

Information for Parents, Coaches and the Players who will be 14 during the 2011 competitive baseball season

The 'spring and summer of 14' can be a confusing time for competitive baseball players. This is the last year of club-based baseball. After the season players will go on to play at the high school level. Those of you who are coaches will turn your players over to the high school coaching staffs. The players will have to get to know their new coaches as well as many new teammates. Parents too will have to give-up their control and give their sons to the high school staffs which is sometimes difficult to do. Mandatory bat restrictions of -3 come into play, field dimensions are always 60'6" for pitching and 90' on the bases, no more rule addendums, and competition will include older players. This will all become part of the new baseball adventure.

There are several options and opportunities for players to consider and then decide which is best for them. Hopefully this note describes the general nature of these opportunities.

1. A 14-year-old club team may stay together through the spring and summer. This means that the team would play in the FCBC Northern Colorado Rookie League "short season" league, which is played in April and May against other teams from Fort Collins and the surrounding area. Additionally they may play in some weekend tournaments of their choosing. For the summer they may continue tournament play. This competition is often at very high levels as they play other teams from other cities and states. The players get a good and competitive baseball experience. There may also be some summer leagues (for players entering 9th grade) they may join but may require some travel.

2. The high schools in town may also form 14-year-old teams that will play the following summer with players planning to enroll at that school. These teams can play in the spring NCRL season and must be associated with FCBC – the coaches will not be a part of the high school staff (but may have their endorsement) as the high school coaches cannot have contact with these players during the school year as by CHSAA rules. These teams may be formed in August with tryouts and selections run by the coaching staff of the school. Information can usually be found on each high school baseball's website.

3. A 14-year-old club team could stay together in the spring only, and then disband. These players could then possibly play for the high school summer "C" team. This team often includes some of the ninth graders that were at the school the previous year as well as players from other 14-year-old teams also trying out. Players that do not make the "C" team could possibly play with the 14-year-old HS team that was formed in August of the previous summer (#2 above), if there is room. Not making either of these teams the player may find that he has no options available to play baseball for the summer prior to his ninth grade year.

4. A player may also chose to not join any club team. His options would then be the same as the players listed in #3 above after their team disband.

The Fort Collins Baseball Club strongly recommends that teams and players choose option #1 or #2 above (if the opportunity exists), for the following reasons:

A. These options will guarantee that the player will be playing quality baseball all spring and summer and thus continue to develop skills and experience. The other options have the possibility of not playing for one or both seasons.

B. The high school coaches are not required to select any incoming freshman for their high school summer teams. This may change from year to year depending on the size of the pool of upper class ball players at that school and the coach's philosophy about considering /selecting entering freshman.

C. There are typically around fifty competitive ball players of age 14 in Fort Collins in any given year. Over the past couple of years, only about six to twelve 14-year-old competitive ball players have been selected to play on a high school summer team. Consider these odds in your making your decision.

D. Even if a player is selected for a high school summer team, There is also a possibility that the high school program will not able to find enough players to fill roster spots for all levels (e.g. Varsity, JV, and 'C') players come June 1st. This has happened in the recent past.

E. There is a good chance that a player will get more playing time on a 14-year-old team than he or she will get as a young rookie on a high school team. While 'getting seen by the HS coaches', in the summer certainly cannot hurt, it may not necessarily increase a player's chances to make the team the following spring. A lot depends on the coach's philosophies and the upper class pool.

In our experience, the best approach is to play as much quality baseball as possible in the spring and summer, thereby continuing to improve as a player.

The FCBC – and the four Fort Collins High School head baseball coaches (according to their statements last spring at the FC Rookie League Coaches meeting) - encourage 14-year-old teams and players to 'stay together' through the spring and summer. If your high school will be forming a 14-year old team, we encourage you to try out for that team.

If you are a coach and you choose to continue forward with your current 14-year old team or form a new team (independent of any high school), you may want to have a contingency plan for your team in case some of your players decide to try out for and make a high school team. For example, if 3 of your players are selected for their high school team, leaving your roster short, we suggest that you contact the coaches of other 'independent' 14-year-old teams to work out a plan to combine teams for summer baseball. While some logistics would be difficult, this would be a better option than no summer baseball.

Players choosing to try out for high school baseball, you may want to consider the following points.

1. At some of our high schools, summer baseball includes playing in multiple summer leagues such as Legion, NCCL and the CBL. This means playing upwards of 70 games with anywhere from 6 - 8 games a week. Most game times are 5:30, but in the summer some weekday game times may start as early as 3:30.

2. Players trying to play both on the high school team as well as a club team – while possible, will find many conflicts of games (including double-headers and weather make-ups), tournaments, and practice times. The game totals may be overwhelming as well as coaches may not communicate well enough to monitor playing time, and if a pitcher or catcher, keep a player's arm healthy.

If you have additional questions, please email the FC Baseball Club.

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