

# Junior Cougar Baseball Club

## Our Organization

The official feeder club of John F. Kennedy High School in Cedar Rapids, IA

## Our Mission

The mission of the Cedar Rapids Junior Cougars is to provide boys and men that are Kennedy High School-bound student-athletes an opportunity to learn baseball in a respectful environment. We would like to do so in a manner that allows them to compete against the best competition in preparation for high school baseball, where they will then compete for a state championship every year. We operate with a board of directors whose task is to help guide our athletes to success in what we believe is the best feeder program in the state of Iowa.

## Our Philosophy

- Have fun while developing a love for the game
- Improve every day as a student-athlete
- Exhibit good sportsmanship in both victory and defeat
- Learn to play the game the “Cougar Way”

## Organizational Goals

### Community Goals

The objective of Jr. Cougar Baseball is to instill in the children of our community the ideals of good sportsmanship, honesty, loyalty, courage and respect for authority, so that they may be well adjusted, stronger and happier children and will grow to be good, decent, healthy and trustworthy citizens.

### Baseball Goals

It is the goal of Junior Cougar Baseball Club to set-up 2-3 teams at each age group. Optimally; all teams would compete for a title in their respective classification level. These levels vary in their mix of competitive and developmental; however this is a program for players willing to give maximum effort, which includes evaluations. We do not currently offer “rec league” teams. The

Junior Cougar Baseball Club Board of Directors will work with coaches to place the teams in the most appropriate classification level. The number of teams at each age group is dependent on the number of players at each age group that join the club. The Junior Cougar Baseball Club participants from any school, but preference will be given to those attending Kennedy HS “feeder schools” (Viola Gibson, Hiawatha, Nixon, Pierce, Harrison, Madison and Maple Grove Elementaries).

### **Coach’s Role**

Our coaches are all volunteers. All our coaches are selected based on their ability to lead the team. While skill sets vary, all are passionate about the game, and educating all on how to respect the game and do it the “Cougar Way”. Through clinics and continued evaluation, all coaches are also coached on how to get better themselves. While flexibility is given to them to run their respective programs for the general good of all, no coach will mistreat any player in a way that is counter to the “Golden Rule” – treat others as you wish to be treated.

Inappropriate language, abusive physical actions, abusive verbal actions, derogatory comments, or similar behavior by a Head or Assistant Coach during practice or a game will not be tolerated. The Jr. Cougar Board in its sole discretion both for first time and repeat offenders may immediately execute actions including suspension and/or termination from the program.

### **Parent’s Role**

Parents are a vital part of the team. You are as important to the success of the team as the players are.

The Expectations:

- Be supportive of your child’s coaches, all players on the team, and, of course, your own child.
- Negative comments in front of your child or others on the team about any of these three parties inhibits improvement. Disrespect will not be tolerated, and repeat offenders risk suspension and/or termination from the program at the sole discretion of the Jr. Cougar Board.
- Parents are asked to adhere to their team’s schedule and continually communicate with the coaching staff regarding injuries, absences and conflicts.
- All parents need to know that every coach has an open-door policy.
  - At the lower ages (7U – 10U), parents should communicate with coaches as they see fit.

- At the older levels (11U – 14U), we ask that the player get involved with communicating on issues of playing time and / or position. This is standard practice at nearly every high school in the country, and most certainly at Kennedy High School. It allows your child the opportunity to develop interpersonal skills, work through the conversation in a logical manner (versus an emotional manner), and gives them the opportunity to directly hear from the coach. Certainly, these conversations can include parents, but let your child take the lead.
- Parents are asked to understand and respect the “24-hour rule”; please refrain from conversations with members of the coaching staff regarding your child’s role during a game / tournament until 24 hours has passed since the conclusion of the last game. Calmer heads always prevail!
- Please offer your services, as everyone serves a role and is expected to pitch in. Roles might include: Field Prep, Travel and Hotel Planner, Fundraising Coordinator, Treasurer or even shagging fly balls. The coaches will be appreciative of your talents and your help.
- Your child’s position on the team is very important so please use absences diligently, and responsibly. Please try to plan vacations around the season’s games and practices. We keep the number of players on the roster down to increase the number of practice and game repetitions the players receive. However, a disadvantage of this is realized when we have multiple families leave for a vacation, leaving us shorthanded for games / tournaments.

### **Players Role**

- Have Fun. Baseball is a hard sport and a harder one to master. Failure is a large part of this game, it’s easy for them to hang their heads. We want these athletes to learn the life skills required to find the fun within the difficulty.
- Be Prepared. Learning is not always fun, nor is it necessarily supposed to be. There are going to be times when practices will be tough and we will ask your child to do things new to them. We do not expect, nor will we ever expect them to pick up a concept the first few times that we go through it with them. However, the coaches will make every effort to teach your child in ways that will reach them and make learning the skill fun for them.
- Actions. We ask them not to “goof off” in practice or games, since this takes away from their learning as well as the learning of others. “Goofing off” can cause injuries to your child, and injuries to other children. It is not only the coach’s time that they are wasting; they are wasting their time to learn.
- Hustle. We firmly believe that hustling will make up for mental mistakes most of the time. We don’t care if a child makes a mistake, since those can be corrected in practice or with repetition. However, it is our position that the lack of hustle hurts the team.

- Sportsmanship. The Junior Cougar organization, while not perfect, does have a very solid reputation of players, coaches, and parents conducting themselves in a respectful, sportsmanlike manner at games and tournaments. That being said; there is room for improvement in this area. Please remember that this is youth baseball, with amateur umpires who are doing the best they can on any given day. If we can all follow the golden rule of treating others as we'd like to be treated, there would not be any issues with sportsmanship.
- Gear. Each athlete is expected to be in appropriate attire, every time. This means game days and practice days. There will certainly be days that your coach decides game whites or game green, practice shirts or sweatshirts, just bats or gloves and maybe even a shorts day. This is dictated by the coaches and the expectation is for the players to adhere to that. Some coaches ask that parents help their kids with gear, while others specifically request that parents DO NOT carry the gear. This is another area where we ask that you respect the coaches wishes as he/she is trying to instill a life lesson to the student athlete.

### **21st Century Notes**

- Umpires are hard to find and even harder to retain. Much of it has played out before our eyes on the various social media outlets. Their mistreatment will not be tolerated and the consequences noted above for coaches, parents and players applies here as well.
- Nearly all teams utilize apps to run the team's communication, scheduling and game experiences. Please be prepared to download, sign in and use the app. If you do not know how to do any of that it is imperative you ask other parents or coaches to assist you.
- Practice and field time is precious. Please be on time so your athlete can be ready to fully maximize their hands on time. "Cougar time" means 10 minutes earlier than scheduled – "if you arrive 5 minutes early, you are 5 minutes late".
- Kids events are scheduled at what seems like a razor's edge margin between events. All of us with kids have felt the time pinch more and more. We do ask however that when baseball is in-season (April – July) we expect it to be the priority sport (Middle school sports take priority during April and May).
- Practice locations are assigned by age group. Fields are difficult to acquire and access, so teams may need to practice at multiple locations throughout the year. Teams using ANY facility including fields are responsible for their maintenance and upkeep, which is the responsibility of all families and not just coaches. There are so many teams and organizations that the decision-makers at these facilities are able to pick and choose their "tenants"
- The end of season tournaments have been creeping farther and farther back in July, please confirm dates with coaches before making any plans.

- Our Organization uses a color coding system for its teams: Gold, Green and White.
- USSSA uses a rating system: Major, AAA, AA and A.

### Scheduling

There are 3 components to a youth baseball schedule:

1. Practice. Typically twice per week, but could be 1-3.
2. Games. Most teams play in a league called “PST”, the scheduling meeting is typically in early March. These games are typically played in Cedar Rapids-Iowa City and the surrounding areas. These can oftentimes be the game time reps where coaches or teams will try things they have been working on. Mostly weekday evenings.
  - Your team’s schedule will be finalized following PST (Positive Sports Training) League meetings held in late Feb or early March.
  - The organizational are calculated with the plan that each team plays 50% home games and 50% away games
3. Tournaments. Most teams play in 4-8. Typically 2 day events. These could be in “The Corridor”, Quad Cities, Des Moines or anywhere else you want to play. These tend to be those times where the boys are most tested and competition is at its greatest. The kids tend to remember these the most. The most famous being The Iowa State Tournament. These are typically weekend games. Most tournaments are sanctioned by USSSA whose rules everyone should become familiar with.
  - Tournaments are scheduled at the preference of the head coach and team, collectively. If you have known conflicts please let your coach know ASAP.

Knowing our intent is to promote playing winning baseball over simply settling for winning baseball games, all teams are encouraged to compete at the highest level possible to experience the toughest baseball schedule possible. Please note: there is a fine balance between beating everyone without much effort and consistently losing to very good teams. We ask that coaches work to schedule games that make kids better players versus collecting trophies.

### Fees

There are 2 types of fees that will be due: Organizational Dues and Team Fees.

Organizational: For ages 7U the investment is \$225. For ages 8U – 13U, the investment is \$325. For 14U the investment is variable, depends on number of players

This Investment Pays For:

- USSSA registration fees
- PST League registration fees
- Insurance for players and coaches
- Funds to maintain, repair and replace equipment needed to maintain baseball fields we use
- Fields, chalk, equipment, and materials to conduct practices and games
- Representation at USSSA and PST annual meetings
- Portable restroom services at our fields
- Website services to promote and conduct Junior Cougar activities
- Access to batting cages and bullpen mounds, as well as indoor space
- Access to Coach Bret Hoyer and his staff for instruction and consultation
- Junior Cougar Night / recognition at a Kennedy varsity baseball game
- Game hat
- Organizational Fees including communications, operations, marketing, administration and team stores

Team Fees: Each team at the direction of its coaches will dictate these fees. These will vary year to year for an individual family and team to team within the organization.

They Include:

- Umpires for each league game and if desired, for practices or scrimmages.
- Tournaments
- Team Gear
- Dugout Items (scorebooks, lineup cards, position chart, bat rack, etc...)
- If your team plays 50% home games and 50% away games there will be no additional fees charged back by the organization. IF your team chooses to play more HOME games than away games there will be additional Organizational fees that will be added to your team fees. This rarely happens but some teams do prefer to play at home more often and incur this fee.

**Other cost considerations for each family:**

- You are responsible for equipment needed to play the game, such as gloves, bats, and bags.
- Travel costs including gas, food and hotel is typically NOT included in your team fee estimate given to you by your coach
- Practice and game jerseys are typically ordered and paid for by the parents before the team fees are calculated
- If your team plans on playing fall baseball that would be outside the organization and has a separate fee that is paid directly to the organizer, typically Cedar Rapids Park and Rec.

**When are fees due:**

- \$100 is due prior to evaluations.

- This non-refundable fee serves as your deposit towards Organizational fees. If you are offered a spot on a team.
- The remaining amount due to cover the Organizational fees are due by 11/01 of that year
- All other fees, as discussed within each team, are due as the head coach of each team determines.

### **Fundraising**

- All fundraising efforts must be approved by the board. This applies to initial year and each subsequent year in the case of repeat efforts
- Teams whose fundraiser HAS ALREADY been approved by the board must report the results to the Treasurer of the Board
- In order to receive a receipt for a donation, the team must submit to the treasurer for review
- In order to receive a reimbursement for a donation, the team must submit the receipt to the treasurer for review
- The Board would like to thank donors for any amount contributed on a player's behalf. Please submit these to us so we may give that person/business fair recognition
- No team may fundraise more money than they have allotted, spent or projected for team needs

### **14U Baseball**

- 14u baseball at JFK High School offers a unique experience, 8th graders are given the opportunity to try out for the Freshman team. This dynamic creates a different process than the traditional Junior Cougar Baseball Program.
- All (other than 14u) teams in the organization are created by the organization through evaluations, in an effort to put together teams designed to compete in the appropriate situation for each individual team.
- 14u teams are parent driven. Teams are formed by volunteer coaches and parents. Teams are free to choose their own players, coaches, to decide whether to play league (Pst), tournaments, and even if they want to practice at all. There are no tryouts, no meeting dates and no uniform fittings by the Junior Cougar Baseball Organization.
- The organization provides these teams with the "boring" but critical needs such as insurance, securing gym space and hitting time. This fee (estimated to be \$75-\$125/player depending on the amount of 14U players) is greatly reduced as compared to traditional Jr Cougar teams. All coaches will handle fees and other expenses once teams are developed.

### Player Evaluations

- Evaluations are held anywhere between mid-July and early August. There will be 1-2 sessions for players to attend. Attendance is mandatory.
- Groups of 3 or more individuals with baseball experience will observe and evaluate players. The evaluations will consist of running, fielding, catching, throwing and pitching. The panel will be non-grade related, therefore will be a different (but not unique) panel for each age group.
- The athletes will be scored on a form with numerical values.
- Current Coaches will submit the same evaluation forms to the board for Existing players prior to evaluations these may be used to cross reference if needed
- Teams are then formed based on the results of meetings of the board, they will use evaluation scores, past coach scores and their experience.

### Roster Construction

- We do our best to construct teams that have athletes closely matched to the playing ability of their peers. We will try to best determine the appropriate mix of players and classification. We will use evaluation scoring, prior coach input and team needs as part of our process.
- Teams will consist of 9-11 boys, 12 or more requires board approval.
- There is no guarantee of equal playing time, playing a certain position, or batting in a certain spot in the line-up.
- A spot on a team in the past does not mean that the athlete will be placed on the same team for the following season. Our intention however; is to do the best we can to have each athlete meet their potential and hopefully exceed that.

### Registration

- **All players wishing to attend evaluations and be placed on a team must register prior to the evaluations.**
- The registration fee is due prior to evaluations, there will be no exceptions.
- Registration fees are currently \$100 and are non refundable.
- There is also no guarantee each boy will play on a team each year. If we are unable to place your athlete on any team the registration fee will be refunded. This will be the only exception to the registration fee policy.
- [USSSA Baseball Age Calculator](#) is how we will determine what age group your child will play. Baseball age determination is tricky because it often spans 2 school years for example the 10U team might have 3rd and 4th graders. **PLEASE RUN YOUR CHILD'S AGE THROUGH THE CALCULATOR PRIOR TO REGISTERING**

### Health and Safety



- We, as a member organization of USSSA baseball, use the SafeSport initiative in an effort to provide our athletes unparalleled development and competitive opportunity in a safe environment.
- All athletes deserve to participate in sports free from bullying, hazing, sexual misconduct, or any form of emotional or physical abuse. Our Head coaches will be subject to background checks through this program, a link can be found at [USSSA SafeSport](#)
- Concussion Management:
  - Every team will have at least 1 coach complete and approved training class. Several options are: [IHSAA \(Iowa High School Athletic Association\)](#) and CDC Youth Sports HEADS UP program [CDC Youth Sports Resources](#).
  - Resources are available at [State of Iowa Dept. of Health and Human Services](#)
  - Return to play guidelines will follow [State of Iowa Guidelines \(Administrative Rules, Chapter 54\)](#)
- Arm Care recommendations can be found at [USA Baseball PitchSmart Recommendations](#) and [Iowa HS Baseball manual](#)

### **Fields and Facilities**

Perhaps the most difficult part of youth sports management in the current era is securing space. The Junior cougar Baseball Organization works diligently with The City of Cedar Rapids, Cedar Rapids Community School District, Cedar Rapids Parks and Rec, as well as numerous private schools and facilities to secure a place for our kids to play and practice.

#### **Home Fields**

- **Teams are assigned home fields by the organization, these are non negotiable.**
- Multiple teams will share a home field and each team will be allotted times and/or days of the week that the field is theirs to use.
- Coaches and team parents will be responsible for field prep and field maintenance
- It is advisable for the coaches whose teams share a common field to remain in contact so they may share the burden and responsibilities of this maintenance.
- Coaches will typically ask some parents to volunteer to help in this, it can include mowing, raking infield, moving pitching mounds and the countless other things mother nature can bring to grass and dirt.
- All teams shall leave fields and dugouts free of trash and debris

#### **Indoor**

- Teams will be assigned time slots for winter practice, the board will ask the coaches for requests of days and times prior to putting the schedule together. **Once assigned these are non-negotiable**
- Hitting facility times will be assigned to each team through the end of March, after which time it moves to a registration system

## Notes

- There are times when the board may approve a team to play a greater number of home games. If this is the case the team will not be assessed the additional fees but rather it will be paid by the organization
- Some teams may be assigned multiple fields to be their home field. For example; on Tuesday your team practices at Field A and on Fridays at Field B
- Bases, pitching mounds, field maintenance tools, mowers, rakes, shovels, etc should be put away and locked up before teams leave their facility. This will help the chances they will be available to you and others the next time they are needed.