
Timbergrove Sports Association (TSA) Thunder Select Sports Program Guidelines

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents ii

Revision History ii

1. Overview 1

2. Teams 1

3. Team Manager and Head Coach 2

4. Players 4

5. Costs 5

6. Grievances 6

Revision History

Name	Date	Reason For Changes	Ver./Rev.
Initial Release	5/4/15		A
Amended	9/6/18	Revisions and updates	B
Amended	5/8/19	Revisions and updates	C

1. Overview

The TSA Thunder baseball and softball program are designed to provide a higher level of training and competition to those players that have a desire to develop their skills beyond that offered at the recreational level. This program is an integral part of the Timbergrove Sports Association Baseball and Softball League, and requires a significant parental and player commitment. Although this document is titled “Guidelines”, all participating parties are expected to comply with the information outlined below.

Our Vision is to provide a platform to form and operate an effective community based select program for players of TSA and to help all participating players develop the fundamental skills and aptitude to play competitive sports at the middle school, high school level and beyond.

Our Mission is to offer a more instructive and competitive atmosphere than the recreational league allows for TSA players (7u – 15u); to teach basic fundamentals along with reinforcing life skills and values such as honesty, work ethic, leadership, accountability, discipline, teamwork & good sportsmanship; to provide a fun and rewarding experience to help inspire and develop a player’s passion for the game; to help prepare all players to be physically, mentally and competitively ready to play for their respective middle and high school baseball programs.

The TSA Thunder Program offers:

- Quality Independent coaching (required for 10u level and above)
- Access to TSA practice facilities and game fields at a reduced cost
- Competition with other Select Program Teams
- Development process as preparation for Middle and High School baseball and softball
- Equitable player selection process including tryouts.
- Potential to participate in out of City, State, and World Series tournaments

The TSA League Board of Directors (the “Board”) will be responsible for overseeing the Thunder Sports Program. They shall provide:

- Program guidelines
- Final approval of team independent coaches
- Coordination of TSA facility and field usage
- Keeper of Thunder team information (manager, coach and player rosters)
- Dispute resolution as necessary

2. Teams

TSA can offer Thunder teams for each of the following designated age classifications, given sufficient interest (both parent and player) and talent levels exists within each classification.

Baseball

- 7 & Under
- 8 & Under
- 9 & Under
- 10 & Under

- 11 & Under
- 12 & Under
- 13 & Under
- 14 & Under

Softball

- 8 & Under
- 10 & Under
- 12 & Under

A Thunder team shall only be organized if there are a sufficient number of players, confirmed by the Board, with a talent level able to field a competitive team and a Team General Manager and Head Coach is identified and committed to the team.

The formation of a Thunder team requires Board approval. Multiple teams within a specific age classification are allowed, with Board approval, but will require teams to coordinate player evaluation and tryout activities with the Board in accordance with these Guidelines. The initial Thunder team will receive priority in the player selection process. Although player parents hold the final decision to decline an offer to play from a team, coaches and parents are reminded that one goal of the program is to offer the most competitive teams possible. Any player recruiting actions by team managers or coaches deemed to be dishonest, malicious, or detrimental to the Thunder program as determined exclusively by the Board, will be subject to forfeiture of the Thunder team.

Team colors, uniform fees and uniform selection are the responsibility of the respective team managers. Since the program is authorized by TSA, all teams are required to use the “Timbergrove Thunder” team name and display both the tiffany font “T” and team name “Thunder” on their uniforms. If the Board approved two teams within an age group, the first team will be named “Timbergrove Thunder White” and the second will be named “Timbergrove Thunder Blue”.

Thunder teams are expected to manage their practice and tournament schedule so that it does not conflict with TSA Spring league game schedules and activities. Despite making all efforts to avoid conflicts, should in a rare instance, a player have a conflict between a Thunder and a TSA league event, player must participate in the TSA league event and in any event will not be allowed to participate in the Thunder event.

3. Team Manager and Head Coach

Each Thunder team requires a Board approved team General manager volunteer to coordinate and handle all matters related to the team. Interested GMs must contact the Board representative in charge of the Thunder program no later than the Spring TSA season skills assessment. The team GM manager is typically a player parent and can be assisted by other team parents. Responsibilities include:

- Coordination with the Board
- Communication with player parents
- Scheduling of team practices

- Scheduling and payment of team games and tournaments
- Manage team funds and accounting for team expenditures
- Setting player fees
- Purchase of team uniforms and supplies
- Negotiation of fees and payment of team head coach, if applicable
- Team website postings (Non-TSA)

At the 10 & under age level, the Board requires that each Thunder team hire an independent head coach that is not a player parent and who is approved by the Board. Any exceptions must be approved by the Board or the designated Board member responsible for the Thunder program. When selecting the team head coaches, the following criteria shall be considered:

- Coaching experience
- Extensive knowledge of the game
- Ability to communicate effectively with players
- Ability to communicate effectively with parents
- Any previous written complaints
- Any other pertinent information regarding the individuals qualifications to serve in this capacity
- The ability of the proposed head coach to pass an annual background check as administered by TSA.
- TSA Code of Conduct

The Thunder team head coach will be responsible for the following activities:

- Player evaluation and selection
- Team practices and workout schedules
- Head coach all tournament games
- Team line-up, player positioning and play time

While an independent head coach is not required until the 10 & under age group level, it is strongly suggested that each team try to establish a relationship with an independent head coach and that at least a portion of the team practices are run by the independent head coach. The assistance of the independent head coach has generally been found to help both the coaches and the players.

All Team General Managers and Coaches are reminded that they represent the TSA Thunder Program. They are responsible for the wellbeing of each team member. Coaches should also demonstrate proper demeanor while serving as a TSA representative.

The Board reserves the right to remove any Team General Manager or Coach from the team for cause, exclusively at the Board's discretion. Initial approval of a General Manager or Coach confers no right to continue in that role for any duration of time should the Board, in its sole discretion, determine that removal of the General Manager or Coach is warranted. All Team Managers, Head and Assistant coaches are required to be members in good standing of TSA and pass an annual background check as administered by TSA.

4. Players

Each Thunder team will be made up of a minimum of 9 and a maximum of 15 players.

Thunder players are required to be active participants of the TSA league. “Active Participants” means that the player is on a TSA league team during the Spring season before the summer Thunder season. As an example, a child playing on the 2018 10U softball or baseball Thunder team must have been a registered, active player in the 10U softball or Mustang division in Spring of 2018. Thunder players entering their 1st year of Pony Division or above are not required to play in the TSA Spring season. In rare circumstances and upon prior approval from the Board, exceptions can be made in the team’s TSA player participation level; however in any case greater than 50% of the players on a Thunder team’s roster should be active participants of the TSA league. At no point should a non-TSA player take a spot that could be held by a suitably talented and skilled active TSA participant, as determined from annual tryouts.

As stated above, Thunder players are required to be active participants of the TSA league. In the event a player already on an established Thunder team has tried to register but the division was sold out, the Board has discretion to allow that player to continue on their Thunder team despite not playing on a TSA league team during the Spring season before the Thunder season. The player must have made a legitimate attempt to register for the TSA league. “Legitimate attempt” is defined as registering within thirty (30) minutes of the opening of public registration. The player must be on the waitlist and have a timestamped registration within that thirty (30) minute period.

Unlike the recreational league, select baseball and softball do not guarantee equal playing time for every player on the team. Playing time is the coach’s discretion based on the commitment of time and energy from the players as well as specific game situations. Both individual and overall team development are the goals of this program. Thus, players typically earn playing time provided they are dedicated and maintain a positive attitude. Baseball and softball are team sports, so every position is very critical. Players will be put in positions that are best suited for them to best help the team, as determined by the coaches. It is the responsibility of the team coach to communicate this to the players and parents.

Parents can talk to coaches about their own child’s situation at any time with regards to what they can improve on, how the player is doing and what the player can do to improve. Coaches should not discuss individual playing time or situations about another player on the team with parents of other players.

5. Team Formation and Tryouts

All newly formed Thunder teams shall hold an open tryout session. Established Thunder teams will hold annual tryouts. Annual tryouts will take place during the Spring TSA season, no sooner than two weeks after games have begun but no later than two weeks before the end of the Spring season. If more than one team is established in an age group, the two teams will hold a joint tryout.

All Thunder team tryout dates and related information must be posted on the TSA web site and shall be communicated to the division parents of players for that age group. The team General manager for the Thunder team is responsible for disseminating information concerning such team tryout dates and times.

Player evaluation tryouts will be set up by the team General manager and evaluations conducted with assistance from an independent coach. All players will be assessed on basic baseball or softball skills: fielding, throwing, hitting, and running. Players will also be evaluated on their aptitude for the various skilled positions such as outfield, infield, pitching and catching. Player selections should be based upon the results of this evaluation process along with how the talents and attitude of each player best contribute to the overall chemistry of the team. Coaches' evaluations from previous seasons or league tryouts will also be used in the selection process. Team selection results will be communicated to all players who attended tryouts.

As outlined in Section 2, herein, the Board may approve two teams in any age group. Should a sufficient number of suitably talented players be available to field a competitive second team, the Board may approve formation of a "Thunder Blue" team. Selection will proceed in the following manner: Players will be evaluated as outlined above; the "Thunder White" coach or GM will offer spots to the first 11 to 13 players, based on need, and proceed until the team is formed; should a sufficient number of suitably talented players remain to field a competitive team, a "Thunder Blue" GM/coach will be identified and can make offers to the remaining players from the tryout who were not selected for the "Thunder White" team. The "Thunder White" team should be the most competitive team TSA has to offer within that age group.

Similarly, in age groups where two established teams exist, annual tryouts will proceed as outlined above and both coaches and GMs will add available players to teams, as needed. "Thunder White" will have priority in available player selection, and once any spots are filled "Thunder Blue" will offer spots to any remaining players. Players hoping to move from "Thunder Blue" to "Thunder White" must wait until annual tryouts, unless both coaches agree to the move.

Interested players should be reminded, prior to tryouts, of the commitment required to participate in the TSA Thunder program. Selected players are required to participate in the Spring TSA season preceding the summer Thunder season, and such selected players shall not miss league events on account of Thunder commitments. Select league seasons typically run from March through August, but may also include tournaments in the Fall and Winter. Tournament schedules are within the discretion of team General manager and coaches for each Thunder team, subject to the approval of the Board.

6. Costs

The TSA Thunder program is self-funded. Individual team fees can vary significantly depending upon the number of games and tournaments each team decides to play. Teams are allowed to solicit Board approved sponsorships and/or have fund raising events to off-set the personal out-of-pocket expenses.

The team General manager is responsible for managing the cash flow and expenses for the season. A summary report should be prepared and available for distribution throughout the season, upon request, so parents can view how team funds are being spent.

Examples and estimates of team expenses¹ may include (NOTE: these fees are then divided equally among the players comprising the specific Thunder teams):

- tournament fees - \$500-\$600/tournament
- independent coach fees - \$60-\$150/hr., \$250 - \$500/tournament
- umpire fees - \$50-\$80/game/umpire
- field use fees - \$200/summer (May – July); \$75 (Fall – Sept – Dec); \$100 (Jan-April)
- uniforms - \$175 - \$250/player
- baseballs - \$50-\$100/dozen
- misc. equipment, team registration, insurance, and other - \$150-\$300/season

Funds received for participation in the Thunder program are typically non-refundable if a player subsequently elects to leave a team. Disputes concerning withdrawal from the Thunder program and refunds for fees paid shall be submitted to the Board or Board member responsible for overseeing the Thunder program, in writing, for resolution.

7. Grievances

Management of all questions, concerns and problems will always be handled first on a team level. The Board encourages the player to approach the head coach to insure interaction and to attempt a resolution. If resolution cannot be agreed upon, then the parent and coach should attempt to resolve the issue. The final step would be to file a written grievance with the Board. The Board will try and resolve the issue with all of the parties' interests in mind.

It is not the intent of the grievance process to manage or address day-to-day handling of teams. Game decisions such as playing time and position play are not considered grievance issues and will not be heard by the Board. These types of issues are within the coach's discretion and must be handled between the coach, player and or parent.

8. Notices

All notices and writings submitted to the Board shall be sent to the following address:

Timbergrove Sports Association
ATTENTION: Board of Directors
1500 Bevis Street
Houston, Texas 77008

All notices and writings sent to the Board in connection with the Thunder program, or any dispute concerning the Thunder program as provided in these Guidelines, shall be made or sent to the addresses set forth above.

¹ TSA Thunder teams are not under the TSA 501(c)(3) Non-Profit umbrella. Any purchases are not tax exempt simply because of TSA affiliation, and no donations can be solicited to a team as a non-profit, unless the team seeks their own tax exempt status. As such, balls and equipment used by TSA are not available for use for Thunder teams.

9. Rights

These guidelines do not, and are not intended to, create any rights. These guidelines are created by and may be amended by the TSA Board of directors at the Board's discretion. The TSA Board reserved the right to remove any coach, assistant coach, GM, or player for any reason the Board deems appropriate. Action taken by the Board is not subject to appeal and no right of advance notice is created, inferred, or implied by these guidelines.