

THOROLD MINOR BASEBALL

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Thorold Minor Baseball Return To Play Protocols: Adopted June 14h, 2020.

(These protocols have been adopted by the Board and are a compilation of Thorold Minor Baseball decisions and Baseball Ontario's Return To Play Protocol. In the event that this protocol contradicts or is unaligned with Baseball Ontario's protocol, Baseball Ontario's protocol shall be enforced, take precedent and force a change to this document.)

Baseball in 2020 will look different, and many associations have cancelled their all-star and house league programs. Thorold Minor Baseball has endeavoured to "save" our season. With this said, games will look very different but will continue to be focused on development, learning, fun and safety. Thorold Minor Baseball has put together a "non-interlock" practice, training and game model that will allow a return to baseball. It will be modelled similar to "move-up" and "intersquad" games. A full explainer video will be released, and we feel that this will be the best and closest model to resemble authentic baseball game activities.

Below is a summary of the Baseball Ontario "Return to Sport," protocol and Thorold Minor Baseball has added additional precautions and safety measures. Thorold Minor Baseball will adopt Baseball Ontario's protocol in full and will continue to increase the safety measures as it sees applicable.

The situation with COVID-19 is changing rapidly, and we will continue to be guided by the proper authorities, public health officials and Baseball Ontario. If we are required to reduce or suspend activities once we have started, there is no guarantee that Thorold Minor Baseball will be able to provide full refunds. Players and guardians will be required to acknowledge the protocols, the risk assumed, and the understanding that there could be a scenario where once the season begins, it could be halted or cancelled without a 100% refund.

What We Need To Proceed:

- Niagara will need to move into Phase 2 with the Province reopening
- Social gatherings limits increased beyond 10 for practices, beyond 40 for games with spectators
- Baseball Ontario will need to clarify and/or grant associations the ability to return to games and not just practices and training
- The City of Thorold will need to reopen baseball facilities fully and work with Thorold Minor Baseball on protocols
- Thorold Minor Baseball will need to be able to secure the required PPE and sanitizer to fulfill the protocol and policy
- Thorold Minor Baseball registration numbers need to sustain viable numbers in the divisions that return to play
- Thorold Minor Baseball will need to rely heavily on coaches, board members and parents to help manage and adhere to the outlined protocols.

Insurance, Waivers, Town Hall

- Thorold Minor Baseball has secured its Insurance through Baseball Ontario once again. The Insurance is effective June 12, 2020.
 - The 2020 Baseball Ontario insurance DOES NOT cover communicable diseases, COVID-19 or the like.
 - Players 18 and over or guardians of players 17 and under will be required to sign the following before being allowed to participate in Thorold Minor Baseball activities for 2020.
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- A waiver that outlines that they will adhere to the Baseball Ontario "Return to Sport" protocols that Thorold Minor Baseball has adopted, that they will actively self-screen themselves, their players and their spectators in accordance with the regulations in the protocol, that they will disclose and follow procedural requirements should they fail the self-screening
 - <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/>
- Indemnity form that outlines that participants, guardians and families will hold harmless Baseball Ontario and Thorold Minor Baseball should they contract a communicable disease, COVID-19 or the like.
- Rowan's Law concussion policy awareness.
- *Thorold Minor Baseball will host a "virtual" parent, guardian, player session to outline this document and how play will look for the 2020 season.

Provincial Stages, Public Health, City of Thorold, Facilities

- Baseball activities will be scheduled 45 minutes apart to ensure that there is adequate time for cleaning, sanitizing and maintaining the facilities.
- When players and spectators are scheduled for the 2nd or 3rd event at the facility, they must remain in their vehicles or physically distanced OUTSIDE of the venue until the last person from the activity before them has left, as to avoid the potential of cross-over contamination.
- Each team entering the facility shall be responsible for cleaning any common touchpoints upon entry and exit of the facility.
- There will be no concession stands open during the 2020 season until further notice unless the Provincial gathering limit has been increased to 250 or the City of Thorold is operating the concessions while following public health guidelines and regulations.
- Spectators are encouraged to bring their own chairs, as there is no guarantee that the City of Thorold or Thorold Minor Baseball can adequately clean and continue to clean bleachers.
- If a Baseball activity is delayed once it has started for any reason, players and spectators are required to return to the vehicles while the delay is in place. If someone does not have a vehicle, they may shelter in a safe location but must maintain proper physical distancing.

Cleaning, Sanitization

- Thorold Minor Baseball will use sanitizer or disinfectant wipes with 70% or higher alcohol as well as clean microfiber cloths available at each practice, training session, scrimmage or game.
- *Each session will have no less than one (1) coach, parent or association member assigned as the "sanitization coordinator" who will have gloves and a mask on. They shall be responsible for sanitizing items before, during and after the session.
- Sanitization must be completed by a member that is over the age of 18.
- To minimize waste and contamination, all players and attendees will be asked to NOT bring disposable water bottles and will be asked to keep all garbage or waste with them in their bag until they leave the park.
- All trash and debris will be removed by the "sanitation coordinator" before exiting the facility.
- *Thorold Minor Baseball will be working in conjunction with the City of Thorold staff to ensure that the ballparks and facilities are cleaned and maintained regularly, as outlined by public health recommendations and regulations.

- More information about the sanitization of equipment will be covered in the practice, games and scrimmage sections.
 - Baseball Ontario has removed the requirement to sanitize the physical baseballs and is following best practices that during games/scrimmages, players, coaches must sanitize their hands after each defensive inning or after they have completed their turn at-bat. During practices, all engaged participants must sanitize their hands every 30 minutes or sooner if a coach deems that it is necessary.

PPE (Coaches, Players, Spectators)

- *Coaches are required to wear a PPE mask or face shield, and PPE gloves at all times.
- Players are encouraged to wear a PPE mask when not in a live-game situation.
- Players are allowed to wear a PPE mask during play if they are comfortable so long as the mask is in good repair, appropriately worn, and they continue to maintain proper distancing.
- Spectators are encouraged to wear PPE masks when in the facilities.
- *Spectators are required to remain no less than 2 meters from all fences, gates, and out-of-bounds lines or playing field entry points.

Player Requirements

- Players shall not share batting helmets, hats, catcher's gear, batting gloves, baseball gloves or any other equipment that is not a baseball, bat or bases.
 - Equipment which must be shared will be sanitized between each use by a coach or assigned member, excluding baseballs,
- The player can wear a PPE or Homemade mask during baseball activities so long as the mask is in good repair, appropriately worn and IS NOT WHITE or GREY.
 - It is encouraged that players try wearing a mask during practice, training or when they are idle for extended periods during baseball activities.
 - EVEN WITH A MASK, PLAYERS MUST MAINTAIN THE 2 METER PHYSICAL DISTANCING WHEN NOT IN A LIVE BALL GAME SITUATION.
- *Players are asked to have batting gloves on both hands while they are batting and are encouraged to disinfect them after head use.
- *All personal baseball equipment must be stored in a personal bag or storage unit provided by Thorold Minor Baseball (this is to be determined).
- Players are prohibited from:
 - Spitting, including water
 - Chewing gum or seeds
 - Sharing water, drinks, or food (this includes pre/post activity team snacks)
 - No handshakes, fist or chest bumps, high fives, hugs, kisses, etc. (Dancing will be allowed, we are not monsters)

Parent, Guardian Requirements

- Baseball Ontario requires that guardians, spectators, guests will be limited to 1 per player until the Provincial group gathering limit has been set at 100.
 - *Thorold Minor Baseball is looking into a "live-feed" option for spectators, family and friends to view baseball activities from their computer, tablet or phone.

- Non-participant attendees must sign-in each time they enter the facility to observe a game, practice, training session or the like.
 - The attendance tracker will be maintained by a designated coach or association assigned member.

Practices, Games, Scrimmage

Dugouts

- Dugouts will not be used during practices, games or scrimmages.
- Players will be required to bring a chair with them to games and scrimmages.
 - Thorold Minor Baseball is looking into a storage/seat alternative and will have more information as it is available.
- Spectators are prohibited from entering the playing field, player areas or training areas without being requested by a coach or official, or if they are assigned a role by the coach or official.

Practices, Training

- Practices and training will be conducted in groups of 3-4 players plus a coach. Groups will be distanced (approximately 20-30 feet) from each other using a "zone" system in the fields.
- Players and coaches must ensure that they are 2 meters (6ft) apart during warm-ups, stretches, drill walk-through, pre-game and post-game gatherings and while not engaged in active drills.
- During drills that require players to be closer than 2 meters, they will be asked to finish the drill, and then move back to being 2 meters apart.
 - Coaches will endeavour to develop drills that avoid close contact where possible.
- Players and coaches must sanitize their hands every 30 minutes at a minimum.
 - Players and coaches are asked to use proper sneezing/coughing recommendations, such as using their elbow or using a tissue. Players and coaches are required to re-sanitize their hands if they sneeze or cough on their hands or if they have transferred droplets to their hands.

Game and Rule Changes

- There will be no lead offs in any division, which aims to limit fielders' holding runners and aims to limit the congestion around bases between live ball plays.
- *In Sr. Rookie, there will be NO catcher used in the game. A hitting net will be used to collect the pitched balls.
- *In Mosquito, there will be NO catcher used in the game. A hitting net with the "9 strike zones" displayed will be used. Because of this, there will be NO stealing of bases in Mosquito this season. There will be two buckets behind the Pitcher mound.
 - 1) Unused balls
 - 2) Used balls. After each live ball situation, the pitcher will return the live ball to the USED BALL bucket and begin the next at-bat from the UNUSED BALL bucket.
 - The pitcher will be encouraged to receive live balls with their ball glove and drop that ball into the USED BALL bucket.
 - At the end of each inning or when their UNUSED BALL bucket is depleted, a coach will retrieve the non-live balls that are in the "catcher net" to replenish their UNUSED BALL bucket.
 - Once all UNUSED BALLS are depleted, the pitcher will then use the USED BALL Bucket and start a new collection of USED BALLS repeating this process.
 - The pitcher MUST sanitize their hands after each offensive inning.
 - The goal of this process is to limit the number of times the same ball is used in play.

- This rule may change as we determine the viability of cleaning the catcher's equipment or the risk in assigning one player to be the catcher for the entire game.
- After each at-bat, players are PROHIBITED from retrieving the bat from the hitter in front of them. A coach or assigned member must retrieve the bat and sanitize it. No batters shall be allowed to use the same bat, back to back.
- Sr. Rookie will have a 12ft circle (instead of 8ft) around the pitching machine, and one coach will be assigned as the machine operator for the entire game. This coach will have two types of buckets of balls: 1) Unused balls, 2) Used balls. After each live ball situation, the coach will return the live ball to the USED BALL bucket and begin the next at-bat from the UNUSED BALL bucket.
 - *The coach feeding the machine will also be the UMPIRE for the game and shall make all calls from within their 12ft circle; therefore, the coach feeding the machine should be knowledgeable of the rules, and when possible, have umpire experience.
 - The coach will be required to wear a mask and PPE glove on the hand they are feeding balls into the machine with. They will also be required to wear a baseball glove on their non-feed hand.
 - They will receive live balls with their ball glove and drop that ball into the USED BALL bucket.
 - At the end of each inning or when their UNUSED BALL bucket is depleted, they will retrieve the non-live balls that are in the "catcher net" to replenish their UNUSED BALL bucket.
 - Once all UNUSED BALLS are depleted, they will then use the USED BALL Bucket and start a new collection of USED BALLS repeating this process.
 - The coach feeding the machine MUST sanitize their hands after each offensive inning and will be responsible for sanitizing the machine before and after the game or session.
 - The goal of this process is to limit the number of times the same ball is used in play.
 - It is suggested that the same coach be used each game to refine the process, so it becomes second nature.
- Pitch counts will continue to be tracked in 11U and up; however, it is encouraged that electronic pitch counting via OBA ON DECK APP is used and is interacted with by one designated counter per team.
- Players may not lick their fingers, spit on their hands, spit into the gloves, chew their nails, blow on their hands or otherwise go to their mouth.
- *Any players found doing this will be asked to stop the game, sanitize their hands or be replaced for that inning.
- Tag plays are still allowed; however, defensive players should vacate the area as soon as reasonably and practicably after applying a tag. In the event that there is substantial contact or touching during a tag or defensive play, all players involved are required to sanitize their hands and any equipment that was likely exposed to respiratory droplets.
- Mound visits must be conducted 2 meters apart and may only include the pitcher and one coach. Players are not permitted to conduct mound visits with each other.
- Trainers or any coach attending to an injured player MUST wear gloves and a PPE mask.
- Pitchers and catchers warming up in the bullpen must maintain 2 meters distance at all times.

Pre-Game, Post-Games

- There will be no pre-game or post-game ceremonies permitted.
- Pre-game meetings at home-plate will take place 2 meters apart and will be limited to coaches and umpires.

- Teams are required as this document outlines to properly sanitize and clean the facility before, during and after baseball activities.

This document may alter, be updated, redacted or amended, as the pandemic realities are fluid, ever changing and best practices are refined and recommended.