

FLORIDA DISTRICT 11

2023 TOURNAMENT RULES SUMMARY – **SOFTBALL**

IMPORTANT RULE CHANGES FOR 2023

- **FOR ALL TOURNAMENT COACHES:** all tournament coaches will be required to complete the Little League Diamond Leader Training Program in order to be eligible to participate as a tournament team manager or coach. The certification received will remain in the Little League Database for all future years. The program can be completed by going to LittleLeague.org/DiamondLeader (page 160, 2023 Rule Book).
- **MANAGERS/COACHES IN THE DUGOUT:** There will be allowed a manager and up to two coaches in the dugout during tournament play, regardless of the number of players on the roster (page 161, 2023 Rule Book).
- The new Tournament Mandatory Play (for all divisions except SR Division) rule will now be a continuous batting order during tournament play allowing defensive players to play when and how much a manager decides. SR Division will continue to have the special pinch runner in effect (Tournament Rule 9, pages 179 and 180, 2023 Rule Book).
- Courtesy Runner (for all divisions except SR Division) for the pitcher/catcher during Tournament Play with two (2) outs may be utilized and that courtesy runner will be the batter who made the last out. A pitcher/catcher must have met their mandatory play prior to a courtesy runner being utilized (Tournament Rule 3.e, page 175, 2023 Rule Book).
- **INTENTIONAL WALKS:** For all divisions of play, an intentional walk without throwing any pitches may be requested by the defense one time per game per batter by announcing such decision to the plate umpire. Any additional intentional walks desired by the defense on that same batter would then require four pitches be thrown and called “ball” by the umpire (Rule 6.08(a)(2), page 129, 2023 Rule Book).
- **PITCHER WARM-UPS:** Managers or coaches are NOT permitted to warm up a pitcher at home plate or in the bullpen or elsewhere at any time. They may stand by to observe a pitcher during warm-up in the bullpen as long as an adult coach remains in the dugout (Tournament Rule 3.g, page 176, 2023 Rule Book).

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- **Bats for major league and below:** cannot be more than 33 inches in length nor more than 2 ¼ inches in diameter **with a 1.20 BPF** (Rule 1.10, page 84, 2023 Rule Book)
- **Bats for JR/SR League:** cannot be more than 34 inches in length nor more than 2 ¼ inches in diameter **with a 1.20 BPF** (Rule 1.10, page 84, 2023 Rule Book)
- **Penalties for use of illegal bats:** an illegal bat must be removed from the game. Additionally, if the batter enters the batter's box with one or both feet **entirely** on the ground with an illegal bat or is discovered having used an illegal bat during her turn at bat and prior to the next player entering the batter's box **and** the infraction is discovered before the next player enters the batter's box, **the batter is out**, and: (Rule 6.06(d), page 126, and Rule T-3.b, page 175, 2023 Rule Book)
 - 1.1. the manager of the defense may advise the plate umpire of a decision to decline the penalty and accept the play (as long as this election is made at the end of the play),
 - 1.2. for the **first violation**, the offensive team will **lose** one eligible adult base coach for the duration of the game,
 - 1.3. for the **second violation**, the **manager** of the team will be **ejected** from the game, and
 - 1.4. any **subsequent violations** will result in the **newly designated manager** being **ejected**.

An illegal bat **must** be removed from the game once discovered (Rule 1.10, page 84, and Rule 6.06(d), APPROVED RULING, page 126, 2023 Rule Book)

- **LEAVING DUGOUT WITHOUT PERMISSION:** A manager or coach may not leave a dugout for any reason during a game without receiving permission from an umpire. The manager or coach may be removed from the field for the remainder of the game for violation of this rule (Tournament Rule 7, VISITS, page 178, and Regulation XIV(d), Field Decorum, page 73, 2023 Rule Book)
- **Dropped Third Strike – Will NOT Apply in 8/9/10 Division of Play:** For the **8/9/10 Tournament**, on a dropped third strike by the catcher, the batter will be out (Tournament Rule 3.c, page 175, 2023 Rule Book)
- **Electronic Equipment in Dugouts:** the use of electronic devices in the dugout is allowed for players, coaches, or managers **as long as** the devices are **not used for communication**; the penalty for violation of this rule is **ejection from the game** (Rule 3.17, page 106, 2023 Rule Book)
- Any part of the pitcher's undershirt or T-shirt exposed to view shall be of a solid color. **NOTE:** a pitcher shall not wear any items on his/her hands, wrists, or arms which may be distracting to the batter, except that play-calling bands may be worn on a pitcher's non-pitching wrist or forearm (Rule 1.11(a)(3), page 86, 2023 Rule Book)

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- **Dangling Throat Guards on Catcher's Masks:** Catchers must wear a mask with (NOSCAE) approved catcher helmet and “dangling” type throat guard during pitcher warm-up and games (Rule 1.17, page 89, 2023 Rule Book)
- Only one offensive time-out is permitted **each** inning (Rule 5.10(d) (**NOTE**), page 121, and Tournament Rule 7, VISITS (**NOTE**), page 179, 2023 Rule Book)
- **LEAVING BASE EARLY (9/10/11 DIVISION and above):** any runner is out when the runner fails to keep contact with the base until the ball has been released by the pitcher on delivery (Rule 7.08(a)(5)(a), page 135, and Tournament Rule 3.d, page 175, 2023 Rule Book)
- **LEAVING BASE EARLY 8/9/10 DIVISION only):** any runner is out when the runner fails to keep contact with the base until the ball has been batted or reaches the batter (Rule 7.08(a)(5)(b), page 135, and Tournament Rule 3.d, page 175, 2023 Rule Book)
- **BATTER TO REMAIN IN BATTER'S BOX:** During regular season play (if proposed by the divisional VP and approved by the Board of Directors), after entering the batter's box, the batter must remain in the box with at least one foot throughout the at bat. **Exceptions:**
 1. On a swing, slap, or check swing.
 2. When forced out of the box by a pitch.
 3. When the batter attempts a “slap” or “slap bunt”.
 4. When the catcher does not catch the pitched ball.
 5. When a play has been attempted.
 6. When time has been called.
 7. When the pitcher leaves the eight-foot circle or the catcher leaves the catcher box.
 8. On a three ball count pitch that is a strike that the batter thinks is a ball.

PENALTY: If the batter leaves the batter box or delays play and none of the exceptions apply, the umpire shall warn the batter. After one warning on a batter, the umpire shall call a strike. Any number of strikes can be called on each batter. No pitch has to be thrown, the ball is dead, and no runners may advance.

NOTE: The batter may return to their position in the batter's box and assume the new count at any time during the at-bat, unless such enforced penalty is the third strike. (Rules 6.02(c), pages 122 and 123 and Tournament Rule 3.a, pages 174 and 175, 2023 Rule Book)

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- **SPECIAL PINCH RUNNER USAGE-SENIOR LEAGUE ONLY:** Twice a game but not more than one time per inning, a team may utilize a player who is not in the batting order as a special pinch-runner for any offensive player. A player may only be removed for a special pinch-runner one time during a game. The player for whom the pinch-runner runs is not subject to removal from the lineup. If the pinch-runner remains in the game as a substitute defensive or offensive player, the player may not be used again as a pinch-runner while in the batting order. However, if removed for another substitute that player or any player not in the lineup, is again eligible to be used as a pinch-runner (Tournament Rule 3.e, pages 175 and 176, 2023 Rule Book)
- **PITCHERS:**

Pitching limits in Major Division and Below: a player may pitch in a maximum of twelve (12) innings in a day, but if seven (7) or more, that player requires one day of rest prior to pitching in the next game (Regulation VI(b), page 60, and Tournament Rules 4.e, 4.f, and 4.g, pages 176 and 177, 2023 Rule Book)

Pitching limits in JR/SR Leagues: no pitching restrictions apply (Regulation VI(b), page 60, Tournament Rule 4.d, page 178, 2023 Rule Book)

Major Division and Below: A pitcher remaining in the game, but moving to a different position, can return as a pitcher anytime in the remainder of the game but only once in the same inning as she was removed (Rule T-4.d, page 176, 2023 Rule Book). **Junior/Senior Leagues:** a pitcher remaining in the game, but moving to a different position, can return as a pitcher anytime during the remainder of the game but only once in the same inning as she was removed; a pitcher may be withdrawn from the game, offensively or defensively, can return as pitcher once per inning provided the return does not violate the substitution, visits per pitcher, or mandatory play rule(s) (Tournament Rule 4.c, page 178, 2023 Rule Book)

RULE 8.02(a)(1), PITCHER BRINGING HANDS TO MOUTH: the pitcher may bring the hand in contact with the mouth or the lips provided he distinctly wipes off the pitching hand before contacting the ball (Rule 8.02(a)(1), page 147, 2023 Rule Book)

REMOVAL OF PITCHER DUE TO INNINGS PITCHED LIMIT (Major Divisions and Below): Managers are responsible for the removal of pitchers once the pitcher has reached his/her maximum number of innings pitched for the day, week, or game. Failure to remove that pitcher is basis for protest (Tournament Rule 4.i, pages 177 and 178, 2023 Rule Book)

WARM-UP PITCHES BETWEEN INNINGS: A pitcher shall be permitted to pitch no more than eight (8) preparatory pitches to the catcher but no more than one minute of preparatory pitches between half-innings (Rule 8.03(a), page 148, 2023 Rule Book)

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Penalty for Illegal Pitches for ALL DIVISIONS: If a pitcher pitches an illegal pitch, the pitch will be declared a ball to the batter (there is no longer an advancement of any base runners without liability to be put out for JR Division and above). If the catcher is not in position to receive the pitch and a pitch is made, the pitch will be declared a “NO PITCH” and the pitch shall be called a ball. A play may follow these calls and the manager of the offense may advise the plate umpire of a decision to decline the illegal pitch penalty and accept the play. (Rules 8.01 and 8.05, PENALTY, pages 145, 146, 147, 148 and 149, 2023 Rule Book)

Major Division and Below: If a player pitched in seven (7) or more innings on (Column A) and is still eligible, that player can pitch again on (Column B):

COLUMN A

Sunday
Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Saturday

COLUMN B

Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Saturday
Sunday
Monday

PITCHER VISIT LIMITS: For 9/10/11 DIVISION and above, a manager or coach may come out once (**8/9/10 Division – twice**) in one inning to visit the pitcher but the second time (**8/9/10 Division – third time**) out, the player must be removed as a pitcher. A manager or coach may come out twice (**8/9/10 Division – three times**) in one game to visit the pitcher, but the third time (**8/9/10 Division – fourth time**) out, the player must be removed as a pitcher. (Tournament Rule 7, pages 178 and 179, 2023 Rule Book). When a manager requests timeout to make a pitching change, it shall **not** be counted as a visit to the pitcher provided the manager makes the pitching substitution prior to speaking to any defensive player. This is important where a pitcher remains in the game and the manager plans to return that player to the pitching position either in that same inning as he/she was removed (major division and below) or at some time during the remainder of the game (JR and SR division of play). However, **when a manager or coach is granted time out to talk to any defensive player, the defensive team will be charged with a visit to the pitcher** (Rule 8.06(c), APPROVED RULING 1, PAGE 150, and Tournament Rule 7, pages 178 and 179, 2023 Rule Book)

INTENTIONAL WALKS: For all divisions of play, an intentional walk without throwing any pitches may be requested by the defense one time per game per batter by announcing such decision to the plate umpire. Any additional intentional walks desired by the defense on that same batter would then require four pitches be thrown and called “ball” by the umpire (Rule 6.08(a)(2), page 129, 2023 Rule Book)

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FOREIGN SUBSTANCE APPLIED TO GAME BALL: The pitcher shall not apply a foreign substance of any kind to the ball (this includes dirt or clay) or deface the ball in any manner. A pitcher may use a rosin bag for hands only. The pitcher may bring the hand in contact with the mouth or the lips provided she distinctly wipes off the pitching hand before contacting the ball. When a pitcher violates this rule, an umpire shall call the pitch a ball and warn the pitcher. If the violation is repeated during the game, the umpire shall remove the pitcher from the game (Rule 8.02 (a)(1) and (3), pages 147 and 148, 2023 Rule Book). No **player** shall intentionally discolor or damage the ball by rubbing it with soil, rosin, etc. or any other foreign substance. The umpire shall demand the ball and remove the offender/player from the game. If the umpire cannot locate the offender/player and the pitcher delivers such discolored or damaged ball to the batter, the pitcher shall be removed from the pitching position at once (Rule 3.02, page 101, 2023 Rule Book)

PITCHER WARMUP BY MANAGER/COACH PROHIBITED: Managers and coaches must not warm up a pitcher at home plate or in the bull pen or elsewhere at any time (this includes before or during the game). They may stand by to observe a pitcher during warm-up in the bullpen as long as an adult coach remains in the dugout (Tournament Rule 3.g, page 176, 2023 Rule Book)

UNANNOUNCED SUBSTITUTE PITCHER: If a player who has not been announced as a substitute for the pitcher delivers one warm-up pitch to the catcher, that player now becomes the pitcher of record (assuming eligibility) and must pitch to at least one batter (Rule 3.08(a)(1), page 104, 2023 Rule Book)

PITCHER IN CIRCLE: If the pitcher has possession of the ball within the pitcher's 8-foot radius circle and is not making a play (a fake throw is considered a play), runners not in contact with their bases must immediately attempt to advance or return to their base. If no such immediate attempt is made, "No Pitch" is declared, the ball is dead, and the runner is out. If the runner fails to keep contact with the base to which that runner is entitled until the ball has been released (**8 – 10 year old Division:** until the ball has been batted or reaches the batter), the runner is out (Rules 7.08(a)(5) and **NOTE 2**, pages 135 and 136, Rule 7.13, pages 141 and 142, and Tournament Rule 3.d, page 175, 2023 Rule Book)

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PITCHING RULES: Pitchers must pitch in an underhand motion with both feet on the ground within the 24-inch length from the pitcher's plate. The shoulders shall be in line with first and third bases. The pitcher shall take a position with her **pivot foot** in contact with the pitcher's plate by having the foot entirely or partially on the top surface of the pitcher's plate and the **non-pivot foot** either on or behind the pitcher's plate. A pitching motion that is a rocking motion by raising the pivot foot off the pitching plate and returning it to the plate is an illegal act. The pitcher may not take the pitching position on the pitcher's plate without having the ball in her possession. The pitcher must not make any motion to pitch without immediately delivering the ball to the batter. The pitcher must not make a stop or reversal of the forward motion after separating the hands. The pitcher must not make two revolutions of the arm in the windmill motion. Pushing off with the pivot foot from a place other than the pitcher's plate is illegal, including a crow hop (defined as the act of a pitcher who steps, drags, or hops off the front of the pitcher's plate, replants the pivot foot, establishing a second starting point, pushes off from the newly established starting point and completes the delivery of the pitch). The pivot foot must remain in contact with or push off and drag away from the pitcher's plate prior to the front foot touching the ground, as long as the pivot foot remains in contact with the ground. When the pivot foot leaves the ground, it is considered a "leap" (an act by the pitcher when both feet become airborne on the initial move and push from the pitcher's plate) and is an illegal pitch. The pitcher must not make another revolution after releasing the ball. The pitcher shall not deliberately drop, roll, or bounce the ball in order to prevent the batter from hitting it. The pitcher shall hold the ball in one or both hands in front of the body for not less than 1 second and not more than 10 seconds before starting the delivery. The pitcher has 20 seconds to release the next pitch after receiving the ball or after the umpire indicates "play ball". If the hands are together while in the pitching position, the pitcher may not step back with the non-pivot foot. For the pitcher to remove herself from the pitching position after the hands have been brought together but prior to the start of the pitch, the pitcher must legally step back from the pitcher's plate with the pivot foot first (Rule 8.01(g), APPROVED RULING 1, page 145, 2023 Rule Book). (Rule 8.01(a) through (d), (f), (g) APPROVED RULINGS, (h), (j), (l), (n), (o), and (r) through (v), pages 145, 146, and 147, 2023 Rule Book; also, see Rule 8.01 in its entirety, pages 145, 146, and 147, 2023 Rule Book). The penalty for violation of these pitching rules shall be an illegal pitch and the pitch will be called a ball.

Mandatory Play – International Tournament (8/9/10 Division through Junior Division): all tournament teams must adopt a policy of a continuous batting order during tournament play allowing **defensive players** to play when and how much a manager decides (Tournament Rule 9, pages 179 and 180, 2023 Rule Book). "**MANDATORY PLAY**" is defined as a player who come to bat and is either (1) retired, (2) retired as a batter-runner or runner, (3) scores, or (4) the inning or game ends. **Courtesy runners cannot be utilized on any pitcher/catcher who has not completed the "at-bat" requirement as that will constitute an illegal substitution** (Rule 2.00, AT-BAT, page 90, 2023 Rule Book). A player may be entered and/or re-entered defensively in the game at any time during the game (Tournament Rule 9.a, page 179, 2023 Rule Book)

There is no mandatory play for SR League.

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Managers are solely responsible for ensuring that all players fulfill the requirements of playing participation. **Failure to meet the playing requirements in this rule is a basis for protest and, if protested or brought to the Tournament Committee's attention, it may result (by action of the Tournament Committee) in the removal of the team's manager, without replacement, for the remainder of the International Tournament.** (Tournament Rules 9.g and .h, page 180, 2023 Rule Book)

ON-DECK BATTER (JR AND SR DIVISION ONLY): the on-deck batter is to be positioned in the **on-deck circle closest to their dugout** (Regulation XIV(b), Approved Ruling, page 73, 2023 Rule Book)

SUBSTITUTION AND RE-ENTRY-SR DIVISION ONLY: Any player who has been removed for a substitute may re-enter the game in the **SAME** position in the batting order. (Tournament Rule 10.b, page 181, 2023 Rule Book)

DESIGNATED HITTER-SR LEAGUE ONLY: Designated Hitter (DH) **WILL** apply during tournament play. Any player in the starting lineup, including the Designated Hitter (DH), who has been removed for a substitute may re-enter the game **ONCE**, provided such player occupies the same batting position as she did in the starting lineup. A substitute (non-starter) may not re-enter the game in any position once they are removed from the lineup. (Tournament Rule 10.h and 10.i, pages 181 and 182, 2023 Rule Book)

FIFTEEN AND TEN-RUN RULE: If after three (3) innings (**Junior/Senior League:** four (4) innings), two and one-half innings (**Junior/Senior League:** three and one-half innings) if the home team is ahead, one team has a lead of fifteen (15) runs or more, the manager of the team with the least runs shall concede the victory to the opponent. If after four (4) innings (**Junior/Senior League:** five (5) innings), three and one-half innings (**Junior/Senior League:** four and one-half innings) if the home team is ahead, one team has a lead of ten (10) runs or more, the manager of the team with the least runs shall concede victory to the opponent. During regular season, the local Little League may adopt the option of not utilizing this rule. However, this rule will apply during Tournament Play at all levels. (Rule 4.10(e), page 111, and Tournament Rule 12, page 182, 2023 Rule Book)

BUNTS and ATTEMPTS AT BUNT: holding the bat in the strike zone is considered an attempted bunt. In order to take a pitch, the batter must withdraw the bat backwards away from the ball (Rule 2.00, BUNT, page 91, 2023 Rule Book)

NO SLIDE TO AVOID RULE: Any runner is out when the runner does not slide or attempt to avoid contact with a fielder who has the ball and is waiting to make the tag (in other words, the runner "trucks" the fielder as in football or rugby) (Rule 7.08(a)(3), page 135, 2023 Rule Book). **There is no "must slide rule", only the "no slide to avoid contact" rule** (Rule 7.08(a)(3), Approved Ruling, page 135, 2023 Rule Book)

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HEADFIRST SLIDING:

8/9/10, 9/10/11, and Major Divisions Only: When a runner is advancing or stealing a base, there is no head-first sliding. If a runner does slide head-first while advancing, that runner shall be called “Out” (Rule 7.08(a)(4), page 135, 2023 Rule Book).

JR/SR League: A runner may slide head-first on an advance to any base.

Head-first sliding is always allowed for all runners in any league if they are attempting to return to a base they occupied.

If a **defensive player blocks** the base, home plate, or baseline clearly without possession of the ball, a delayed “dead ball” obstruction shall be called and the runner is safe (Rule 7.06(b), **NOTE 2**, page 135, 2023 Rule Book)

TIE GAMES: During tournament play, when the completion of six innings (**Junior/Senior League:** seven innings) and the score is tied, the following tie-breaker will be played to determine a winning team (Tournament Rule 14, page 183, 2023 Rule Book):

- a. the seventh inning (**Junior/Senior League:** eighth inning) will be played as normal.
- b. starting in the top of the eighth inning (**Junior/Senior League:** ninth inning) and each half inning thereafter, the offensive team shall begin its turn at bat with the player who is scheduled to bat last in that respective half inning being placed on second base. **EXAMPLE:** If the number five batter is the lead-off batter, the number four batter in the batting order will be placed on second base. An eligible substitute or special pinch runner may be inserted for that runner.

APPEALS: Any appeal under Rule 7.10 (tag-ups on fly balls, runners advancing or returning to a base and failing to touch each base, or a runner failing to touch home plate and making no attempt to return to touch home plate, and home plate is tagged): any appeal under this rule must be made before the next pitch, or any play or attempted play. **No appeal can be made if the ball is dead.** If the violation occurs during a play which ends a half inning, the appeal must be made before all the defensive players have left fair territory.

In making an appeal, the pitcher shall not throw to a base while the foot is in contact with the pitcher’s plate. In putting the ball back into play, after taking the pitching position, the pitcher shall step backwards off the pitcher’s plate (with the pivot foot first) to begin the appeal. **Successive appeals may not be made on a runner at the same base.** If the defensive team on its first appeal errs, a request for a second appeal on the same runner at the same base shall not be allowed by the umpire (Rule 7.10, pages 140 and 141, 2023 Rule Book)

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All fielders, except the catcher, must be positioned in fair territory when play begins (including first- or third-basemen attempting to hold on runners). **NOTE:** There is no penalty for this infraction; the umpire should just have the player move into fair territory (Rule 4.03, pages 107 and 108, 2023 Rule Book and Page 19, 2022 Make The Right Call Manual)

TIME LIMITS: THERE ARE NO TIME LIMITS, OTHER THAN CURFEWS, DURING TOURNAMENT PLAY (Tournament Rule 13, pages 182 and 183, 2023 Rule Book)

ENDING GAME: When the winning run is scored in the last half-inning of a regulation game, the umpire shall not declare the game ended until the runner forced to advance from third has touched home plate and the batter-runner has touched first base (Rule 4.09(b), page 110, 2023 Rule Book).

Tie game in the bottom of the sixth inning, two outs. Batter receives ball four and all runners begin to advance. The runner from third base touches home plate. The batter rushes to join in the endgame celebration without having first touched first base. The batter then enters the dugout with the rest of the team. **RULING:** Umpire will call the batter out for abandoning his/her effort to advance. In this instance, the third out is a result of the batter being called out before touching first base, therefore it is a force out. No run scores and the game continues with the score still tied. (**NOTE:** the player must enter dead ball territory before he/she can be called out for abandonment.) (Rule 4.09(b) Situation, page 21, 2022 Make The Right Call Manual)

UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT: The actions, on or off the field, of players, managers, coaches, umpires, and league officials must be above reproach. Any player, manager, coach, umpire, or league representative who is involved in a verbal or physical altercation, or an incident of unsportsmanlike conduct, at the game site or any other Little League activity including through online or social media, is subject to disciplinary action by the local league Board of Directors (Regulation XIV(a), page 73, 2023 Rule Book)

Any comments, concerns, suggestions, or questions regarding rules should be directed to:

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