

## To Parents and Coaches of FCBC Competitive Baseball Players who will be 14 in the 2010 season,

The 'spring and summer of 14' can be a pretty tumultuous time for baseball players, coaches, and parents. This is the last year of club-based baseball. This is no small event considering that some teams have played together for up to 6 years. After the season, teams will be broken up as the players go to different high schools. 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 these 'new' coaches as well as many new teammates. Mandatory bat restrictions of -3 come into play. High school field dimensions are 60'6" pitching and 90' bases.

That being said, there are several options for 14-year-old baseball in Fort Collins in the spring and summer. This note describes the general nature of these opportunities and makes a recommendation on which one appears best for the players.

1. A 14-year-old club team could stay together through the Spring AND Summer.
  - a. In the Spring, the team could play in the 'short season' (April & May only) NCRL 14-year-old Rookie League (a '60/90' league), and/or play in weekend tournaments (sometimes '60/90,' sometimes '54/80,' depending on the tournament and level)
  - b. In the summer, the team could play in tournaments (either '60/90' or '54/80'), and/or play in a summer 8<sup>th</sup> grade or HS baseball league at a level appropriate to the team's skill level. For example, the American Legion organization has operated a high school Summer Baseball League for many years in Colorado. This past year, they added an 8<sup>th</sup> grade Summer Baseball League (for player's just finishing 8<sup>th</sup> grade).
  - c. Breaking News: For the first time ever, 3 of the 4 high school coaches in town are forming 14-year old teams that will play in the summer of 2010 for that school. [Note that, as is the case with all HS teams in the summer, these will be FCBC teams, NOT PSD teams.] Tryouts for these teams will be in August 2009 with selections being made by the HS coaching staffs. These same teams will also play in the spring as a regular 14-year old FCBC team, but with coaches that are not part of the HS Coaching staff, since this would be a violation of CHSAA rules.
2. A 14-year-old club team could stay together in the spring only, and then disband.
  - a. Spring options are the same as listed above.
  - b. Summer options are limited to trying out in 2010 for the entry-level summer team of the appropriate high school (e.g. the 'C' team). There most likely will not be an opportunity to try out for the HS's 14-year old team (for the 3 schools that have one) since that team will have already been selected in 2009.
  - c. If the player doesn't make a HS team, then there is no baseball at all for that player in the Summer of 2010.
3. A 14-year-old player could choose not to join any club team
  - a. Here the only option is to try out in 2010 for the entry-level summer team of the appropriate high school (e.g. the 'C' team). Again, there most likely will not be an opportunity to try out for the HS's 14-year old team (for the 3 schools that have one) since that team will have already been selected in 2009.
  - b. If the player doesn't make a HS team, then there is no baseball at all for that player in 2010.

The Fort Collins Baseball Club strongly recommends that teams and players choose option #1, and in particular, the new HS 14-year-old team if it exists, for the following reasons:

1. Option 1 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.
2. The high school coaches are not required to select any incoming freshman for their high school summer teams. In a given year, some do and some don't. This depends on the size of the pool of upper class ball players at that school and the coach's philosophy about considering/selecting entering freshman.
3. In terms of numbers, there are typically around fifty competitive ball players of age 14 in Fort Collins in any given year (as measured by the number of players on the previous year's 13-year-old competitive

teams). 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. Therefore, the odds of your player being selected for the high school team are small.

4. Even if a player is selected for a high school summer team, there is a possibility that the high school program will not be able to find enough players to fill roster spots for all levels (e.g. Varsity, JV, and 'C') due to a lack of players come June 1<sup>st</sup>. This has happened in the recent past.
5. There is a good chance that a 14-year-old 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' next summer certainly can't hurt, it may or may not 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 increased experience and skill will come through in the tryouts the following spring.

Therefore, we 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 specifically encourage you to tryout for that team.

If you are a coach and you choose to form your own 14-year old team (independent of any high school), you may want to have a contingency plan for your team in case several of your players do end up on a high school team. For example, let's say that 3 – 4 of your top players are selected for their high school team, leaving only 8 players on your roster. 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 if this happens.

If you do decide to tryout 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, or 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 depending on the opponent's field availability.
2. Some of you may be thinking that an entering freshman could play both on the high school team and the club team. Our experience has shown that this is not a reasonable option. There will most certainly be multiple schedule conflicts between the practices and tournaments for the club team and the practices, league games (including double headers), makeup games, and tournaments for the high school team. Plus, with all the high school baseball going on, the 14-year-old players simply may not have the energy to play 4-6 games in a weekend tournament with their club team. This will be especially true of pitchers. In fact, the high school coaches might restrict their pitchers to only pitching in HS games – from their point of view, that would not be an unreasonable request.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. We hope it has been useful. If you have additional questions, please email the FC Baseball Club.

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