

# Seattle PONY Baseball

## Frequently Asked Questions About Pony Division Baseball

### Pony Division: 13- and 14-year-old baseball players

Please note that general answers are given to these questions. Specifics are subject to change based on needs and desires of individual coaches and teams. Within this general outline, and subject to approval of the Division Commissioner, each coach is empowered to customize the program for his own team.

Further questions may be directed to Pony Division Commissioner Steve Smith at [pony@spbpony.org](mailto:pony@spbpony.org).

### What are “Olympic” and “Cascade” levels?

PONY Baseball divides the Pony Division into two subdivisions:

- Cascade Division is for players who have the commitment to play high quality, competitive, recreational baseball. Cascade teams play 20-25 games during the season, with weekly preseason training starting in January, outside practices starting in March, and games running from April to mid-to-late-June. Games are with Cascade teams from other regional PONY organizations. Cascade teams usually have more 13-year-old players than 14-year-olds.
- Olympic Division is for players who have the skills and commitment to compete at the highest level in the county. Olympic teams play up to 25-35 games during the season, with twice-weekly skills and physical training starting in January. Games run from mid-March to mid-to-late-June. Most games will be with Olympic teams from other regional PONY organizations. Some will be with regional Sandy Koufax ("select") teams. Olympic teams usually have more 14-year-old players than 13-year-olds.

### How many Pony teams does Seattle PONY Baseball have?

Number of teams varies from year to year depending on the number of players registered. For 2010, we plan to field two Olympic teams and as many Cascade teams as needed so that all who want to play have the opportunity.

### Who are the coaches?

Pony teams are coached by highly capable, highly motivated, and experienced coaches. Some teams are coached by dedicated volunteers, but because the level of play is higher and because of increased time demands, a smaller pool of people are able to commit to coaching Pony as volunteers than in the younger divisions. Coaches of most of our teams are paid a stipend for their services. Coaches committed to Olympic teams in 2010 are Zak Rosencrantz and Corey Allen. Cascade coaches will be named later.

### **What about tryouts?**

Competitive tryouts are used to select players for Olympic teams. There is a series of tryout sessions in August and September for Olympic selection. Players who wish to play Cascade and are not interested in Olympic do not need to attend the tryout sessions. Skills assessments are conducted in early spring to build Cascade teams (winter training is provided for Cascade players as a group with all coaches participating, as specific teams are not yet formed).

### **What is the tryout schedule for 2010 Olympic teams?**

The 2010 Olympic teams will be selected through a series of tryouts in August and September 2009:

Wednesday, August 19 – 5:00-8:00 Rainier Beach Playfield, 8802 Rainier Ave. S.

Sunday, August 30 – 2:00-5:00 Montlake Playfield, 1618 E. Calhoun St.

Sunday, September 13 – 2:00-5:00 Rainier Beach Playfield, 8802 Rainier Ave. S.

All candidate players are encouraged to attend as many sessions as possible. To be considered for an Olympic team a player must attend a full tryout session on at least one of the days.

### **Are players cut? What if we are only interested in Cascade?**

Not all players who try out for Olympic teams are selected. Those not selected are assigned to the Cascade program. We are committed to running a Cascade program that gives such players everything they need to improve as players. Often they become leaders of their Cascade teams and get far more playing time in key roles than they would have if chosen for an Olympic team. Thirteen-year-olds who are not selected to Olympic teams will be well prepared for Olympic-level ball the following year when they are fourteen.

Players who do not wish to try out for Olympic teams may register as Cascade players, and are not required to attend the August/September tryouts. We make every effort to make sure that all players who register are assigned to a team; it is very rare that we are not able to place all registrants, and this has not happened in the last five seasons.

### **How many games in the season? What is the practice schedule?**

Cascade teams play 20-25 games in the April-to-mid-June season. Most weeks, Cascade players will play baseball three days, just as in Bronco, but some weeks there may be three games and no practices. There may be some weeks with three games and one practice. Olympic teams play 25-35 games between mid-March and mid-June. Olympic players can expect to play baseball, either game or practice, three or four times per week.

Games are scheduled in an “interlock” with other regional PONY organizations. We have some control over exactly when games are scheduled, but it is generally not possible to guarantee a regular schedule of specific evenings for games each week. Most teams will have games every Saturday.

**Where are the games?**

Home games are in at Bobby Morris Playfield on Capitol Hill, Montlake Playfield, and Judkins Playfield. Away games are throughout the region; longest trips to the north, south, east and west are to Maltby, Renton, Issaquah, and West Seattle, respectively. (And remember, when you play another Seattle PONY team it's a home game even if you're technically the "visitors"!).

**Where are the practices?**

Practice fields for Pony Division teams are at our home fields: Bobby Morris, Montlake, and Judkins.

**How much does it cost?**

We anticipate that 2010 fees for the basic program of January-March training and April-June practices and games will be around \$450 for Cascade and \$750 for Olympic.

**Why does Pony Division cost so much more than Bronco?**

Pony fees include winter training, coaches stipend, and professional, association-certified umpires hired by the league for all home games (two-man umpire crews for Olympic games), none of which are included in the Bronco program.

**Is there a summer tournament (All Star) program?**

Yes, we field age-specific "Senators" teams – one for 13-year-olds and one for 14-year-olds – from the Pony Division. There is a separate, independent springtime tryout for Senators teams. Olympic-level players do not automatically qualify for Senators teams; players who tried out but were not selected for Olympic teams in August are often selected for the Senators. It is not uncommon for a player to decide not to try out for an Olympic team (because of other springtime commitments, etc.) and then to be selected for the Senators. At this time, we anticipate that Zak Rosencrantz will coach the 13-year-old Senators in 2010 and Corey Allen will coach the 14-year-old team.

**What kind of off-season training is there?**

Official (covered by registration fee) off-season training begins in January, including conditioning and indoor baseball activity. Olympic teams train twice weekly January through mid-March and Cascade teams train once weekly. More training can be added, at additional expense, either in the fall or additional days in winter, depending on the wishes of coach and team.

**Are players guaranteed a certain amount of playing time?**

Yes. The specifics are ultimately decided by the coaches for their own systems, with approval from the Division Commissioner. For example, in 2009, the Olympic coach used the following policy: "In each set of 3 games, each player will start one game, play one entire game, and will appear in every game." The following policy has been used for Cascade teams: "All players in good standing will play in the field a minimum of one-third of the innings played by the team each week, and each player is guaranteed a minimum of 5 plate appearances every three games."

### **Why does “PONY” Baseball have a “Pony” Division?**

PONY Baseball was begun at a time and place when Little League did not include players over the age of 12. “PONY” stood for “Protect Our Neighborhood Youth” and it was exclusively for 13- and 14-year-old players. Over time, PONY expanded geographically and added programs for other age groups. “PONY” morphed to “Protect Our Nation’s Youth” and the 13- and 14-year-old division became “Pony” and the other beloved equine-themed names were introduced for other age groups!

### **For what reasons should my player choose Seattle PONY Baseball’s Pony Division over “Select” baseball for 2010?**

- Play locally with friends he or she has played with for several years.
- Great coaches committed to our community-based model.
- Lower cost.
- Guaranteed playing time.
- Seattle PONY Baseball’s community-based program nurtures the person as well as the player and emphasizes the importance of the relationship of the individual to the group. This quality is often missing from select programs, which sometimes create a negative competitive environment between players and parents on the team.