

Legion Baseball Adopts Pitch Count Rule for 2017

In an effort to minimize arm overuse injuries, American Legion Baseball has changed its pitching rule for the 2017 season. Legion Baseball has adopted regulations limiting pitchers based on the number of pitches thrown, replacing the previous rule which was focused on innings pitched.

This change is in line with USA Baseball's Pitch Smart initiative, which includes series of practical, age-appropriate guidelines to help parents, players and coaches avoid overuse injuries and foster long, healthy careers for youth pitchers. Legion Baseball is seeking full compliance with the initiative, which has the support of Major League Baseball and numerous medical advisors. For more information on Pitch Smart, including risk factors and resources, visit pitchsmart.org.

"We think they should always follow, in youth baseball, pitch count rules," said leading surgeon Dr. James Andrews, one of Pitch Smart's advisors and the founder of the American Sports Medical Institute.

ASMI's research director, Dr. Glenn Fleisig, agreed, saying, "Our research at ASMI and elsewhere has shown that one definite factor for which kids get hurt and which kids do not get hurt: overuse. Pitch counts is the ideal method for keeping track of how much someone is pitching and, therefore, how likely it is they get hurt."

In the Legion senior program (ages 19 and under), pitchers will not be able to exceed 120 pitches in any single day, while pitchers in the junior program (ages 17 and under) may not exceed 105 pitches. Should pitchers hit the limit in the middle of an at-bat, they may finish pitching to that batter before being removed from the position.

Pitchers will not be able to make more than two appearances in any three-day span. In addition, pitchers will have required rest based on the number of pitches thrown in a given day.

Throwing 1-45 pitches in game action requires one day of rest, 46-60 pitches requires two days of rest, 61-75 pitches requires three days of rest and 76 or more pitches will require four days of rest.

Failure to adhere to the pitching rule will lead to the ejection of both the pitcher and the team manager if a protest is filed to the umpire-in-chief.

"Legion Baseball prides itself on being an exemplary organization which helps young athletes grow as players and people. Safety is always our top priority and it has become clear that the best way to keep our young pitchers safe is to enact pitch counts at all levels," said Gary Stone, Legion Baseball chairman. "I would like to praise the department baseball chairmen who helped provide the baseball committee with these important recommendations."

In addition to the rule changes, the 2017 rule book will also feature recommendations to help young pitchers stay healthy. Some of these suggestions include not pitching with fatigue, taking time off each year from competitive pitching, following lower pitch counts at younger ages and avoiding multiple appearances in the same day. More recommendations are available on pitchsmart.org.