

2019 WMLL Rules of Emphasis for Umpires (updated 2/16/19)

All games are governed by current season national Little League rules as modified by WMLL's local rules. Listed below are selections from national and local rules which are particularly important and/or have proven troublesome or difficult for umpires to interpret and enforce. WMLL local rules are available at www.wmll.org by clicking the Rules button on each league page. **You must be familiar with all the rules that apply to any league in which you are umpiring and should review the appropriate league rules before each game and have a copy with you at each game.**

Balks – Badger League. In games played prior to June 1, all balks will be called, but no penalty assessed. Instead, the umpire will explain the rule violation to the pitcher and tell him/her what to do so the rule is not violated. In games played June 1 and later, balks will be called and penalties enforced in accordance with national rules.

Bases. If the impact of a runner breaks a base loose from its position, no play can be made on the runner at that base if the runner has reached that base safely. If there is continued action involving a subsequent runner, the base plate becomes the actual base for the purpose of making calls.

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 during the same at bat. If a hitter is called out for throwing the bat, the ball will be dead and any runners must return to the base which he/she occupied prior to the pitch. Note: this rule applies to accidental bat throwing while or after swinging at a pitch, not to bat throwing in anger or protest, which calls for immediate rejection.

Coaches. Coaches (except base coaches & pitching machine operators) are to remain within 3 feet of the dugout entrance during play. Please ask coaches to follow this rule.

Courtesy Runner – All Leagues. A courtesy runner **must** be used for the catcher when there are two outs.

Defensive Positions in the Atlantic League and Softball Lgs through Minor Lg. Each team shall field ten players when on defense. Four of those players must be outfielders and take positions on the outfield grass. **Umpires must enforce this rule.**

Dugouts. Only the head coach and no more than two adult assistants (3 asst's in Atlantic Lg), and participants in uniform may be in the dugout during games. Siblings, parents, friends, other players etc are not permitted. *Penalty: one bench warning to the team; subsequent violations will result in the team forfeiting the game.*

Fair & Foul.

- Home plate, 1st & 3rd bases are in fair territory.
- Any batted ball that hits 1st or 3rd is a fair ball regardless of where it bounces after hitting the base.
- A batted ball which bounces in fair territory in the infield is a fair ball if it passes 1st or 3rd in fair territory even if it then touches down in foul territory.
- A fair or foul ball is judged by the position of the ball relative to the foul line, not the position of a player who may touch the ball.

Infield Fly. The umpire should call the batter out as soon as he or she determines that a batted fly ball should be easily caught by an infielder, when there are runners either on 1st & 2nd, or 1st, 2nd & 3rd and there are less than 2 outs. *Note: the infield fly rule is **NOT** used in the Atlantic & Pacific Leagues or in Rookie, Minor or Major Softball Lgs.*

Innings, start & end: A subsequent inning or half inning begins immediately when the 3rd out is made in the previous half inning.

Leading Off: In the Atlantic, Pacific, Central & Major Lgs in baseball and the Minor Lg in softball, runners may not leave the base until the ball reaches home plate. In Major Lg softball, the runner may leave the base as soon as the ball leaves the pitcher's hand.

Leading Off First Base-Badger League: Leading off and stealing in the Badger League is now exactly as in the Senior League and High School baseball.

Live Ball/Dead Ball. A pitched ball that bounces before reaching the batter or plate is a live ball.

Offensive Time Outs. Limited to one per inning (this includes base coaches coming down the line to have a conference with a batter).

On-Deck Hitters, Warm-up Swings & Swinging of Bats. Players must not swing a bat unless they are in an approved warm-up area, which include soft-toss stations, batting cages, an on-deck circle or in or next to the batter's box. *Penalty: one warning per team; subsequent violation results in game ejection for offender.*

- No on-deck hitters are permitted in the Atlantic, Pacific, Central and Major leagues (7-12 year olds), but are permitted in the Badger and Senior and Junior Softball.
- In leagues with an on-deck hitter (Badger, Senior and Junior Softball), the one on-deck hitter must be in the on-deck circle **behind the batter's back** (3rd base on-deck circle for a right-handed batter and 1st base circle for a left-handed batter. The on-deck hitter may only have the bat he/she plans to use in the on-deck circle and no other equipment (except catchers who may wish to keep their shin guards on in the on-deck circle.

Pitchers. Any part of a pitcher's undershirt (ie a shirt or sweatshirt worn under the jersey) exposed to view shall be of a solid color. White long sleeve shirts are not permitted. A pitcher shall not wear any items on his/her hands, wrist or arms which may be distracting to the batter.

Pitchers Position – Atlantic Lg. When the pitch is delivered, the player in the pitcher's position must have at least one foot on the dirt area of the pitcher' mound, forward of the point where the ball leaves the machine. At the conclusion of a play the ball becomes dead and base runners cannot advance when secured in the pitcher's hand.

Pitching – Time Limit Considerations. The first pitch of a half inning must be delivered not longer than 90 seconds after the 3rd out of the previous half inning. *Penalty: 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 if the game is being unnecessarily delayed. No more than 4 warm-up pitches between innings for baseball and no more than 5 for softball.*

Pitcher to Catcher Rule: In baseball, a pitcher who delivers 41 or more pitches in a game cannot play the position of catcher for the remainder of the day. A pitcher who throws 40 or fewer pitches in a game may catch in the same game.

Catcher to Pitcher Rule: In baseball, a player who plays the position of catcher for 4 or more innings may not pitch in any games that same calendar day.

Run Differentials (Mercy Rules) & Maximum Runs Per Inning:

- **Atlantic & Pacific Baseball** – No run differential rule. In these leagues, the batting team can score a maximum of 7 runs per half inning. Any half inning that does not end by national rule ends as soon as the 7th run crosses the plate.
- **Rookie, Minor, Major Softball** – A maximum of 5 runs per half inning
- **Major Baseball** – No run differential rule.
- **Juniors Softball** – A maximum of 7 runs per half inning.
- **Badger & Senior Baseball** – 10 run differential after 5 innings (4½ if home team is leading).

Sliding, Collisions, & Obstruction. On close plays at 2nd base, 3rd 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 (and the fielder has the ball), the umpire shall call the runner out for offensive interference. 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. 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 from the game. **The runner has the primary responsibility to avoid a collision with the defensive player.**

Head first sliding when advancing to a base is NOT permitted in the Atlantic, Pacific, Central and Major Leagues or in the Rookie, Minor or Major Softball Leagues and the violating runner is called out. A head-first slide when returning to a base in these leagues is permitted. Head first sliding is permitted in the Badger and Senior Leagues.

Stealing:

- **Atlantic Baseball & Minor Softball** - There is no stealing.
- **Pacific League** - In all games played through and including May 31, no base stealing is permitted. In regular season and tournament games played June 1 and later, stealing is permitted except that a base runner may not steal home. A base runner may not steal home. Once a player has stopped at third base, he/she cannot advance to home plate unless the ball has been put in play by the batter or the pitcher issues a bases-loaded walk or bases loaded hit batsman.

Strike Zone: In all leagues, umpires should be sure to call the full strike zone as defined - one ball diameter inside and one ball diameter outside, for a total width of 23" (Home plate is 17" wide), and from the arm pit to the 'knee pit'. If any portion of the ball is **within this zone as it crosses home plate**, and the batter does not swing, it is a strike. (Do not pass judgment on the pitch until it crosses home plate!)

Time Limits:

Spring/Summer Time Limit: No inning shall begin at or after this time limit for the league. For example, in a league with a time limit of 1:45, if you start an inning before an elapsed time of 1:45 and the game clock passes 1:45 during that inning, 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. For example, if the 5th inning ends at 1:40, you will play 6th inning, no matter what the score. If the home team is ahead after 5 1/2 innings, the game is over. If the visiting team is ahead (or the game is tied) after 5 1/2 innings, then you play the bottom half of the inning, **to completion or the point at which the home team takes the lead**, no matter what the time is.

Fall Ball Inning & Time Limits: All Fall Ball games are limited to 6-innings with two types of time limits. There also is a 9 PM curfew Sunday thru Thursday that supersedes both time limits. Time-limited games can end in a tie & will be considered a complete game regardless of the number of innings played.

- No new inning may begin after the **"no new inning" time limit** of 1 hr, 20 mins for Rookie BB and Minor BB & SB and 1 hr, 40 min for Major BB & SB, Junior BB & SB & Senior BB & SB is reached. An inning starts when the last out of the prior inning is made. If an inning starts prior to the "no new inning" time limit expiring, that inning may be completed unless the game ends because the home team takes the lead or the "hard" time limit is reached.
- When the **"hard" time limit** is reached (10 minutes after the "No New Inning" Time Limit), the game ends immediately after the current batter finishes their at bat. When this occurs, the outcome is determined by the score at the end of the last complete inning, unless the home team is at bat & has tied the game during their at-bat (after being behind at the end of the last complete inning). In this case the game ends in a tie.
- **Fall Ball Special Game Time Rule for Minor Field (Weeks 1-3):** The first weekday game on the Minor Field (except Major Softball) must end no later than 5:50 PM (hard time limit), regardless of the start time, for weeks 1 thru 3.

Games after the initial game of the day must start within ten minutes after the final out of the previous game or at the scheduled start time, whichever is later. Coaches should have their players warmed up and be ready to take the field almost immediately following the end of the previous game in order to keep the final games of the day from running very late.

Weather. When lightning is visible, the Board of Director(s) / umpires present will suspend the game for **thirty minutes** and all coaches, players, spectators and umpires will take immediate shelter in the dugouts, near the concession stand or in private vehicles to insure their safety. If lightening continues such that the restart of the game will be delayed by 45 minutes or more, the immediate game will be called and rescheduled in accordance with regular rain out procedures.