

All About Tournaments

Why your team should enjoy the youth baseball tournament experience at The 3&2 Baseball Club of Johnson County

More kids playing more baseball is what tournaments are all about. Tournaments are a fun extension of league play where players get more at bats, more innings pitched and more fielding chances in one weekend than they can sometimes get in two-three weeks of league play. When that happens, players naturally get better. When the proper tournament is entered, it can be a fun and rewarding experience for the coaches, players and parents.

Deciding When to Play

Pre-Season tournaments (April) are a great way for teams to come out of winter and get used to playing right away. A quick three or four game weekend tournament in April will help teams determine what they need to work on as league play begins.

After league play has started and team has had a chance to work out the kinks, *mid-season tournaments (May-June)* are a valuable tool to help judge the progress a team is making. As the season progresses and the team has determined it wants to play in a state tournament, it is helpful that it has played in one-two tournaments leading up to that weekend.

Deciding Where to Play

It is very important that your first experience in tournament baseball be a good one. Traveling to an unknown facility can cause frustration when things do not go as anticipated. It is very important that the coaching staff understand all the tournament rules and nuances of a given tournament so that the team's expectations are met. Factors to consider when deciding where to play include:

- Cost – Make sure you know the total cost of the tournament, gate fees, baseballs provided, sanction fees, etc.
- Location – Is the location convenient for your team? Do you want to travel and stay in hotel as part of the overall tournament experience? Some teams find this to be a great way to vacation and build team unity at the same time. Or, would your team prefer to play in a tournament close to home and not pay travel/lodging costs?
- Facility, fields – Have you seen the facility or have you heard about it from someone else? Are the fields adult softball fields or are they age-appropriate sized? Do pitchers throw off real mounds or are temporary mounds used? Do the scoreboards work or even turned on for the tournament?
- Organization – How good is the communication from the host organization? Do you know all the details going in or are you left with more questions? Is the schedule on-line where you can watch results when you are away from the fields?
- Teams entered – Who is playing in the tournament with you? Are the teams at your competitive level? Is there good variety of teams? Make sure to check the “Look who’s coming” link on most tournament’s web sites.
- History – Does the tournament host have a good reputation in the area? Talking with other teams can usually determine if you can expect a good experience or one that you should shy away from.

Costs

Entry Fees

The cost to enter a tournament can range greatly depending on where it is played, when it is played and how the host organization is structuring the tournament. Typically, in the Kansas City area, the average cost of a

three-game minimum tournament is \$350 for teams under the high school level of play with high school tournaments ranging a bit higher.

Sanctioning

There may be other costs involved in tournament play including the cost to sanction your team with a national organization like USSSA. The \$20-\$25 cost to do this gets your team registered with that organization and allows you certain benefits of that association (expand on this). This annual (August 1-July 31) fee is paid by a team before the first tournament it plays in. This fee is sometimes paid for by the league the team is associated with.

Gate

Depending the facility the tournament is played at, an admission fee is charged for spectators. This is usually more than regular league games as expenses for tournaments are higher than normal league play. The price for an adult admission to tournament games can be as high as \$5 per adult per day. Typically hands are stamped or tickets are given out to allow admittance later in the day if two games are played.

Some tournament organizations are including the gate fee in the tournament entry fee. This allows for all spectators free admittance to the facility as the organization has collected that fee up front.

National Affiliations / Classification Systems / Ages

There are several organizations that teams/leagues can affiliate with for the purpose of tournament participation. In the Kansas City area, USSSA is a popular option. Others include Triple Crown, Little League and Super Series.

USSSA has grown in popularity because of the classification systems it introduced and the widespread tournament offerings. In an effort to rank teams so that like teams play against each other based on overall offensive and defensive strength of the team. Just like in professional baseball, the classifications systems are A, AA, AAA and Major.

For the purpose of tournament play, players cannot turn the next older age before May 1 to be eligible to play on the same age level team.

State Qualifiers, State and World Series Play

Tournament play has a progressive nature to it if a team elects to follow the path. Tournaments in April, May and June are state qualifying tournaments, meaning teams must place so high in the tournament to get a state berth. A and AA level tournaments only require you to participate in a qualifying event to play in the state, and then just participate in the state to play in a World Series. Each classification at each age level has its own qualifiers, state and World Series events. There is no A-level World Series event. Points are earned based on who well a team places in each tournament. Those points help seed teams at State and World Series tournaments.

Formats

Most tournaments are going to be a three-game minimum with a pool-play format. Based on how a team does in pool play, it is seeded for bracket play. On weekend tournaments, games typically start on Friday with championship bracket play on Sunday. Other options are double-elimination (rare) and two-game-pool-play then seed into bracket play. It is important the coaches understand the format and how teams advance from pool-play to bracket play. Teams are typically seeded based on record and runs allowed.