

## 2019 Minor League Softball: Local Rules

*(Note: new rules and rules of emphasis are in blue)*

All national Little League rules for Minor League softball, as described in the current season rulebook, apply unless specifically changed in these local rules or by past WMLL custom. The WMLL Safety Plan contains further regulations which will be enforced as local rules.

### BASICS

- **Ball:** An 11-inch softie ball will be used.
- **Pitching & Base Distances:** Pitching will be from 35 feet with the bases 60 feet apart.
- **Team Responsibilities:**
  - **Home Team:** The home team provides two new regulation balls and when games are at Forward Drive a volunteer to help in the concession stand.
  - **Visiting Team:** The visiting team provides a volunteer to operate the scoreboard. If playing in the first game of the day, the visiting team must get the scoreboard controller from the concession stand & turn on the scoreboard. If playing in the last game of the day, they must return the scoreboard controller to the concession stand & turn off the scoreboard.
  - **Both Teams:** After every game, both teams must clean up their respective dugout areas. After the last game of the day, both teams must help put on the tarps, replace the bases with the “base plugs” & store the bases in the 3rd base dugout.
- **Pre-Game Warmups & Batting Practice:** Teams may warm-up prior to games in appropriately designated areas. Pregame batting practice can take place only in a batting cage or soft toss station. Players should be careful when warming-up so other individuals are not injured. Players are not permitted to enter Ch 15 property for any reason at any time. Coaches & other adults are allowed on Ch 15 property only to retrieve balls.
  - **Batting Cages:** Major, Badger & Senior League baseball & Major League softball teams have priority in the cages. Atlantic & Pacific League baseball & Minor League softball teams may use a batting cage if it is unoccupied. If a Major, Badger or Senior League baseball or Major League softball team arrives, please cooperate & quickly exit the cage.
  - **Soft Toss Stations:** Atlantic & Pacific League baseball & Minor League softball teams have priority in the soft toss stations. If a soft toss station is occupied by a Major, Badger or Senior League baseball or Major League softball team, you may politely ask them to vacate. Only whiffle balls, tennis balls, or other soft surface balls are permitted for soft toss.
- **Infield Practice:** Time permitting, the home team may conduct infield practice for eight minutes or the time available until the official start time, whichever is less. Time permitting means that the infield practice cannot interfere with the game’s official start time. All players present (not just the starting infielders) should participate in the infield practice.
- **Dugout Entry & Nut Ban:** Only uniformed players, the manager, two coaches and one scorekeeper (maximum of four adults) are permitted on the bench. The manager should require all others to leave the dugout. **For the safety of individuals with peanut allergies, peanuts are not allowed in the dugout or anywhere at the ballpark.**
- **Player Movement:** Players must stay in the playing area or on the bench during the game unless the manager permits them to leave.
- **On-Field Coaches:** The offensive team may have adults as base coaches. **The defensive team may station one coach on the outfield grass for instructional purposes.** All other coaches must stay within three feet of the dugout entrance.

- **Attire.** Players must be in uniform to be eligible to play in a game. Except for medical identification purposes, players may not wear jewelry regardless of the composition of that jewelry.

## GAME LIMITS & PACING

- **Inning & Time Limits:** All regular season games are limited to six innings with no new inning beginning at or after an elapsed playing time of one-hour and thirty-minutes. If an inning is underway at the one-hour and thirty-minute mark, the inning should be completed in full unless the home team is ahead after the top half inning of play. In that case, the game is considered completed and the home team wins. A game which ends due to the time limit will be considered a complete game regardless of the number of innings played. Tie games will not be continued if six innings have been played or the time limit has been reached. The umpires will enforce the scheduled starting time and the time limits for each league.
- **Game Start & Ending Times:** For the purposes of the one-hour thirty-minute time limit, the official start time of the initial game of the day will be the scheduled start time regardless of the time of the first pitch (unless the delay is weather-related). Games after the initial game of the day must start ten minutes after the final out of the previous game or the scheduled start time, whichever is later. The official game starting time and ending time (when the last out in the last inning is made) should be recorded on the scorecard.
- **Run Limit:** A maximum of five runs can be scored per half inning.
- **Inning Switch:** Players must hustle on and off the field between offense and defense so that the game proceeds quickly.
- **Warm-Up Pitches:** During player pitch, pitchers are limited to a maximum of four warm-up pitches prior to each half inning.
- **Courtesy Runner for Catcher:** To allow the catcher to be in gear and ready to play without delay, a courtesy runner may be used for the catcher at any time, but is mandatory when there are two outs. This runner will be the individual who made the last out in the inning.
- **Delay of Game Penalty:** The first pitch of a half inning must be delivered not longer than 90 seconds after the third out of the previous half inning. The umpire may call a strike on the batter if the violation is by the offensive team, or a ball on the batter if the violation is by the defensive team. The umpire may continue to call strikes or balls each 20 seconds until the first pitch is delivered.

## LINEUPS & PLAYING TIME

- **Batting Order:** Every player in attendance must be in the batting order. If a player is unable to continue play, there will be no penalty to the offensive team when that individual is scheduled to bat. If able, the player can reenter the batting order without penalty. Players not present for the game's first pitch, even if their arrival is anticipated, must be listed at the bottom of the batting order. If an absent player's batting order spot is reached before they arrive, there is no penalty and they remain in the same position in the batting order.
- **Defensive Players:** Teams can play with up to ten players on defense of which a maximum of six can play in the infield (including the pitcher and catcher). All outfield players must position themselves on the outfield grass. Free defensive substitution of all players is allowed.
- **Defensive Playing Time.** Each player shall play at least four innings defensively. At least one of the defensive innings must be playing an infield (including the pitcher and catcher) position and one an outfield position. The minimum defensive innings in this rule must be full half innings.

**CLARIFICATION:** This rule must be fulfilled within the first 4 innings. If the game ends in fewer than 4 complete innings the rule will not be fully enforced.

- For teams of 11 or 12, five innings are needed to play everyone four innings. For teams of 13-15, six innings are needed. No player should play more than 4 innings before all players have played at least 4 innings.

- *If a team has only 7 players, there will only be 4 opportunities to play outfield in the first 4 innings. No player should play the outfield for 2 of those 4 innings.*

**Playing Time Rule Exceptions.** *The only exceptions to the playing time rule will be:*

- *If a player misses practices and/or games without a valid reason, the coach may decide to reduce the number of innings played in the field for the next game by a maximum of one inning. Absences due to family vacations should not affect playing time.*
  - *If a player arrives late for a game, the manager can decide to reduce the number of innings at his/her discretion.*
  - *If a player is being disciplined, a manager must inform the opposing manager prior to the game or immediately after an incident which requires removal, for the participation rule to be satisfied. The player who is being disciplined should be advised of why he/she is not participating. If the discipline results in the player being “docked” more than one inning below the league minimum, the coach must inform the League Coordinator in writing of the discipline and the cause. This method of disciplining should be used with reasonable discretion.*
  - *If a game is shortened because of the time limit, inclement weather or run limit, all players will not be required to satisfy the playing rule.*
  - *If an eligible player does not fulfill the participation rule, that player must be a starter in the team’s next game and play the whole game. Any manager who violates this rule will be subject to dismissal by the league’s Softball Operation Committee.*
- **Forfeits:** Teams forfeit the game if they have fewer than six players to start. A team has fifteen minutes from the schedule starting time to obtain six players before a forfeit is declared. When both teams have less than six players, a double forfeit occurs. Teams that start the game with six players but lose one or more players during the game may continue. If the number of players drops below six, an out is recorded each time a missing player’s turn to bat occurs.
  - **Replacement players:** Teams that expect to have fewer than ten players available for a regular-season game may use replacement player(s) from other WMLL Minor League teams. Replacement player(s) may not pitch and must bat at the end of the order. Replacement players may not be used in the League tournament.
  - **Line up Cards.** Line up cards are to be exchanged between the managers at the beginning of the game to indicate the starting players, all eligible substitutes, absent and injured players and players who are being disciplined by not participating.

## BATTING

- **Helmets:** For league games, helmets with face masks will be used by batters and runners.
- **On Deck Warmups:** For safety reasons, on deck warmup swings are prohibited.
- **Strike Zone:** To encourage more aggressive hitting and speed the game along, the strike zone used is larger than the standard. The width shall be 23 inches (the width of the plate plus 3-inches on both the inside and outside corners) and the height shall be from the armpits to the bottom of the batter’s knees.
- **Bunting:** Bunting is not allowed.
- **Bat Throwing:** A player will receive one warning each game for inappropriately throwing the bat. For any subsequent instance of throwing the bat in that same game the player will be called out. The warning and out can be on the same at bat. If a hitter is called out for throwing the bat the ball will be dead and any runners must return the base, which he/she occupied prior to the pitch. Note: this rule applies to accidental bat throwing, not to bat throwing in anger or protest.

## ADVANCING BASES

- **Walks:** There are no walks.
- **Hit Batters:** During player pitch, a batter will be awarded first base when hit by a pitch unless the ball is called a strike or the umpire decides that the batter should have been able to avoid being hit. Hit batters are not awarded first base during coach pitch. In either case, the ball is dead immediately on hitting the batter.

- **Dropped Third Strike:** Batters may not advance to first base on a dropped third strike.
- **Infield fly rule:** There is no infield fly rule.
- **Double First Base:** When a double first base is used, the runner must touch the orange portion of the base while the fielder must touch the white portion on the initial play at first base. If there is no play the runner may touch the white.
- **Stealing:** [Stealing is not allowed.](#)
- **Leaving Base:** Runners may leave the base when the ball crosses the plate. Players detected leaving early will be called out. Pickoff throws by defensive players are allowed and runners may NOT advance on pickoff throws.
- **Sliding & Offensive Interference:** On close plays at second base, third base or home plate, the runner is required to slide or to avoid collision with a defensive player who has the ball while located within the batter's box area or within the vicinity of another base. If contact is made and the runner did not slide, the umpire shall call the runner out for offensive interference. When a runner initiates malicious contact with any fielder, with or without the ball, in or out of the baseline, the umpire shall eject the runner for the game. The runner has the primary responsibility to avoid a collision with the defensive player. Head first sliding when advancing is prohibited with the penalty of the offender being called out. Players should be taught and encouraged to slide properly.
- **Defensive Obstruction:** A defensive player without the ball who impedes a runner, whether intentional or unintentional, or who fakes a tag will be penalized for defensive obstruction. The umpire will award the runner the base or bases they are attempting to reach.
- **Play Stoppage:** [Play stops when the pitcher has control of the ball. Runners that are not in stride and more than halfway to the next base will be returned to the preceding base by the umpire.](#)
- **Baserunning Guidelines:** *The following are guidelines for coaches only - they are not rules that will be enforced by umpires. Please talk with the coaches of the other teams on a regular basis & work together to implement these judgement calls in a consistent fashion. Always feel free to contact the League Coordinator if there are issues or you have concerns.*
  - **Extra base hits:** *The batter & all base runners are allowed to attempt to take two bases on any hit to the outfield that does not result from an infield error. (This is intended to make playing the outfielder more engaging & to teach outfielders the importance of hustling after the ball.)*
  - **Passed balls & overthrows:** *All base runners are allowed to attempt to take one additional base when there is an overthrow / passed ball at any base. Note: Players are limited to one total extra base even if there are multiple overthrows at multiple bases on the same play. (This is intended to teach the importance of backing up throws & using discretion when making throws.)*
  - **Fielding errors:** *Base runners should not take an extra base as the result of a fielding error anywhere on the field (other than the aforementioned overthrow to or passed ball at a base)*
  - **Unmanned outfield positions:** *Base runners should not take an extra base as the result of a ball being hit to an outfield defensive position that is unmanned due to a shortage of players. If an extra base would have been possible even if a player was defending the relevant position the batter & all base runners are allowed to attempt to take two bases. Otherwise, they should be held to one base.*

**PITCHING:** [Note: Minor League softball will utilize three different types of pitching - machine pitch \(for all games in April & May\), coach pitch and player pitch \(for all games in June & July\). If any games are rescheduled, they will be played using the pitching rule in place for the date the game is played, rather than the pitching rule that was in place when the game was originally scheduled.](#)

- **Machine pitch:** [Coaches will operate the pitching machine when their own team is batting.](#) The defensive player fielding the pitching position must have at least one foot on the dirt area of the pitcher's mound, forward of the point where the ball leaves the machine. The pitching machine and cord are in play. However, if a batted ball becomes lodged in/under the machine so as to be unplayable, the umpire shall have the discretion to call a

replay. If a thrown ball becomes lodged in/under the machine as to be unplayable, the ball shall be declared dead and the base runners will be awarded the base to which they were heading when the ball was declared dead.

- **Player pitch:** Any underhand style pitching motion is allowed. **Pitchers will pitch until there are three balls, or the ball has been hit into fair territory, or the batter has been hit by a pitch, or the batter strikes out. If three balls are pitched, a coach from the batting team will take over pitching to the batter with any strikes carrying over from the original count.**
- **Coach pitch:** **Coaches will pitch to their own teams.** Any underhand style pitching motion is allowed. **When pitching, coaches must wear a mitt for safety reasons.** The defensive player fielding the pitching position must have one foot in the pitching circle. A ball that hits the coach inadvertently remains in play. If a coach intentionally touches a ball in play, the batter is out and runners are returned to their bases.
- **Player pitch limits:** **A player-pitcher may pitch a maximum of two innings in a game.** One pitch in an inning will count as a full inning pitched. Pitchers' innings need not be consecutive, but a pitcher cannot be removed and then re-entered as a pitcher in the same inning.
- **Pitching Guidelines:** *The following are guidelines for coaches only - they are not rules that will be enforced by umpires. Please talk with the coaches of the other teams on a regular basis & work together to implement these judgement calls in a consistent fashion. Always feel free to contact the League Coordinator if there are issues or you have concerns.*
  - **Coach pitch distance:** *For consistency, coaches should pitch from 35' just like player pitchers. Moving in a step or two is permissible, but not encouraged.*
  - **Coach pitch style:** *For consistency, coaches should pitch with a velocity & trajectory similar to that of a good player pitcher. Lobbing the ball in a soft toss fashion is NOT beneficial for hitter development & is strongly discouraged.*

## BEHAVIOR

- **Sportsmanship:** **Coaches, parents, players, and all spectators should adhere to a high level of sportsmanship.** The league will not tolerate harassment of umpires; verbal or physical altercations involving coaches, players, or spectators; hazing; or negative interactions between or among coaches, spectators, and players, including organized chanting or "cheering" directed at opposing teams or players. Instances of unsportsmanlike behavior reported to the Board of Directors will be investigated by the President and may result in discipline, including suspensions.
- **Treatment of Umpires:** **Coaches, players, and spectators must accept and respect umpire decisions.** They should refrain from questioning judgment calls and must avoid actions which tend to undermine umpire authority.
- **Coach Interactions with Umpires:** The coach should provide the players and fans with an exemplary model of sportsmanship. To question an umpire's ruling only one coach is to represent the team. The coach must request a time out and calmly consult with the umpire who made the call. A coach must remain in foul territory and may not run out of the dugout or yell objections. To check on an injured player's status, the coach may be on the playing field after an umpire requests their assistance. Coaches who feel an individual umpire is lacking in skills or knowledge should not offer instruction or advice, but should report their concern to the League Coordinator or Umpire Coordinator.
- **Warnings & Ejections by Umpires:** Umpires will not tolerate any abusive language, equipment throwing or other violent or unsportsmanlike behavior by coaches, players or fans. Any person guilty of participating in these actions will be warned once by the umpires. In severe instances the offending party will be immediately ejected. A second violation will result in ejection from the game and removal from the WMLL field areas. The umpire will report such ejections to the umpire coordinator who will notify the Softball Operations Committee Chairperson. Unsportsmanlike behavior which results in a game ejection carries with it another one game

suspension. For a second game ejection, there will be an automatic three game suspension. For a third game ejection, the individual will receive a season ending suspension.

## **WEATHER (& LIGHTING FAILURE)**

- **Lightning:** When lightning is visible, the game will be suspended for thirty minutes and all coaches, players, spectators and umpires must take immediate shelter in the dugouts, near the concession stand or in private vehicles to ensure their safety.
- **Delaying Games due to Rain, Lightning or Lighting Failure:** If a field is not playable at game time, but might be playable in a short period of time, the game will be delayed no more than fifteen minutes. The conditions will be checked after fifteen minutes and, if the field is still unplayable, the game will be canceled and rescheduled by the coordinator. If a delay occurs after a game has begun, the first fifteen minutes of the total delay time do not count as part of the game time limit.
- **Calling Games due to Rain, Lightning or Lighting Failure:** When a game has been delayed for forty-five minutes, the game will be called. Prior to leaving the field of play, the coaches will verify the line ups, score and exact point at which play has been stopped (i.e. outs, balls and strikes batter, runners score, etc.) Any dispute should be referred to the league coordinator and/or Softball Operations Committee for resolution.
  - A game called before the completion of one inning will be rescheduled as a new game.
  - A game called after the completion of one inning and before it is an official completed contest will be considered a suspended game. A suspended game shall be resumed at the exact point of suspension.

### **Resuming a Suspended Game:**

- *The league coordinator shall attempt to reschedule the suspended game at the time when the two teams will be playing each other again. The suspended game will be played prior to the regulation game or another suspended game.*
  - *The line ups and batting order of the teams shall be the same as the moment of suspension. If player(s) present originally are absent when the suspended game is resumed their spots in the batting order will be skipped over with no penalty. Players absent originally, but present when the game is resumed will be added to the end of the batting order.*
  - *All pitching regulations will be determined by the week during which the suspended game is being resumed.*
- **Immediate Cancellations:** These rules will not restrict the Board of Director(s) present at the field from immediately canceling play in order to ensure the safety of coaches, players, spectators, umpires and concession workers.

## **POST-SEASON TOURNAMENT**

- **Structure:** A post-season league tournament will be organized and the tournament will be seeded. Winning players and coaches will receive trophies or medals as determined by the Board of Directors.
- **Rules:** All regular-season rules apply except those which are specifically noted in these local rules.
- **Game Time Limit:** The finals will be played without time limit, although the game may be called for darkness or weather conditions.

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## **Minor League Softball Philosophy**

The league is designed to develop the player's defensive and offensive skills and understanding of softball strategy from the perspective of different positions. A primary emphasis is on the individual's enjoyment of the sport.

There are four very important goals for the WMLL's softball program:

- 1) To have volunteer coaches pass along their knowledge of the game of softball to the players.

2) To have equal participation for all players so they can have an opportunity to practice the softball skills they are learning.

3) To foster total enjoyment of the game.

*This goal is not easily obtained for all players. What is needed is constant encouragement by coaches and parents alike in times of failure. No one will catch every ball, hit every pitch or make every play. As human beings, the fire of competition burns in each of us. As parents, coaches and spectators, we must control our own competitive nature in order to build the proper atmosphere in which these young players can enjoy what we consider the greatest game in the world.*

4) To provide an opportunity for young girls to experience the camaraderie of being on a team, to meet players from other schools and other neighborhoods and to build new friendships.

Coaches will be encouraged to give players the opportunity to learn several different defensive positions and to rotate into these positions throughout the season. Positions in the batting order should be rotated regularly to give players an opportunity to bat at different spots in the lineup.

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### **WMLL Parent & Volunteer Pledge**

I will teach all children to play fair and to do their best. I will positively support all managers, coaches and players. I will respect the decisions of the umpires. I will praise a good effort, win or lose.

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