



*“The country is Base Ball
crazy, and it is a pleasant
form of dementia.”*

1898 editorial

League Handbook



League Handbook



Introduction

Welcome to Bay Area Vintage Base Ball. This league is dedicated to preserving the style of play that was in effect between 1880-1890. We play the game the way it was before \$100M contracts, shoe sponsorships, and 25 man rosters. Ours is a competitive, yet fun league where experiencing the game of base ball in its purest form can be enjoyed by all.

BAVBB plays 12-15 games a season in a fun, relaxed atmosphere where true grit is displayed and sportsmanship is the holy grail. Each club is outfitted in reproduction uniforms from the 1880's, and the equipment consists of balls, gloves, bases, etc., that are made to look, feel, and perform as they did when the game was still home-grown. Can you handle a 40 ounce bat? 1886 Rules?

Come back in time and play the game of "base ball" as it was meant to be played.



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League Rules of Play

The following rules are used by this league and are not meant to reflect the entire rule book as described in the *Spalding's Base Ball Guide of 1886*. Our leagues rules are summarized below. Local rules which have been adapted for our use are marked with an asterisk *. For a complete review of the rules as written, please either purchase the book online or look for the link on our website at www.BAVBB.com/forms-and-rules

1. Hitting

COUNT: 7 Balls and 3 Strikes

HIGH OR LOW BALLS: The Umpire will call for the "Striker to the line." The Striker (known as the batsman in these rules) will immediately step to Home Base and express his desired strike zone preference. The Batsman may call for a low ball (belt to knee) or high ball (belt to shoulders) or both. The Umpire will then announce to the Hurler (known as the pitcher in these rules) to deliver the ball as required. Throughout the entire at bat, only low or high strikes will be called. If a Batsman does not make a request, both high and low strikes will be called. Note: The belt area is a strike for either zone.



NO TIMEOUTS: Only a Club Captain can ask the Umpire to call for a timeout. A Batsman who steps out of the box can be quick-pitched and a runner can be picked off at any time unless time has been called by the Umpire. When a player requires an injury timeout and completes the inning on the bench, he must come out for the remainder of the game.

FOUL HIT: (Known to many as a Foul Ball today) is not counted as a strike. When a ball is deemed a Foul Hit and not legally caught, the ball is dead until possessed by the pitcher in his position in the pitcher's box. Any foul tip caught by the catcher is an out regardless of the number of strikes.

FOUL STRIKE: A ball hit by the batsman while not in the batter's box results in an out.

HIT BATSMAN: Counted as a ball and no base is awarded. The play is a dead ball and no base runners may advance. If the Umpire feels the Batsman is leaning into the strike zone he may call interference and call a strike. A Pitcher who is deemed to be intentionally throwing at a Batsman will be fined \$5 and subject to ejection for further offenses.



League Handbook: Rules of Play

2. Base Running

BASE COACH: Only the Club Captain and one assistant base coach are permitted at any time. A single base coach may move from the first base box to the third base box depending on the situation.

HUSTLE: A Base Runner shall be allowed to return to his bag without the threat of being put out, in the case of a foul hit not legally caught, provided he do so on the run.

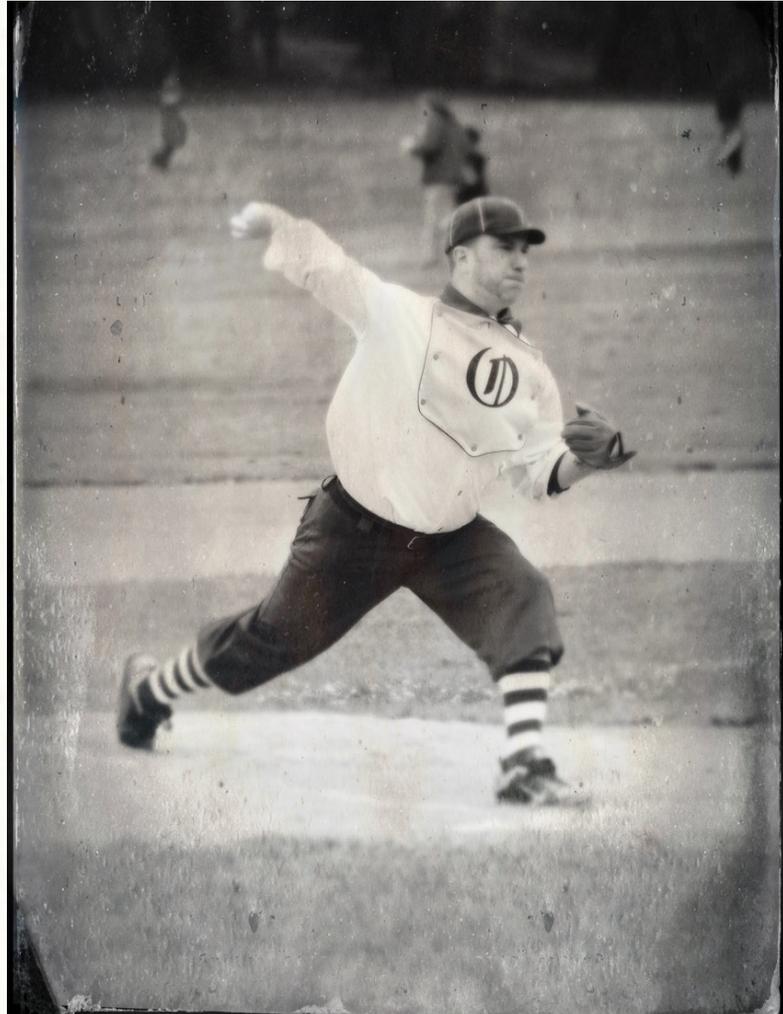
BLOCK: A batted or thrown ball handled by any person not involved in the game. Base Runners may run freely without the ability to be put out, until the ball is returned to the pitcher and held by him standing in the pitcher's box. This rule does not apply if said person kicks or throws the ball beyond the reach of the fielder. This rule does not apply if the batted or thrown ball merely deflects off a person not involved in the game.

3. Pitching

PITCHER'S BOX: There is no mound or rubber. Pitchers throw from a box that measures 4' wide x 7' deep and is outlined in chalk. The front line of the box is 50' from the center of Home Base.

PITCHER'S MOTION: The pitcher must begin and end inside of the box on each pitch. Failure to do so results in a Balk.

 (local rule) Only one-step is allowed and any leg kicks should not go above the knee, nor may the foot cross behind the plant leg. The Umpire can call a no-pitch violation. If violation occurs twice in



same at-bat, Batsman is awarded first base. This rule was created to avoid the wind-up and other modern forms of pitching mechanics.

NO INTENTIONAL WALK: Pitcher must pitch to the Batsman.

BALK: A balk only occurs when a pitcher starts his throw (with arm or legs) home but does not complete his throw to Home Base. Fake throws to any base while in or out of the pitcher's box are allowed. All Base Runners are awarded to advance one base.

QUICK PITCH: During the Batsman's entire time at bat, a pitcher can deliver the ball to him at any time unless the Umpire has called a Dead Ball.

HIDDEN BALL TRICK: There is no rule requiring the pitcher to have the ball in his hand while he's in the pitcher's box. However he cannot start a pitch to the Batsman without the ball or a balk will be awarded to any base runners.



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4. Fielding

NO INFIELD FLY RULE: A fielder may intentionally allow a batted ball to drop untouched to the ground to start a double play.

5. The Field

BASES: Bases are 15" square bags filled with a loose material such as sawdust that are securely fastened at each location.

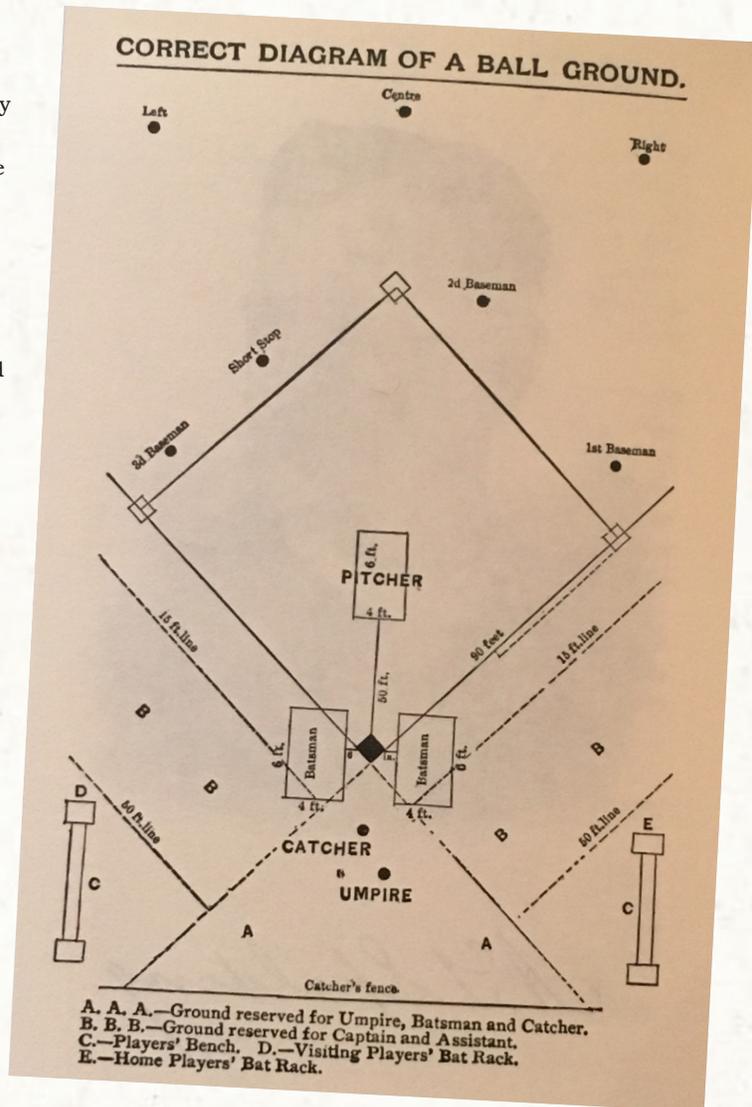
 (local rule) Bases need not be attached.

HOME BASE: It shall be a 12" square white rubber or white stone base affixed securely to and flush with the ground. A corner point facing the pitcher's box such that two sides form the lines of 1st and 3rd bases.

 (local rule) A modern Home Base is used.

SUBSTITUTION: 9 Innings played. Each club will start and finish with 9 players.

 (local rule) Games are 7 innings. More than 9 players may be used. A team may play with 8 players. No more than 2 substitute players (non-roster players) are allowed. If subs are used, no more than 10 players total for the game. Subs may not play the hurler or behind position and must bat at the end of the order. A player pulled due to injury cannot re-enter the game.



6. Game Play

BATTING ORDER (local rule): The manager must declare before the game whether he will bat ALL players in attendance, in order, throughout the entire game OR if he will only bat the players who were in the field the prior inning, from the established batting order. Batting order may not be changed to obtain more at-bats for certain players.

TIEBREAKERS (local rule): Should a tie-breaker be needed due to unforeseen circumstances, it will be (First) head-to-head record between tied teams; and (Second) fewest overall runs allowed for the full season.



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7. The Umpire

There is one Umpire only and he is to be given unquestionable respect and full authority. He is to be addressed as "Sir".

POSITIONING: The Sir may be positioned in one of two manners, provided he be consistent to both teams within each inning: Positioned 15' behind and at a 45-degree angle to the Batsman, the Umpire will move from side to side depending on whether the Batsman bats to the left or right.

Positioned behind the hurler, slightly to either side as to best see the strike zone.

MANNER: Calls are to be made in a raised voice so that players of both sides can hear. The Umpire must wear period dress and may smoke a cigar. (Common Umpires for town games were clergy and undertakers as these were the only men who were trusted in the eyes of God.)

FINAL SAY: The role of the umpire is to keep continuous play of the game from start to finish. The only such stoppage in play should be

during injury to himself, a player, or in the event of rain, etc. He shall not reverse his decision on any point of play based on the opinion of any player or bystander.

GENTLEMEN'S RULING: (local rule) In the event the Umpire has "missed" a play, due only to a blocked view, a Captain can request a "Gentleman's Ruling" to reverse the call. The Umpire will then announce, "A Gentleman's Ruling has been requested." Only players involved in the play may truthfully relate what transpired and a call may be reversed by the Umpire.

8. Players Code of Conduct

Sportsmanship is paramount in vintage base ball. Arguing with the Umpire, charging the pitcher, taunting, and fighting are not tolerated. Players earning a reputation as unruly or unsportsman-like will be banned from the league.

GENTLEMANLY PLAY: Respect must be shown for the game. There is no berating of the Umpire, the fans, or the opposing club. The team at bat may not yell or attempt to distract the fielder or pitcher during live play. Celebrations are limited to handshakes. No posing at Home Base, curtain calling, chest bumping, or high fives.

NOT ALLOWED: There is to be no betting, cursing, spitting, or use of alcoholic beverages during any game. Such infractions, especially in the presence of a lady, will result in a \$5 fine. Sitting among the spectators may also result in immediate ejection. (not practical given wives and kids)



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9. Period Authenticity

THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ARE NOT PERMITTED:

Exterior protective gear, including: batting gloves, helmets, wrist bands, elbow pads, shin guards, etc. No uniform numbers, player names, sponsor logos, backward caps, or jewelry. If, due to injury, a player needs to wear some type of brace or protection it must not be visible. Contact the League President for further clarification.

CATCHER'S GEAR: Includes glove, mask and chest protector but no shin guards. As a substitute for shin guards, catcher may wear soccer shin guards under uniform socks. Catcher may also wear a half-finger glove on throwing hand as was the custom.

PLAYER NICKNAMES:

Nicknames were an important part of 19th century base ball. All players in BAVBB should have nicknames. Players may not give themselves nicknames. They should be earned and bestowed on by their teammates by the end of the third game played. Current nicknames include: Bones, Slick, Hatchet, Danger, Banjo, Squeaky, Mule, etc.

10. Authorized Equipment

In preparing for play, it should be noted that there are several suppliers of vintage equipment. Many of them make fine products but they are not correct for our time period. Only the products below may be used in BAVBB.

1. K & P WEAVER

www.baseballamericaspastime.com

- ☞ Uniforms
- ☞ 1881 Fingerless Glove
- ☞ 1890 Full Finger Glove
- ☞ 1915 Shoeless Joe Catcher's Mitt with webbing removed (only the behind may use).

2. VINTAGE BASE BALL FACTORY

www.vbbf.com

- ☞ Uniforms
 - ☞ Foxy Irwin Original (suggest XL)
 - ☞ Foxy Irwin II (suggest XL)
- Although not to spec, it can be used if the web is cut out.
- ☞ 1870-1880's Base Ball (The only base ball we use)
 - ☞ Akadema Ken-Wel 1920's Dazzy Vance Glove with web between thumb and index finger removed. Four fingers may remain laced together (only the behind may use).

3. BULLDOG BATS

www.bulldogbatsonline.com

- ☞ BAV-S: Standard knob. 35", 40 oz., max 250" barrel and min 125" handle.
- ☞ BAV-T: Tapered knob. 35", 43 oz., max 250" barrel and min 125" handle.

4. HANDMADE BATS.

Handmade bats are only allowed if the maker is approved in advance by the BAVBB Board (contact league president). Each handmade bat must be approved before being used in play by the BAVBB Weights and Measures officer (contact league president).

Bats must be exactly 35", not less than 40 oz with a max barrel of 25 inches and a min handle of 125". Copying the framework of the BAVBB-T and BAVBB-S, bats must have the most minimal taper possible.

It is suggested that you consult with your manager or League President to verify you are using properly approved equipment. Modifications to bats are not permitted and cannot be used in league play. The umpire may inspect equipment at any time.

5. CATCHER'S MASKS.

Rawlings PWMX Catcher's mask with ear flaps removed. Mask can be purchased on Amazon or other sporting goods provider. Vintage era masks with modern padding and straps are allowed with league approval.



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11. Vintage Base Ball Terms

Aces - Runs

Baller, Ballist - Player

Behind - Catcher

Blind, Blinder - No score

Hurler - Pitcher

Bound - Bounce

Bounder - A bouncing ball that doesn't go out of the infield

Capital - The best, first rate. A spectacular catch is a "Capital Play"

Captain - Manager

Cranks - Baseball fans

Daisy Cutter - A sharply hit ground ball

Garden - Outfield

Ginger - Determination, quick fierce play

Hand - An out. "Three hands down" ends an inning

Match, match game - A game between two clubs, as opposed to intra-club games.

Muff - A muffed ball is a missed catch or grounder.

Muffin - A muffin is a less talented player on a club. Also call a "scrub."

Picked Nine - An early type of all-star team. The best local players picked to play versus a specific club passing through the area.

Safety - A safe hit.

Sky ball - Pop up

Short Field - An early name for the shortstop.

Striker - Batter

"Striker To The Line" - Batter Up

Tally - To score a run; score.

12. References, Links & Suggested Readings

Always On Sunday, The California Baseball League, 1886 to 1915, John E. Spalding

150 Years of Baseball, Publications International, 1989

Smithsonian Baseball, Inside The World's Finest Private Collections, Steven Wong, 2005

Spalding's Official Base Ball Guide, 1886, reprint

Base Ball, America's National Game 1839-1915, re-print 1991, Originally released 1911

If I Never Get Back - A Novel, 1990, Darryl Brock

Collection Finder: American Memory from the Library of Congress <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/finder.html> (old Base Ball Cards and photos)

Encyclopedia of Baseball Catchers - 19th Century Base Ball Catcher's Equipment http://memberstripod.com/bb_catchers/catchers/19c_equip.htm

Baseball-Reference.com <http://www.baseball-reference.com/w/wardjo0l.shtml>

Illustrated History Of Base Ball Cards, the 1800's <http://www.cycleback.com/1800s/index.html>

Bay Area Vintage Base Ball, Inc

Founded by Steve Gazay, Nov. 2005

www.bavbb.com

Bay Area Vintage Base Ball is a non-profit 501(c4) corporation under the laws of California. Articles of Incorporation as well as League Bylaws are available through the Secretary of the State of California.