

2024 NorthWood Youth Little League Rules

Girls Softball; Senior's age 11-14

Introduction:

The 11-14 year old girls (Senior's) is intended to be slightly more competitive, but also a fundamental improvement league to be the next step towards full on kid pitch middle school age/High school softball

This hybrid kid pitch/ Machine Pitch division is structured to represent a traditional softball game with the major difference being the use of the machine instead of a pitcher for innings 3-6. Players still fill all traditional fielder roles, score is kept during the game, but the intent is upon player development and fun, and less on competitiveness. The machine will allow every pitch to be hittable, thus kids do not have to worry about being hit by a pitch, which will help dramatically improve their hitting skills and confidence to prepare them for the unpredictability of kid pitch divisions in the future. The machine also enables more balls to be put into play, which will keep fielders actively engaged and focused on the game. There are games in kid pitch where a pitcher may struggle, and fielders become disengaged as the walks begin to accumulate. In Machine Pitch, this does not happen, and can lead to a much more action packed game for everyone, which is more fun and helps develop a passion on interest for softball.

The first two innings of each game will start with traditional live softball pitching. The two innings are a good introduction to allow pitchers to develop, without compromising the development of all the other players and skills including hitting in softball. The machine allows more hittable balls to be presented to batters, and allows more balls to be put into play to develop fielding skills.

2024 Playing Rules:

Play Ball:

- If a team is short players, they may borrow from another team to fill the field. The minimum required players from one team for a game to be held is 7. If less than 7 players from one team is present, that game is a forfeit. If you get to a game to find out you are short players, use rotating players from the opposing team to play the field only. Have them play the outfield. They will still bat in order (sub them out if needed) and play the field for their normal team.
- Games are limited to 6 innings with a maximum duration of 1 hour and 15 mins. No inning should start after 1 hour and 15 minutes of play. However, a new inning should always start, beginning with the last out of the prior inning if any time is remaining on the clock. That inning will played for it's full duration through bottom half of inning if necessary due to score. (If home team ahead we do not play bottom half of last inning.)
- After 3 complete innings a game can be called due to inclement weather conditions, and will be considered a complete game at discretion of league.

- Each inning is played with three outs, or **4 Run limit in the kid pitch first 2 innings; 6 run limit in the Machine pitch innings**. Whichever comes first. Except last inning, no run limit. If the team (visitor) in top half of the 6th inning is up by 10 or more runs, they are limited to an additional 6 only. The home team can still score unlimited, and may have slight advantage if they score 17 or more runs to catch up. (rare occurrence). The intent of this rule is to just not allow Last inning unlimited runs to lead to a extra long merciless inning.
- Mercy Rule in place, is one team is ahead by 15 runs after 3 innings of play are completed, they win, and remainder of innings are played to a 6 run limit/3 outs as a time allows, and up to losing coaches discretion whether they want to continue as a scrimmage game until time limit is reached.
- The official ball will be a 12" BADEN 12MBP for Senior's division while machine is pitching. Balls suitable for pitching machine use are easily identified by the red/blue striped Kevlar stitching pattern. Do NOT put regular Synthetic covered balls into pitching machine or damage/buildup on wheel will occur, resulting in inaccurate pitching and damage to the wheels. The official ball during Kid pitch innings is a traditional 12" USSSA softball of varying brands.
- An umpire shall be provided by the league to feed the pitching machine and make all calls in the field. (If no official umpire is provided, the offensive teams coach should feed the machine, while a defensive coach makes the calls in the field.)
- During kid pitch rules, it is preferable that the umpire plays the game behind the plate until the pitching machine comes into play, and they may transition into the field position feeding the machine. An adult or coach should assist in making field calls and be provided by the home team to umpire the field during pitching innings.
- Keep score during the game to keep kids engaged in playing their best. There will be no standings, but there will be a round of playoffs at the end of the season where records may be used if required for seeding purposes.
- Pitching machine speed should be set at **40 MPH for Seniors**.
- Machine will be set up at the start of each machine pitch inning by the umpire in charge with both head coaches from each team, home catcher in full gear, and first batter from the visiting team at the plate with the batting helmet on and her bat extended from the batters naval over the home base. Once both coaches are satisfied with the consistent position of the balls being pitched, the inning will commence.

The Field:

- Field will be a regulation softball field. Bases are 60 ft. apart.
- Pitcher's mound is 40 feet from home plate. Place the pitching machine just inside or just inside the pitching plate. (towards home plate)
- You may field up to 10 players, which allows for the use of 4 outfielders. Outfielders play the outfield. There is no short center fielder, space the outfielders apart equally. They may not fill the infield. There is no player assigned to stand on 2nd base.
 - Outfielders may not receive the first throw from a defensive player on a batted ball to make a put out at any base, whether by forcing or by tagging. They can make a put out in

a “run down” (pickle) situation or any subsequent play following the first throw. (This is to ensure the center fielder is not utilized as an extra infielder)

- You put only one player at the pitcher position. They stand on either side of the pitching coach/umpire and machine or behind (never in front).
- The pitcher must start within the pitcher’s circle (10ft diameter). Any contact with the circle will be considered inside the circle. Play is stopped when the pitcher has the ball within the pitcher’s circle. Again, any contact with the circle will be considered inside the circle. There is no halfway line as there is in Juniors ball. A runner is in play and eligible to be put out at any time the ball is live.
 - If the pitcher fields a ball in the circle, she MAY make a play on the runner at any base, however, upon the ball returning to the pitcher and her making any contact with the pitching circle, the ball is declared dead.
- Catchers
 - * Sr’s, 11-14 year old’s should position themselves in traditional position behind home plate to catch the ball on the fly and allow space for an umpire when transitioning to kid pitch format.
 - *In Senior’s a 3’ x 6’ catchers box is drawn behind home plate. If catcher cannot keep the ball inside the box, runner can steal the next base. **Stealing Home is allowed but, Runner may not advance until ball leaves the catchers box. This rule applies both when machine is pitching or live pitching.**
- **No player should play more than 3 innings at one position in a game. No permanent assignments. This is up to coaches to enforce amongst themselves and to encourage player development.**
- All players should get playing time in the infield each game.
- All players may sit out only for a maximum of 6 outs per game (2 innings). There is no warning for violating this rule. A violation of this rule occurs for each out after 6 outs a player sits out. For each violation of this rule, at the beginning of the next inning after the violation, the violating team will start with an out for each violation (up to, including and over, three outs, in which case the violating team will skip at-bats), and during the inning of any violation, the non-violating team will have one run per violation added to its score. If the violation(s) occur during the last inning of a game or there are not enough innings left in the game to enforce all of the outs penalties, the penalties for outs and runs will be enforced and applied at the beginning of the violating team’s next game. Only exception to this rule is due to Injury or illness that requires a player to sit out remainder of the game.
- IF the ball hits the machine or a coach, it is a dead ball. All runners advance one base or go to closest base if contact is result of a thrown ball, and not an initially batted ball.
 - Be sure to never reach under machine or make a play at a ball near the machine for Safety reasons.
- **When calling close plays, the tie goes to the fielders.** Hitting and running skills develop much faster. Fielding a ball, making the correct decision where to go with it, and then making the throw, catch, and tag or put out requires more effort at this age.
- There is No Infield Fly rule in play in either Junior or Senior’s divisions.

At Bat:

- When pitching machine in play, each batter gets maximum of 6 pitches. If they swing and miss at 3 of the pitches, they will strike out. No balls are called for pitches they do not swing on. But 6 pitches is the maximum(result is same as a strikeout), unless a foul ball is hit on the 6th pitch. Then the batter receives one additional pitch, (same for any pitches thereafter, a foul they get one more until swing and miss, don't swing, or put ball in play. Any of those will end the at bat.)
- The 1st two innings of every game will represent a traditional softball game with kid pitching in place. 4 ball walks and 3 strike rules will be in affect for these 2 innings.
- **No bunting when machine is being used to pitch. You can bunt during kid pitch innings.**
- **All players present must** be in the batting order, no many how many are present. Except in case of emergency, no players may be skipped in order after game has started without team incurring an "Out"
- The umpire may call a "no pitch" if the pitch is clearly out of the strike zone and the machine malfunctions and the batter does not swing.
- A hit ball that hits the pitching machine, pitching coach/umpire, or that stops inside the circle around the machine is a dead ball single. All runners advance one base.
- All children must always wear a helmet with a face mask when batting and running the bases.
- On deck batters are allowed at their own teams coaches discretion.
- Thrown Bat: 1st time warning. 2nd Time is an out. 3rd time you are removed from the game.

On the Bases:

- Any runner that crosses the halfway line while ball is live may advance to the next base at their own peril. If pitcher has control of ball in the pitching circle, they may not continue to advance.
- If runner does not cross the halfway mark and the pitcher has control of the ball within the circle, the runner may not advance unless the pitcher attempts to make a play on them.
- On an overthrow to any base, including first base, the runner may take one additional base only at their own peril. The fields may attempt to make any play to get them out. The base is not a free reward for an overthrow. However, note, the runner can only take one base per overthrow.
- No leading off base or leaving the base until the ball has left the pitching machine or the pitchers hand when kid pitching.
- Stealing is allowed if the ball after it passes the plate, **leaves the catchers square marked area.**
- Stealing home is allowed.
- If there is a good hit, the base runners may take as many bases as the hit yields. That includes a homerun. Base running is NOT station to station.
- Baserunners must slide feet first. You may dive back into a base after rounding. Automatic out for sliding head first.
- Runner for the Catcher: When there are 2 outs, a pinch runner for the catcher is allowed and encouraged. The pinch runner should be the last player who was out.

Manager and Coaches

- Only coaches in the dugout and on the field
- Base coaches allowed. They may be kids, but they must wear a helmet.

General Tips:

- *Try to simulate a traditional softball atmosphere as much as possible. That's why we do not want defensive coaches in the field. We want to teach the kids to know where to go with the ball to make a play.*
- *Although Stealing home is now allowed, it should not be used drive up the score intentionally with aggressive base running to take advantage of a struggling pitcher or catcher. This is still a learning league, and pitcher/catchers need to not be afraid every mistake they make could lead to a run. They can still walk in a run on 4 bad pitches, this is more in line than a single bad/missed pitch to earn that run.*
 - *Coaches should use discretion when teaching runners to steal home strategically, and not just every opportunity to take advantage of a weak pitcher or catcher.*
- *Overthrows to bases, runners may advance one base only for the same reasons mentioned above. However, if the fielding team tries to throw the runner out at the next base, the ball is still live and the runners can continue to advance.*
- *Basically kids should take the bases earned on the hits, not so much on the errors made by the fielders. Base coaches should not encourage overly aggressive base running. If an outfielder or infielder is making a throw to the pitcher, don't send a kid approaching third base on to home. Running is easy, throwing, catching, making a play is significantly harder as these players are still developing. The limits on overthrows and stealing help keep the game competitive and fun for everyone.*
- *The 6 pitch limit is intended to keep the game moving, not to punish the batter. Fielders and base runners will lose focus if the batter is not hitting. The batter will also begin to feel pressure if they are not hitting. Their arms get tired and they begin to have even more difficulty. It is better to sit them down, and let them try again when their turn comes around.*