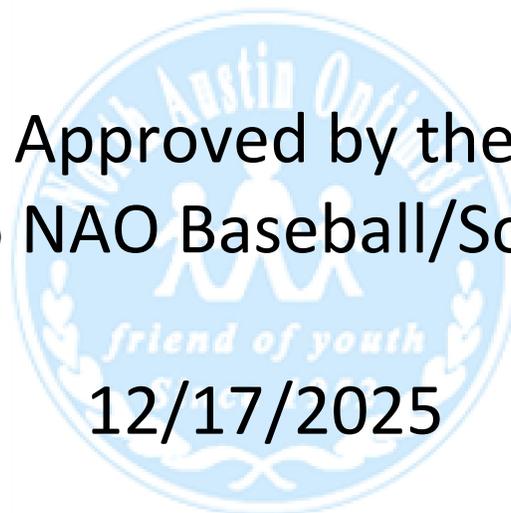


# **NORTH AUSTIN OPTIMIST 2026 BASEBALL/SOFTBALL HOUSE RULES**

Approved by the  
Spring 2026 NAO Baseball/Softball Board



Holly Atkins  
NAO Club President

Holly Atkins  
(Acting) Youth Activities Dir.

John Haller  
Baseball/Softball President

**NAO BASEBALL/SOFTBALL BOARD  
SPRING 2026**

TITLE	NAME
Director of Youth Activities	Holly Atkins (acting)
President	John Haller
Vice President	Andy Benjamin
Secretary & Treasurer	Olga Henson
Player Agent	Sandra Escobar
Registrar	Sandra Escobar
Umpire-in-Chief	Holly Atkins
Schedulers:	
Baseball Softball	John Haller/Olga Henson Eric Faz
Head Team Rep	Dan Hussey
Field/Lawn Equipment Maintenance	Kyle Stoutenger
Awards	Holly Atkins
Fundraising / Sponsors	Jeff Williams
Uniforms	Eric Faz
Banners	Kyle Stoutenger
Field Commissioners	
6U Shetland 8U Pinto 10U Mustang 12U Bronco 14U Pony Softball	Andy Benjamin Scott Summers Micah Rushing Damien DePoister Andy Benjamin Eric Faz
Tournament Director	John Haller
NAO Club President	Holly Atkins

**1. GENERAL INFORMATION**

- a. The NAO Baseball/Softball Board is made up of all volunteers who were appointed to the Board by the Director of Youth Activities and approved by the NAO Club Board of Directors. The duties of the NAO Baseball/Softball board are as follows:

NAO Club President	An ex-officio member of all Optimist Boards and/or committees. Does not have voting authority on the Baseball/Softball board.
Director of Youth Activities	An ex-officio member of all youth boards and/or committees. Carries out such duties and assignments as may be delegated to him/her by the Baseball/Softball board President. Does not have voting authority on the Baseball/Softball board. Oversees the operations of the Baseball/Softball board
Baseball/Softball President	Presides at all Baseball/Softball board meetings. Supervises the functions of the various committees, and sees that the rules, policies, and principles of North Austin Optimist and PONY Baseball are carried out. Only has voting authority in case of a tie.
Secretary	Records the minutes of board meetings and handles league correspondence
Treasurer	Responsible for the collection and disbursement of league funds. Keeps financial records, compiles reports on those records and prepares the league budget with the assistance of the Baseball/Softball board.
Player Agent	Maintains a balance of strength among the teams of the league. Must consistently remind everyone connected with the program that the welfare of the players and the league are paramount rather than a single manager or team. The player agent arranges for and supervises all tryout sessions. He/she shall supervise the distribution of players among teams and shall maintain the player pool during the regular and the All-Star season.
Registrar	Conducts the registration of all players and coaches manually and online. Responsible for collecting all

	league fees of players and coaches with the help of the Division Commissioners.
Umpire-in-Chief	Responsible for obtaining suitable umpires for the league. Receives all complaints relative to umpires and makes suitable recommendations to the Baseball/Softball board. Shall make every effort to register all umpires with PONY Baseball. Will submit to the Treasurer weekly a summary of umpire's payroll.
Schedulers/Tournament Coordinators	Work with other leagues in Central Texas to schedule games for all NAO teams. Also serve as tournament coordinators prior to and during NAO hosted tournaments.
Head Team Rep	Relays all league information from the Baseball/Softball board to the individual team representatives. With the help of the board, organizes opening day carnival, opening ceremonies, picture day and closing ceremonies. Responsible for coordinating and supervising all fundraising activity for the league. Collects all funds related to fundraising.
Field/Lawn Equipment Maintenance	Responsible for making sure that all fields are kept up by the coaches that will be playing on that designated field. Responsible for keeping up the maintenance on all lawn equipment with budget approval from concession stand.
Sponsors/Banners	Responsible for supervising all sponsorship activity for the league which includes securing the sponsors on behalf of each team. Collects all funds related to sponsorship.
Trophies	Purchases trophies for all players as well as team trophies for tournaments.
Uniforms	Coordinates the purchase of all team jerseys and hats for players, as well as t-shirts for parents and family members.
Fundraising	Coordinates all fundraising activities at NAO.
Field Commissioners	Oversee their assigned division and work closely with the Player Agent to make sure that the players are fairly assigned to teams. Commissioners also assist in all tryout sessions, work with coaches and parents of their division to resolve any disputes that may occur and consults with the Baseball/Softball

	<p>President in case disputes need to be escalated. Commissioners are responsible for making sure their division coaches make general preparation maintenance, development and improvement of all baseball/softball fields and make recommendations to the Baseball/Softball Board for suggested or needed expenditures for field improvements. Commissioners set the practice schedule for each field according to the cooperation of the work schedule from each team.</p>
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- b. All problems or issues concerning your team or division must be addressed to your division Commissioner. Issues that cannot be resolved by Commissioner will be elevated to the Baseball/Softball President and board as necessary. Complaints and concerns should be in writing and must be given to your division's commissioner. Any petition that has not gone through the appropriate commissioner will be rejected.
- c. If the NAO Baseball/Softball board rules on a matter, the Director of Youth Activities, Baseball/Softball President and Division Commissioner must all agree in order for the matter to be brought back before the Board.
- d. NAO will follow all PONY Baseball rules related to bat specifications. Coaches are expected to know and abide by these rules. Any bat that does not meet PONY specifications will be removed from play immediately and both teams warned. If an illegal bat is discovered after a warning has been issued, the coach of that team will be ejected.
- e. The North Austin Optimist (NAO) name and/or logo cannot be duplicated or used without prior Baseball/Softball Board approval.
- f. Smoking within the complex is only allowed at the back gate, or in the parking lot.
- g. Definitions of penalties:
  - i. **Coach's Ejection Penalty**: Any NAO coach who is ejected from a game at NAO or while visiting another field is temporarily suspended from coaching until the circumstances of their ejection is reviewed by the NAO Baseball/Softball Board. If the Baseball/Softball Board is unable to meet in a timely fashion (e.g. before the coach's next game), the Baseball/Softball President and Youth Activities Director will review the case, meet with the coach, and determine how best to proceed. The

ejected coach will not have contact with their team of any kind during the game(s) from which they are suspended.

If a coach from another park is ejected, the umpire should stop time, get a board member over to the field to assess the situation and determine if the coach can remain in the park or not for the remainder of the day. The coach's league should be notified of any ejections that occur at our park. After any ejection, a meeting with the umpire(s) on duty and the board should be held to determine if that coach is allowed back or future games.

- ii. **Player's Ejection Penalty**: Any player who is ejected from a game at either our fields or while visiting another field, will be suspended for the rest of that game.
  - iii. **Suspended Coach/Player**: Any suspended coach or player will not have contact with their team of any kind during games. This includes electronic devices. Any coach or player doing so will be dismissed for the remaining season.
  - iv. **Dismissed Coach**: A dismissed coach will have no coaching responsibilities whatsoever.
- h. The Baseball/Softball Board shall have the authority to suspend, discharge, or otherwise discipline any player, manager, coach, umpire, league officer or other person whose conduct is in violation of the Rules and Regulations of PONY Baseball and North Austin Optimist and/or is considered detrimental to the best interests of the league.
- i. Persons subject to such discipline shall have the right to a hearing before the Baseball/Softball Board before such discipline is imposed.
  - ii. In the event of such a hearing involving a player, or other person under the age of 18, that person's parents shall be invited to attend.
  - iii. Before any action is taken an emergency Baseball Board meeting must be called in writing with three signatures in approval. Three days notice must be given to all parties involved and all Baseball/Softball Board members.

## **2. COACH'S APPLICATION PROCESS**

- a. All potential head and/or assistant coaches must be at least 18 years of age and complete a NAO Coach's Application Form. Incomplete applications will not be considered.
- b. The current Baseball/Softball Board will review and either approve or deny the coach applications. Applicants can be denied for any reason that is in the best interest of the organization.
- c. Once the application has been approved, to ensure that potential coaches meet basic established guidelines, the Optimist Club of North Austin will perform a criminal history background check. Anyone not meeting the basic guidelines will not be approved. The Baseball/Softball President will relay the ineligibility to the applicant.
- d. NAO head coaches are volunteers, but will be selected based on their dedication, communication skills, and experience/knowledge of the game.
- e. If two or more coaches are candidates for the same head coaching position, the Baseball/Softball Board will determine the head coach.
- f. In the event that there are more teams than coaches, parents and/or relatives may be asked to volunteer and coach a team but must go through the same process as all coaches do as mentioned above.

## **3. COACH/PLAYER CONDUCT**

- a. Swearing and abusive language is strictly prohibited.
- b. Use of tobacco, illegal drugs or alcohol during games or practices, on or off the field is strictly forbidden.
- c. No enticement will be given to a player by any coach to play for their team.
- d. Heated discussions or arguments by the coaches on the playing or practice field will not be tolerated.
- e. No soft toss against fences.
- f. Umpire judgment calls (balls, strikes, fair, foul, out, safe) will not be argued.

#### **4. COACH RESPONSIBILITIES**

- a. Teams in 6U Shetland and 8U Pinto may have four coaches, one team representative and one scorekeeper. Teams in 10U Mustang through 14U Pony may have three coaches, one team representative and one scorekeeper. If a coach needs special accommodation, an assistant may be added to the team if the Baseball/Softball Board approves.
- b. Once the assistant coaches have been established no coaching personnel changes can be made without prior NAO Baseball/Softball Board approval.
- c. Only the head and assistant coaches may be in the dugouts or on the playing field during scheduled games.
- d. Only the head coach or an appointed assistant coach may act on behalf of the team during games.
- e. **ALL** coaches are **REQUIRED** to attend the NAO Coach's meeting where they will be given information on the 2026 Baseball Season. All the house rules will be covered word for word. There will be a sign-in sheet for coaches to sign at the meeting. If no coaches are able to make the meeting, they should have a meeting with their division Commissioner or Baseball/Softball President in order to go over the house rules for that year.
- f. Head coaches must attend all Coaches meetings called by the Baseball/Softball Board. Because of their importance, if the head coach is unable to attend then an assistant coach from that team must attend in place of the head coach. Failure to have a coach at the meeting(s) will result in a one game suspension of the violating team's head coach.
- g. The head coach must notify their division Commissioner and/or an NAO Baseball/Softball Board member of any injuries to players which requires medical attention while playing or practicing baseball/softball for NAO within one day (24 hours) of said injury. Any coach failing to do so will have to appear before the Baseball/Softball Board.
- h. The NAO Baseball/Softball Board does not allow coaches or team representatives to accept contributions of any kind (monetary, uniforms or equipment) for any regular season team or organization without prior approval. The NAO Baseball/Softball Board must approve and record any and all contributions made to the team or organization. The head coach of the violating team will be suspended, pending review by the NAO Baseball/Softball Board. All-Star teams are allowed to hold fundraisers or accept contributions specifically for their team of that same year. Funds or contributions raised in this manner

must be submitted to the NAO Baseball/Softball Board. The Baseball/Softball Board will reimburse the team up to the dollar amount raised. All expenses must be team related, equally distributed among all the players, and a receipt must be submitted for reimbursement. Any unused monies will be donated to the Baseball/Softball fund.

- i. All teams must get permission from their Commissioner prior to practicing or scrimmaging on NAO Baseball/Softball fields. Coaches who do not participate in field maintenance and preparation do not qualify for any practice time on NAO fields. Coaches are responsible for the field they play and practice on as well as the surrounding area (bleachers, cages., etc.).
- j. Teams may meet for practices and/or games up to 4 days but not more than 7 hours per week.

## **5. TEAM FORMATION**

- a. NAO is a recreational league designed to give every child an opportunity to play within his or her age and ability level.
- b. Only players registered through NAO will be covered under the NAO insurance policy.
- c. NAO returning coaches, in good standing, may protect up to 12 players, which include their own child(ren) as well as the children of their assistant coaches (if the assistants are known by draft day). New coaches may protect up to 8 players, which include their own child(ren) as well as the children of their assistant coaches (if the assistants are known by draft day). A list of protected players must be submitted to the Player Agent the Wednesday prior to the draft on Saturday. All other players will go in draft. Coaches that do not have a child in the division they are coaching may protect a relative or child(ren) of a significant other not living with them instead.
- d. Registered players must try out and enter a player draft. Players that miss tryouts will be assigned to a team via player draft rotation.
- e. Tryouts will be held if necessary, on a date to be determined by the Baseball/Softball Board. The subsequent draft will be presided over by the Baseball/Softball President, Division Commissioners and Player Agent, or other Baseball/Softball Board members designated by the Baseball/Softball President.
- f. Upon the conclusion of tryouts only the head coach from each team in each division will be allowed to attend the player draft for that division. If a head coach is unable to attend the player draft, an assistant coach may select players

for that team instead. If no coaches from a team attend the draft, the Baseball/Softball President or Commissioner for that division will represent the absent team. If this occurs there will be no arguments from the absent coach about the players selected. If a head coach does not like the team selected, that coach may resign his position and let one of the assistant coaches take the team.

- g. Each head coach will draw a number to determine the order of draft picks. If a team already has players on the roster due to protected players, the team with the fewest players will pick first and will keep picking until that team is equal in number of players, and then the draft pick rotation will be enforced.
- h. The draft rotation will be determined randomly, but in the event roster space is limited, players will be prioritized based on when they registered.
- i. Only the Player Agent and Baseball/Softball President will be allowed to know the order of rotation and shall not divulge that information to anyone.
- j. Head coaches may trade players once the player draft is complete, but trades will not be official until approved by the Player Agent. No trades or team transfers will be allowed after the following Monday.
- k. Team size will be limited to thirteen players per team maximum for 8U Pinto through 14U Pony, and fourteen players per team maximum for 6U Shetland and Softball. Any changes to team rosters once the season begins must be approved by the Player Agent.

## **6. ALL-STARS**

- a. The Baseball/Softball Board will determine the number and composition of all-star teams in each division.
- b. The Baseball/Softball Board will select all-star head coaches for each division. Coaches that have no interest in being considered for all-stars must inform the Baseball/Softball President at their respective draft.
- c. The Baseball/Softball Board will determine the selection process for all-star teams and work with selected coaches to come up with the most appropriate process given the circumstances at the time.
- d. If an all-star coach quits after teams have been selected, the NAO Baseball/Softball Board will select a replacement from the pool of eligible regular season coaches.
- e. Head all-star coaches will get one open pick at the end of the all-star draft.

**7. SCHEDULES/GAMES**

- a. A practice schedule for the NAO field practice times will be developed and maintained by the Commissioner. Teams may not practice at NAO until receiving permission from the Field Commissioner.
- b. No team will be allowed to play any team not on their regular season schedule without prior NAO Baseball/Softball Board approval.
- c. No one except for players, coaches and umpires will be allowed on the field or in the dugouts during games.
- d. The Director of Youth Activities, Baseball/Softball President, an appointed Field Commissioner person or head umpire may declare the playing field unsuitable for play due to weather conditions. Cancellations of games due to weather should be decided by 5:15pm that day.
- e. All rain outs will be rescheduled at the earliest date available as provided by the scheduler. If it rains again on the rescheduled date/time, the game will be considered a tie.
- f. Coaches **CANNOT** set their own games schedules. Failure to play a scheduled game will result in a forfeit. Penalty will be no practice for one week.
- g. The game time limits are as follows:

6U Shetland	60 Minutes	12U Bronco	1 Hr, 40 Minutes
8U Pinto	75 Minutes	14U Pony	1 Hr, 40 Minutes
10U Mustang	90 Minutes		
Softball: Pinto through Bronco will be 75 Minutes			

- h. The plate umpire will be the official timekeeper.
- i. 6U Shetland through 10U Mustang divisions will have a five-run inning rule. 12U Bronco and 14U Pony will have a seven-run inning rule.
- j. No new inning will start after 10 minutes before time expires. A new inning starts after the last out is made.
- k. : There will be free substitutions for 6U Shetland through 14U Pony. It is the Head Coach’s responsibility to ensure that all their players play every other inning during

each regular season game. 6U Shetland through 14U Pony divisions must bat the entire roster.

- l. In 6U Shetland through 14U Pony divisions, all players will bat in rotation during the game. The rotation will remain the same throughout the game. Late arrivals will be placed at the end of the batting rotation. Once the entire line up has batted and the first batter in the line up has batted twice, no players can be added to the batting list.
- m. During regular season play a team may play a game with one player short of a full defense. 6U Shetland teams are required to field a minimum of nine players on defense; the 10<sup>th</sup> batting position will be an automatic out. 8U Pinto, 10U Mustang and 12U Bronco teams are required to field a minimum of eight players on defense, the ninth batting position will be an automatic out.
- n. Each team must have a scorekeeper. The home team will be the official scorekeeper. After the game, both head coaches will sign the official scorecard kept by the head umpire.
- o. Protesting a game: The protesting head coach will announce to the umpire when a game is being played under protest. Scorekeepers must make a note of the protest in the score book exactly when it occurs. IMPORTANT: "Rules Protests" must be in writing and include the rule that applies. If the rule in question cannot be found, the protest will not stand. Written protests must be given to the division Field Commissioner WITHIN 24 HOURS of the onset of the game in question. There are NO protests on umpire "judgment calls."
- p. All teams with pitchers will need to keep their own pitch counts for their players. Refer to the PONY pitch count chart for how many pitches a player can throw in a game, and the corresponding rest required after they throw that many pitches.
- q. In 10U Mustang and 12U Bronco, no suicide steal/squeeze to home plate and/or slash bunting will be allowed.
- r. Curve balls are to be discouraged in 10U Mustang.
- s. A NAO team can pick up a player(s) in their same Division if they are short to complete their team roster for a scheduled game. The picked-up player(s) must play in the out field and bat at the bottom of the line up.

## **8. TEAM EQUIPMENT**

- a. Team or organizational equipment will be purchased by the equipment manager.

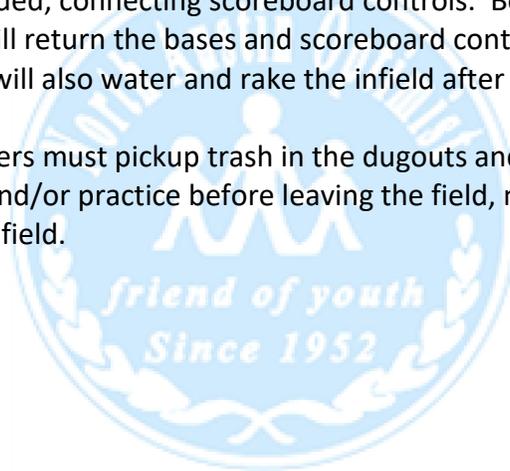
- b. All playing equipment must be PONY Baseball/Softball approved. Baseball bats must be engraved by USA baseball as per PONY rules.
- c. Notify the equipment manager immediately of any equipment problems or needs.
- d. Foreign objects such as stars, medals, stickers, etc., are not allowed on any NAO uniform or team equipment.
- e. All players and coaches must be in uniform to be on the playing field or in the dugouts. (Uniform entails league shirt and cap.)
- f. All teams must wear league approved uniforms during regular and post-season play. Teams have the option of having their own uniforms made for their team. They can choose to receive an NAO uniform or not, but will pay the same price either way.
- g. Only 14U Pony division players are allowed to wear metal cleats. 6U Shetland through 12U Bronco players must wear rubber cleats. No metal cleats on portable mounds.
- h. NAO will not provide batting helmets to teams or players. All players must purchase their own batting helmet for use in practice and games.

## **9. TEAM DUTIES**

- a. Each head coach will choose a Team Representative who will be responsible for attending all Team Representative meetings and relaying any messages from the NAO Baseball/Softball Board to their team's coaches and parents. This includes Concession Stand and Field Duty dates, picture dates, fundraising information, Opening and Closing Ceremony information, etc. Coaches please choose your team representative wisely; make sure that they will keep you informed of upcoming events. The NAO Baseball/Softball Board will not accept "My team representative did not tell me" as an excuse for missing a team assigned duty.
- b. Each team will be assigned to "Concession Stand Duty" throughout the season. All team coaches and parents must sign-in at the concession stand when they report for the assigned team duties in order to be credited for their participation. If a team consisting of a minimum of 4 parents does not work on their assigned concession day for the duration of the shift, the head coach for that team will be suspended from the following game and the team will be suspended from practicing on NAO fields pending NAO Baseball/Softball Board review. Remind the parents that they agreed to participate in the team's assigned duties when they signed their child's registration form. Parent

participation is expected. Your team will be notified at least one week prior to their assigned Concession Stand Duty date.

- c. Each team will be assigned to "Field Duty" throughout the season. If a team does not work on their assigned field duty date, the head coach for that team will be suspended from the following game and the team will be suspended from practicing on NAO fields pending NAO Baseball/Softball Board review. Remind the parents that they agreed to participate in the team's assigned duties when they signed their child's registration form. Parent participation is expected. Your team will be notified at least one week prior to their assigned Field Duty date. Field Duty includes picking up trash, emptying all trash barrels into the dumpster, cutting, weed eating the grass, and cleaning the restrooms.
- d. On game day, the home team of the first game is responsible for preparing the field at least fifteen minutes prior to the scheduled game time. Responsibilities include chalking the field, placing the bases, raking and watering the playing areas as needed, connecting scoreboard controls. Both teams of the last game of the day will return the bases and scoreboard controls to the designated areas. Both teams will also water and rake the infield after the game.
- e. All NAO players must pickup trash in the dugouts and around the bleachers after each game and/or practice before leaving the field, no matter if it is at our fields or any other field.



**2026 Baseball House Rules Agreement**

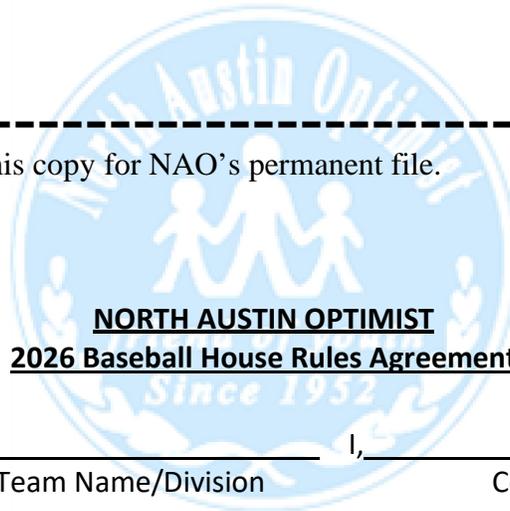
As Head Coach of the \_\_\_\_\_ I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree  
Team Name/Division Coach's Name

- To comply with the 2026 NAO Baseball House Rules
- I agree that it is my responsibility to enforce these rules and make sure that I, my coaching staff, team rep., parents and players conform to these rules.
- To accept and enforce any penalty issued to me, my staff, or players for violating any of these rules.

Head Coach: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Baseball Board  
Representative: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Detach, Sign and Return this copy for NAO's permanent file.



As Head Coach of the \_\_\_\_\_ I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree  
Team Name/Division Coach's Name

- To comply with the 2026 NAO Baseball House Rules
- I agree that it is my responsibility to enforce these rules and make sure that I, my coaching staff, team rep., parents and players conform to these rules.
- To accept and enforce any penalty issued to me, my staff, or players for violating any of these rules.

Head Coach: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Baseball Board  
Representative: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_