



**Apex Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources
2022 SPRING SOFTBALL LEAGUE RULES
JUNIOR DIVISION**



GENERAL:

1. The goal and objective of the league shall be to provide enjoyment and instruction of the game of **fast pitch softball**. Good sportsmanship and basic fundamentals should be stressed by all coaches. The role of winning should be played down. An atmosphere of learning and fun is the objective of this program.
2. All matters concerning the league of rule interpretation shall be administered by the Apex Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources (APR&CR) Department.
3. All volunteer coaches shall be selected by the Apex Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources Department.
4. All new players shall be assigned to teams by APR&CR. All players returning from the year before have the option of remaining on the same team or going to a new team.

Exception: new head coaches may option their child (children) and one assistant's child (children) onto their team.

5. Sisters shall be placed on the same team unless requested otherwise by a parent/guardian.
6. All coaches shall attend each practice or have his/her assistant attend in his/her place. Players are not allowed to practice without APR&CR approved adult supervision.
7. No player shall be dropped from a team without the approval of the APR&CR. Coaches shall report to APR&CR any player that misses practice repeatedly. For safety reasons, playing time may be reduced for not attending practices.
8. If a team roster drops below 13, the first player on the waiting list may be placed on the team by APR&CR.
9. All rules will be governed by NC High School rules except for the local rules stated herein.

OPERATING GUIDELINES

Registration

Player registration during the designated month and shall be coordinated and conducted by APR&CR. Under unusual circumstances, individuals may be added or deleted to/from the program at the discretion of APR&CR. This shall be done only after taking into consideration those involved and the ramification on the league.

Scheduling

Schedules for all regular practice, game and makeup game situations, shall be coordinated through APR&CR, taking into account field availability and holidays.

Pre-season

- Each team will be provided the same number of practice opportunities per week.
- Any deviation from allotted schedule must be cleared through APR&CR and attendance may not be a player requirement.

In-season

- Teams will be offered the opportunity to practice on a facility availability basis
- Teams may not reserve fields for more than one week at a time and may not do so before **8:00am on Thursday of the week before** they wish to practice.

Post-season: Schedule permitting, there will be a single-elimination tournament immediately following the regular season.

Draft Procedures

To be organized and operated by APR&CR and the league coaches under the following guidelines:

1. Teams shall draft in reverse order of their finish in the previous season. Teams with no returning players shall be treated as a new team and will start at the top of the draft (see #2).
2. New teams added to the league and teams with no returning players shall be placed at the top of the draft order. These teams will be ranked based on number and age of option players
 - Teams with the fewest option players will draft first.
 - Coin flip will determine draft order of new teams with same number of option players.
3. All teams will be age balanced (as close as possible, dependent on the make-up of the league).
4. Each team shall be permitted to keep returning players, sons, and daughters under the following conditions:

- Options may be awarded to a coach and /or coach's child who has registered to participate. All options must be declared in writing prior to the draft. All options on the oldest age for the league will be protected through the second round. All options on the next oldest age will be protected through the third round. Brother / sister options will be protected in the last round. A team is allowed two option players.

Note: A team may not have more than two option players on its roster during a season. Any player designated an option player the previous year who returns to the same team will remain an option player.

5. Based on the total number of players needed to equalize the number on each team, each coach will draft until he reaches this number and then withdraw from the draft.

- Exception: When a team reaches 6 players on their roster, that team must hold until all other teams reach 6 players. Note: Any team that returns 6 or more players will receive a first round choice, and then have to hold until all other teams have the same number of players.
- If any teams are short players after the draft, players will be assigned to the team at the discretion of APR&CR. Appointments shall be made per draft order and waiting list policy.

If a player drops from a team prior to games beginning, APR&CR will attempt to replace that player from the established waiting list.

Length of Games/Tie Breakers

1. Length of games: 7 innings

2. Game Start Times:

- The clock will start for the first game of the day/night right at its scheduled start time. All of the following games will start 12 minutes after the last out is called of the previous game unless the 12 minutes ends before your scheduled start time, in which case you would revert back to the original schedule.
- **No games will start early**
- Field supervisors are in charge of the clock. If you want to know how much time is left, please address the field supervisor.
- **No new inning may begin after 80 minutes of play.** (If the home team is ahead with a child at bat and the time expires the child at bat, finishes the at bat).
- **In situations where the second game of a week night cannot begin before 8:45pm, the game will be postponed to a later date in the season.**
- A new inning begins at the time the third out occurs in the previous inning.

No pre-game infield practice allowed any time on the infield.

Batting Line-Ups

1. Batting line-ups of only players present are due 10 minutes before the official start time of the game.

2. **Once the line-up has been turned in to the field supervisor, the only changes allowed are additions to the bottom of the line-up for late-arriving players.**

All games should begin with an umpire/head coach meeting at home plate to discuss playing rules.

Ties

1. Regular Season Games
 - **Junior League:** any regular season game that ends in a tie at the end of the time limit or the end of the seventh inning whichever comes first shall have **one more inning of play to determine a winner**. If a winner cannot be determined at the end of this inning, the game will be counted as a tie.
 - Any regular season game that ends in a tie shall be counted as one half a game win and as one half a game loss in the league standings.
2. Post Season Games
 - All post season games will be played until a winner is determined. **The Championship game will be seven (7) complete innings.**
3. For purpose of the next year's draft:
 - If team records are identical, the first tie breaker will be head-to-head competition. This will be followed by a draw if head-to-head results cannot be used.
 - Post season games are not counted towards the draft order.

Cancellations/Inclement Weather/Make-up

1. In case of inclement weather, **a decision will be made by APR&CR at 4:00 pm** on the day the game is to be played (8:00am on Saturdays). Information may be obtained by calling APR&CR's

INFORMATION HOTLINE: (919) 249-3348

2. Make-up Games
 - The department will reschedule games within 3 working days. Please contact us if you have not received your notification within this time period.
 - If at all possible, all games that are canceled due to weather or other conflicts approved by APR&CR will be made up.
 - If extenuating circumstances occur, APR&CR reserves the right to designate which games will be made up.
 - It is the responsibility of the coach to notify his/her players about the makeup date. APR&CR is not responsible for contacting players on an individual basis.

Speed- Up Rule

Catchers on base with **1 out (may) or 2 outs must be removed** and a pinch runner substituted in her place. The runner is the player scored as the **last out** that inning. **The catcher is the player who will be catching when the team goes on defense.** Note: we do not use runners for the pitchers.

Injured Player Substitution

In the event of an injury, the injured player may be replaced by a player who has already been in the game if no other player is available. **When replaced at bat (if not walked), the next batter assumes her count.**

- If a player is injured and leaves the game while at bat, running the bases or playing defense he/she may return as long as they do not miss their next at bat. If he/she does not return by their next at bat they will not be allowed to return to the game and no out will be assessed for the missing player.
- If the injured player is a runner he/she may be replaced by the player who scored the team's last out. If a player is at bat and is unable to finish the at bat due to injury the next batter in the batting order would take over his/her count.
- A team must be able to field 7 players. If the team cannot field seven players because of an injury or for any other reason, the game will be considered a forfeit.

Forfeits

Game time is forfeit time. A team must have at least 7 players to start the game. No out will be assessed for the eighth, ninth or tenth positions if they are not filled in the batting order. However, all players present must bat. If another player arrives he/she must be added immediately upon arrival and must occupy the last spot in the batting order.

Maximum Runs per Inning

No limitation on runs allowed to score each inning.

12-Run Rule

If at the end of **4 1/2 innings (home) or 5 innings (visitor)** a team is ahead by **12 runs**, the game shall be called. Note: If after four innings the visiting team has completed their at bat and has achieved a twelve or more run lead, the home team must have an opportunity to bat.

Shortened/Postponed Games

Once a game has started and becomes postponed or shortened, that game shall be continued from the stopping point. Teams may play with different players if needed and may re-substitute in order to field a team. Total game time is limited to no new inning **after 80 minutes of play.**

- 3 1/2 innings (home ahead) and 4 complete innings (visitors ahead) shall constitute a complete game.

Dugout Area

1. The only personnel permitted in the dugouts are:
 - Players
 - Head coach
 - 2 assistant coaches

- Scorekeeper
 - Note: no batboys/batgirls
2. **Consumption of tobacco products (including e-cigarettes) or alcohol is prohibited in the vicinity of any Town-sponsored athletic event, including on the field and in the dugouts or bleachers.**
 3. All dugouts should be cleaned out by the team that occupied them at the end of the game. This is the responsibility of the head coach.
 4. Coaches must remain in the dugout when their team is on defense and only the base coaches and on-deck batter may be out of the dugout area while on offense.
 - Exceptions:
 - To remove a pitcher- any approved coach
 - To attend an injured player - any approved coach
 - To confer about an error in rule interpretation or score - Head Coach only (See conduct rule)

Conduct

1. Players will be allowed to cheer for their own team but not jeer the other team, i.e. loud songs, cheers, are unacceptable etc. No chanting allowed. No coach or player shall belittle or berate the players or coaches of another team. Phrases such as "can't hit," "can't catch," or "can't throw" will not be tolerated.
 - First offense: Warning
 - Second offense: Ejection from game of offending person and/or head coach.
 - Penalty: Any time a player, coach or spectator is ejected by an official or APR&CR staff member, they must leave the playing site immediately. That person shall be automatically suspended for a minimum of the next game the team plays in. More games can be added to the suspension at the determination of the Department. A suspended coach or parent a may not be present at the playing site for the game(s) in which they are suspended. Failure to abide by this will result in further disciplinary action. A suspended player may be allowed to attend the game to support their teammates, at the discretion of the Department. Game suspensions may apply to regular season games, tournament play, and may, at the discretion of the Department, be carried over to the next season the player or coach registers for.
2. Harassment of umpires and scorekeepers will not be tolerated. Questions should be asked by the Head Coach only and done so calmly about rule interpretations only. Judgment calls are not to be argued. Failure to comply with this rule will result in immediate ejection of the guilty party and possibly forfeiture of the game. **No warnings will be given.**

Reminder: The purpose of this program is to teach softball, have fun, and learn sportsmanship. Players look to their coaches as role models and the thing players see you do leave lasting impressions as they continue to play the game in later years. We're all human, and as such we all make mistakes including umpires, coaches and parents.

It's the kids' games so let them be the ones that benefit most!

Protective Headgear with Face Shield

Protective headgear with a face shield is required for batter, runner, on-deck batter, or any player warming up a pitcher. Chin straps are optional. **Any player intentionally removing their helmet shall be warned for the first offense and then removed from the game for the second offense.** If the player is removed from the game the player's position in the batting order will be assessed as an out.

Re-Entry Rules

- Free substitution is allowed for all players & positions with the exception of the pitcher.
- Pitchers: If removed from pitching, she may only return as a pitcher once later in the game, **but not in the same inning.** Only the starting pitcher may return once later in the game.

Pitching Rules

1. Maximum of **3 Innings in a game.**
2. **One pitch equals an inning.**
3. **Trips to the mound:** A maximum of 3 trips per pitcher per game even in one inning. During 3rd visit the pitcher must be removed from the game as a pitcher.
4. **When presenting the ball, one foot must be on the pitching plate. The other foot can either be on or behind the pitching plate. Both feet must remain in contact with the pitching plate/ground at all times prior to the forward step.**
 - **A pitcher has the option of fast-pitch or modified styles of pitching.**
 - Note: pitchers may not wear optic yellow or optic green long sleeve shirts under their jerseys (white and grey sleeves are allowed).
5. Pitching distance: **40' (Junior)**
6. Base distance: 60'
7. Softball: 12" 47 COR; Red Stitch; Optic Yellow Softball

Post-Season Pitching Rule

All season pitching rules apply with the following exceptions:

- **In the championship game pitchers are able to pitch a maximum of 4 innings.**

Hitting

1. Teams will use a continuous batting order throughout the game. Sides change after the third out.
2. If a batter cannot finish her time at bat, the next scheduled hitter will take the batter's place and assume that batter's pitch count.

Special Base Running

1. When a pitcher is in contact with the pitcher's plate and in possession of the ball and the catcher is in the catcher's box ready to receive delivery of the ball, **base runners shall not leave their bases until the ball has left the pitcher's hand.**
2. The violation by one runner shall affect all other runners. When a base runner leaves the base before the pitched ball has left the pitcher's hand, the ball automatically becomes "dead," all action is stopped and returned to the point before the pitch was made. All other runners must return to their original base(s).
3. Batter/Runner may advance to 1st on a dropped third strike.
4. The ball is not dead when batter is walked.
5. Runners may advance past third base to home at any time when the ball is live.

Ball and Strikes Provision

Each pitcher shall be permitted three strikes or four balls for each batter. No intentional walks.

Fielding

Each team shall field **9 players** on defense.

Participation

It is the philosophy of APR&CR that the emphasis of youth recreation should be on participation and skill development rather than winning or losing. Given this statement of philosophy the following guidelines will govern the **Junior Fast-pitch Softball season**.

1. No child can sit consecutive innings on defense unless authorized by the program supervisor.
2. In the case of postponed games participation requirements will still be in effect.
3. Failure to comply with these participation rules shall result in forfeiture of the game in question.
4. Protests shall be the responsibility of the coach and must be submitted in writing to APR&CR by 12:00 noon the following business day. It is recommended that a coach rotate his/her starters each game.
 - **Intent:** when ruling on a protest concerning participation, the coach's intent will be taken into consideration by the program supervisor. It is quite possible circumstances may cause a player to not play the required time. The coach's intent is the determining factor in these situations.
 - **Penalty:** for failure to abide by the participation rules above (upheld participation protest), the following penalties shall apply to the head coach:
 - 1st offense: suspension of game
 - 2nd offense: suspension for rest of season
5. **If a child leaves the game and does not return due to an injury, sickness, or some other event, the team will not be assessed an out for the missing players. Once the player their turn at bat, they will not be allowed to return to the game.**

Protests

The following procedure shall be used for all protests involving the Major Fast-Pitch Softball league:

1. Protests will be allowed for rule misapplication only. No discussion will be permitted concerning judgment calls or the umpire's integrity.
2. Protest must be noted (prior to the next pitch) in the official scorekeeper's book through the head umpire.
3. All protests must be submitted in writing to APR&CR by 12:00 noon the next business day. All protests should include:
 - A brief description of the play involved and the ruling that was made.
 - A rule reference (page and statement) detailing what ruling should have been made.
 - A \$25 protest fee (will be returned if the protest is upheld).
4. Protests will be ruled on by the Program Supervisor.
5. Notification of protest ruling will be given within one week after submission.
6. APR&CR reserves the right to deny completion of protested game if it has no bearing on league standings or is not in the best interest of the league.
7. **Post-Season Tournament:** game stops until protest is resolved by the program supervisor.

Equipment

1. Bats:
 - Only ASA approved bats will be allowed in the league. The bat shall not exceed 34 inches in length nor exceed 34 ounces in weight. The bat shall not be more than 2 1/4 inches in diameter
 - Tape or sleeve may not exceed 15 inches in length from small end.
 - **Penalty:** use of illegal equipment will result in a dead ball situation with the batter being declared out.
2. Gloves:
 - No top lacing, webbing, etc. shall be more than 5 inches in length. A pitcher's glove may not be optic yellow or optic green.
3. Head coaches can exchange and/or receive additional equipment if necessary.
4. No metal cleats are allowed.
5. All equipment issued to a team must be returned to APR&CR no later than ten (10) days after the last game.
6. No pitcher may wear sweatbands or wristbands.

Uniform

APR&CR will issue each player a shirt. **Parents are required to provide primarily grey pants for league play.** Each player must wear their entire uniform, unaltered, to each game. **A player not in uniform or in an altered uniform will be declared ineligible to play.** Each coach will be given extra shirts for emergency fill-ins.

Notes:

- Players keep their shirt issued to them each season
- An altered uniform is when a player defaces her shirt or pants in any way.
- Pants must be primarily grey in color.
- Shirts must be tucked in at all times.
- No Jewelry Allowed. Un-removable earrings must be taped over.
- Batting helmets must stay on until a player returns to the dugout.
 - Penalty:
 - 1ST offense: a warning will be issued
 - 2nd offense: player will be removed from the game

Sliding

If a runner is going into base and there is an attempted play being made on that runner, **she must slide or avoid collision with defensive player.** If defensive player fakes a play on runner without ball and runner slides, then runner is awarded the next base. If a player does not slide and a collision does occur, then the runner is called out. **Players must slide when there is a play at home plate.**

Exception: When batter is going to first base.

- A bat may not be carried to 1st base or beyond.

Infield Fly Rule

The infield fly rule shall apply in this league.

Tournament Play

1. If teams are tied in the regular season the first tie breaker will be the record between the teams in head to head competition.

2. The second tie breaker will be the toss of a coin.
3. All tournament games except the championship game will play by the regular season time limit/inning limit, whichever comes first.
4. If teams are tied at the end of the time limit/inning limit whichever comes first, the game will continue until a winner is determined.
5. The 12-run rule will be in affect during all tournament games including the championship game.
6. The championship game will be seven complete innings with no time limit.

Thank you for coaching, have a great season!