

Baseball Australia

Pathway Review 2012-2013

Implementation of the new model

Introduction:

This document is designed to communicate the process for moving toward the Pathway Model emerging from Baseball Australia's extensive Pathway Review. The new Model has several features which will impact on the way in which states, associations and clubs conduct the game, so a plan for the implementation of these changes is required.

Publicly, the most evident change contained in the new Pathway model is the move to the Little League format, which has implications for both club baseball and national age championships.

What does the implementation of Little League mean at the local level?

- Existing club and association structures can be retained. Leagues will not be structured according to Postcode, and there is no need to create a new governing body to administer each new league that is created: one association can administer two or more leagues.
- Competition requirements are in accordance with the rules established by Little League International. Baseball Australia has appointed a Little League Administrator to work with each state in the implementation of the new procedures.
- Terminology: in this context, a League is a competition conducted by those with the authority to do so; this authority is awarded within the Little League Charter structure as set by the state and national Little League administrators.
- The move to the Little League model means that junior baseball will be conducted in the following age categories: 6U (Aussie T-Ball), 8U (LL Tee-Ball), 11U (LL Minors), 13U (Majors), 15U (Junior), 17U (Senior), and 19U (Big League). Note that these differ from the age groups for the current national Youth Championships.
- Depending on the specific association or club structure, it is suggested that a Little League Administrator is appointed to work with the state's Little League Administrator to ensure requirements are met.
- Inter-league play (ie, complying games outside the league) can be used to satisfy minimum play requirements for state and national championships in Little, Junior, Senior and Big Leagues.
- Members should be aware that unless complying local competitions are conducted, their players will not be eligible for the Little, Junior, Senior and Big League national championships.

Change to the cutoff date:

Currently the qualifying date for each Little League age group is April 30, but our current National Youth Championships, and consequently all age levels in Australian club ball, use December 31.

The issue is further complicated: Little League International may change their cutoff date to December 31 at some time in the future, likely to be for 2015. Obviously, this would be great news for us if the decision is made prior to our introducing the Junior League format at the commencement of the 2014/15 summer season.

An announcement will be made after the Little League International Congress to be held at the beginning of April, 2014.

Other relevant Little League issues:

- Pitching & participation regulations for Little League tournaments differ from those we have in force for our NYCs. Little League also has slightly different pitching & participation requirements for regular season games, and these will need to be adhered to.
- Processes utilising current player clearance procedures will be in place to prevent the stacking of League teams.
- Please note that, pending the decision by LLI in April, 2014, all national events will be run using December 31 as the cutoff date for each age level. For example, a 13U player cannot turn 13 on or before December 31 of the year in which the summer competition commences. Pending the adoption of this cutoff date by LLI, he or she will therefore be 13 or under for the entire year in which that season ends, and in which national and international events will be played.

Possible Club pathway	
Adult Baseball	<p>Grade/Division Adult Baseball</p> <p>Multiple teams playing in graded or social leagues under rules laid down by relevant state, association or local authority</p>
Transition	<p>Big League</p> <p>19U (19 & Under) leagues (or charters)</p>
	<p>Senior League</p> <p>17U (17 & Under) leagues (or charters)</p>
	<p>Junior League</p> <p>15U (15 & Under) leagues (or charters)</p>
Foundation	<p>Little League Majors</p> <p>13U (13 & Under): leagues (or charters)</p>
	<p>Little League Minors:</p> <p>11U (11 & Under): Coach Pitch, Zooka ball etc (anticipated to move to nationally standardised delivery recommendations)</p> <p>8U (8 & Under): Little League Tee-Ball (standardised rules) (nationally standardised delivery recommendations; may include progression within a season from tee-ball to coach pitch, for example)</p>
	<p>Aussie T-Ball</p> <p>6U (6 & Under): Aussie T-Ball modified 6-a-side tee-ball played with foam bats & balls</p>

A note on Aussie T-Ball

In clubs, with their well-defined progression through various versions of the game, Aussie T-Ball is best utilised as a recruitment tool for the very young. In a school situation, however, it can be used as a safe recreational activity through the primary school years.

What does the new National Championship format mean?

National Little, Junior, Senior and Big League Championships for their respective age levels will:

- constitute an integral part of the Competition Stream,
- have the scope to involve more teams (and thus more players),
- be played between teams which have earned their right to be there by performing well in their own state's Championship,
- involve no state team selection, eliminating the need for the identification of the best individuals, and thus the rejection of the majority, by a panel of experts, and
- be scheduled around the Easter period or the middle of the year, freeing up January for other enjoyable baseball experiences for a greater number of participants: vacation camps, interstate visits, local tournaments etc.

The 2014 Little League National Championship, for example, will feature 20 teams, and it is intended that in time this will be the case in other age levels.

Anticipated National Championships from 2015-16 season onward:

1. Little League (13U)
 - For players ages 9-12 at cutoff date (male & female)
 - Played on a 60' diamond with a 46' pitching distance
2. Junior League (15U) (A national tournament will be run in 2015 with the states having the option of sending teams)
 - For players ages 13-14 at cutoff date (male & female)
 - Regular season can be played on an 80' diamond, 54' pitching distance (could also be on a conventional diamond)
 - Tournament Play (State and National) must be played on a conventional 90' diamond to be eligible for international Little League Tournaments
 - Based on existing club/association structure. Leagues with less than ten teams in the competition can, with the approval of the state Little League Coordinator, combine with others to assemble a team for tournament play.
 - Inter-league play (ie, complying games outside the league) can be used to satisfy minimum play requirements.
3. Senior League (17U) (The year of implementation and structure of the national championships will be determined with the state bodies but is likely to be 2016)
 - For players ages 15-16 at cutoff date (male & female)
 - Games are played on a conventional 90' diamond
 - Based on existing club/association structure. Leagues with less than ten teams in the competition can, with the approval of the state Little League Coordinator, combine with others to assemble a team for tournament play.
 - Inter-league play (ie, complying games outside the league) can be used to satisfy minimum play requirements.
4. Big League (19U) (The year of implementation and structure of the national championships will be determined with the state bodies but is likely to be 2016)
 - For players ages 17-18 at cutoff date (male & female)
 - played on a conventional 90' diamond
 - Based on existing club structure. Delivery of tournament play to be finalised at Baseball Summit.
 - Tournaments played between "Districts". In Australia, Districts are currently defined by state boundaries.
 - Inter-league play (ie, complying games outside the league) can be used to satisfy minimum play requirements.
 - Professional players are not permitted to play in a LL national championship.

5. U18 & U16 NYC
 - These represent a continuation of current tournaments.
 - One outcome of the Pathway Review was the recommendation to remove the U14 and U16 National Youth Championships, but to retain the U18 NYC. For 2015 both the U16 and U18 NYC will be held. Baseball Australia is committed to transition to the new model in line with the recommendations of the Pathway Review and is still working to identify suitable player development opportunities in the U16 age group.
6. U25 National Championship
 - Recommendation adopted to change from U23 event.
7. National Youth Women's Championship
 - Continue the current tournament.
8. National Women's Championship
 - Continue the current tournament.

What about the selection of National Youth teams?

- International Baseball Federation (IBAF) world youth championship events are considered to be part of the Competition Stream.
- The continuation of the U18 NYC, and the MLBAAP, will enable the selection of the team for this age level to be done as it is currently.
- The IBAF 15U event uses a different age grouping than our current U16 NYCs. Consideration will be given to selection processes based around scheduling of the IBAF 15U championships.

What about the Little League World Series?

- Australia continues to have direct qualification for the Little League World Series in Williamsport for the winning team at the Australian Little League Championships (13U).
- Winning National Championships teams in Junior League, Senior League and Big League will have the opportunity to contest the Asia Pacific Championships and subsequently qualify for their respective World Series. Winning Asia Pacific Championship Teams are funded by Little League International to their World Series.

What about Cal Ripken?

- Continued participation in this event is under consideration, but for 2014, Australia will continue the practice of sending a team to the Cal Ripken World Series.

What is happening to high performance development?

One of the features of the new Model is the clearer distinction between the Competition and High Performance (HP) Streams:

- the Competition Stream is all about training, playing and growing as a member of a team,
- while the HP Stream focuses specifically on individual improvement.

The long term development of individual players for our senior national teams and for a professional career will be the primary focus of the HP Stream. A key component of this Stream is the Transition Phase, a Phase of four levels which concerns itself with the individual's transition from a player of primary school age to a member of the senior national team.

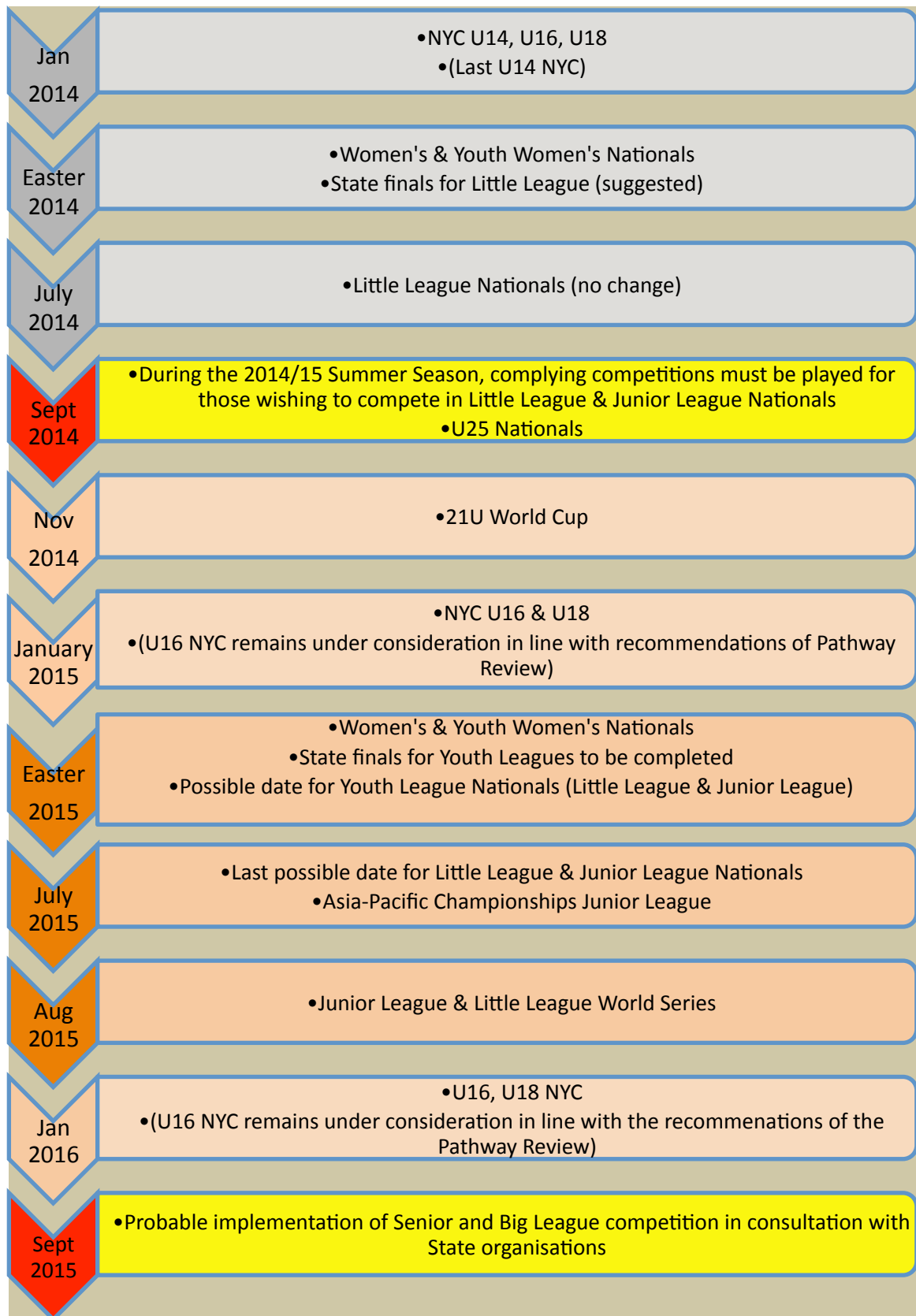
Naturally, players who choose to enter the HP Stream will also be involved in the Competition Stream. The important point is that the intended function of each, though mutually supportive, is quite distinct.

Baseball Australia as a national regulator

Baseball Australia is to take greater responsibility for its role as a national regulator. Specific examples are:

- Implementation of regulations concerning pitch limits, equipment use and minimum recovery periods for all junior players.
- Standardising the progression from Aussie T-Ball through Little League Tee-Ball and Little League Minors (coach pitch and/or machine pitch) to Little League (Majors) to provide a nationally consistent pathway for young players.

Timeline for introduction of changes to Competition Pathway:



2014 National & International Events – anticipated calendar (dates are indicative only):

Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
			LL State Ch'ships		National LL Ch'ship		LL World Series				
U14 National Youth Ch'ship							IBAF 15U World Cup				
U16 National Youth Ch'ship											
U18 National Youth Ch'ship											
							National U25 Ch'ship			IBAF 21U World Cup	
			National Women's Ch'ship					Women's World Cup			
	Phoenix Cup (U18 Women)		National Youth Women's Ch'ship								
ABL	ABL	Australia vs LA Dodgers & Arizona D'backs								ABL	ABL

2015 National & International Events – anticipated calendar (dates are indicative only):

Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
		Easter: LL & Jr League State Ch'ship deadline	Possible dates Little & Junior League National Ch'ship			Asia-Pacific Jr League Ch'ship	LL World Series				
							Jr League World Series				
U16 National Youth Ch'ship											
U18 National Youth Ch'ship							IBAF 18U World Cup				
								National U25 Ch'ship			
			National Women's Ch'ship								
	Phoenix Cup (U18 Women)		National Youth Women's Ch'ship								
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