

## Pitch-count Restrictions Pilot Scheme 2007



As adopted from the Southern Youth League Forums, the BBF have decided to run a pilot scheme on pitch count restrictions in the Southern Pony and Bronco Leagues this year and to report their findings against the current system of innings pitched. A review and decision on whether to adopt pitch count restrictions across the leagues will be made post season.

Like every other youth baseball organisation, we currently have restrictions on innings pitched for youth baseball pitchers. Little League baseball around the world has decided to change its pitching rules for the 2007 season, making the actual number of pitches delivered the deciding factor in determining eligibility.

### Background

Recently, researchers and medical professionals in the field of sports medicine have been working to determine if the actual number of pitches thrown (i.e. pitch count) is a better way to regulate pitching in youth baseball. Most notable among those calling for pitch counts has been Dr. James R. Andrews, M.D., medical director at the American Sports Medicine Institute (ASMI) in Birmingham, Ala. Dr. Andrews is the world's foremost authority on pitching injuries and ulnar collateral ligament reconstruction, or, as it is better known, "Tommy John surgery." The ASMI and the USA Baseball Medical and Safety Advisory Committee have worked closely with Little League to create the guidelines for the new regulation. "This is one of the most important injury prevention steps ever initiated in youth baseball," Dr. Andrews said.

"We call upon all youth baseball organizations, including travel leagues, to implement their own pitch count programs in the interest of protecting young pitching arms. Our goal continues to be to educate everyone, particularly parents and coaches, on the potential injuries that can occur from throwing too many pitches," Said Stephen D. Keener, president and chief executive officer of Little League Baseball and Softball

Starting with the 2007 season, pitchers in all divisions of Little League, from age 7 to 18, will have specific limits for each game, based on their age. The number of pitches delivered in a game will also determine the amount of rest the player must have before pitching again. For the past two years, Little League has conducted a Pitch Count Pilot Program to determine the feasibility of implementing a regulation limiting the number of pitches a Little Leaguer can throw in a day, and the rest required before pitching again. Fifty leagues were studied in 2005, and nearly 500 signed up for the program in 2006. "Surveys of those leagues showed the overwhelming majority were able to implement a pitch count without any problems," Mr. Keener said. "They also found that they were able to develop other pitchers who might not have otherwise ever taken the mound. And they found that their pitchers were stronger at the end of the season."

### Suggested rule changes:

Age	Pitch count
14-16	95 pitches per day
11-13	85 pitches per day
9-10	75 pitches per day

A player may not pitch in more than one game in a day.

Exception – A player may pitch in consecutive games if less than 21 pitches were pitched in the previous game.

## Notes

- Each pitcher's pitch count is computed by adding the number of balls and strikes, the number of foul balls hit with two strikes, and the number of fair batted balls. Warm-up pitches do not count towards this total.
- Both teams must designate the scorekeeper or another game official, parent or volunteer as the official pitch count recorder before the start of a game. The pitch count recorder must provide the current pitch count for any pitcher when requested by either manager or any umpire. However, the manager is responsible for knowing when his/her pitcher must be removed. The official pitch count recorder should inform the umpire when a pitcher has delivered his/her maximum limit of pitches. The umpire will inform the pitcher's manager that the pitcher must be removed. However, the failure by the pitch count recorder to notify the umpire, and/or the failure of the umpire to notify the manager, does not relieve the manager of his/her responsibility to remove a pitcher when that pitcher is no longer eligible.
- If a pitcher reaches the limit imposed in while facing a batter, the pitcher may continue to pitch until that batter reaches base or is put out.
- Intentional Walk: Before a pitch is delivered to the batter, the catcher must inform the umpire that the defensive team wishes to give the batter an intentional base-on-balls. The umpire-in-chief waves the batter to first base. The ball is dead.
- Pitchers must adhere to the following rest requirements:
  - If a player pitches 61 or more pitches in a day, three (3) calendar days of rest must be observed.
  - If a player pitches 41 - 60 pitches in a day, two (2) calendar days of rest must be observed.
  - If a player pitches 21 - 40 pitches in a day, one (1) calendar days of rest must be observed.
  - If a player pitches 1-20 pitches in a day, no (0) calendar day of rest must be observed.

### **Additional implications:**

The present rule that British pitchers must pitch at least 3 complete innings per game remains in place.

As a pilot scheme, pitch counts will NOT be a rule at the Youth Final 4 of 2007.