



Position Statement

Little League



The Hills Juniors Executive has considered all the material available to us and have formed the following opinion. This opinion, after extensive debate, was endorsed at a meeting of member-club delegates on June 12th, 2007.

Basic Position

The Little League format has its strengths, and Little League Inc been a hugely successful international operation over many decades. However, we're not convinced that anything about it will develop our sport further in this country, at this time. We're certainly unconvinced that it will help the Sydney junior baseball community in addressing our dual objectives of recruitment and retention.

Simply put:- it's not fixing anything that's broken. Not in Sydney, anyway.

However, we accept that it may benefit other regions of Australia, and perhaps aid the sport's profile at a national level. Anything that has any chance at all of achieving that is worth supporting.

Therefore, we will offer a Little League competition in Hills this summer, and will do what we can to comply with the overall programme goals, in the hope that it will have some wider benefit to Australian junior baseball.

Detail of implementation

This proposal is subject to approval of Baseball NSW, but is our preferred option ...

- We will run our weekend competitions the same as we have done in the past. Same game formats, venues, age-groups and rules.
- In addition to this, we'll offer a midweek or off-season Little League competition in 2007/8, with details yet to be decided, but in broad compliance with the requirements of Little League Inc. It will run after Xmas 2007.
- It will run under Little League rules as far as possible, and use the Little League age/date cutoff of April 30th instead of the current December 31st protocol for our existing weekend competitions.
- Players registered in the U/12 weekend competitions, together with those who do not turn 13 prior to 30/4/08 and those who turn 10 before 30/4/08, will be invited to play in the Hills Little League competition.
- Subject to negotiation with BNSW on costs, we will also try to make the programme attractive for players who are not registered for our normal weekend competitions in 2007/8. This will require a concession from BNSW that recognises that such players will be unable to afford the cost of a full year's affiliation fee.

- Most importantly, this competition will be run as a Pony League, not club-based as is the case on weekends. Players join a single pool, from which they are drafted by team managers on the basis of their skill at trials, and performance in weekend club games. The draft is not public, and the children never know whether they were early or late picks.
- The LL rules require that no League has more than 250 players. Based on past season data, Hills have nearly 400 eligible children, which means we may need to split our LL activity into two Divisions if more than 250 register. We've chosen to do so on the basis of the player's home address (postcode), and not on the basis of his/her club membership. This seems to be the fairest way to split the player-base, and ensures that there's no incentive for a player to change clubs.
- The number of teams involved will depend on the number of children who register for Little League. Similarly, whether both a Major and Minor League are offered will also depend on this.
- We expect that the fee payable for Little League will be levied only upon those players who accept invitations to the programme, and not the entire player-base who might otherwise be eligible.
- The expectation that Hills Juniors will need to split into two Divisions is based only on the number of players who actually register for Little League, and not the total available player-base within our Association.
- If we do split, teams from the Major Leagues in both North and South Division will play each other, not just among themselves.

Conclusion

Although the ABF strategy seems to be to overlay Little League on existing weekend competitions, we just can't support that within Hills. Such a strategy can't help us with recruitment, and has a possible negative impact on retention.

Therefore, we feel that offering Little League as an optional and additional activity for our player-base is more appropriate, in line with similar statements so far made by BNSW.

Peter Schmidt
President, Hills Juniors
June 10th, 2007.