



# SOM Cougars Travel Baseball

## 2026 Info Session



# What is Cougars Travel Baseball?

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- Cougars is the competitive travel offering of the SOM Baseball Committee, SO Rec and SOM Baseball Boosters
- We form Town Travel Teams that train in Winter and Play a Spring and Summer Schedule.
- We compete in USABL in Spring and New Providence League in Summer, usually competing within a 25 mile radius of home.
- We field teams from 7u-13u. 7u typically only plays in Summer their first year.
- Beginning at 8u we have tryouts, winter training and Spring and Summer Seasons.
- All players receive professional coaching in the winters.
- At 11u-13u we use a professional coaching model for Spring and parent volunteers for 8u-10u.
- All teams are volunteer parent led for Summer



# 2026 Cougars Summer Travel

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- Season is June-July with some practices beginning May and is designed to be complementary to Rec and will not compete during the season.
- We will compete in New Providence Green League against teams from nearby towns (Westfield, Millburn, Watchung Hills, New Providence, Berkeley Heights, Cranford, etc.)
- For 7u there is the possibility of tournament participation in Cal Ripken Tournament in mid July and for 8u a 1 day tournament within NJ.
- Open to everyone, but tryouts are required. At 7U, we try very hard not to make any cuts if possible.
- Last year we had two teams at 7U; number of teams this year depends on interest and registrations. If we create more than one team they will be EQUAL teams (no a and b)
- This year we will hope to field at least one first grade 7u team and an 8u team of 2nd Graders.
- There will also be an open tryout held for any players not rostered for Spring Cougars to take any open spots in Summer.



# Eligibility



- Summer Travel teams are aligned by grade level: 1st graders will play 7U and 2nd graders will play 8U. Age-based eligibility rules (April 30 cutoff) still apply for tournament compliance, but team placement is determined by current school grade to keep players with their classmates.
- Must be a resident of South Orange or Maplewood
- Playing spring baseball in the SOM recreational program
- Available the vast majority of June-July
- Please note that every subsequent season Cougars tryout. No spots are guaranteed





# Key Dates and Commitment

- Tryouts: April 26<sup>th</sup>, 8:15AM Meadowlands Field 1 (Rain Date is May 3rd)
- Registration for Tryouts is now open through the SO Rec Catalog. <https://secure.rec1.com/NJ/south-orange-village-township-nj/catalog>
- Team selection shortly thereafter by May 4th (or May 11th if Rain Date is needed)
- Month of May/Early June: approximately 5 practices
- Regular Season (9 Games) June 8th-July 15th
- Playoffs (1 Game guaranteed) July 14th -as late as July 29 (play until you lose)
- 7u Expect 2 games per week, Mondays and Wednesdays at 6:00 pm unless rescheduled. Games are initially scheduled for M/W but can be moved around at coaches' discretion. **Typically no weekend games**
- 8u Expect 2 games per week, Tuesdays and Thursdays at 6:00 pm unless rescheduled. Games are initially scheduled for M/W but can be moved around at coaches' discretion. **Typically no weekend games**
- Ripken tournament (7u Only): likely in mid-July
- Expectation is that travel players will be able to be at the vast majority of practices and games in June and July. We will consider individual family conflicts (vacations, etc.) case-by-case.
- Cost: approximately \$350 per player for the season, to cover cost of uniforms, equipment, league fees, umpires, tournament entries.



# Philosophy

More competitive than spring rec, but not overly so.

All players given opportunity to play multiple positions, but playing time may not be completely equal.

Intense focus on player development and enjoyment, and introduction to “real baseball.”

We want players to love the game, have a great time, and improve their skills and abilities.

Emphasis on sportsmanship, integrity, and inclusivity.

An awesome way to make friends and play ball together.



# Rules and Game Play

- Games are six innings. Yes, six real innings of baseball.
- For 8u All Kid Pitch
- For 7u Two coach pitch innings, then two kid pitch innings, then two coach pitch innings.
- During kid pitch, four balls is a walk and three strikes is a strikeout.
- Kids pitch from ~40 feet at 7u and 46' in 8u; there is a catcher, wearing gear.
- During coach pitch, players have 5-6 pitches to make contact.
- Scores are kept, and there is a winner and loser for each game.
- No stealing bases, no bunting.
- Maximum of five runs per inning, except the final inning.
- Four outfielders (until 8u playoffs)





# Coaches and Parental Involvement

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- All practices, in game coaching and administration is led by parent volunteers, so we will need lots of parental involvement. Last year we had 5 coaches and another 4-5 parents helping out (16 kids)
- For 2026, we are looking for lead parents for 7u and have a lead parent for the additional 8u Team
  - Dan Demonte
- If you are interested in volunteering, please reach out to Paul or Jeremy



# Who Should Try Out?

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- Players who enjoy baseball and want to play more during the summer, once spring rec winds down.
- Skill level will vary widely, particularly at 7U.
- We do not divide kids by ability until 8U.
- If your player has a desire to play more baseball, if spring rec games aren't enough, travel may be right for you.
- Many players will decide to play because friends are doing it, and that's a great reason so long as they enjoy baseball and want to play more of it.
- Friendships are also made on these teams. Many players come back summer after summer. Families grow close as their kids grow together.
- Presence in NJ during most of June-July is very important.

# Questions?



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