
Cal Ripken Discussion

Posted by Darin - 2008/04/28 16:21

For many years our city has played Little League Baseball. There is a current proposal being discussed to switch our charter from Little League to Cal Ripken. There is a lot of support for switching to Cal Ripken. If you have any questions or comments, please use this forum to discuss them.

For those who are unfamiliar with Cal Ripken Baseball, the link to their site is below:

<http://www.ripkenbaseball.com/>

Our park will have to supply an official vote soon, let me hear your comments.

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Re:Cal Ripken Discussion

Posted by Darin - 2008/04/28 16:21

We will have a Q&A session at Wing's restaurant with the District and State Commissioners of Cal Ripken at 7:30 4-23-08.

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Re:Cal Ripken Discussion

Posted by jckramer - 2008/04/29 02:05

I wasn't able to make the meeting, as I am sure there were a few others that were also not able to attend. I've been to the Ripken web site and did not find the answers I was looking for. You say the city is looking to change to Ripken. Why? What are the benefits, is it cheaper, safer, better insurance? I have found nothing that would make me want to vote one way or the other. What are the rule differences between LL and Ripken? Where can I find this information?

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Re:Cal Ripken Discussion

Posted by darin - 2008/04/29 11:47

Some highlight that impressed me:

It's really a decision the city has given to each park to consider. The city will support what the parks want to do. With that said, there is a lot of momentum to switch to Ripken.

The city sanctions with Babe Ruth for 13-yr and above. Ripken uses the same rule book as Babe Ruth baseball. Our kids can play from the same book at 4-yr old thru 18-yr old. Obviously, there are adjustments for various age groups but it's all contained in the same book.

Ripken has sanctioned post season for all ages. LL only sanctions 9/10 and up. In Ripken, you can actually go to a state tournament in T-ball. What a blast for the kids. Post season for T-ball is prohibited in LL. As of now, LL won't allow 4-yr olds to play. In the city of Huntsville, the 4-yr old boys have to play on the softball side. Ripken allows 4-yr olds to play baseball.

As for 11/12-yr olds, Ripken offers a Majors 60 and/or Majors 70. Majors 60 is basically what we play under LL. Majors 70 moves the mound back to 50' and bases back to 70'. It also allows for lead-offs and normal baseball rules (balk, dropped 3rd strike, etc.) Ripken offers both, LL shuns lead-offs, etc. The kids just love leading off. It would be great to have either option available for kids that are 11 & 12.

LL has become very strict and mandated lots of rules (some so strange that they've had to rescind them only weeks after making them mandatory) on leagues over the past couple year. Ripken has been the group growing by leaps and bounds due to their kid friendly rules and less intrusive management style. Ripken has really been asking the leagues for input on what works best for the kids. LL has taken the stance that they will dictate to you what their experts say works best. That's been really hurting their relationship with existing leagues. Lots of cities in Alabama have switched to Ripken. Madison and Monrovia have become Ripken leagues. Most of Mobile (traditional LL stronghold) have switched.

I think Ripken is meeting a market need where they are providing rec ball needs at a level that is changing the face of baseball. Leagues that have gone to Ripken have seen a steady growth of player return from travel ball. Travel ball is

huge but burdensome and expensive. Ripken is offering the best of both travel and rec by their structure.

Let's keep the discussion going.

Re:Cal Ripken Discussion

Posted by jckramer - 2008/05/01 09:48

Thanks, that is what I wanted to know.

Re:Cal Ripken Discussion

Posted by darin - 2008/05/01 12:14

One additional piece of information:

We are going to run a city wide pilot program for Cal Ripken during Fall Baseball. We will play normal games (T-Ball, CP, Minors) at our park (like in years past) and probably play Majors70 games at John Hunt park. After the pilot season this fall we are going to get together and vote/decide on whether to play Cal Ripken or Little League next Spring. Planning is still being done. I'll let everyone know more as it unfolds.

Re:Cal Ripken Discussion

Posted by Jim Morris - 2008/05/06 16:24

Something I think needs to be pointed out in a move to Cal Ripken is that it means fewer kids at our park. If the 11-12 year old boys are playing on 70 foot bases and go to John Hunt Park to do so, then we have quite a lot fewer games and boys down at Fern Gully in the future. I would say based on current year numbers, we are talking about 55-60 fewer boys in the American League baseball program as it exists today. And 5-6 fewer teams playing on the 7 fields that make up Fern Bell and Fern Gully.

My son is 13, and has moved on to Sandhurst, so none of this makes a difference to me personally. However, I think everyone needs to think about this aspect of it too. Are you ready to send the 11-12 year old boys off to John Hunt or Sandhurst Park?

Can the 11-12 baseball be played at Fern Bell/Gully? I saw something about both 60' and 70' field options for that age division....

Jim

Re:Cal Ripken Discussion

Posted by darin - 2008/05/06 18:21

This is another good discussion point. We are going to play Majors70 at John Hunt this FALL but if we adopt to go to Cal Ripken for next spring, each park will have a field that will accomodate 70' bases for games. There are many ways to do this. They will probably need to cut the infield out a little deeper and set a second set of anchors. There are ways to configure the mounds to have both 46' pitching rubbers and 50' pitching rubbers. The city is even considering using temporary mounds that they can move easily. I don't see this as "less" players but MORE players in our park next spring. We will probably attract kids who are playing exclusive travel baseball to come back to the park.

Bottom line, we will have a field that can be used for either 60' bases or 70' bases for very little cost.

This won't be any different than some fields are currently. For example, we can set bases at 50', 60', 65' and 70' on Fern Bell South and we have multiple pitching rubbers on most softball fields. This will just make our fields more versitile.

