Rev. 04/26/2023

Softball Rules for Games Between Branchburg and Hillsborough Teams

3rd-5th Grade Division

All ASA Rules apply except as noted below:

I. PLAYERS / MANAGERS / COACHES

A. All managers and assistant coaches must be Rutgers Safety-Certified.
B. Parents who are not certified are not allowed on the field.
C. Only players registered in the recreation program may play in the games. No substitute players are allowed at any time. This includes brothers and sisters of players. There are no exceptions to this rule at any time during the season.
D. Children not playing softball are not allowed on the field during practices and games.

II. EQUIPMENT

A. Only equipment approved for use by the leagues shall be used in practices, clinics or games. This includes bats, gloves, helmets and catcher's gear.
B. All practice and game balls shall be 11 inch "hard" softballs.
C. Sneakers or rubber cleats may be worn (no metal cleats).
D. Uniforms will be worn at all games.
E. Batting helmets are required to have attached facemasks (chin straps are optional).
F. Pitchers are to be provided with protective facemasks.
G. All players must wear chest protection under uniform shirt.

III. FIELD

A. Distance between consecutive bases shall measure **60** feet.
B. Pitching rubber should measure **35** feet from the back of home plate.
C. Double-wide safety bag to be utilized at first base to avoid collisions.

IV. REGULATIONS

A. Up to ten (10) fielding positions to be used (including pitcher and catcher).
B. All four outfielders must play at least ten feet behind the bases or be in the grass area of the outfield. Positioning outfielders in the infield is not allowed.

C. Coaches shall not pitch or be positioned on the field during play, except in case of "coach pitch rule" (see Section VII).

D. Games are to be six (6) innings long unless shortened by lack of sunlight as defined below, or if maximum time limit is reached. Maximum time limit: In no case (day or evening games) should a new inning be started after 1 hour and 45 minutes past scheduled game start time. In addition, all games must end at least 10 minutes before next scheduled game on field.

E. Sunlight (unlighted fields only): Before Memorial Day no new innings are to be started after 7:45 p.m. (umpire may change this at his/her discretion only if agreed to by both managers). Starting on Memorial Day and thereafter, no new innings are to be started after 8:00 p.m. Managers shall discuss this with umpire prior to the start of the game. **Regardless of these time limits, the umpire may call game due to darkness at any time based on his/her discretion (managers must not involve themselves in this decision), and score shall revert to end of last "completed" inning (inning is considered "completed" after top half if home team is ahead). Tie games will be recorded as such.**

F. On a lighted field, game must end no later than 9:45 p.m.

G. There is a three (3) out or five (5) run rule per inning. **Unlimited runs are allowed in the last inning, as long as the umpire declares it the "last inning" prior to the start of the top of the inning. If no "last inning" is declared by umpire, then the five (5) run limit applies.**

H. If one team is short on players, it is permissible to share players to allow an official game to proceed. Each team must have a minimum of seven players in order for the game to count as an official game (otherwise team that is short of players must forfeit).

I. A player arriving late to the game shall be added to the bottom of the batting order.

J. A player leaving early from the game is skipped in the batting order (no automatic outs).

K. Only ONE person at a time in the on-deck cage and wearing a helmet. Players cannot swing bats outside of the on-deck cage when warming up.

L. Umpires have the final say regarding all field calls. **Respecting the umpire and his/her calls is a requirement.**

M. All players will bat, regardless of whether they are playing the field.

N. Unlimited free substitution of players in the field, including pitchers (see Section VI for limitations on pitchers).

O. "Mercy Rule" shall end a game if a team is winning by 11 runs or more after four full innings of play (including playoff games).

V. GAME PLAY

A. At the end of a play, runners may not advance once the pitcher has control of the ball within the vicinity of the mound.

B. One additional base shall be awarded to all runners on overthrows where the ball goes out of play (into "dead ball" area).

C. Runners are allowed to take only one (1) extra base (at their own risk) on an overthrow that remains in play.
D. Runners cannot advance on fielder drops that remain in the infield.
E. There is NO stealing allowed.
F. No leading while pitcher has the ball, but runners may take lead ("get a jump") once the pitch crosses the plate (and return to base if ball is not hit).
G. A batter is allowed to bunt.
H. Infield fly rule **IS NOT** in effect.
I. No advancing to first base on swinging third strike dropped by the catcher.
J. Base runners may tag-up on a fly ball.
K. A player is allowed to slide, but a "must slide" rule will not be enforced.
L. When a batter gets hit with a pitched ball, the umpire will give the batter the option to either take the first base or bat again.
M. Intentional walks are not permitted.

VI. PITCHING

A. Pitchers must wear facemasks at all times.
B. A wide strike zone will be used from shoulders to knees. Managers should tell umpire about this strike zone prior to each game.
C. Pitchers should start their delivery with at least one (1) foot on the rubber.
D. Players shall not pitch more than three (3) innings per game unless agreed to by the opposing manager.
E. Players that are currently pitching on a travel team are to be limited to two (2) innings of pitching per game. If there is more than one player on a team that is also a travel team pitcher, they must pitch no more than three (3) combined innings per game.

VII. "COACH PITCH" Rule

A. After there have been three walks in an inning*, there will be no further walks in that particular inning. The three walks* do not have to be consecutive. ***Note: The three walk requirement may be reduced to two walks as agreed to by both managers and umpire prior to start of game.**
B. Starting after the third walk* in an inning, if a pitcher throws four balls to a batter, a coach will come in to pitch and the batter will not take first base. The coach that pitches should be from the hitting team, if possible. Balls will not be counted for the remainder of the inning, so there will be no further walks during the inning. The child pitcher will remain to field the position (with a fielder's mask and to the side of the coach) while the coach pitches for the remainder of the inning.
C. When an inning is completed, the walk count for this coach-pitch rule is reset. In other words, the pitching team would have to walk another three batters* in a separate inning to trigger another coach-pitch.

VIII. EXTRA INNINGS

A. Extra innings are permitted unless both managers agree to end game in a tie.
B. Batting team shall start each extra inning with a runner on second base. Runner placed on second base to start inning shall be player in batting order that precedes the inning's leadoff batter (last scheduled batter up in the inning).

IX. INCLEMENT WEATHER

A. Umpires shall stop play at the first sign of lightning or nearby thunder. Players and spectators should seek cover away from the field and bleachers, preferably in a vehicle.
B. Game shall not resume until 30 minutes from last lightning/thunder.
C. Games should be played during showers until the umpire halts play, or, if an umpire is not present, until managers agree to stop play. However, if umpires are not present, but games on adjacent fields have umpires, then managers must follow decisions made on the adjacent fields.
D. In the event of a game that must end due to inclement weather, results of game (including ties) shall be considered official after 3 innings (2 ½ innings if home team is ahead). Scores shall revert to end of last "completed" inning when game is called (inning is considered "completed" after top half if home team is ahead).
E. Unofficial non-playoff games halted by inclement weather will only be rescheduled (replayed from beginning) if necessary at the softball league's discretion.

X. PLAYOFF GAMES

A. Extra innings shall be used so that playoff games do not end in a tie.
B. 1 hour and 45 minute time limit does not apply to playoff games.
C. Playoff games halted by darkness or inclement weather can be suspended and resumed at another date at the softball league's discretion.
D. Suspended playoff games resumed at a later date shall continue with same score, batter's count, number of outs, baserunners, etc. as existed at point of game suspension. This is a continuation of the suspended game, but manager may use new batting order due to possible issues with same player availability. Baserunners used at point of continuation shall be last batters in new batting order.
E. Eleven-run "Mercy Rule" after four full innings applies to playoff games as well.

XI. UMPIRE / SCOREKEEPING

A. Head coaches from each team should meet briefly with umpire while players are warming up before game to briefly review the rules and strike zone referenced above.
B. Game umpire(s) have final say. No contesting final game results.
C. If a situation arises where there is no umpire for the game, coaches can serve as umpire. A suggestion that has worked well in the past is to have a coach from one team be umpire while this coach's team in in the field, and switch every half inning so that a coach from other team serves as umpire whenever his/her team is in the field. This tends to work well because the batting team needs extra coaches at first and third base, if available.

D. Managers from both teams are responsible for keeping track of runs scored in each inning by assigning one coach on each team to keep basic scoresheet of player names and/or uniform numbers and tally of runs by each player in each inning. Managers from each team should verify score with one another each inning and resolve any disputes by consulting scoresheets as necessary.

E. Winning team is responsible to report game results to the softball division coordinator.

XII. SPORTSMANSHIP

A. The goal of our programs is to promote learning, develop skills, encourage sportsmanship and to HAVE FUN!

B. GOOD SPORTMANSHIP (AMONG COACHES, PLAYERS, AND SPECTATORS) IS EXPECTED AND SHOULD BE STRESSED AT ALL TIMES! Players should be taught by example of their coaches to respect the opposing team and the umpire.

C. Coaches will not play players in the same position for an entire game (such as outfield only) unless it is a safety issue. Allowing children to play both infield and outfield is important in developing skills in a recreational league.

D. Each player will not have to sit out more than 2 innings per game, and must play at least every other inning in the field unless restricted by injury.