



SANDY SPRINGS YOUTH SPORTS
SOFTBALL - MAJOR LEAGUE
LOCAL RULES AND REGULATIONS

Version: March 2, 2023

The following are the basic rules needed by the coaches. These rules rely heavily on the USA Softball rules, with some modifications for recreation league play. While many USA rules are contained herein, this should not be construed as a substitute for the USA Rules, which each coach is expected to read and adhere to.

The Major League is a Competitive League and introduces and reinforces more advanced rules such as pitching, stealing and defensive control of the ball. While play may not be interrupted at the conclusion of each play, coaches will, within reason, be allowed to liberally use time outs to discuss strategy with his/her team.

I. GENERAL RULES

1. EQUIPMENT

- a. Major League will play with an 11" Optical Softball having a COR of 0.47 and a Compression of 375.
- b. Catcher's gear shall be worn by the person playing the catcher's position.
- c. Batting helmets must have a facemask.
- d. Pitcher, 1st baseman and 3rd basemen are required to wear a protective mask at all times when pitching to a batter.
- e. The distance between bases shall be set at 60'. The distance between the Pitcher's Plate and Home Plate shall be 35'.
- f. The Pitcher's Circle is an 8' radius from the back of the rubber.
- g. Bats must conform to the [rules set forward](#) by the National Federation of State High School Associations.

2. DURATION OF GAMES

- a. **Length of Games:** Games shall be 6 innings in length; however, no new inning shall be started after 75 minutes. Games ending in a tie shall be declared a tie. Upon conclusion of the game the players and coaches should shake hands, or exchange a "fist bump," and say "good game" to the opponent, and vacate the field so that the next scheduled game can begin on time.
- b. **Time Between Half-Innings:** The time between the last out and the first pitch in the



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next half inning should not be greater than 3 minutes. During this time, a pitcher has up to 1 minute to deliver up to 5 practice pitches. Once the umpire calls "play ball", the catcher and batter have 30 seconds to take their places. The umpire in the event of equipment problems may extend flexibility on these rules.

c. **Courtesy Runner Rule:** In order to speed the game, the offensive coach may substitute a base runner for the catcher, who is catching the subsequent inning, with 2 outs. This is to allow catcher to prepare for the next half-inning. The courtesy runner shall be the player who made the last out in that inning.

3. DUGOUTS AND HOME TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

a. Dugouts

- i. **Assignments:** Home team will occupy the 1st base dugout.
- ii. **Cleanup:** Teams must remove all equipment and trash from the dugouts immediately following the completion of games. Please sanitize dugouts.
- iii. **Vacate Immediately:** Dugouts are to be vacated immediately following any game where another game is scheduled on the same field. Post-game team meetings must be held elsewhere.

b. Team Duties

- i. **Electronic Scoreboard:** The Visiting Team is responsible for keeping the score on the electronic, physical scoreboard via the SingleScore app.
- ii. **Electronic Scoreboxes:** The Visiting Team for the last game of the day on each field is responsible for turning off the scoreboard. The power switch is at the scoreboard.
- iii. **Scorebook:** The Home team is responsible for scorebook or GameChanger
- iii. **Game Balls:** The Home Team is responsible for supplying one (1) new game ball, and one (1) like-new game ball (use game ball from prior game).

4. NUMBER OF PLAYERS REQUIRED

a. A team must have a minimum of eight (8) players present at the start of a game. If 8 eligible players are not available by 10 minutes past the official game time or at any time during the game (for any reason including injury), the umpire shall declare the game a forfeit.



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i. In the event of a forfeit, the teams are encouraged to play a practice game during the scheduled time and, if they do, umpires shall not officiate. However, in no event shall the practice game proceed past 15 minutes preceding the scheduled start time of the next scheduled game.

b. If a team is playing with less than nine (9) players, an 'out' shall be declared when an "open" position in the line-up is reached. Likewise, when a player leaves the game for any reason, an 'out' shall be declared when that player's place in the batting order is reached. However, enforcement of this rule is at the discretion of the managers, who, prior to the start of play can agree to not enforce this rule.

c. For the playoffs only, in the case where a team does not have a minimum of 9 players available, Rule 4b will NOT be left to the discretion of the opposing manager. An out MUST be taken in the batting order for any empty slots in the batting order.

5. LINEUPS, LINEUP CARDS AND SUBSTITUTIONS

a. **Lineup Card:** Team Managers shall prepare lineup cards prior to the start of each game. A copy of the lineup card shall be given to the Umpire and Manager of the opposing team.

b. **Batting Order:** The Lineup card must list the names and jersey numbers of all players. The sequence designated by the Lineup Card shall also be the Batting Order. All players on team rosters must be listed on the lineup cards including players not starting and absent players.

c. **Late-Arriving Players:** Any late-arriving players shall be entered into the game at the bottom of the existing batting order when they arrive.

d. **Re-entry and Substitution:** There shall be free substitution for all players throughout the game, this includes pitchers. However, if a pitcher is removed during an inning, if she returns to the pitching position during that same inning, she will not receive any warm up pitches.

e. **Substitution Rules:** If more than 10 players are present for a game, then the coach will be required to use substitutes, and the coach must fairly distribute playing time so that no player plays more than one (1) inning more than any other player. No player should be on the bench for two innings before every other player has also been on the bench.



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f. **Infield Play:** All players available for a game shall play at least 1 full inning in an infield position (P, C, 1B, 2B, SS, 3B) during the first 3 innings of the game. (Applies for all regular season and all playoff games.)

g. **Call-Up Rule:** A Manager concerned about being short-handed for any game may recruit players from the Minor league. Substitute players must be from a list of interested players that are maintained by League Directors; Managers may contact substitute player candidates on the eligible list directly without League Director assistance. The following rules apply to call-up players:

- i. Call-Up players are ineligible if playing conflicts partially/completely with a game of their team
- ii. Call-Up players are subject to all of the same rules as roster players
- iii. Call-Up players may only play in a league, which is one (i) league higher than their team league
- iv. Call-Up players can only play when the team in need has fewer than 9 members of their team present. Substitute players may not play if the team in need has 9 or more players present.
- v. Call-Up players cannot play the pitcher's or catcher's positions.
- vi. Call-Up players are eligible for post season (playoff) games to avoid a forfeit because less than eight players are available. In this case the team with eight or fewer players may use substitute players to field a maximum of nine players.

6. PLAYOFFS – Double Elimination Bracket

- i. Time limit is 80 minutes. Open inning at 60 minutes or after 3rd inning, whichever occurs first.
- ii. Pitching Rules (See rule III-3) will still apply for the opening round.
- iii. If a game in the playoffs is tied at the end of regulation time and less than 6 innings have been played, one full extra inning will be played. Should the game be tied after that inning, a tiebreaker will be played to break the tie per USA Rules. Starting with the first extra inning and for each half inning thereafter the offensive team shall begin its turn at bat with the player who is scheduled to bat last in that



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respective half inning placed on second base. The game shall be continued until one side has scored more runs than the other at the end of a complete inning or until the team second at bat has scored more runs in their half of the inning before the third out is made. If time has expired and 6 innings have been completed, then the tiebreaker inning will be the 7th inning.

- iv. Playoff and championship games shortened by weather that would otherwise be considered a complete game during the regular season will be resumed at a later date.
- v. Pitching rules (see Rule III-3) will increase to 12 outs. Pitchers still may not appear in more than 2 closed innings.

II. OFFENSIVE RULES

1. **OFFENSIVE INNING:** The game will consist of "open" and "closed" innings. An "Open Inning" is the first new inning begun after 60 minutes of play or after 3 innings, whichever occurs first.

2. RUN LIMITS:

- a. Closed Inning: the number of runs which may be scored in any Closed Inning shall be limited to three (3).
- b. Open Inning: the number of runs which may be scored in any Open Inning shall be limited to eight (8).

3. **MERCY RULE:** There is a "mercy rule" of an eight (8) run difference after 5 completed innings.

4. **SLIDING:** Runners should slide at all bases at which a play is being made with the exception of 1st base. No contact is allowed unless the player slides. If contact is made when the runner doesn't slide, she will be declared out. A runner who does not slide, but avoids contact will not be declared out. The intention of this rule is to minimize collisions.

5. **COURTESY RUNNER:** In addition to the Courtesy Runner allowed for catchers (see Rule I2c) a Courtesy Runner may be requested by a Manager for any base runner who has a doctor's notice requesting that running activity be minimized. The player who made the last recorded out shall be the Courtesy Runner.

6. BASE RUNNERS



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- a. **Lead-offs:** Runners may take a leadoff the base once the pitcher releases the ball.
- b. **Runners-at-risk:** Base Runners are always at risk until they reach a base safely. If a runner safely reaches a base to which she is not entitled, she is not out but will be returned to the proper base by the umpire after play has stopped.
- c. **Stealing Bases:**
 - i. Base Runners may advance only 1 base per pitch, regardless of any overthrows, and there will be no stealing home.
 - ii. Runner cannot begin to move toward the base (i.e. steal) once the catcher has started the throwing motion back to the pitcher. In other words, there are no delayed steals, steals on bad throws to the pitcher, or getting into the look back rule.
 - iii. There shall be no stealing when the Coach is pitching.
- d. **Ball in Pitcher's Possession in The Pitcher's Circle:** When the pitcher has the ball inside the eight-foot pitcher's circle during or after a play, Base Runners who are not then forced and either (a) have stopped their forward progress, (b) are stationary on a base, or (c) are attempting to return to a base, may not advance until the next pitch is thrown.
- e. **Hit by Pitch:** Umpire's discretion based on USA rule.

III. DEFENSIVE RULES

1. **PITCHING:** All USA rules regarding pitching are to be strictly enforced by the umpires.
 - a. **Illegal Pitch:** Sandy Springs follows the USA rules for an illegal pitch, but because we are a developmental league, a pitcher should be warned that they are pitching illegally first. If after the initial warning, the pitcher continues to deliver illegal pitches, the umpire may call an illegal pitch. The umpire will only award a ball to the batter for an illegal pitch. Runners may advance if that is ball 4 and the runner is now forced. If the runner advances during the illegal pitch, the offensive coach has the option to accept the illegal pitch penalty (ball on batter, all runners return) or the result of the pitch/play (e.g. if it was an illegal pitch but the batter hit a three run double, the offensive coach has the discretion to choose the result).
 - b. **Feet in Contact:** The pitching rules now allow a pitcher to start with both or just the pivot foot in contact with the pitching plate. The pitcher MAY take a backward step off



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the pitching plate with the non-pivot (or stride) foot before the hands come together, simultaneous with the hands coming together, and event after the hands come together (all considered prior to "the start of the pitch"). However, they are NOT allowed to take a backwards step after the hands have separated to start the pitch.

2. COACH PITCH RULE:

- a. When 4 "balls" are thrown by the "kid" pitcher, or the count reaches "3-0" (3 balls, no strikes), the offensive coach will enter the game to pitch to the batter and will inherit the count. No walks will be issued. Each pitch the coach throws will count as a strike.
- b. Defensive Pitcher may not line up forward of the Coach Pitcher in relation to home plate
- c. The "Coach Pitcher" cannot participate in any defensive play and must use reasonable effort to avoid interfering with defensive team play. If the umpire judges that reasonable effort to avoid interference was not given by the "Coach Pitcher", the umpire shall call "interference" with the effect that the batter will be called out and all base runners will return to the bases they occupied at the beginning of the play.
- d. The Coach pitcher should wait in foul territory against the fence, near the base coach (or serve as the base coach) until needed. This is to minimize the delay between the "kid" pitcher's last pitch and the coach pitcher's pitches.

3. PITCHER INNING LIMITS: No pitcher may throw more than 9 outs in any game. If the out is recorded while the "coach rescue" pitcher is in the game, then that out is credited to the pitcher that started the AB. Pitchers may not appear in more than 2 "closed" innings.

4. NUMBER OF PLAYERS (MAXIMUMS): All Players bat, each team will field a maximum of 10 players.

5. OVERTHROWS:

- a. **Overthrows to 1st Base:** In order to encourage plays at first, the batter/runner may advance only to second on an overthrow to first, even if she has rounded first before the overthrown ball arrives. The runner will always be at risk. For example: a runner attempting to take more than second base on an overthrow will be returned to second base at the conclusion of the play but will be at risk while attempting to advance. Runners on other bases may only advance one extra base on an overthrow (i.e. runner on 1st can go to third and a runner on second can score). The play is dead once the fielding team has possession in the pitcher's circle. For example: there is an overthrow



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at first base and the batter attempts to go to second base, if the fielding team tries to throw the ball to second base (rather than throwing it to the pitcher) but overthrows the base and the runner advances to third, then the runner will be returned to second after the play is ruled dead, provided that runner was not tagged out while advancing.

b. **All other Overthrows:** On overthrows to any other base, runners may advance as far as they are able to go with the following exception: If a runner on first or second at the beginning of a play attempts to steal second or third, and the catcher or any other fielder overthrows the base in an effort to make the play, the runner may not advance past the base they were headed to when the steal attempt was made.