



Can you believe it? Little League games start in 3 days! That's right, the season is already here and Monday will be the start for many of our softball teams as well as our 50/70 baseball teams. The rest of our baseball program has one more week to get in some practice before they start games the week of April 29. The Zeeland Little League website has all of the game information you need including time and location!

In this month's newsletter, I wanted to set some expectations for parents, touch on some great events happening with our softball program, discuss All-Stars, and cover a couple smaller program updates involving volunteer coaches and the website/app updates!

Parent Expectations

As I mentioned earlier, games are starting soon! With that comes nerves and excitement, but more importantly some growing pains. I underline the word growing because that is what we want to make sure all of our players are doing throughout their little league experience. The first few games for teams are usually the hardest, as players are still rusty and some haven't played in a live game in a long time. Players are adapting to live pitching and the speed of the game. Also, the weather hasn't cooperated too well over the past couple of weeks and many teams have gotten very little practice time in.

There will be walks, there will be errors, and there will be "sloppy play". There will also be great hits, great plays, and great pitching. Our hope is that as the season goes on, the players are improving and you are seeing more of the latter. Overall, as I mentioned in our Parent Meeting, the stats that really count for me are smiles, teammate build-ups, and hustle! Expect some bumps in the road early on. When you are home with your son or daughter, work on those shortcomings in the backyard or at a park. Get in some extra swings, work on your pitching mechanics, or just play some catch! If you are interested in additional lessons or clinics, we are constantly updating our website with those opportunities. Personally, as someone who was not a very good ball player at a young age, the best way to improve is to challenge yourself every day to be the best you can be. The more work your kid(s) put in, the better they will get! Don't rely on someone else to get you better, but instead take the accountability to improve yourself every day.

We have a team of Board Members that will be watching games throughout the year and looking for ways we can help the players. Our focus will be on how our coaches are doing in their roles and the skills of the players at each division. This information is discussed at our meetings as we develop and tweak our league structure and rules to better fit our players. One of the larger areas of discussion currently is ways to continue to improve our softball program to put our girls in situations that benefit them the most. The biggest change this year was combining AA and AA+ into one league being all in Zeeland. We look to continue to develop that concept and create a division structure that makes sense in future seasons. Please continue to provide me the feedback that you are seeing, and if you see myself or another board member out there, come say hello.



Softball Events

We have two new events we are working on for our softball program. The first is a FREE pitching clinic being put on by the Zeeland East and Zeeland West Softball Teams. This will be on Wednesday, April 24, at 5:30PM at the Zeeland High School Varsity Fields. **Parents, you should come too!** As I mentioned earlier, the best way for our girls to develop as pitchers is for them to work on it at home. We are requesting that parents come out and listen in as well. There will be current and former pitchers from the program, along with some other experienced pitchers, all there to work with our girls and give them some tips to work on down the road. There is no sign-up required to attend! This event has been posted on the schedules for our AA and AAA softball teams. Unfortunately our Majors teams have games that night in interleague play.

The other big softball event is “**Girls Night Out**” which will be Friday, June 7. In the past, we have invited the AAA and Majors softball teams to Kaat Kids Day at the baseball fields. However, we felt that the softball teams deserved their own event for all the hard work they put in. Therefore, mark your calendars that day for a really fun evening of softball. We are working with the Zeeland East and Zeeland West Softball Teams to put together the event, and will be hosting this at their fields as well! Stay tuned for more details on this as we plan it all out. We will still be having a Kaat Kids Day as well on Saturday, June 8, so also stay tuned for more information on that event as well.

All-Stars

A lot of time has been put into creating a fair, unbiased selection process for our All-Star teams. The process of picking “the best” is inherently subjective, and therefore a lot of time has been put into updating this procedure. The full policy is now posted on our website under the “League Information” tab:



In summary, players that are interested in being selected to an All-Star team must complete the Player Commitment Form. Only players that complete and submit this form by May 17 will be considered for selection. For families that have multiple children in the league, only one form that includes all of the player’s names is required.



From there, the players that completed the form will be invited to a tryout. The only exception is our 50/70 and Juniors Baseball program, as they have smaller numbers and a tryout may not be necessary. Softball will be Saturday, June 1, and baseball will be Monday, June 3. More details will be announced about the specifics of the tryout later in May.

The players who make the team will be selected by a committee. The committee will be composed of the All Star Manager, at least one board member, and other coaches in corresponding divisions that also attend the tryout. The team will be determined based on a vote by the committee, where the top 12 vote getters are selected to the team. There are also guidelines in the policy for rare instances when additional players may need to be added. Our Board will also review the selections to look for any discrepancies or issues throughout the process. The goal of this selection process is to eliminate bias, provide transparency, and do the best possible job of selecting the players most deserving of making the respective teams.

If you are interested in knowing the ins and outs of the process, please take a look at the policy! You will also find a copy of the commitment form in the All-Star section of the website as well. Be sure to read that over and submit it by May 17 if you are interested. If you have any questions about All-Stars, don't hesitate to ask! We will do our best to keep everyone up to date on All-Stars as we continue through the season.

Volunteer Coaches

A new requirement this season is to have anyone interested in helping teams at practices and/or games to go through our background check and concussion testing just like our registered coaches do. I am happy to report that we have had 60 different people sign up to be extra helpers! Our original plan was to provide shirts for the extra helpers, but with the number of people that have stepped up we will not be able to do that this season. However, we will look to account for this next year and hope that everyone coaching this year will sign up again during registration for 2020! If you are still interested in helping, there is a link under the "Coaches" tab of the website called "Sign Up to Volunteer Coach". Fill out the form and you will get an email with further instructions.

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Sign Up to Volunteer Coach

ZLL Coaching

Parents or other volunteers wishing to help with coaching in Zeeland must complete the necessary coaches registration before participating in practices or games. Please fill out the form below and you will be emailed instructions! Let us know if you have any questions or issues.

Enter your first and last name: *

Phone Number: *

+ Add Page



Other News – SI PLAY APP and Zeeland Little League Website

For those that are using the SI-Play app on your smartphone, you may have noticed it is now called “Sports SignUp Play” or “SSU Play”. If your phone still shows the SI-Play app, please go into your app store on your phone and update the application, or search for SSU Play. The software provider for the website and app is changing hands, and with that comes some imaging and name changes. Overall, this change should only bring more support and better features to our app and website to enhance communication throughout the league.

Additionally, if you need to add or update contact information in the Zeeland Little League website, please just send me your name, kid’s names, phone, and email and I can make that update!



Remember, have fun out there and enjoy it! Every time you get a chance to step on a field and play the game is a blessing. Use those opportunities to learn, improve, and let loose a little bit. Be there for your teammates, be a positive contributor to the program, and help Zeeland Little League be the best it can be! I can’t wait to watch some games.

Have a great Easter!

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