



Southeast Region Annual Meeting
MINUTES
Friday, December 7 - Saturday, December 8, 2023
Embassy Suites
9800 Queensway Boulevard
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

Participants

John Lucas, Southeast Region Commissioner
John Armentrout, Assistant Regional Commissioner
Cherrie Sanders, Southeast Region Secretary
Brandon Currence, Virginia State Commissioner
Dave Cogar, Virginia Assistant State Commissioner
Steve Cohn, Virginia District 8 Commissioner
Doug Strong, Tennessee State Commissioner
Mike Tatum, Tennessee
Jimmy Sanders, ENC State Commissioner
Mickey Davis, ENC Assistant State Commissioner
Joe Lane, WNC Assistant State Commissioner
Sandra Eldridge, Florida State Commissioner
Pat Eldridge, Florida State UIC
Jim Guzdowski, Southeast Region Umpire Consultant
Robert Faherty, Senior Vice-President, Babe Ruth League, Inc.

Welcome and opening comments

John Lucas called the meeting to order and welcomed the participants. He also expressed his appreciation for the work that everyone continues to do to ensure that we have the best program available for the youth of our areas.

2024 SER budget review

John Lucas presented a brief overview of the budget for 2024 based on the expenditures and income from 2023. We are beginning to dip into our reserve funds.

2024 tournaments schedule

An addition - Ocala has agreed to host the 14-Year-olds Southeast Region tournament.

Review of bracket play

The format of bracket play is a Regional decision. Pool-play brackets are no longer posted on the Babe Ruth website. The discussion of tournament brackets to be used in the Southeast Region resulted in modification of Southeast Region Policy 20191001 and Policy 20211020.

Policy 20211020

Policy 20211020 was modified to read that champions will be taken from each State and openings filled in by pecking order. This brought up a problem in the Cal Ripken Division – if a State is low in the pecking order, teams have scattered by the time that they are asked. It was suggested that the first- and second-place teams register and see where the chips fall. Champion and runner-up from the same State should not play each other in pool play. Winner and runner-up in each Cal Ripken age division can advance. They must register as soon as possible. Necessary adjustments will be made to corresponding policies so they are all consistent. This will be tried for a season to see how it goes and can be revisited next year.

Policy 20191002

The Southeast Region currently charges \$2500 and provides a championship banner, winner and runner-up team plaques, and medallions for first- and second-place team members for a total expense of \$600.

Joe Lane made a motion to increase the charge to host all Southeast Region tournaments to \$3000. The motion was seconded by Doug Strong. Motion carried unanimously. The increase will be in effect for 2025.

Policy 20191003

Currently, the host league pays for baseballs. The decision was to leave the policy as is.

Policy 20191004

The question before the group was if the policy should be expanded to allow host to charge an admission fee at the gate. Everyone will have the option of an admission fee at the gate or the team parents gate pass fee. Doug Strong and Jimmy Sanders will confer and bring back a per-attendee price option for the admission fee at the gate.

Policy 20211021

Payments to umpires calling Regional games will remain as they are.

Doug Strong made a motion to increase the travel stipend by \$50 each. The motion was seconded by Brandon Currence and the motion carried.

Time limits for 8s, 9s, and 11s

Doug Strong has supervised two 8-Year-olds tournaments recently and sees no need for time limits. The key is having the umpires keep the game moving.

Joe Lane supervised the 9-Year-olds tournament last year. Average time was 1 hour, 15 minutes. WNC has imposed 1 hour, 45 minutes per game with no time limit in the championship game. Joe's recommendation is imposing a 1 hour, 45 minute time limit for the 9-Year-olds. Specification must be made that at the end of the allotted time limit, the game is considered regulation regardless of the number of innings played. Joe Lane made a motion to impose a 1 hour, 45 minute time limit for the 9-Year-olds with specification that at the end of the allotted time limit, the game is considered regulation regardless of the number of innings played. The motion was seconded by Jimmy Sanders and the motion passed by 3-2. Joe amended his motion to add "Specification must be made that at the end of the allotted time limit, the game is considered regulation regardless of the number of innings played. There will be no time limits on a championship game and no game can end in a tie for the season beginning in 2024." Seconded by Jimmy Sanders, motion passed 3-2. NOTE: No inning shall start after the time limit expires; however, innings that have begun can be completed. An inning begins with the last out of the previous inning.

Sandra spoke about the 11-Year-olds tournament. She did not have any issues with times in the tournaments she supervised, but would not be opposed to a time limit being imposed. Sandra made a motion to include the 11s in the 1 hour, 45 minute time limit. The motion died for lack of a second.

Tournament host contract

The question before the group is should the tournament host contract be modified to allow the host to make a 50% deposit and pay the remainder at a future predetermined time? The consensus was that if John Lucas feels he needs to allow a league to do this, he has that prerogative.

Contingency for incomplete tournament

The question is, should the SER consider contingency plans if a tournament cannot be completed? The consensus was that John Lucas should be able to make these decisions without a policy being in place.

Review Commissioner stipend for those serving as SER reps

After thorough discussion, it was decided that John Lucas can consider individual cases and adjust amount if necessary. The stipend is based on mileage, with an allowance for meals.

Umpire discussion

Jim Guzowski made a presentation dealing with NUA membership costs and benefits.

How can we increase the number of umpires for Babe Ruth? 1. Most don't want to pay the cost of certification. 2. They aren't interested in calling tournaments, only regular season.

Junior umpires are not covered by the NUA insurance; they are covered by league insurance. Tournament contracts should include confirmation that the league has insurance.

Jim suggested that the local leagues have a plan in place to reimburse NUA-certified umpires for their \$65 after they call a certain number of games.

Brandon Currence suggested a scholarship program for their reimbursement.

Sandra Eldridge stated the cost for certification is made up in one game. The leagues should require them to be certified.

Robert Faherty is looking for ways to value up the \$65 certification fee.

Local leagues can help curtail harassment of umpires and keep it to a minimum.

Patches should be available during the second quarter of the year. John Lucas said that we need to follow up on that to make sure that patches are provided.

Policy 20211021

Any change would be effective in 2025. Differing opinions were shared, such as 2-man during pool play and 3-man after pool play. Brandon Currence made a motion to increase to 3-man for entire tournament. The motion was seconded by Sandra Eldridge and was not approved. Brandon Currence made a motion to change to 2-man in pool play and 3-man in bracket play. Seconded by Sandra Eldridge, motion carried unanimously.

Umpires for Rookie tournaments

The question presented was, "Should the SER require that the selected umpires for Rookie and 8U tournaments have a working regular-season knowledge of the use of the pitching machines?"

No changes will be made; however, the priority will be to have four umpires who have worked the machine.

2024 new rules and rule clarifications

Robert Faherty had words of appreciation for John Lucas. John is vocal in providing the opinions shared by the State Commissioners in our Region. Michael Solanik has been appointed as a National Commissioner. Robert is the National Commissioner who oversees the Southeast Region. Jessica LaBella is the service representative for the Southeast Region. She has made it a mission to improve the communication with SportsEngine. Communication concerning safety procedures has ramped up owing to a Virginia player losing his life in a game accident. Recommendations are being formulated and will be shared.

Robert provided everyone a copy of the form used to submit proposed rule changes.

Chartering and registration is open.

Putting a player on second base for extra-inning games was not adopted at the International Board meeting. One Region is doing this as a pilot.

Pitch count protections review

The recommendation that the pitch counts will be announced at the end of each half inning will be included in the agenda used by Regional representatives. Failure to announce does not negate the count. It is the responsibility of the manager and/or coach to ensure that the count is correct.

Review of the Tournament Team Checklist

The decision was to remove the requirements for a copy of the abuse training being included on the checklist. It is already included in the roster requirements. Add - the credentials shall be in the order listed below. All items relating to the players shall be in the same order as the roster. Age groups will be changed once the new rule book is released.

Review managers and coaches meeting agenda

Please stress how important the pitch count is. There were questions about video cameras being placed on the backstop or in that immediate vicinity. John Lucas suggested we add “We require the host to display signage stating no video recording devices in the backstop area.” This will be added to the MTIP and to the managers meeting agenda.

Establish a new Division for Babe Ruth as 13-18

No action was taken as this will be submitted as a change for 2025 International Board meeting consideration.

Reports from State Commissioners

ENC – No gains or losses. No 16-18 team for Regional. They are meeting soon with a startup league for 13-15 and 16-18 ages. All CR State tournaments are played at the same site and at the same time. They are picking up three new softball leagues and Wilmington Little League with 400 to 500 kids involved.

Virginia – Paul Link and John DeYoung have stepped down. Brandon Currence and Dave Cogar have taken over.

Tennessee – Showed quite a bit of growth, especially in softball. Problems with older players participating. Several questionnaires on potential new leagues have been followed up on.

WNC – Increase in tournament team numbers. They added a large former Little League program and have been working with Cherokee Nation with no success so far. A new State Softball Commissioner is in place. They are continuing to work with a softball league with 200+ teams and are also experiencing problems in the older age groups. They created 13-14, 15, and 16-18, garnering more interest.

Florida – Continuing to grow. New leagues in North Florida and a new league in South Florida. They had difficulty with parks who lost lights owing to a hurricane making it difficult to get all their games in owing to darkness. They had 80 teams in their B tournament and are trying a new process to allow more teams to participate. There is a pilot program in South Florida in which the 11s play at same venue as the 12s.

John Lucas asked about T-Ball State tournaments. Florida offers tourney for that age group. Would it be feasible to have a Regional tournament? This will be pursued for 2025.

Reports from representatives at Southeast Region tournaments

Rookies (Doug Strong) – The host had a wiffle ball tournament and tacos for the icebreaker. It was a great tournament.

9s (Joe Lane) – Weather became an issue.

10s (Sandra Eldridge) – Altamonte Springs hosted and did a great job. Rain hindered opening ceremonies and icebreaker.

11s (Sandra Eldridge) – The Host did an excellent job despite medical complications with their President.

12s (Brandon Currence) – Good tournament.

13s (Joe Lane) – Good umpires, one fainted in first inning. There were issues in the championship game between coaches and parents. He suggests not housing teams in same hotel as umpires and Regional reps. There was no medical staff on site and he suggests some form of law enforcement presence on site.

14s (Doug Strong) – Rain was an issue. One parent complained about field maintenance after rain until she was offered a rake.

13-15s (Jimmy Sanders) – Great people to work with, excellent facility. No icebreaker. The managers meeting was held in bleachers (noisy). Using two fields took away umpires' room. Jimmy made a suggestion to avoid the hottest time of day and possibly require cooling or misting fans. Managers did not like the 7-team format, but none had a fix.

16-18s (Brandon Currence) – No issues. Positive report from Paul Link.

SER age-group participation by State, 2022–23

John Armentrout presented reports on Team Participation Summary, Cal Ripken Team Participation, Babe Ruth Team Participation, and team participation projections. There was a question about eliminating the pecking order for Babe Ruth age groups. John Lucas will be making a decision about fill-in teams for Babe Ruth age groups.

Softball

Softball is moving their World Series to Florence, Alabama. We have tried for 3 years to hold a Southeast Region tournament with little to no participation. Any State Commissioner who would like to host an invitational tournament is welcome to do so.

SportsEngine

Any leagues having issues with SportsEngine should go directly to Jessica LaBella instead of going to SportsEngine.

1. Leagues that received promotional pricing from SportsEngine will get same in 2024.
2. SportsEngine has implemented training to help alleviate problems.
3. SportsEngine has completed technical development that was missing in 2023 to where leagues will not have the issues that they did in 2023.
4. SportsEngine has increased help aids and training for leagues to have access on the website 24/7.

5. Jessica and Colleen are leading support with SportsEngine for leagues and meet with SportsEngine counterparts weekly to go over any open items that are reported by staff or leagues.

Leagues are asked to submit rosters as soon as possible so that they are completed by the start of the playing season.

Selection of teams to play in the 10s and 12s World Series

They take the current Regional champions. They take the previous year's Regional champions. They take World Series champions in 9s (to 10s), 11s (to 12s), host (one or two teams); international teams are also invited. The feeling is that the criteria, as presented, are not being followed.

Review of the 2023 Cal Ripken Pilot Uniform Program

Several opinions were expressed. Doug Strong made a motion that we do not participate in the pilot program any longer. The motion was seconded by Joe Lane and carried unanimously.

50-Percent Play Rule

There being no dissenting opinions, the policy will remain in place.

Clarification of suspended game pitching rules

This will wait until the new rule book is released.

Clarification of the tiebreaker rules

No action was taken on this topic.

Miscellaneous

John Lucas is placing another shirt and cap order. If you would like another shirt or cap, please let him know your size.

Doug Strong spoke about the need for a change to the pitch count rule because it is allowing a pitcher to pitch the minimum every day for consecutive days. Coaches need to be mindful. This needs to be submitted to headquarters for clarification.

District Commissioners should be informed that if they want to submit a rules change, they should submit their proposed change to their State Commissioner who will, in turn, submit it to the Regional Commissioner.

Adjourn

Dave Cogar made a motion to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Cherrie Sanders, Secretary