



14. PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL-THE FIRST YEAR DRAFT

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The Major League Baseball First-Year Player Draft is held every year in June by conference call among the 30 Major League Clubs. The Clubs take turns selecting players in reverse order of their won-loss records at the close of the previous regular season, with National and American League Clubs alternating selections. The Draft will conclude at the end of the 50th round (or earlier, if each Club declines to continue making selections). A National League Club selects first in even-numbered years, and an American League Club selects first in odd-numbered years.

The Major League Rules govern which players are eligible for selection in the Draft. These Rules are detailed, but the basic eligibility criteria can be described as follows: Generally, a player is eligible for selection if the player is a resident of the United States or Canada and the player has never before signed a Major League or Minor League contract. Residents of Puerto Rico and other territories of the United States are eligible for the Draft. Players who enroll in a high school or college in the United States are considered residents, regardless of where they are from originally.

Certain groups of players are ineligible for selection, generally because they are still in school. The three basic categories of players eligible to be drafted are:

1. High school players

If they have graduated from high school and have not yet attended college or junior college;

2. College players

From four-year colleges who have either completed their junior or senior years or are at least 21 years old; Junior college players, regardless of how many years of school they have completed;

3. 21-year-old players

A Club generally retains the rights to sign a selected player until one week prior to the next Draft, or until the player enters, or returns to, a four-year college on a full-time basis. A selected player who enters a junior college cannot be signed until the conclusion of the school's baseball season. A player who is drafted and does not sign with the Club that selected him may be drafted again at a future year's Draft, so long as the player is eligible for that year's Draft. A Club may not select a player again in a subsequent year, unless the player has consented to the re-selection.

A player who is eligible to be selected and is passed over by every Club becomes a free agent and may sign with any Club, up until one week before the next Draft, or until the player enters, or returns to, a four-year college full-time or enters, or returns to, a junior college. In the one-week period before any Draft, which is called the "closed period," the general rule is that no Club may sign a new player.

This description is a general one and the Major League Rules themselves, not this summary, govern eligibility issues. Players and coaches with questions about particular players are referred to the Baseball Operations Department at the Office of the Commissioner of Baseball.

