

History

The Challenger program was set up by National Little League in 1989. Two years later (1991), the program was started in Washington in District 8 by Bev and Gary Newsome. Gary was the District 8 administrator. Teams were from the Woodinville/Bothell/NKC area. The program was chartered at the district level. During the years, the program grew to 4 teams – mostly players from the Woodinville/Bothell/North King County area. The teams were named after MLB teams.

Our players stay on the same team from year to year. Once the player hit age 15 – 18, they will be moved up to the Senior Challenger division. Unless there are exceptions that have been requested by parents or coaches, the teams stay together. Thru the years, the players wore the original shirts/jerseys each year. Shirts were order for new players, damaged or needed a different size. District found that the players were married to their shirts and proudly wore them.

In 2018, Bev was honored as Challenger Volunteer of the Year award for her tireless hours to the Challenger program at District 8. She was feted at the Major Baseball World Series in Williamsport.

In June 2019, Sam Ranck from National Little League, came to our Jamboree. He noted that the district had enough older Challenger players and the district needed to form the Challenger and Senior Challenger divisions. Bev and Sam agreed to start the two divisions of Challenger in 2020 – it got delayed due to covid and started in 2021. Ages for Challenger are 4 – 18. If there is no Senior Challenger division, players can play up to age 22 if they are in school. Ages for Senior Challenger are 15 and up – there is no maximum ending age.

As the district moved to the Senior division, the district met with the Challenger coaches in early 2020 prior to Covid. There was much discussion about how teams would be formed and players could leave the program if they couldn't play with their teammates. In the end, It was realized that the teams would stay together as the 4 teams had the ages to be Senior Challengers. There would be some minor changes in the Challenger division.

The overall player counts for both Challenger and Senior Challengers average around 120-130 each year. Each year, a few players have joined, some have dropped, and yes, we miss the players that have passed on. Only 2 of the 8 teams have mostly only league players – Northlake Challengers (11 Northlake and 2 North Bothell) and Shoreline Senior Challengers (11 Shoreline players and 7 other leagues). Woodinville has been recruiting and will have a Challenger team this year. They had 4 players last season on another team and we will need to place the other 11 players.

It was promised by District that to differentiate the difference between the two divisions, the Senior Challengers would have a replica type jersey. Please remember, Senior Challengers are ages 15 on up. What do your Baseball and Softball intermediate, junior and senior divisions wear? Challengers have no All-Star tournaments that advance to district, state, regional and world series. Aren't Challengers our All-Stars all season long?

Reason for the Challenger program at the district level:

- Registration – by having one place to register, the parents know that this is the program for intellectual and physical disabilities. There have been some problems in the league registration as parents miss the description or that fact that the other sign ups in the league have closed, so they register under Challenger thinking their player will get on a Baseball or Softball division team. By the time it is discovered, the player may not be able to play.
- Challenger is a fluid sign up – it never closes and can register and get on a team even though the season has started
- Two charters needed – Challenger and Senior Challenger. Overall, the costs of chartering by the district will decrease the leagues' assessments. Currently, it has been noted that not all leagues charter the two Challenger divisions, even though they must charter if they have at least one player. It was also noted that the assessment that was based on the data center number of teams that were chartered and the league still pays the assessments even though that league's player plays for another league that season.
- Registration fee – When the league does the registration fee, they should be moving that fee from their player to the league when the player will play. When handled by the district, no need to track the payments.
- Co-leaguering is not an option. Because the players do and want to stay on the same teams year after year, teams have players from different leagues. We can't pick and choose – to co-league means that all players from the league (for example: NW, NE, NC) must have only their players on the co-league teams. It would mean that all the Challenger and Senior Challenger teams need to be re-formed.
- Forming teams – any team is formed from all in the district. If the program is done by the leagues, and the players play on the same teams each year, it means that the out of league waivers need to be done. Parent letter request, approval from both boards, DA info and then sent to Charter Committee to approve. Based on last year, this is 60 waiver out of 118 players.
- Uniforms – Because the district has no stop in sign ups, we can get additional uniforms quickly after initial orders. We have great relations with Risan's, who have helped us throughout the years.
- Team formation and scheduling will be done by District no matter how the program is run due to the overall numbers of player participation. It is more difficult to ask the individual leagues to forward their information than the district forward the league's information to them.