My youth baseball scoresheets

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I present my youth baseball scorecard. It is designed to give the youth baseball scorekeeper the ability to answer the most frequently asked questions without delay. It gives maximum space to write while keeping all the visual hints about the progress of the game. It incorporates pitch counting in a way that makes it easier for the scorekeeper to recover from lapses of attention.

1 Layout

A youth game is typically six innings long, and most teams use a continuous batting order in which all players (12 or more) are in the lineup. So instead of the symmetric 9x9 grid, this scoresheet has space for 15 in the batting order, and space for seven innings.

In a youth game, it's more common to need the extra inning column for the case of a blowout batting around in an inning, but there are two factors that make it unlikely that a youth scorebook would ever need more than space for seven innings. First, most leagues employ some sort of mercy rule, ending the game early if one team gets too far ahead. A team that bats around almost by definition is scoring lots of runs, and are likely to trigger the mercy rule, ending the game in fewer than six innings. Second, an inning in which a team bats around is also one that takes a lot of time to play, and most youth games have some sort of time limit. In the rare instance a game goes beyond seven innings, the scoring could be continued on space for the next game in a book.

Not every team uses a continuous batting order; some bat nine and use substitutions as in "normal" baseball. This scoresheet can handle those, by having space for two players at each spot in the batting order.

Everything about a youth scorebook should be optimized to let the scorekeeper answer questions from coaches or the umpires about the progress of the game: the score, of course, but the inning, the number of outs, pitch counts, and sometimes the count on the batter. Better to use space to optimize the recording of such information than to take up space for summary statistics which wouldn't be filled out until the game is over. This is in contrast to a professional game, where there is a scoreboard to remind everyone of the score and inning. For a professional game, the primary jobs of the scorer is to prepare the official score report that is submitted to the league, and most scorebooks are designed to let the scorer tally the statistics and prove the scorebook at the conclusion of a game. Youth games usually don't generate such reports or statistics, and anyone who wishes to keep statistics will be doing so electronically.

The natural way to set up a scorebook is with the visitors, batting first, on the left-hand page. There are some circumstances—pool play rounds of a tournament, for example—when home and away aren't decided until just before the game starts. Since you'll want to get your book set up beforehand, there are boxes for home and away, and also labels for top and bottom of innings. The one that doesn't apply should be crossed out. When someone asks what inning you're in, you want to include top or bottom, and even though you can figure that out from home/away, it can be hard to do this on the fly. So the labels are there at the top of the inning columns.

2 Scoreboxes

As in all scorebooks, the individual scoreboxes in the main grid of the scoresheet are for recording the results of a plate appearance. The boxes in these scoresheets are designed to let the scorekeeper answer questions as efficiently as possible, and to give enough room to write as much detail as desired.

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These scoresheets are a largely open design. They're not completely blank, but you gain far more flexibility in what you record if one uses the basic abbreviations instead of trying to have something to circle or fill in for every possible outcome.

The series of five small sub-boxes are for recording pitches, explained below. The large sub-box is for the running pitch count total. This should start over with each new pitcher.

As with many scoring schemes, I like to keep track of runners' progress schematically, around the baseball diamond. Some scorebooks (such as Bob Carpenter's) leave the scorebox completely blank, and scorekeepers need to draw the base progress freehand. One can argue that the miniature baseball diamonds in each score box are unnecessary clutter, especially if the batter is put out without reaching base. Youth baseball typically features a much larger fraction of baserunners than does a professional game, and my handwriting—especially during an exciting moment in a game—is not good enough to freehand draw a baseball diamond while leaving room to record the method of advancement to the other bases. So these scoreboxes provide a hint for drawing a runner's progress, small circles representing every base. They're unobstrusive enough to avoid cluttering the box when a batter is put out. The diamond they make is large enough to record the running tally of the score, a more efficient use of space than filling the diamonds in.

The space around the schematic diamond is kept clear, to give enough space to record the method of advancement as a runner reaches each base. The circles themselves can be filled in to represent the positions of the baserunners when play stops.

3   Pitchers

Although many scorebooks are ambiguous about this, having the *opposing* pitcher's statistics on a team's scoresheet makes finalizing a pitcher's statistics easier than flipping between the two teams' sheets. You don't get a team's entire record on a single page, but this scoresheet is designed for in-game efficiency.

In some youth leagues, pitchers are given one balk warning before balks are called. This scoresheet includes a column for that, "BK warn". When a balk warning is issued, I record the inning number and the jersey number of the batter, separated by a colon or slash.

The pitching section doesn't include the entire pitching line that scorers need to for the official score report, but it does record the information you'd need—innings pitched and pitches thrown—to fill out a pitching affidavit in a tournament.

4   Keeping score

There are many guides to the conventional notation used in scoring, which is not nearly as standard as you might think. I've found the following notations helpful for in-game reference.

First, I fill in the dot for the base where every baserunner stops at the end of a play. So on a double, I draw the lines from home to first to second, but only fill in the dot at second. Same scheme for a single with an error allowing the runner to advance on the same play. It's then a good check to glance at the runners on base and compare with where the endpoint dots are.

Without a scoreboard to turn to, everyone turns to the scorekeeper for the score. This sounds tautological, but without a scoreboard, it's really hard to remember of the score. Traditional scorebook methods don't lend themselves to instant readout of the score; the scorer might need to add all the runs from previous innings and tally the runs in the current inning. Using the scorebox diamonds to keep a running tally of the score avoids an uncomfortable pause to add the runs up.

Although it's not necessary for compiling statistics (except RBIs), I record the player at bat for each advancement of a baserunner, prefixed with W, P, S, or D for wild pitch, passed ball, steal, or defensive indifference. The batter could be recorded in three ways: Ramzel and Tunnell recommend writing the batter's defensive position number, but this doesn't work with a continuous batting order and gets messy if kids switch positions frequently. One could also use position in the batting order, which in a traditional game is a single digit, but can be two digits with the continuous batting order. Better to write the jersey number, which you can get just by looking at the player without cross-referencing a lineup.

5   Pitch counts

Pitch counts are important for maintaining healthy arms of youth pitchers, and all leagues and tournaments set limits to the number of pitches any pitcher may throw. To prevent a pitcher from going over, we must track the pitches. This scoresheet tracks pitches in a way that also gives the count and makes it easy to recover from temporary lapses of attention. It's an extension of the pitch tracking system devised by The Baseball Enthusiast blog, which is similar to the system used by Andres Wirkmaa.

In the upper left corner of each scorebox are five small boxes: the first column of three for balls and second column of two for strikes. To record a strike, use a slash for a swinging strike, a dot for a called strike, and an X for a foul ball. To record a ball, write the pitch number (of that plate appearance). For foul balls with two strikes, write the pitch number outside the balls-and-strikes box. Then the number of filled boxes immediately gives the count. Add one for the ball in play, and add this total number of pitches in the plate appearance to the previous pitch count, and the running pitch count is updated and can be quoted without delay.

This method does take room in the scorebox, but it's more practical than dividing your attention to different zones of the scoresheet during a plate appearance. But the chief advantage over a sequential list of total pitches is the recovery from temporary lapses of attention. If you learn what the count is, you can fill in any pitch you might have missed, except for two-strike fouls. This will be more accurate, though, than simply trying to guess how many pitches you missed.

6   Assembling a scorebook

Using a PDF viewer with even minimal editing capability, you can create your own scorebook, and have it printed and bound at an office supply store or print shop. This can often be done while you wait. I've recently taken to printing my own scorebook on Rite-in-the-Rain paper, then having Fedex Office coil bind it with a clear front cover and dark plastic back cover. I'll also spray-glue a sheet of chipboard to the back cover to give myself a decent writing surface.

My recommended layout:

Front cover Team logo, season, league

Inside front cover and page 1 roster with jersey numbers, schedule, any useful contact information. Pitch Smart USA pitch count guidelines. Field dimensions.

Page 2-3 The scoresheets!

continued facing pages Enough scoresheets for the season, plus a few extra
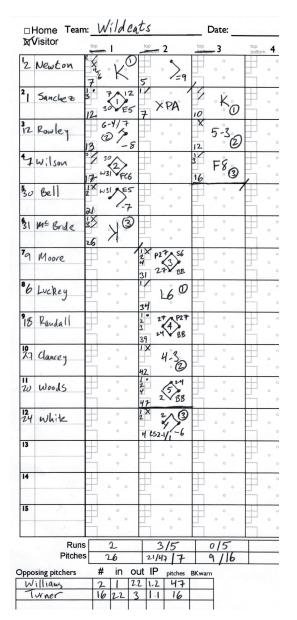
after scoresheets League rules

last page, opposite inside back cover Scoring abbreviations

For contact information, think of anyone you might need to get ahold of. Coaches, league officials, parks department. Do you know who to call if the field or equipment cabinet is locked? Consider also adding the street addresses of the fields you play on, both to remember where the fields are, and in the event emergency services need to be called.

It can be very useful to have the league rules printed in the scorebook, especially concerning legal bats, pitch limits and mercy rules. I've certainly been in situations where showing the rules to the umpire has made a difference in going forward with play.

7   Next page: sample scorepage

Scorecard

☐ Home Team: **Wildcats** Date: _____
☒ Visitor

#	Player	1	2	3	4
2	Newton				
1	Sanchez		XPA		
12	Rowley				
7	Wilson				
30	Bell				
31	McBride				
9	Moore				
6	Luckey				
18	Randall				
27	Clancey				
20	Woods				
24	White				
13					
14					
15					

	1	2	3	4
Runs	2	3/5	0/5	
Pitches	26	21/47 7	9/16	

Opposing pitchers	#	in	out	IP	pitches	BKwarn
Williams	2	1	22	1.2	47	
Turner	16	22	3	1.1	16	

First inning

Newton Williams pitching. Swinging strike, ball, four foul balls, swinging strike for out 1

Sanchez Ball, called strike, ball, reaches on error by third baseman

Rowley Singles to center. Sanchez advances to second.

Wilson Two swinging strikes then a ball. Ball hit to shortshop, who throws to second baseman to put Rowley out for out number 2. Wilson safe at first on the fielder's choice, Sanchez to third.

Bell Two balls, foul, single to left but advances to second on an error by the third baseman. Sanchez scores.

McBride Ball, foul. Wild pitch ball in which Wilson scores and Bell advances to third. A swinging strike, then a called strike three. Inning over, at 26 pitches.

Second inning

Moore Ball, foul, three more balls to walk

Luckey Ball, swinging strike. Moore steals 2nd. lines out to shortstop for the first out

Randall Three balls, called strike, ball four walk

Clancey Ball, gets away from catcher. Moore advances to third, and Randall to second, on passed ball. Foul. Groundball to second baseman, who throws to first for the second out. Moore scores, Randall to third.

Woods Ball, called strike, three more balls to walk

Turner pitching Williams lasted $1\frac{2}{3}$ innings and threw 47 pitches.

White Ball, foul, Ball, single to short. Randall scores, Woods to second.

Newton first pitch double to right field.

Sanchez Ball. Then a swinging strike that gets away from the catcher. White tries to score, but is tagged out as by the pitcher on a throw from the catcher. Three outs. Sanches will be at the plate in the third.

Third inning

Sanchez Three swinging strikes for first out.

Rowley foul, grounder to third who throws to first for the out.

Wilson Ball, swinging strike, ball, fly out to center field for the third out.

Note on 'XPA' Most scoring schemes don't address the situation where the third out is a pickoff or caught stealing. If you're not counting pitches, you'll have nothing for the score box. But if you are counting pitches, you'll have already marked the pitches thrown, and need keep the running pitch total going. So I write XPA, PA for Plate Appearance, and X to indicate it doesn't count as a plate appearance.

Note on passed balls, wild pitches, and steals Although the narrative inserts these into the sequence of pitches during the plate appearance, the notation doesn't contain any record of which pitch they were associated with.

□Home   Team: _____   Date: _____   Scheduled Time : _____   Actual Start : _____

□Visitor

| | top bottom **1** | top bottom **2** | top bottom **3** | top bottom **4** | top bottom **5** | top bottom **6** | |

| 1 |
| 2 |
| 3 |
| 4 |
| 5 |
| 6 |
| 7 |
| 8 |
| 9 |
| 10 |
| 11 |
| 12 |
| 13 |
| 14 |
| 15 |

Runs

Pitches

Opposing pitchers   #   in   out   IP   pitches   BKwarn

Final

☐ Home
☐ Visitor

Team: _____   Location: _____   End Time: _____

	bottom top 1	bottom top 2	bottom top 3	bottom top 4	bottom top 5	bottom top 6	
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							
13							
14							
15							

Runs
Pitches

Opposing pitchers	#	in	out	IP	pitches	BK warn

Final

Base Charting Symbols

Reaching Base

—, 1B	Single
=, 2B	Double
≡, 3B	Triple
≡, HR	Home Run
BB	Walk
E	Error
FC	Fielders' Choice
HBP	Hit By Pitch
IBB	Intentional Walk
CI	Catcher Interference
KW, KP	Dropped 3rd strike
TX	Tiebreaker runner on
RTB	Return to base

Batter Put Out

F	Fly Out
L	Line Out
P	Pop-up Out
ꓶF	Foul (appended)
K	Strikeout swinging
Ʞ	Strikeout called
u	Unassisted
IFF	Infield Fly
DP	Double Play
TP	Triple Play
SAC	Sacrifice
BT	Bunt

Advancing

SB	Stolen Base
WP	Wild Pitch
PB	Passed Ball
DI	Defensive Indifference
BK	Balk
OBS	Obstruction

Runner Put Out

PO	Picked Off
CS	Caught Stealing
Int	Interference

Miscellaneous

CR	Courtesy Runner
XPA	PO/CS 3rd out

Recording strikes

⊠	foul
⊡	called strike
⊘	swinging strike

Hit location descriptors

1–9	Standard player positions
34, 56, 78, 89	in between positions
13, 15, 23, 25	infield between postiions
S	short
D	deep
XD	extra deep
L	fair along line
F	foul
M	midfield

Pitch Smart USA Guidelines

Age	Daily Max (Pitches in Game)	Required Rest (Pitches)				
		0 Days	1 Day	2 Days	3 Days	4 Days
7–8	50	1–20	21–35	36–50	—	—
9–10	75	1–20	21–35	36–50	51–65	66+
11–12	85	1–20	21–35	36–50	51–65	66+
13–14	95	1–20	21–35	36–50	51–65	66+
15–16	95	1–30	31–45	46–60	61–75	76+
17–18	105	1–30	31–45	46–60	61–80	81+