written complaint with any supporting documentation must be submitted to the Board. If there is sufficient justification, a hearing before the Board will be held. The vote of simple majority by the Board will be sufficient to dismiss the coach. There will not be an appeal process.

Team Managers

Teams may choose to have a "Team Manager" to assist the coach(es) with administrative tasks. These tasks include, but are not limited to, coordinating fundraising activities, booking hotels for tournaments, coordinating post-game snacks, notifying parents of rainouts, tracking unpaid

registrations and other administrative duties to help the team function efficiently. Team managers will be exempt from the required volunteer hours (see *VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES*).

Attendance

Practice is important for individual skill development and development of team concepts/play. Every player's presence is important and is expected. Unless otherwise exempted by the coach, all players are expected to attend all practices, Brainerd Parks & Rec league games, and tournament games. Excused absences will be granted for school and religious events. However, it is expected that the coach will be notified in advance of any absences. Unexcused absences may result in a reduction of playing time.

Playing Time

Minimum playing time for the 9-13 year olds will be four (4) defensive innings per six or seven inning game. Some situations, such as expired time limit or 10-run rule, may prevent this from happening. The starting lineup for 9-13 year olds will provide an opportunity for every player to have a place in the batting order. At the 14-18 year old level, coaches are encouraged to find playing time for all players, but playing time is not guaranteed and only nine players will be in the field and in the batting order to start the game. It is possible that players may sit out an entire game at the 14-18 year old level based on coach's discretion.

Positions

It is the philosophy of BLABA that we develop our youth to become well-rounded baseball players. Consistent with this philosophy, coaches are strongly encouraged to position players at multiple positions, both infield and outfield, while being mindful of safety, throughout the season. Players may be prevented from playing certain positions due to risk of injury. For example, a player who has difficulty catching the ball might not be asked to play catcher or first base, or a player who has difficulty throwing the ball might not be asked to pitch. However, if a safety issue does not exist, a player should not be prevented from playing multiple positions simply due to lack of skill.

Games and Practices

Travel teams are expected to participate in a minimum number of tournaments based on their age level.

- 9U-10U – 2 tournaments
- 11U-13U – 3 tournaments
- 14U-18U – 4 tournaments

Additional tournaments may be entered at the coach's discretion. Post-season tournament play is by invitation only and depends upon the team's success in qualifying tournaments during the regular season. If a team earns a berth to a state tournament, the association will cover the cost of the registration to the tournament, but the parents of the team must cover any additional cost for gate fees, hotels, and travel.

Team practices will begin as early as weather permits and/or an indoor facility is made available and will be scheduled by the team's coach. Players who are in the 8th – 12th grades may begin practices at the conclusion of school ball.

Tournament play begins in May and continues through July.

Fields

All teams will play games on fields of a size appropriate for their age and skill level. For home games, the following field and age pairings will be used when scheduling games.

- Ages 9-11
- Ages 12-13
- Ages 14-18

Practices may be held on any field or in any location deemed appropriate by the team's coach. ***Brainerd Parks & Rec will handle all field maintenance & scheduling.***

When attending games and/or practices, please be considerate. Park your vehicle appropriately, drive safely, pick up your trash (including inside dugouts) and keep your children off of other people's property.

Behavior

The highest standards of sportsmanship will be expected from the players, parents, coaches, umpires and spectators.

Conduct that will not be tolerated includes verbal abuse, tantrum-like acts, profanity, physical aggression on or off the field, and acts intended to cheat the spirit of the rules or to intimidate the umpires. Coaches may use their discretion whether to issue a warning or to immediately eject the violator from the game. The coaches are responsible for reporting **all** incidents to the Board. Subsequent violations may result in suspension from play or attendance. If a player is ejected from a game for any reason, he/she may be suspended for the following game as well (this will be the head coach's discretion).

The coach represents the BLABA program and should be the only person communicating with the umpires. One of the objectives of the program is to teach respect for the officials and the proper procedure for dealing with any problems with the umpires.

Unless playing in the field, at bat, on base, on deck, warming up to pitch or coaching, all players shall remain in the dugout or on the bench. It is mandatory that each batter, on deck player, runner, player in a coach's box, or non-adult bat/ball shagger on the field wear a batting helmet that meets safety standards.

Players will treat their coaches, parents, teammates, umpires, spectators, and the opposition with respect. After each game, the participants will line up and shake hands. Spectators are restricted to the areas that are "out of play" and away from the benches. Parents are only allowed on the field or in the dugout at the invitation of the coach.

Suspension / Dismissal of Player from Team

Once a team is selected, a coach cannot replace a player solely because of lack of skills. A player may be released for the following reasons:

- Frequent, flagrant disregard of the player's responsibilities
- Continued play in such a manner as to endanger others and/or self
- Displaying an uncaring attitude which results in not applying oneself, thus hurting the team's competitive potential (example: not showing up for practice)

- Failure to work within a team environment, placing self-interest before the team's
- Repeated unsportsmanlike behavior

Before requesting the removal of a player, the coach must discuss the situation with the Board and the player's parents and attempt to correct the situation. The discussion should include an objective description of the behavior and the intended discipline. If this attempt fails, the coach must notify the Board who will decide on further action. The coach may remove a player, for reasons noted above from any practice, game or tournament until Board has a chance to review

Inclement Weather

In case of inclement weather the coach shall determine if there is a practice. At games, the home team's coach will determine whether or not the game will be started. Once the game has started, the umpire is responsible for determining when play should be halted. In all cases, players should report to the place of the practice or game unless you receive notification from your coach.

Games and practices will be halted when lightning is visible. Players will be removed from the field and may not return to the field until there has been no lightning for at least 30 minutes.

If you, as a parent, are not able to be present during an event, be sure your child knows another adult who will be present and with whom he/she can take shelter if bad weather suddenly threatens.

Blood Policy

A player or coach who is bleeding or who has an open wound shall be prohibited from participating in the game until appropriate treatment has been administered. If treatment cannot be administered in a reasonable amount of time, the individual must leave the game. Once the bleeding has been stopped, the individual may reenter the game. If there is a substantial amount of blood on the uniform, it must be changed before reentering play.

Drug, Alcohol and Tobacco Policy

BLABA mandates that all players and coaches while participating in an activity shall refrain from the use of alcohol, tobacco, and/or other controlled substances.

It shall be a violation of this policy for a player, coach or Board member, while participating in a BLABA activity, to use a beverage containing alcohol, use products containing tobacco, vaping, or use or consume, have in possession, buy, sell or give away any controlled substance.

It shall also be a violation of this policy for any player to be charged by law enforcement personnel for a drug or alcohol offense at any time during the BLABA season (from the first day of tryouts through the final BLABA sponsored activity of the year). Any offense by a player during his time shall be treated in the same manner as if it happened during a BLABA activity.

Once a violation has been brought to the Board's attention and a decision has been made, the player or coach will be informed of his ineligibility by a written letter from the Board Chairman.

First Violation: Upon notification by the Board, the player/coach shall lose eligibility for the next two consecutive games or two weeks of the baseball season, whichever is greater. No exception is permitted.

Second Violation: The player/coach shall lose eligibility in BLABA for the remainder of the season. No exception is permitted.

Accumulative Penalties: Penalties shall be considered accumulative throughout the player's/coach's participation in BLABA. It is the Board's discretion to determine if a player/coach is to be removed indefinitely for accumulative penalties.

Uniforms and Equipment

- BLABA will supply jerseys, hats and the following equipment: New game baseballs, practice baseballs, batting helmets, catcher's helmet and mask, catcher's chest protector, catcher's shin guards, catcher's glove, bats, first aid kit, tees, and scorebooks. BLABA encourages players to have their own helmet for safety and sanitary reasons, but will not require players to have their own helmet.
- Players must provide their own glove, pants, socks, belt, shoes, and personal protective equipment.
- Parents are responsible for providing any additional safety equipment that they choose to use. Properly fitted, correctly sized equipment is very important to a player's success, especially in terms of gloves and shoes.
- The wearing of athletic supporters with a hard protective cup is strongly encouraged for all players.
- All players are encouraged, but not required, to use cleated baseball shoes. Players ages 9 -12 can use shoes with hard plastic or rubber cleats. They are not allowed to use metal cleats. Players ages 13 -18 are allowed to use metal cleats.

Bats

Aluminum bats are allowed for all levels of play. Travel teams will need to follow specifications for bats as outlined by Minnesota Youth Athletic Services (MYAS). It is the player's responsibility to check bat requirements prior to purchasing a bat. It is the coach's responsibility to ensure bats meet all such requirements.

Bats are an item of equipment, like gloves, which need to be fitted to the individual player. Parents should consult coaches and specific league rules before purchasing bats.

Equipment Abuse

Under no circumstance will the abuse of equipment be tolerated. Umpires and coaches are instructed that each instance of equipment abuse will result in that player sitting on the bench for the remainder of that game. At the umpire's or coach's discretion, one warning may be given. If the abuse of equipment results in damage to the equipment, that player and/or his parents will be held responsible for reimbursing the cost of replacement. Players may be suspended from play until reimbursement is made.

Repeat offenses may result in suspension for multiple games up to and including the remainder of the season.

Complaints

BLABA philosophy is that baseball should be a fun and rewarding experience for all concerned: Players, coaches, spectators, and officials. We strive to maintain this environment. We expect all participants to act with courtesy to other participants. We will not tolerate any lack of conduct or sportsmanship by any participant. Unacceptable conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Foul or abusive language.
- Harassment of coaches, officials, players, opponents (belittling or derogatory comments).
- Any form of taunting which is intended to embarrass, ridicule, or demean others under any circumstances, including on the basis of race, religion, gender, or national origin.
- Threats of aggression—threatened, attempted, or actual physical violence.
- Any form of sexual misconduct.
- Interference of or entering into the field of play by a spectator.
- Willful failure to follow the direction of an umpire, coach, or tournament official during the game.
- Any form of intoxication at a game.

The process of handling complaints and unacceptable conduct shall flow as follows:

- The complaint will be resolved at the earliest stage in the process.
- Complaint must be filed in a written format to any Board member.
- All complaints received by any Board Member must be reported to the entire Board.
- The Board will investigate the complaint and render any decision or disciplinary action.
- All affected parties will be notified in writing of the results, disciplinary action, and appeal rights.

Program and Coach Evaluations

At the end of the season, a survey will be emailed to the members of the association using a web-based survey engine. Parents and players are asked to complete an evaluation at the end of the season on their experience with the baseball program and the coaches. This is your most significant opportunity to express opinions and to help make improvements. Contents of the evaluations are confidential and are only viewed by the Board. The input from these evaluations carries a lot of weight and we pay close attention to what these evaluations tell us. Please take advantage of this opportunity.

VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

In order to provide an outstanding baseball experience to all participants of the association, much work is required both on and off the field. In order to provide safe and functional equipment, good-looking and comfortable uniforms, and an opportunity for all kids to play baseball at a level that is consistent with their abilities, fund raising is required on a regular basis. In order to involve all participants of the association and to help keep the cost to play baseball reasonable, BLABA requires assistance from parents and players to help with fund raising, and organizing/running association functions.

Each family with players between the ages of 9 and 18 will be responsible for a total of five (5) volunteer hours each season, regardless of the number of children they have in the association.

Hours will accumulate starting with the player evaluations/tryouts and continue through the following summer. Hours will reset each year starting with player evaluations/tryouts. For each volunteer hour that is not completed, the family will be charged \$50. The reason for the charge is not to raise additional funds for the association, but rather to encourage families to be part of association functions and distribute the workload across multiple people. The fee for unworked volunteer hours from the previous year will be collected before a player will be allowed to attend evaluations/tryouts. For those with extenuating circumstances, are unable to pay for unworked volunteer hours, or those otherwise deemed appropriate by the Volunteer Coordinator, an offseason payment plan, or completion of volunteer hours after the deadline may be allowed.

Volunteer opportunities will be relayed to participants of the association through the association's website and through electronic forms of communication. The Volunteer Coordinator will keep an up to date record of the number of volunteer hours each family has completed. Volunteer opportunities may include, but are not limited to, tournaments, player evaluation/tryout facilitators, and other community events which raise money for, or promote, the association.

TRYOUT POLICIES

Player evaluations/tryouts will be used to determine which players comprise the Travel teams. Player evaluations/tryouts will also be used to help evenly distribute talent amongst the Travel teams to promote a competitive balance. All eligible players must attend tryouts, regardless of skill level or level they wish to play. If a player is unable to attend the scheduled tryouts they need to contact the Tryout Coordinator in advance for special circumstances

Player evaluations/tryouts will be held between the end of the playing season and winter. Holding tryouts at this time allows team building and organization, including completion of fund raising and tournament registrations, over the winter during the off season.

Eligibility

In order to be eligible to try out and play on a Travel team, a player must:

- Attend school or live within the boundaries of the Brainerd Lakes Area Baseball Association boundaries noted in Article I section II of BLABA Bylaws.
- Have paid all applicable fees.
- Meet age guidelines specified by Minnesota Youth Athletic Services (MYAS).
- Copies of birth certificates (county or hospital issued) must be supplied to the head coach prior to playing in 1st game.

Age

The age level for which a player is eligible is his/her age on April 30th of the year in which he/she will be playing. Players in their respective age groups must not reach the next age before May 1. With the permission of the Board, a player may be allowed to "play up" with his/her grade level even if his/her age indicates he/she should be playing at a younger level. A player cannot "play down" at a younger age for any reason.

Processes

- Notice
 - Adequate notice will be given to potential tryout participants and the association will make every effort to offer multiple dates to allow as many participants as possible to attend tryouts.
- Deposit
 - Players will be required to pay a non-refundable \$25 deposit and complete their registration prior to attending tryouts (see “Registration” above). Any outstanding balance from the previous year (including unworked volunteer hours—see *VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES*) must be paid before the player will be allowed to attend tryouts, unless other arrangements have been worked out with the Treasurer and Volunteer Coordinator.
- Player Identification
 - When the player arrives for tryouts, he/she will be identified by a number assigned at the tryout session. The number given to each player is determined by the order in which the player arrives to check in (first player to arrive is #1, second to arrive is #2, third is #3, etc.). A player must not wear clothing from a prior year’s travelling team, use anything identifying him/her as a previous traveling player, or wear any article of clothing with his/her name imprinted on it.
- Evaluators
 - Tryout evaluators will be selected by the Board, and may include coaches, parents, members of the local baseball community, or professional evaluators. The evaluators will be people who are known to possess the knowledge necessary to evaluate a player’s skill. The Board will make every attempt to select evaluators who are impartial. Evaluators will not be related to any of the tryout participants involved in their assigned age level. If an evaluator is/was a coach or parent in the association, he/she will not be allowed to evaluate level(s) which he/she has just completed coaching or the tryout level(s) his/her child(ren) will participate in. Every effort will be made to avoid having Board members evaluate players to avoid speculation of favoritism or bias. In the event that the Board is not able to secure enough outside evaluators, Board members will assist with tryouts, including evaluation of players. The above rules apply to Board members who are evaluating players.
- Skills Evaluated
 - Players will be evaluated, at a minimum, on the skills of throwing (strength and accuracy), fielding ground balls, catching and tracking fly balls, and hitting. Other skills may be evaluated as deemed appropriate by the Board. Players will be given an opportunity to practice each skill prior to being evaluated and will not be evaluated on their practice. Players will also have the opportunity to perform each skill several times while being evaluated. Evaluators will score each player on that player’s overall performance (technique, position, footwork, accuracy, strength, balance) for that skill, and not on each individual repetition. Written comments will be included to help support the score given.
- Spectators
 - Parents are allowed to observe the tryouts but are not allowed to coach or assist their child in any way. Parents are not allowed on the field during the tryouts.

Player Selection

Players will be placed on a team based on their own merits (skills, athletic ability, hustle, enthusiasm, and coach-ability).

Team Selection

The tryout/evaluation scores will be the primary basis used to select the players for each team. In cases where players have the same evaluation scores, written player evaluation from the previous year's coaches may be used to differentiate player ranking.

Travel Teams

Each Travel team will carry a minimum of 11 players on the roster. At each age level, the top six scores will automatically be invited to be a part of the travel team roster. The remaining roster spots will be determined by the Board Members, evaluators, and/or coaches (coach's picks"). Coach's picks may include players that were not able to try out due to injury or other conflicts.

In the event of a tie which includes the sixth highest score, only the players who have scored in front of that tie will be automatically included on the roster. The coach will complete the team with coach's picks. For example, if there is a tie for ninth, the top eight will be invited automatically, and the coach will determine the remaining spots using coach's picks.

The coach of the team is responsible for contacting the players on the team to verify desire to play on the team, and to provide a final roster to the Board. The coach may add registered players to roster at any time during the season with Board approval. Good cause must be determined for Board to approve. Board will determine fee and volunteer hour requirements based on percentage of season completed.

Determining Level of Play for Travel Teams

Travel teams will be encouraged to play at the AAA level for each age. However, the coach of the team may request to play at the AA or A level, if he or she has a legitimate concern about the team's ability to compete at the AAA level. For example, a team that did not win a game or had many games shortened by a mercy rule the year before at the AAA level may be allowed to play at the AA level. The purpose of playing at a lower level is to give the players more repetitions and promote skill development that they may not receive playing at a higher level and having games shortened by the mercy rule. Final approval will be issued by a Board vote.

If the Board determines sufficient talent exists to field a second team at a particular age level and there is interest from parents of those players, the Board may elect to field that second team. Majority vote will be required to approve this second team.

Injured Players

In the event a Travel team has injuries and does not have enough players to field a team, the coach of the team will be allowed to select players as either short-term or long-term replacements for the injured player(s). When the injured player returns from the injury, he/she will return to the Travel team. The coach will determine if the replacement may remain in the team or not. Per MYAS rules, the replacement will remain on the team's roster for the remainder of the season, even if he/she does not continue to play with the Travel team. Players who are not registered with BLABA will not be allowed to be used as replacements for any reason.

In the event a replacement is necessary, the coach of the team must contact the Chairperson of BLABA and alert him/her to the situation. The Chairperson must then contact MYAS to make the addition to the Travel team's roster.

PLAYER RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS

Players on a traveling team should take pride in themselves, their team and in their community. They must follow the directions of the coaches and must be willing to accept constructive criticism.

Player responsibilities include:

- Have pride and confidence in yourself, your teammates and your coaches
- Be attentive and work hard in practice and games. Make your best efforts to perform the tasks as directed by the coaches.
- Be a competitor, perform up to your full ability, and contribute to team unity.
- Compliment teammates and let the coaches handle the criticism.
- Show respect toward your coaches, teammates, and parents.
- Show respect toward opposing players, coaches, umpires, and spectators.
- Keep your equipment clean and in good repair.
- Maintain a responsible attitude toward your health. Be aware of the dangers of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.
- Remember that baseball is a game and keep it in perspective with family, school, and church activities and responsibilities.
- Demonstrate good sportsmanship and proper behavior.
- Remind your parents that you need to be at practice and games on time.
- Inform your coach whenever you will miss or be late for practice or games.

Player rights include:

- To participate at a level that matches your maturity and ability.
- To play as a child, not as an adult.
- To participate in a safe, healthy environment.
- To be treated fairly and with dignity and respect.
- To have fun in sports.
- To have an equal opportunity to develop your abilities and strive for success.
- To have good coaching; to be taught the fundamentals of baseball.

COACH RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS

The coach is a teacher of baseball skills, a manager of the functions necessary to run a team, and is responsible for the social, psychological, and physical development of all players in his/her care. He/she is accountable to the players, parents, and the Board.

Coach responsibilities include:

- Obey and enforce all BLABA rules.
- Treat players in an equitable and fair manner.
- Demonstrate good sportsmanship, self-control, and proper behavior.
- Ensure the good sportsmanship and proper behavior of team players, assistant coaches, parents, and spectators.

- Attend meetings as necessary.
- Assure that all players receive playing time as mandated by this handbook.
- Teach the players to have fun and enjoy competition.
- Help players develop a healthy, competitive attitude toward winning and losing.
- Assess individual players' strengths and weaknesses and create a developmental plan to help each player improve skills.
- Care for and return all BLABA equipment.
- Report any problems with fields to the Board.
- Recruit parent volunteers as necessary.

Coaches will hold a pre-season parent meeting. At this meeting the coach will distribute team schedule (if available) and roster, and set the tone and expectations for the season.

Coach rights include:

- To be treated with respect by players, parents, volunteers, umpires, league and the Board.
- To be made fully aware of the rules and policies under which they must function.
- To have access to necessary safety equipment and practice fields.
- To expect full cooperation from parents when they are asked to assist.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS

Your child's participation in the baseball program will require a significant contribution of your time and effort. Parents can contribute many things to support their child, team, and their program. Practically speaking, BLABA is an adult volunteer work project, constructed, supervised and assisted by parents who desire to make its benefits extend to their children. Parent participation is vital to the success of BLABA.

Parent responsibilities include:

- Let your child know you love him/her, win or lose, whether he/she plays well or not.
- Compliment and encourage. Coordinate your efforts to help your child's development with the recommendations of the coaches.
- Support your coaches. Remember that they are responsible for many children in addition to yours.
- Don't compare your child to other players. Be honest with yourself and your child about his/her abilities.
- Regard each player on the team as your own.
- Keep negative comments to yourself. Express concerns only to the coach and in a straightforward, fair, objective manner.
- Teach your child to have fun and enjoy competition. Don't tell him/her that winning does not count, because it does, and he/she knows it. Instead, help him/her develop a healthy competitive attitude toward winning and losing.
- Follow the Youth Team Parent Code of Conduct supported and distributed by BLABA.
- Demonstrate good sportsmanship and proper behavior. Don't criticize officials, coaches, other parents, or players.
- Ensure good sportsmanship behavior of your child and your guests.
- Get your child to and from practice and games on time.
- Inform the coach in advance if your child will miss a game or practice.

- Provide any information the coach requests regarding your child's health and wellbeing.
- Volunteer to assist the coach whenever possible.
- Volunteer your time and talents to make your team a success.
- CHEER, CHEER, CHEER!

Parents rights Include:

- Have your child treated fairly and with respect. Have your child practice and play in a safe and healthy environment
- Have your child coached by effective and qualified adults.
- Have your child engage in practice and play that will increase his/her skills and enjoyment of the sport.
- To be fully informed by the coaches regarding schedules, team rules, and your child's strengths and weaknesses.

BLABA PARENT/GUARDIAN CODE OF CONDUCT

As a parent/guardian of a child involved in the BLABA program, I/we agree to abide by and follow the rules and guidelines listed below:

- Will respect the property and equipment used at any sports facility, both home and away.
- Will encourage good sportsmanship through my actions by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches, and officials at every game and practice.
- Will promote the emotional and physical well-being of the athletes ahead of my personal desire to win.
- Will provide support for coaches and officials working with the athletes to provide a positive experience for all.
- Will remember the game is for the athletes and not for the parents.
- Will demand that my child treat other players, coaches, officials and spectators with respect regardless of race, creed, color, sex, religion or ability.
- Will treat all players, coaches, and officials with dignity and respect in language, attitude, behavior, and mannerisms.
- Will inform the coach of any physical disability or ailment that may affect the safety of my child or the safety of others.
- Will inform the coach, within a reasonable period of time, of any anticipated absence from practices or games.

I/we also agree that if I/we fail to abide by the aforementioned rules and guidelines, I/we may be subject to disciplinary action. This action could include, but is not limited to the following:

- Verbal warning
- Written warning
- Parental game suspension
- Parental season suspension
- Parental banishment

These actions may not be necessarily taken in a progressive manner, and the Board reserves the right to select and apply any penalty depending upon the situation.

BLABA BEHAVIORAL GUIDELINES FOR YOUTH COACHES

Be liberal with words of praise

- Have realistic expectations and consistently reward achievement.
- Give a reward for desirable behavior as soon as it occurs.
- Reward effort and correct technique as much as results.

Reacting to mistakes

- Give encouragement immediately after a mistake.
- When appropriate give corrective instruction after a mistake, but always do so in an encouraging and positive way.
- Don't punish when things go wrong.

Team rule violations

- Let players help establish the rules.
- Allow the player to explain his/her actions. Be consistent and impartial. Focus the responsibility on the player, not you, who made the choice to violate a rule.
- When giving penalties, it's best to deprive children of something they value (deny participation or sit on bench for a period of time).
- Be selective in the amount of physical measures you use for disciplinary reasons (running laps, push-ups, etc.). Caution: exercise, when used for disciplinary reasons, may become an aversion.

Getting positive things to happen

- Set a good example of behavior.
- Encourage effort, don't demand results.
- In giving encouragement, be selective so that it is meaningful.
- Never give encouragement in a sarcastic or degrading manner.
- Encourage players to be supportive of each other and reward them when they are.

Create a good learning atmosphere

- Always give instructions positively.
- When giving instruction be clear and concise.
- If possible, demonstrate the correct technique.
- Be patient and don't expect or demand more than maximum effort.
- Reward effort and progress.

Player recognition

- Show all players that you care about them as individuals.
- Don't let players leave feeling like losers.

Communicate effectively

- Ask yourself what your actions communicated.
- Encourage players to express their concerns to you.
- Be sensitive to individuals' needs.
- Communicate at a time when a child is most receptive.

Gaining players' respect

- Set a good example. Actions speak louder than words.
- Be competent, fair, considerate and credible.
- Earn respect, don't demand it.

Countering parental pressures

- Communicate to your players that the important thing is that they enjoy playing and develop their skills, not that they must win or be a "star".
- Communicate to parents that by placing excess pressure on children to perform, they can detract from the potential that youth sports can have for enjoyment and personal growth.
- Have a meeting with parents before the season starts to discuss these matters.

Brainerd Lakes Area Baseball Association (BLABA)

Contract Packet

**“Developing Athletes into Leaders with Character
and a Passion for Excellence”**

The Brainerd Lakes Area Baseball Association is a non-profit organization aimed to give youth ages 18 and under an opportunity to enjoy baseball on a more organized and elevated level. Our association will field teams at different age groups and is affiliated with the Gopher State Baseball League through Minnesota Youth Athletic Services (MYAS). Our hope is that all players have the opportunity to play ball with members of their school and community.

Coaching Philosophy and Commitment

The position of coach is a very important to the overall success of the Brainerd Lakes Area Baseball Association Youth Baseball Team’s goals and objectives, which are laid out in this packet. Our coaching staff is made up of individuals who have passion for the game and who want to share their knowledge and love of the game with others. These coaches are volunteering their time in an effort to develop players who are respectful towards others, and who will represent Brainerd Lakes Area Baseball Association in a positive manner both on and off the field.

We believe that the best way to have such an impact is for us to rise to a higher level of performance and behavior than the opponent. We are not consumed with wins and losses, but make no mistake, we do play to win.

Going along with this view, we believe that our coaches are responsible for all on-field actions. The use of profanity is not allowed and the questioning of calls or interactions with other coaches/players will be done in a respectful manner. Questioning an umpire call is acceptable, but we want to maintain a high level of sportsmanship.

In an effort to help our coaches grow we ask that they make an effort to attend any necessary coaches meetings, team functions, practices and games. Our coaches have been asked to make a huge commitment of their time on a volunteer basis.

Commitment to Youth Team Philosophy

I understand that as a BLABA Team, we will be involved in competition and practice or training throughout the baseball season. I understand and agree with the goals of BLABA, which are:

- To provide quality baseball instruction in the following areas
 - Proper throwing and catching fundamentals.
 - Proper infielding and outfielding fundamentals, including reaction, accuracy, and arm strength.
 - Proper hitting fundamentals striving for increased bat speed, control, and power.
 - Proper base running technique, skill, and strategies.
 - Proper fundamentals of the catcher's position.
 - Proper fundamentals of the various defensive positions.
 - Proper pitching fundamentals, focusing on mechanics, speed, control, and fielding the position.
 - Proper techniques for other parts of the game such as cut-offs and relays, bunt defenses, backing up throws, base running, etc.
- To provide quality baseball instruction
- To work out, train, practice and compete with the proper attitude, dedication, drive and motivation.
- To provide a positive team experience with emphasis on encouragement and teamwork.
- To prepare for high school level play.

In order for our team to meet our goals as stated above, I commit myself to:

- Maintaining a teachable and flexible attitude...to be a listener and a learner.
- Willingly submit to the leadership of the coaching staff who are committed to the development of this team, by following the practices and goals stated in this packet.
- Paying the entire amount of my share of the team expenses (fees) before the first workout or practice.
- Making my life available for growth through whatever opportunities this team may bring. I am committed to growing in my baseball abilities, personal character, and skills for living.

The Player Development Objective of BLABA Baseball

"Comparable playing time" needs to be an emphasis of BLABA baseball because we need to develop and expose all of our players to various situations throughout the season. It is impossible to have "equal" playing time but "comparable" playing time is possible and a fair objective. Baseball is unique—if the entire team receives opportunities to grow, develop, and improve individually, the entire will grow and improve together. There is also an emphasis on "being competitive" which means playing to win, and playing to win means to give it your all. If parents, coaches, and players take on this definition of "being competitive" then success will be redefined. In fact, whether we win or lose is not the only way to measure success, but it is a way to encourage players to work hard as a team and to build morale.

While we are still trying to win games, we are doing it as a team by "being competitive". The responsibility of trying to win, "being competitive" and developing a competitive mentality falls on the players. Coaches are there to administrate, direct, and execute the game strategy and to hold players accountable. Coaches are also responsible to provide honest, objective input to help the player reach his or her goals, as well as to help them define their goals.

Playing Time Considerations

With the exception of injuries and excused absences, playing time will be dependent upon reasonable satisfaction of a player's "being competitive" and the effort put forth in practices. If a player fails to meet this expectation, his or her playing time will be affected until he or she shows an improvement in attitude and effort. This change or improvement could be the next day, the next game, or whenever the coaching staff appreciates improvement. Playing time is not solely dependent on raw athletic ability. It is determined by skills, effort and attitude.

Additional Team Philosophy Factors that Affect Line-Up Decisions:

- Demonstration of in-and off-season development.
- Effort at practice (practice is **NOT** an optional activity).
- Pre-game effort.
- Playing the right people, at the right positions, at the right time (talent and experience).
- Using key opportunities to develop players (experience at a given position to give depth and develop skills for future situations).
- NOT arbitrarily inserting players simply to equalize playing time, but rather "comparable" playing time (quality playing time against quality opponents).

Youth Team Player Code of Conduct

The following Code of Conduct has been established to help each team member develop into a respectful player with good sportsmanship. These policies are in place for your protection and character development. In light of these principles, final decisions regarding any of the above issues reside with the team's coach(es). Their decision is final.

Character and Proper Conduct

- Actions speak louder than words!
- Hustle at all times during games and practices.
- Work hard. Put forth 100% effort all of the time. Practice makes perfect.
- Stay focused. Pay attention during games and practices.
- Have fun. Keep a sense of humor, but know when to be serious.
- Take pride in how you approach the game and how you wear the uniform. Play sharp, look sharp, be organized, and be on time.
- Be confident but not arrogant.
- Be respectful of coaches, umpires, opposing team members, parents, etc.
- Never give up.
- Demonstrate self-control. If you disagree, make an error, or strike out, remain calm and stay in control of your behavior.
- Do not complain about anything such as:
 - Umpire calls
 - Coaches' decisions
 - Field conditions
 - Weather conditions
- Be positive, not negative or judgmental. Encourage teammates.
- Demonstrate class at the end of a game in both victory and defeat. Shake hands with opponents and keep your head up.
- Seek to improve as a player.

- Safety needs to be a top priority.

Inappropriate Conduct

The following behaviors will not be tolerated. Disciplinary action will be taken.

- Attitude problems
- Back-talking coaches or parents.
- Throwing equipment in a display of anger or frustration.
- Trash talking opponents.
- Critical judgment of teammates.
- Leaving the dugout or bench area during a game. Remain in the dugout or bench area during games, unless there is an emergency or you receive permission from a coach. We are a team, so even when you are not in the field or at bat, you are still a part of the team.
- No horseplay or messing around.
- No profanity or crude language.

Consequences for above actions and attitudes include:

- Sent home early from practice.
- Removal from a game.
- Suspended from an upcoming game(s)
- Some form of physical exercise (i.e. running, push-ups)

Youth Team Parent Code of Conduct

The following policies regarding conduct of BLABA team parents are being established in support of the Player Code of Conduct. We need parental support and participation in order to successfully achieve our goals. Some of the players will soon be in a position to try out for high school athletics. They need to understand that playing time, positions played, athletic ability, effort and attitude are key ingredients for coaching staff to determine rosters, etc.

Parent Code of Conduct & Support

- Be supportive of and reinforce all elements of the Player Code of Conduct.
- Don't complain about things such as:
 - Umpire Calls
 - Coaches' decisions
 - Playing time
- If you have an issue with anyone on the coaching staff, go to that person before or after a game. Please refrain from entering the dugouts during a game. This is both disruptive to the team and embarrassing for the player.
- Please let the coaches instruct, position players, and handle the coaching of the game.

Inappropriate Conduct

The following behaviors will not be tolerated:

- Allowing a player to leave the dugout or bench to sit with you (except in an emergency). Send him back to the dugout. Make sure you provide him/her enough refreshments for the game prior to the game starting.
- Questioning playing time. High school coaches are not receptive to parent interference in the running of their teams so this will be good practice for what is ahead.
- Critical judgment of or negative talk of coaches, players or umpires.

Consequences for the above actions

More than likely you will be first asked to stop your behavior. This may come from a coach or someone else involved in the BLABA league. You may be asked to leave the field if you have disrespected an official or coach. If this behavior continues, your child may be pulled out of a game or temporarily suspended. If you are dismissed for inappropriate conduct you will be responsible for any outstanding fees and no refunds will be given.