Sport Alliance League / Club Conference Bylaws (Subsection A.)

Howard County Softball Alliance

Softball Commissioner - Patrick McGinnis
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League Website – or type https://www.hcrpsports.org/hcsoftball

Updated: April 2022

League Description: The Howard County Softball Alliance League provides a recreational softball league for local youth organizations. The purpose is to allow organizations' specific age groups, without enough enrollment to run in-house division games, the opportunity for a competitive schedule with an adequate number of teams.

Spring Schedule Details:

Key Dates	
2022 Organization Interest Inquiry Deadline:	March 12
2022 Registration Deadline:	March 26
2022 Player & Coach Roster Submission Deadline:	April 7
2022 Roster Certification Deadline:	April 9
2022 Opening Day	April 23

All HC Softball Alliance rules below are league specific and serve as supplemental guidelines to the HCRP Sport Alliance League / Club Conference Bylaws.

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I

Policy Matters

A. The Alliance league will consist of three age groupings:

An 8U League of teams of players 8 years of age and under;

A 10U League of teams of players 10 years of age and under; and,

A 13U League of teams of players 13 years of age and under**.**

B. Age and Eligibility

This Alliance of teams from participating organizations is formed for the benefit of:

8 year-old and under softball players, female, as determined by December 31 of the current calendar year.

10 year-old and under softball players, female, as determined by December 31 of the current calendar year.

13 year-old and under softball players, female, as determined by December 31 of the current calendar year

C. Team Registrations and Rosters

Only players registered with the softball organizations participating in this Alliance may play in this league. Any manager or coach who substitutes a ballplayer who is not registered with his league shall be expelled from the Alliance for the remainder of the regular season and post-season. Any game played with unregistered players shall be forfeited. All 8U teams must register with and pay a fee to the Howard County Department of Recreation & Parks. All 10U & 13U teams must register with and pay a fee to the Howard County Department of Recreation & Parks. Players who have been or are on a full-time travel team roster during the 2021/2022 season are ineligible for Alliance league play.

Teams must complete and submit a Howard County Recreation & Parks youth team roster to the League Commissioner by the scheduled due date. This process is electronic through SportsEngine, and details on the process will be sent to participating organizations. Once the rostering process is complete, organization representatives will receive a copy of the roster to review and certify. Certifying a roster is completed when an approved organization representative confirms via email response to the League Commissioner that a roster is complete and accurate. The League Commissioner must approve all changes to rosters. No roster changes after the deadline unless approved by League Commissioner.

D. Official Rules (8U, 10U, & 13U)

The rules of USSSA Softball, as modified by these rules, will apply to the 3 divisions of the Softball Alliance formed by the participating softball organizations. The primary purposes for modifications to the rules are:
(1) the safety of ballplayers,
(2) the need for standardized rules acceptable to the participating leagues;
(3) respect for the authority vested in the umpire;
(4) the concern that good sportsmanship should override competitiveness in the conduct of managers, coaches, assistant coaches, ballplayers, parents, and spectators.

E. Official Game

Games for the 8U and 10U age groups will be played for Six (6) innings, time limit, weather and field conditions permitting. No new inning should start after 105 minutes (1 hour 45 minutes).

Games for the 13U age group will be played for seven (7) innings, time limit, weather and field conditions permitting. No new inning should start after 105 minutes (1 hour 45 minutes).

Only the umpire is designated to call a game due to darkness, weather, or field conditions once Recreation and Parks and/or the Board of Education have deemed them playable. Every attempt should be made to play games during the regular season.

All age group:
(1) No hard stop for time. The final inning will be played to a conclusion.
(2) The new inning begins right after the third out is registered in the bottom half of the previous inning.
(3) Regular season games can end in a tie.
(4) The umpire shall notify both managers that the new inning is the "last inning" of an official game.

The following rules will apply to the end of season tournament:
(1) For a game to be official when called on account of darkness, weather, or field conditions, the losing team must bat at least 4 full innings. In such case, the umpire shall notify both managers that the new inning is the "last inning" of an official game.
(2) If a game is suspended before 4 innings are completed it shall be treated as a suspended game.
(3) All extra inning tie games to be settled by ITB – International Tie Breaker. No outs and runner at 2nd base. Player that precedes the leadoff batter starts at 2nd base.

G. Mercy Rule (8U, 10U)

There is no Mercy Rule for the 8u and 10U age groupings. It is the responsibility of the manager to do their best while respecting the game to prevent a lopsided final score. Games are for the development of players and should be continued.

(13U)

A twelve (12) run rule applies after 4-1/2 innings if the home team is ahead or after 5 innings if the home team is losing.

H. Official Scorekeeper

The **"home"** team as designated in the playing schedule is responsible for keeping the official score and notifying the plate umpire of the score at the end of each half inning. Umpires are NOT responsible for keeping the official score. It is the responsibility of the "Visiting" team's scorekeeper to confer periodically, at least once each inning, with the official scorekeeper in order to minimize scorekeeping disputes.

I. Reporting Scores

The manager or coach of the winning team for the 10U and 13U leagues shall email **Patrick McGinnis** pmcginnis@HowardCountyMD.gov, or call 410-313-4716 to report the score. Scores should be reported the night of the game and tournament game within 4 hours of its completion or suspension. Each manager shall maintain a record of the final scores and innings played of all official games and suspended games including date of play, time, and field location.

A Point System will be used as the second tie breaker for regular season standings and tournament seeding. Head-to-Head record will continue as the first tie breaker.
Teams will be awarded: 3-points for a win, 1-pomt for a tie and 0-points for a loss.

J. Continuation of a Suspended Game

If a game is called earlier than as stated in paragraph "E" above, play will be considered "suspended." Continuation of a suspended game will not be necessary unless it is in the tournament. If such is the situation, the game will be continued from the point of suspension.

K. Umpire

Howard County Recreation & Parks will schedule and pay the umpires for all regular season games and playoffs games,

II

Special Pitching Rules

A. Preparatory Pitches (Apply to 10U and 13U age grouping)

Each new pitcher is allowed a maximum of 5 warn up pitches. A returning pitcher may throw a maximum of 3 warm up pitches.

B. Pitch Count Limits & Mandatory Rest Days

There are no pitch count limits or mandatory rest days for softball. However, a pitcher may only pitch a maximum of 4 innings in any given game. One pitch thrown is the equivalent of one inning.

Coaches are responsible for the use of their pitchers over the course of the season. Coaches are encouraged to utilize and develop multiple pitchers and to monitor innings pitched for individual players.

Pitchers may return to pitch after playing elsewhere in a previous inning

C. Pitching Styles

Any pitching style (High School Federation, USSSA, ASA, NSA or Pony) is legal for League play. Both feet need to start on the rubber. Once the hands come together you may not step back off the rubber. The pivot foot may remain in contact with or may push off and drag away from the rubber prior to the front foot touching the ground, as long as the pivot foot remains in contact with the ground. You may not replant the pivot foot and push off again.

D. Forced Removal from Pitching Position

For 10U and 13U age groupings, teams are allowed one charged offensive conference per inning. Any subsequent offensive conference shall result in the removal of the pitcher from the pitching position.

Pitchers may return to pitch after being removed from the pitching position. The pitcher may not pitch more than a total of 4 innings in a game. One pitch = one inning.

Pitchers will be permanently removed from the pitching position after hitting a third batter with a pitch in the game.

Clarification/Point-of-Emphasis: Especially at the 10U level, a ball that bounces/rolls and hits a batter while still ruled a dead-ball shall not be considered a "credited" hit-by-pitch by this rule, and the batter, while having option to take first base, should be encouraged to remain hitting. If the batter remains, the pitch will be counted as a ball.

E. Other Pitching Rules

The pitching rubber is set at 35 feet for 8U and 10U, with bases at 60 feet. The 8U and 10U leagues shall use 11-inch softballs. The pitching rubber is set at 40 feet for 13U, with bases at 60 feet. The 13U league shall use 12-inch softballs.

III

Modified Rules of Play

- The Alliance Coordinator will schedule and pay the officiating fees for the regular and postseason.
- Run scoring limit per teams/inning are: a maximum of five (5) runs per inning. The "last inning" as stipulated by the umpire and modified unlimited inning scoring applies.
- Last Inning: If the visiting team is trailing by any number of runs or tied when it comes to bat, it can score as many runs as possible to make up any deficit, plus go ahead by the designated age group run per inning limit. If the visiting team is leading in the last inning, it can only score designated age group run per inning limit. If the home team is trailing or tied when it comes to bat, it can score as many runs as possible to make up any deficit plus go ahead by one (1) run to win the game.
- All catchers must wear a mask and protective gear. It is recommended that female players wear a protective cup or pelvic protector.
- The entire bench bats and all players *MUST* bat in order. Players must be on the bench and ready to play before their names can be placed in the line-up. Players arriving after the line-ups are completed and/or play has begun must be placed at the bottom of the batting order.
- Players arriving late to a game will be placed at the bottom of the lineup and can bat/play without penalty.
- Teams must have a minimum of eight of their own players to begin a game. Teams may continue playing a game with 7 players (in this situation only - the 8th batter takes an automatic out). 10U teams are not required to play 10 defensive players.
- A team fielding less than eight (8) players will forfeit**. Forfeit rule only applies to tournament play**. During regular season every effort should be made to play regular season games, which may include using players from the other team.
- Defensive positions Before Play Begins:
    - Outfielders should be positioned no closer than 10 yards beyond basepaths (i.e. 3 Steps in Grass) when play begins.
    - No more than 5 defensive players (4 Fielders and Pitcher) can be positioned on the infield to start the play.
- If catcher or pitcher becomes a baserunner with two outs, the last batted out must be used as a substitute baserunner.
- Base runner *MUST slide, give herself up or get out of the way* if there is a force out play at 2nd base, 3rd base or home. In the event that the baserunner violates this rule, the runner will be called out. If, in the judgement of the umpire the runner's violation of the rule caused the defensive player to move to avoid contact or otherwise modify a secondary defensive play, both the runner and the secondary runner will be called out.
- ANY MALICIOUS CONTACT will result in a game ejection.

- Batters may NOT Throw Bats. Upon first instance, BOTH teams will be warned verbally by umpire. All subsequent instances result in Dead Ball, batter-runner to be declared out and base-runners return to their previous bases.

- The number of innings a player plays in the field (defensive innings), may not exceed the number of defensive innings of any other teammate by more than one. (Example: If Sarah plays six defensive innings, everyone else on her team must have played five defensive innings).

- In the event of lightning or thunder, the umpire MUST suspend play immediately and all ballplayers, managers, coaches, and assistant coaches MUST promptly leave the playing field and take shelter, preferably in automobiles. Play may only be resumed if there has been neither sighting of lightning nor sound of thunder for **thirty minutes.** It is entirely the judgment call of the umpire whether to resume play.

- The home team is responsible for providing all game balls. Prior to the start of the game two (2) NEW (or reasonably new) game balls will be provided to the umpire. If additional game balls are needed, used game balls in good condition will be given to the umpire by the home team. **All game balls must have the same core.**

- The home team is responsible for the field to be ready for play **before each game**. This includes but not limited to: (1) drawing foul lines and batter's boxes. (2) Making sure the bases are at the proper distance and installed correctly in the hub. (3) Pitching rubber is at the correct distance.

- No tie games during tournament play. See rule for continuation of a suspended game as prescribed in Chapter 1, Section J. **This applies only to tournament play.** A tie during tournament play will be decided by implementing the International Tie Breaker Rule.

- Starting time for games scheduled on Monday through Friday evenings is 6:00 p.m. Each team is allowed a 15-minute grace period. The visiting team has the field 15 minutes prior to the start time for practice. A change in game times can be negotiated between teams prior to the scheduled game so long as proper notice is given to both teams.

  The umpire is allowed the same 15-minute grace period. If the umpire has not arrived by 15 minutes after the scheduled starting time for the game, the home team shall select an umpire from among the managers, coaches, parents, or spectators with the mutual agreement and concurrence of the opposing manager.

- **Metal spikes are NOT PERMITTED at all in the Alliance League.**

8U Only

Games will consist of Coach Pitch. Each batter gets four (4) strikes. There are no called strikes, only swinging strikes. The rules on foul balls for the 8U league follow the normal pattern. That is, foul balls ARE strikes on the first, second, and third strikes. On the final strike, the batter is not out on a foul ball (that is not caught by a fielder).

No dropped 3rd strike and no infield fly.

No stealing of bases. No lead off from bases is permitted. A base runner may not leave the base until the batter makes contact with the ball. Any runner that leaves the base prior to the batter making contact shall be called out.

No bunting

Batters may attempt to run for extra bases on any hit that leaves the infield. Once the ball is returned to the infield by the defense, the runner may not advance any further (even if there is an overthrow/error).

Batters are limited to a single if the batted ball does not leave the infield.

Ten (10) Players and two (2) coaches on the field. Coaches are encouraged to be on the field.

Base runners may not tag up and advance on caught fly balls. This is even true if the fielder catches the ball and inadvertently throws the ball away. However, a base runner may be "doubled off" should he or she be caught off base and a successful throw be made to the original base of the runner.

Games will be self-umpired by coaches.

10U Only

The 10u League shall a “modified player-pitch” format for all games. The “modified player-pitch” format is designed to minimize walks; thus allowing the batters to put the ball in play, while allowing the defensive team more opportunities to make defensive outs and giving pitchers more game experience in the circle. The intent of the “modified player-pitch” format is to create a livelier game, which enhances the enjoyment and skills of the players.

Coach Pitch Rules:

a. The coach will come in and pitch to any batter who has four balls. The batter will keep the same strike count and can only hit the ball or strike out. The umpire will record only strikes against the batter while a coach is pitching.
b. Note that no additional walks are allowed for any relief player pitcher that enters the game during that inning.
c. The coach shall pitch non-windmill to each batter and throw a flat (non-arcing, non-slow pitch style) pitch at a speed as close as possible to a realistic game speed pitch.
d. While the coach is pitching to the batter, the player pitcher must be positioned within the pitcher’s circle, but not in such a way as to interfere with the coach who is pitching.
e. If the coach hits the batter a dead ball is declared and the batter continues batting.
f. If a batted ball hits the coach, the ball is live. The coach is considered to be part of the field, similar to a base umpire. HOWEVER, if the coach catches a batted ball, the batter will be declared out.

Play will stop when the pitcher has control of the ball in the circle. There will be no advancements on overthrows.

A runner can attempt to steal a base once the pitched ball crosses home plate. A runner may not lead off and must maintain contact with the base until the ball crosses home plate. No stealing of home. A team may only steal two (2) bases per inning, including passed balls by the catcher. Any runner leaving the base early shall be called out.

No bunting

No dropped 3rd strike and no infield fly.

Teams may have as many as 10 players on the field

13U Only

Runners may attempt to steal when the ball crosses the plate, including home. Any runner that leaves the base early shall be called out.

Players may slide feet first only.

Teams may only have 9 players on the field.

Play will stop when the pitcher has control of the ball in the circle and the umpire will call time. Any runner more than halfway to a base will be awarded that base.

IV

Incidents and Injuries

A. Incident Reports

In the event that an incident takes place or a player suffers a serious injury, it is the responsibility of both team managers/coaches to prepare reports of the incident or injury and to obtain the names of witnesses to the incident or injury.

B. Information Required

The manager/coach may use the reporting form provided by the organization to which the team is a member. Information that needs to be documented in the report includes:

- The date, place, and time of the incident or injury.
- The name(s), addresses and telephone numbers of the person(s) involved.
- The name(s), addresses and telephone numbers of any witness(es).
- Were police or EMS called? Did they respond? Was a formal police or EMS report prepared?
- A description of the events that took place before, during and after the incident or injury.
- How was the matter resolved?
- What additional issues, if any, need to be resolved?

C. Submission of Reports

The manager or coach of each team shall notify the representative of his/her league orally within three hours of the incident or injury. Formal written reports must be submitted within 24 hours of the incident or injury to the representative(s) of the league(s) to which the parties in the incident or injury belong.

V

Disputes

A. Expectations

Managers, coaches, assistant coaches, and ballplayers are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful and cordial manner at all time on and in the vicinity of the playing field. Losing tempers or other obnoxious or threatening

displays over an umpire's decision will not be tolerated. Disrespectful language and actions by managers, coaches, assistant coaches, ballplayers, parents and other spectators towards umpires or towards one another have no place in this Alliance.

B. Disputes

Interpretation of these rules during the conduct of a game is within the authority, judgment, and discretion of the umpire(s) assigned to work the game. Any discussion regarding a rule or its interpretation will be resolved immediately with the umpire having the final decision. If a second umpire is working the field, the plate umpire and field umpire may confer with one another over a controversial call.

C. Protests

NO PROTESTS WILL BE ALLOWED.

D. Complaints

Complaints regarding the conduct of managers, coaches, assistant coaches and ballplayers during games and practice sessions and, most importantly, when wearing uniforms, shall be brought to the attention of the Patrick McGinnis, Recreation Sports Supervisor, Howard County Recreation and Parks 410-313-4716, **pmcginnis@howardcountymd.gov**

E. Conduct of Parents and Spectators

Managers and coaches are responsible for the conduct of parents and spectators. The name of any parent or spectator ejected by an umpire from the viewing area or field complex shall be reported within 24 hours of the ejection by the manager or head coach of the team with which the parent or spectator is associated to the representative of the league to which that team belongs. The league representative shall notify the representatives of the other participating leagues of the ejection.

F. Code of Conduct for Managers, Coaches, Ballplayers, and Parents

Where a league requires a code of conduct to be completed, as a prerequisite for managers, coaches, ballplayers, and parents for a team that is participating in the Alliance, managers, coaches, ballplayers, and parents shall abide by the terms of such code for all Alliance practices and games.

G. Ejection from Game

If a manager, coach, assistant coach, parent, or spectator is ejected from a game, the individual ***MUST*** leave the playing complex entirely within 5 minutes of being ejected. If a player is ejected and his parent or guardian is present, the player must leave the playing complex under the supervision of the parent or guardian. If a player is ejected and his parent or guardian is not present, the player shall leave the field and dugout areas and sit in the spectator area for the duration of the game. Failure to do so will result in forfeiture of the game. A "forfeited game" call is solely within the authority and judgment of the plate umpire and may not be protested.

- By noon of the day following the incident, the plate umpire will notify the umpire-in chief of the name of any manager, coach, assistant coach, or player ejected from a game and the circumstances leading to such action. The umpire-in-chief shall then notify the Recreation & Parks League Supervisor, Patrick McGinnis.

- If any manager, coach, assistant coach, player or spectator is ejected the ejected player is suspended from (1) game including playoff games. For any subsequent ejection, the individual must meet with Patrick McGinnis, Recreation & Parks Sports Supervisor before returning to play. They are barred from league participation for the remainder of the season unless reinstated by the Sports Supervisor.

VI

Post Season Play

A. Post Season Tournament

The post season will consist of a seeded double elimination tournament. It will be at the discretion of the league supervisor whether to have a Gold and Silver bracket if the number of teams warrants having multiple brackets. Seeding will be determined by the following:

1. Wins
2. Head-to-Head
3. Point totals
4. Coin Toss

B. Championship Awards

Trophies are distributed to players on the championship team and players on the runner-up team (There may be multiple divisions, and each division champion and runner up will receive trophies.) The awards will be paid for by Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks.

C. Umpires

Umpires are scheduled and paid for by Howard County Recreation & Parks during the playoffs.

VII

Board of Directors

Each league participating in the Alliance will have one voting representative who will serve during the season as a member of the Alliance's Board of Directors. The members of the Board of Directors shall vote on all policy and rulemaking matters. The Recreation Sports Supervisor will serve as the Chairperson, and shall serve collaboratively as the arbiters for any disputes that may arise during the course of the season and post season. The members of the Board of Directors are not empowered to overturn decisions rendered by umpires during games.

Howard County Recreation & Parks, through its assigned League Supervisor, reserves the right to amend the rules and schedules as conditions may warrant. All decisions made by League Supervisor are final.