



Division Rules – 2023

(as of 4/6/2023)

Softball Minors

1. Players:

- Players of the Minors Girls Softball team shall include girls from 2nd and 3rd grade. Any other participants require Warren Baseball and Softball Inc (WBSI), Long Hill Baseball and Softball Association (LHBSA), Ridge Youth Sports Inc (RYSI) and Somerset Hills Ball Club (SHBC) board approval.

2. Safety and Equipment:

- An 11 inch softball will be used for each game.
- Players must wear team uniforms for games.
- Steel/metal cleats are not allowed at any time.
- A batter may swing their bat only while in the on-deck batting area at any time.
- Only one player is allowed in the on-deck batting area at any time.
- Players who are in the dugout are to remain behind fences at all times and are not to stand in fence openings in order to watch the game.
- Tossing or throwing of balls is not allowed in the dugout.
- Helmets with face-guards must be worn by all batters and base-runners.
- Helmets are not to be removed until a player is off of the playing field.
- Face masks for fielding must be worn by infielders and outfielders at all times.
- Chest/heart guards while playing the infield and pitcher are recommended.
- When playing the position of catcher during a practice, warming up a pitcher, or game, the player must wear full body protection gear (catcher's helmet with faceguard, chest protector and shin-guards).
- No player will wear jewelry, including watches, earrings, or anything around their necks.
- If a defender is blocking a base without being in possession of the ball, thereby preventing a base-runner from successfully reaching the base without making contact, the umpire is to award that base to the base-runner.
- No fielder may play closer than 50 feet from home plate except for the pitcher.
- If there is a safety base, a defensive player at first must tag the white bag, not the safety bag to record an out.

3. Game schedule and length:

- Minor league games will consist of 6 innings, unless called for game time limit, weather, darkness, and thereby, subject to the rules below.
- In the event a game must end due to an unforeseen event (e.g. lightning), the game is considered “official” when three and one half innings are completed with the home team ahead or four complete innings with the visiting team ahead.
- A time limit is in effect. No new inning will begin after 1 hour and 45 minutes past the start time. Once that time limit is reached, the inning in progress is to be completed and the game will end at the conclusion of that inning. Extra innings will not be played in the event that a game concludes with a tie score.
- There is no time limit for playoffs. All playoff games must be played to completion (6 innings).
- In order to ensure a playoff game does not carry on for longer than necessary, when a playoff game ends with a tie after 6 innings, at the start of the 7th inning, and each inning thereafter, the offense will begin its turn at bat with the player who batted last the previous half inning, at 2nd base. The team that scores the most runs at the end of the inning will win the game.
- The official start time of the game should be established by the umpire during the pre-game meeting with the team coaches. Coaches should ask the umpires to establish the official start and end time. As the 1 hour and 45 minute time limit approaches, the umpire should remind the coaches (or vice-versa) of the time limit and determine if the next inning played would be the final uncapped inning.
- Capped vs Uncapped innings: While there is no “mercy rule”, there is a “cap” on the number of runs allowed per inning. Each inning, except for the last inning, will be “capped” at 5 runs. The last inning (due to time constraint) or the 6th inning), whichever comes first, will be “uncapped” where-as there is no run limit.

4. **Game Rules:**

- The pitching distance will measure 32’ from apex or point of home plate to front center of pitching rubber.
- The distance between the bases is 60 feet.
- A maximum of 10 players on the field at one time (4 players in the outfield). If a team is short-handed (e.g. has only 6, 7 or 8 players at game time), the coaches should try to work out how to best help that short-handed team and attempt to still play the game as scheduled.
- All outfielders must be on the outfield grass when the ball is pitched, but can enter the infield once the ball is hit.

5. **Balls and Strikes:**

- The pitcher will pitch from the pitching rubber and shall have both feet on the rubber when they begin their delivery.
- At the start of each inning, the pitcher will pitch to the first five batters. The pitcher will be limited to 4 pitches to each batter.
- If pitcher hits three batters, she must be removed from the position for the remainder of the game. Any batter who is hit by a pitch, when she cannot get out

of the way with reasonable effort, will be awarded first base. First base will not be awarded if the batter is hit by a coach pitching.

- If the batter has not struck out, been put-out, been hit by a pitch or put the ball into play after their first 4 pitches from the pitcher, the strike count (if any) will be maintained and the coach from the batting team will resume the pitching responsibility – only strikes will be counted, no balls will be called. The coach may begin their delivery from the rubber or up to 1 stride from the front of the pitching rubber.
- After the first five batters, the batting team's coach will pitch the entire at bat to each batter that inning. The pitcher will continue to field the pitcher's position and cannot be switched to another fielding position in that inning. When assuming the pitching position, the pitcher must remain a further distance from home player than the coach that is pitching.
- Note to coaches: Pitchers out to know that the ASA (American Softball Association) rules state that "Both feet must remain in contact with the pitching plate at all times prior to the forward step." As part of this rule, pitchers should not step their foot back behind the mound during their wind-up/deliver. As a general rule, this will not be enforced in the minor league (or major league) recreation program in order to foster an environment which encourages more girls to try pitching, one where pitchers don't have to worry about every pitching rule/restriction. However, if either the umpire or coaches believe that the pitcher, by stepping backwards, is generating additional velocity that is unsafe to the batter, they should work with the pitcher or a solution that keeps the batter safe.
- The strike zone is defined as the ball crossing over the plate plus 3 inches outside and from the shins to the shoulders. A ball that hits the plate is not a strike.
- The umpire will only call strikes. They will not call balls.
- Balks will not be called.
- No pitcher may pitch more than two innings in any one game. For purposes of this rule, a single pitch thrown in an inning constitutes an inning pitched. This rule applies for playoffs as well.

6. **Batting and Base Running:**

- No balls will be called by the umpire. As a result, no batters can walk.
- Bunting of a ball pitched to the batter is not permissible.
- The Infield Fly rule will not be called.
- Base stealing will not be permitted.
- A runner may not leave their base until the ball is hit or it crosses the plate.
- Tagging up is permitted when a fly ball is caught by an outfielder; if a fly ball is caught by an infielder, tagging up is not allowed.
- Base runners are limited to one base on all batted balls hit in the infield.
- Base runners may take additional bases on all batted balls hit into the outfield, as defined by any ball that is hit into the outfield grass or that is fielded by an outfielder.

- a. The play ends once an infielder has secured the ball in the infield or the infielder returns to the infield with the ball.
- b. If the base runner is not at the half way point between the bases once the ball is secured by the infielders, the runner will be sent back to the previous base.
- c. If the runner is at the half way point or beyond once the ball is secured by an infielder, the runner may advance to the next base.
 - No advances are allowed on overthrows to any base.
 - If a player leaves the game and does not return (e.g., leaves for another commitment), the team shall skip that player's turn at bat in the batting order and not be penalized.
 - If a player arrives late to the game, and their turn "at bat" has already passed, they shall be moved to the bottom of the batting order.

7. **Fair playing time:**

- The batting order should be rotated each game to ensure all girls have the chance to hit against kid and coach pitching.
- Rotate infield and outfield positions each inning, unless there are safety concerns with a particular player playing infield. All players should have equal infield and outfield playing time.
 - a. For playoffs, all players must have an opportunity to play the infield at least once.
 - All players in attendance at a game will be included in the batting order.

8. **Other Requirements:**

- Coach behind the catcher: A coach of the fielding team is permitted to stand behind the catcher and umpire to help retrieve balls to speed game along. That coach may and is encouraged to communicate with the pitcher, catcher, hitter and fielders as this is an instructional league.
- Coaches in the field: Coaches of the fielding team may be in the field while game is in play. They are encouraged to communicate with the pitcher, catcher, hitter and fielders as this is an instructional league. The relief Pitching Coach of the batting team may, if they choose to be, in the field behind the pitcher or they may wait in foul territory awaiting the time to relieve the pitcher. If a coach in the field is hit by a live ball, the umpire would decide how many bases the batter and baserunners should be awarded.
- Official Scores: For each game, scorebooks will be kept by both teams. The winning team will report the final score to the League Commission within 24 hours after the end of the game. After each game, both coaches should agree on the results of the game – including the final score because the runs in a game may be used to determine playoff seeding.
- Seeding: Seeding for playoffs will be determined by team points. Points will be awarded accordingly; Win = 3 points, Tie = 2 points, Loss = 1 point, Not played = 0 points. In the event of a tie, the tie breaker will be determined by, 1) head to head, 2) winning percentage, 3) runs scored against and 4) coin flip.

