

# Playing Up During the Spring Season

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Allowing children to “play up” a division higher than their natural league age has been widely discussed both among the NCYB board, as well as throughout PONY baseball. Only recently has PONY even allowed it, and then only at the discretion of each individual league.

On the one hand, there are legitimate concerns about player safety, physical ability, emotional readiness, and dilution of play impacting the entire league.

On the other hand, with the proliferation of year-round baseball there are certain players who are ready to play up a level, and some leagues want to encourage those players to continue to play recreational baseball and not default to year-round travel teams.

Most PONY leagues do not allow children to play up during the Spring Season. However, the NCYB board has decided to experiment with it this coming 2012 Spring Season for all divisions. At the end of the season, the board will evaluate the effectiveness of this new rule and decide whether to continue it for the following spring season.

## Impact on All-Stars

Per national PONY rules, any player that has played up a division during the regular season will not be allowed to play down during all-stars. For example, a league age 8 player who plays up to Mustang during the regular season will not be allowed to play down to Pinto for all-stars. This includes if that player is not selected to a Mustang all-star team.

It is important to note that being selected to play up at the beginning of the season in no way ensures the player will be selected to that all-star team at the end of the season. Therefore, even if allowed to play up, parents and players should carefully weigh all-star implications into the decision process.

## Notification

Following the player assessments and the process outlined below, the player agent will contact the parent/guardian to notify them of the decision in regard to whether the league will allow the child to play up.

## For players wanting to play up to Mustang, Bronco, or Pony, the following process will apply.

To be considered to play up, parents must directly notify the Player Agent (Steve Estes) prior to Player Assessments scheduled on January 28 and 29, 2012 (see Events page on the NCYB website for details).

Players wanting to play up during the Spring Season must take part in player assessments for both their natural age-group division, as well as the division in which they desire to play up. This is because the decision will likely

not be made on their status until after all player assessments are complete. For example, a league age 8 player must take part in both Mustang assessments as well as Pinto.

The evaluation team will consist of:

1. The NCYB President
2. The Vice President
3. The Player Agent
4. The Division Representative of the division player would like to play up (example: the Mustang representative evaluates a league-age 8 player hoping to play up)
5. The Division Representative of the division player would naturally play (example: the Pinto representative would also take part in the decision for that same player)

All known elements of the player will be taken into consideration, and includes but is not limited to knowledge of the player via:

- Player assessments
- Winterball
- Travel ball
- The last Spring Season
- Etc.

The player will be evaluated against the next league age up from their own. For example, a league age 8 player wanting to play Mustang will be evaluated against all league age 9 players. That player's comparison to their league age 8 peers will not be considered, nor will they be compared to league age 10 players.

Four of the five league officials must agree that the player meets each of the three following requirements. In the event that a family member is one of those five members, that official will not take part in the process and three of the remaining four must agree on all of the following:

1. The player is emotionally ready for the next level. This includes but is not limited to:
  - a. Able to handle the increased pressure and intensity that comes with play at the next level
  - b. Mature enough to be around older players day in and day out
  - c. Will be coachable at the next level up (able to handle and process the direction and feedback coaches will provide)
2. The player has average, to above-average "baseball IQ" relative to the division they are attempting to play up to. This includes but is not limited to:
  - a. Understanding the rules of the game
  - b. Ability to learn signs
  - c. Has the capacity to quickly learn and apply situational play such as:
    - i. Lead-offs and steals
    - ii. Holding runners on and pick-offs
    - iii. Situational defense
3. The player is considered to be among the top eight players of the next age group up in terms of overall physical play. Their total physical game will be considered, which includes but is not limited to:
  - a. Hitting for average
  - b. Hitting for power

- c. Speed/baserunning
- d. Throwing ability
- e. Fielding ability

**For players wanting to play up to Pinto the following process will apply.**

Because of safety considerations at the Shetland level and ensuring truly beginning players are not overwhelmed by more advanced beginning players, NCYB has a somewhat more liberal approach to allowing players play up to Pinto (compared to older divisions).

To be considered to play up, parents must notify the Player Agent (Steve Estes) prior to Player Assessments scheduled on January 28 and 29, 2012 (see Events page on the NCYB website for details).

The parent/guardian must agree to be a manager or assistant coach of the team if the player is allowed to play up or have a designated adult to do so in their place, and attend all practices and games. This is to ensure the player receives individual instruction and does not take away from instruction of other players.

The evaluation team will consist of:

1. The NCYB President
2. Vice President
3. The Player Agent
4. The Pinto Division Representative

Three of the four league officials must agree that the player meets all of the requirements outlined below. In the event that a family member is one of those four officials, that official will not take part in the process and two of the remaining three must agree the player meets the criteria.

In the case of Pinto the comparison point will be to all players in the Pinto division (both 7 and 8 year olds). The candidate player will be allowed to play up if he/she is considered higher than the bottom 33% for both emotional and physical readiness. For example, a league age 6 year old would need to be considered as good or better than one out of every three seven and eight year old Pinto players for the following criteria:

1. Emotional and mental readiness: This includes but is not limited to:
  - a. Understanding of the basic rules of the game
  - b. Ability to focus and pay attention
  - c. Mature enough to be around older players day in and day out
2. Physical ability: This includes but is not limited to:
  - a. Consistently catch thrown balls
  - b. Able to throw the ball in a consistent manner
  - c. Able to track and maneuver to fly balls
  - d. Shows the ability to be able to hit off a pitching machine