

## 2020 WPPA SOFTBALL RULES—14U DIVISION

Welles Park Parents Association softball rules are based on the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) softball rules—modifications and exceptions to NFHS softball rules are identified in this document. This document also includes additional Welles Park-specific softball rules that govern such items as uniforms, coach/parent conduct and more. These rules will be in place until season's end unless determined by the commissioner in collaboration with division coaches that a change is needed.

### **FIELDS**

#### **Dimensions & distances**

1. Base paths: 60'
2. Pitching plate: 43' from the back tip of home plate to the front of the pitcher's plate.

#### **Markings**

1. Pitcher's circle: 16' in diameter around the pitcher's plate.
2. Additional field markings:
  - **Note:** No WPPA softball divisions draw or use the diagonal line on the field in front of home plate. The fields should not be marked with this line. If the line is drawn, umpires—and players—should ignore.
  - Batter's boxes are marked at 7' long and 3' wide. The front line of each box shall be 4 feet in front of a line drawn through the center of home plate.

### **EQUIPMENT**

#### **Uniforms**

1. WPPA-provided uniforms should be worn at all games—this includes official shirts, pants and socks.
2. In the event of extreme cold, players should prioritize warmth over uniform compliance.
3. In the event of extreme heat, and at the discretion and announcement of the softball commissioner, shorts will be allowed. Uniform socks should still be worn to protect players' legs.
4. Sliding pants are optional, but recommended.
5. WPPA coaches must wear WPPA shirts for all games. Parents volunteers ("helping coaches") helping coach 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base do not need to wear coaching shirts, but it would be preferred.

#### **Helmets**

1. Supplied by league; players are also allowed to use their own.
2. Batters, on-deck batters, and runners must wear helmets. All helmets must have approved facemasks.

#### **Facemasks**

1. ~~Two-Three~~ masks are supplied by league; players are also allowed to use their own.
2. Required to be worn by pitchers. Strongly suggested for players at 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base.
3. Optional for players at other positions.

#### **Shoes**

Cleats are recommended at the 14U level but not required. Players may only wear cleats with plastic or rubber cleats. No metal cleats allowed.

#### **Bats**

1. Softball bats must be furnished by players.

2. Bats must be alloy and must say "official softball" and include "ASA" or "USSAA" softball logo
3. No oversized barrels (over 2.25" in diameter) are allowed.
4. If a bat is judged by an umpire to not comply with the above rules (or to be considered "unsafe" for any reason), it will be removed from play with no penalty to the batter.

### **Softballs**

1. Players will use a 12" ball.
2. The league will provide two (2) game balls for each game, distributed at the beginning of the season to each coach.
3. Each coach will bring one WPPA-supplied game ball to each game. Before each game begins, each coach will give the game ball to the umpire.

### **GAMES**

#### **Pre-game & starting a game**

1. The home team is responsible for setting up and removing bases (if necessary) and always occupies the 3<sup>rd</sup> base side of the field.
2. Before each game, the head and assistant coaches from each team must identify themselves (and any helping coaches) to the umpire. (A "helping coach" is anyone that will be helping coach players on the field during the game.)
3. When the field is available to do so, each team will have 10 minutes to warm up on the field. The home team takes the field first; the visiting team takes the field second. Both teams should be off the field 5 minutes before the official game time. If warmup time is cut short due to an overlapping game or weather, etc., each team will evenly divide the time available before the game to warm up on the field.
4. Each head coach must make him or herself available to the umpire for a pre-game meeting at home plate 5 minutes before the start of the game and after both teams have finished warming up on the field.
5. Before game time, each head coach must provide the opposing head coach with his or her line up, including the names of all players in attendance. Any players not present at the time of the pre-game meeting, but who are expected to arrive, must be placed at the bottom of the lineup.

#### **Rain delays/cancellations/make-up games**

1. Thirty minutes prior to the first game of the day, the softball commissioner will determine if the grounds and other conditions are suitable for starting the game. If the softball commissioner is not available to make the decision, another board member shall make the decision.
2. In the event a game is cancelled, the commissioner will notify both head coaches via text and/or email.
3. After a game is cancelled, the commissioner will alert both teams that a make-up game needs to be scheduled, and provide available dates/times/fields. If neither team makes a concerted effort to schedule a makeup game within a week of receiving options, the commissioner will assign a date/time and field.
4. With regard to field availability, makeup games will be given priority over regularly scheduled practice, at the discretion of the commissioner.

#### **Time & inning limits**

1. Games are a maximum of 6 innings or 2 hours 15 minutes.
2. No full inning may be started ~~2 hours~~ after 1 hour 45 mins past the scheduled start time; no half-inning started after ~~2:10 minutes~~ hours past the scheduled start time, with the exception of an official delay as a result of weather, etc., in which case all game times/starts

may be pushed back, and all times will be measured from delayed start time. This is at the board's/commissioner's discretion.

3. Any full inning started after 1 hour 45 mins from the scheduled start time will be played as the final open inning with no run cap. The umpire should announce to both head coaches that the inning is uncapped.
4. In the regular season, any game still being played five minutes before the scheduled start time of the following game will end immediately and revert to the score at the end of the previous inning, unless the home team is ahead at the time the game is called, or unless the home team, having been behind at the end of the previous inning, has tied the game. Time limits still stand even if game is not followed by another game.
5. In the playoffs, a full 6-inning game must be played—there are no time limits.
6. A game that is tied at the end of the last inning will be continued until a winner is determined, unless time limits, darkness or inclement weather intercedes. If an official regular season game is tied and cannot be continued because of time limits, weather or darkness, the game will remain a tie. (Note: For league standings, a tie game counts as one half of a win and one half of a loss.)
7. An inning may not be “uncapped” once the first pitch has been thrown. An inning can never be capped for the visiting team and then become uncapped for the home team, even due to time restraints.
8. Because the time limit typically occurs before the inning limit, the umpire and coaches will discuss IN ADVANCE when they are moving to the open inning, which will then become the final inning of the game.
9. **Speed-up rules**
  - Time elapsed between the third out and the start of the next half inning shall be no longer than 3 minutes. Umpires will ask coaches to move more quickly as 3 minutes approaches.
  - This time includes warm up pitches for pitchers returning to the mound from the previous inning.
  - Pitchers new to the mound for the game may have 6 warmup pitches, even if 3 minutes have already passed.
  - Coaches for the batting team shall instruct their catcher for the next inning to suit up after the 2<sup>nd</sup> out and be ready to play immediately after the 3<sup>rd</sup> out is made.
  - When there are two outs and the catcher is on base, it is required that coaches send in a courtesy runner for the catcher so that she may put on her equipment. Runner will be the player who made the last out.

### **Complete/official game**

1. A full game is 3.5 innings if the home team is winning; four (4) if the visiting team is winning. (i.e., in case of rain or time limit has been reached).
2. If the game must be called because of darkness, inclement weather or time limit before it is considered complete/official, an attempt will be made to make it up and replay it from the beginning. If that is impossible, the score will stand as it was at the end of the last full inning played.

### **Minimum players & penalties**

1. A full team is composed of 9 players.
2. Eight (8) players are required to start the game. No mandatory out will be recorded for the team with 8 players.
3. If one team has fewer than 8 players when the game is scheduled to start, that team will forfeit, although the teams may play a scrimmage game if they choose.

4. If a team starts with 8 players and drops to 7 players during the game, one automatic out will be recorded each time the end of the lineup is reached.

### **Borrowed players**

1. Borrowed players must be borrowed from the 12U division.
2. Teams may only borrow enough players to reach a roster of 10 players.
3. Borrowed players must bat at the bottom of the order.
4. No official player may sit out more innings than a borrowed player.
5. Borrowed players may play any position (including pitcher).
6. ~~5.~~ Teams *may* call up the same farm team player more than once during both the regular season and playoffs.

### **Injured players**

1. In case of any injury to a defensive player, she may be replaced by a player from the bench.
2. A coach should seek to apply immediate first aid and/or seek emergency medical care as necessary for the injured player. If a parent or guardian is not present, he or she should be notified as soon as possible.
3. If appropriate, a player may return to the game after a rest of at least the remaining half inning in which the injury occurred.
4. In case of any injury to a batter who cannot continue the plate appearance, the at-bat shall be vacated and will not count. No out is recorded. The next batter starts with a new count.

### **Run limits & slaughter rule**

1. Maximum of 5 runs per inning before the last inning; no maximum runs in the last inning (or mutually agreed- upon final inning, should a complete game be impossible).
2. The umpire will declare a “slaughter rule” in effect if one team is ahead by 15 or more runs at the end of a half inning (if the home team is ahead) or after a complete inning (if the visiting team is ahead).

## **BATTING**

### **Batting order/lineup**

1. Continuous batting order—everyone bats.
2. All able and eligible players, including called up players, will constitute the batting order and all players will bat during the entire game in the order established by the lineup. The only exception to this rule exists if a player is temporarily or permanently removed from the game due to injury, illness or disciplinary action, or must leave the game early for personal reasons.
3. Any player arriving after the beginning of the game is added to the end of the batting order.
4. There are no designated hitters in WPPA softball.

### **Strike zone**

1. The strike zone is the space over home plate, between the batter’s forward armpit and the top of the knees when the batter assumes a natural batting stance. Any part of the ball passing through the strike zone in flight shall be considered a strike. The umpire shall determine the batter’s strike zone according to the batter’s usual stance.
2. Any ball that touches or bounces in front of or on home plate shall not be considered a strike by the umpire.

### Hit by pitch

1. If the pitched ball hits the batter or her clothing while she is positioned within the batter's box, the batter is awarded 1<sup>st</sup> base.
2. A player is considered "hit by pitch" even if the ball is on the bounce (i.e., has hit the ground first).
3. No movement to avoid the pitch is required if it is headed toward the batter while she is in the batter's box, although batters are encouraged to do so to avoid injury.
4. If the batter is hit by a strike either by swinging or by moving into the strike zone—as determined only by the umpire—the ball is dead. The pitch is called a strike and the batter remains at bat unless it is strike three and the batter is out.

### Bunting & slapping

1. A batter may bunt or slap the ball. **No slashing (show of bunt and then full swing) is allowed.**
2. Holding the bat in the strike zone is considered a bunt attempt. To take a pitch, the bat must be withdrawn—pulled backward and away from the ball—and the umpire will call the pitch a ball or strike. If the bat is not withdrawn, the pitch will be called a strike regardless of the ball's location in the strike zone (as a shown bunt not withdrawn is considered a swing).
3. Batter is out when a bunt on a third strike is foul.

### Dropped 3<sup>rd</sup> strike

1. The "dropped 3<sup>rd</sup> strike rule" is in effect if:
  - ☐ There are two outs or
  - ☐ There are zero or one outs and 1<sup>st</sup> base is unoccupied.
2. If there are two outs or if no runner occupies first base, the batter is not out unless the third strike is caught by the catcher. If the third strike is dropped, the batter is entitled to try to reach first base before being tagged or thrown out.
3. In this situation, the ball is considered live and all runners may advance at their own risk, including on overthrows to first base. An overthrow into the outfield remains a live ball with no restriction on the runner. Overthrows out of the field of play are subject to the standard overthrow rule and all runners advance one base.

### Thrown bat

1. If a batter throws her bat unintentionally, her team will receive one warning from the umpire, but the play will stand.
2. If the same or any other player from the team **that has been warned** throws a bat during the remainder of the game, the player who has thrown the bat will be called out and the umpire will call a dead ball. There are no more warnings.
3. If a batter throws her bat intentionally, she will be called out immediately and subject to ejection from the game by the umpire.

### **BASE RUNNING RULES:**

#### **Leadoffs**

1. No advance leadoffs. Runners may advance at their own discretion once a ball leaves the pitcher's hand.
2. A runner leaving early will prompt a team warning. The next time any runner from a team that has been warned leaves a base early, she will be called out. If the ball is hit, it will be called a no-pitch. If a strike or a ball is called, the runner will be **called** out and the pitch will count as called.

### Runners advance / “Look-back” rule

1. When a ball is hit, play is live (and runners may advance) until the pitcher has control of the ball with both feet touching or within the pitcher’s circle. (If there is no visible pitcher’s circle drawn, umpires must make sure pitchers are within an 8-ft radius of the pitcher’s plate.)
2. Once the pitcher has control of the ball inside the pitcher’s circle then:
  - Any runner who is already on a base must remain at that base.
  - Any runner in between bases must immediately return to the last base or advance to the next base.
  - Failure to immediately return nonstop to the base or proceed to the next base will result in a runner being called out.
  - Once a runner stops at a base for any reason they will be declared out if they leave that base
  - **Exception:** the runner will not be immediately declared out if a play is made on her or another runner. A lifted arm/fake throw is considered a play.
3. A runner may attempt to continue from first to second on a base on balls at the runner’s own risk. However, the player must not hesitate, stop, or delay their motion from home to second base. This rule does not apply when a batter has been hit by a pitch.
4. ~~3.~~ When all runners have gone back (or forward) and the umpire has declared each runner safe or out, the umpire will call time.

**Note:** There is no requirement for the pitcher to actually look back, despite the name of the rule

### Stealing

1. Stealing is allowed—no limitations.
2. Runners may attempt to advance to the next base when the ball leaves the pitcher’s hand.
3. There is no wall at 3rd. Runners stealing 3rd may advance home at their own risk.
4. Runners may break toward/advance to a base after the catcher throws back to the pitcher or on an overthrow from catcher to pitcher, as a return exchange to the pitcher is a live-ball situation.
5. Runners may advance on wild pitches/passed balls.

### Pickoffs

1. The fielding team may attempt to pick a runner off at any base at any time.
2. A pickoff attempt puts the ball in play and the ball is live.
3. Runners at all bases can advance at their own risk if a pickoff attempt is made.

### Infield fly rule

1. When declared by the umpire, an “infield fly” is a fair fly ball that can be caught by an infielder (this includes the pitcher, catcher or any outfielder positioned in the infield) with ordinary effort when
  - Runners are on first and second or
  - When all three bases are occupied and before there are two outs in the inning.
2. The batter is automatically called out (whether the ball is caught or not), which removes force plays at all other bases. The ball is considered live, so runners may properly advance at their own risk.
3. The infield fly call/signal must be made by the umpire while the ball is in the air. It cannot be retroactively applied if not called before the ball is touched by a fielder or drops to the ground.

4. If a declared infield fly becomes foul, it is treated as a foul ball.

### Overthrows

1. Out-of-play boundaries must be clearly identified and agreed upon prior to the game by coaches and umpire(s).
2. In the case of an overthrow to 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> in which the ball goes out of play, the umpire will award one extra base—one base beyond the base to which the runner(s) were headed at the time the ball ~~went out of play—to~~ was released by the defensive player who threw the ball—to the runner(s).

### Helmets

1. Helmets must be worn by batters, on-deck hitters and base runners.
2. Base runners must keep helmets on until they leave the field and return to the bench or dugout. If a base runner's helmet is deliberately removed before time has been called by the umpire, the runner will be called out.

### Sliding

1. No head-first slides while advancing to the next base are allowed. The runner will be called out if she does it.
2. A player may, however, slide head first when returning to a base previously occupied.
3. If the ball and the runner are approaching the base at the same time, the runner must avoid contact with the fielder (sliding is recommended not required). If the fielder is in a legal position (meaning, appropriately allowing the runner the right of way to the base), and the runner makes contact with that fielder, the runner can be called out.

### Courtesy runner

1. When there are two outs and the catcher is on base, a courtesy runner must be used for the catcher so that she may put on her equipment. (Courtesy runner must be the player who made the last out.)
2. Coaches are encouraged to bring in a courtesy runner when a batter has been hit or otherwise injured during her at-bat.

## DEFENSIVE RULES

### Player maximums & field positions

1. Nine (9) players are allowed on the field.
2. Outfielders must start the play on the grass and may not enter the dirt until the pitcher releases the ball.
3. If the game is being played on a baseball field (e.g., senior diamond at Welles) and the infield is significantly larger than on a traditional softball field, coaches and umpires should pace it out (infield arc radius for NFHS fields is 60' from the center of the pitcher's plate), and agree to an approximation of where the "grass" line should be.
- ~~4. Until the open inning, infielders may not play more than two steps in front of the base path unless a batter shows bunt, at which point fielders may charge the plate. In the open inning (the last inning of the game), coaches may position players where they want, keeping their safety a top priority.~~
4. Unless a fielder has possession of a ball and is in the process of making a play, a fielder may not block the base paths—runners have the right of way to the plate/base.
5. If a play is being made on the runner involved in obstruction, and in the umpire's judgment that runner would have reached the base had the obstruction not occurred, a dead ball is called, the runner is allowed to advance and is also awarded the next base. No penalty awarded if no play is being made on that runner.

## Sitting out

1. Based on a 6-inning game, no player should sit out more than 2 times before all other players have sat at least 2 innings

## Pitcher putouts

1. No restrictions.
2. Pitchers may run to bases to make force outs.

## Catcher

1. Catcher will assume position behind the plate for all pitches.
2. Coaches, opposing coaches, umpires, and other players have the right to suggest to the umpire that s/he move the catcher back to ensure her safety.

## PITCHING RULES

### Pitching

1. There are no modifications for pitching at the 14U level. This means: No limits on walks and no coach pitching.

### Pitcher position & motion ~~(player pitchers)~~

1. For a pitch to be considered legal without penalty:

Pitchers must begin with their pivot foot on-in contact with the pitcher's plate and ~~that the~~ non-pivot foot in contact with or behind the pitcher's plate. A pitcher's pivot foot must remain in contact with the ground throughout the delivery until the ball is released. A pitcher may take one step back with her non-pivot foot.

- ⊖ Pitchers may not step forward with their pivot foot or push off from a point in front of the pitcher's plate—no leaping/crow hopping is allowed.
  - ⊖ Once the ball is released, there is no restriction on the pitcher's motion or pivot foot.
  - ⊖ Pitchers may not throw lob pitches. Pitches must be thrown with no discernible arc.
  - ⊖ A pitcher's windup must be a continuous motion without interruption, stop or reversal of the forward motion.
  - ⊖ The ball must be delivered underhand, released below the hip. No side-arm pitches.
2. If the umpire deems a pitch illegal, the pitcher will receive a warning, and the pitch will be called a ball, whether the batter swings at the ball or not. On the second offense, the umpire will award a ball to the batter and all runners on base will advance one base without penalty. If the illegal pitch is hit and all runners reach their base safely, no penalty is declared.
  3. A slingshot/non-windmill pitching motion is legal. However, coaches are reminded that this is a developmental/ instructional league. Windmill pitching is expected at the advanced levels and allowing/encouraging a slingshot in 14U will not prepare your players for competitive softball.

### Intentional Walks

There will be no intentional walks, neither automatic nor with the delivery of four intentionally wide (or rolled, etc.) pitches. The pitcher must attempt to pitch to all batters. If the umpire feels this rule is being violated, he/she will warn the head coach of the defensive team—any further violation can result in the head coach being ejected.



## **Pitch & inning limits**

1. A player may only pitch 4 innings max per game during regular season and playoffs. There is no weekly inning limit nor “rolling” week during playoffs. Number of pitches are not tracked in WPPA softball.
2. A pitcher may be withdrawn from the game and re-entered once.
3. If a pitcher throws one pitch it is deemed an “inning.”
4. A pitcher who hits 3 batters in a game must be removed and is not permitted to pitch for the remainder of the game.

## **UMPIRING**

1. Umpires are selected, trained, scheduled and compensated by the WPPA. Eligibility is determined by the WPPA Board of Directors and managed by the Umpire Coordinator, who is a duly elected officer of the board. No umpire outside of the WPPA organization is authorized to participate in the program unless authorized by the board.
2. Umpires need only communicate with the head coach. Assistant and helping coaches should direct all questions through the head coach.
3. Umpires needing to clarify rules should speak with both head coaches only.
4. Umpires will be provided for the games whenever possible. In the event an umpire is not provided or doesn't show up, each team will provide a coach volunteer to umpire. They may umpire in tandem throughout the game (plate/field) or umpire alone for half the game each.

## **COACH/HELPING COACHES/PLAYER POSITIONING & CONDUCT**

### **Coach positioning**

1. Offensive coaches may position one coach (or parent volunteer if necessary) at first base and one at third to assist runners. Coaches are responsible for communicating those guidelines to helping coaches and enforcing them as well.
2. No coaches may coach from the outfield or infield.
3. Defensive coaches must remain on, near or behind their players' bench and may not interfere with offensive coaches who are coaching base runners.
4. Coaches not coaching a base, supervising a warming-up batter or pitcher must remain in the dugout/bench area while the game is being played.

### **Bench rules**

1. Only team members and their respective identified coaches are allowed on the team bench or in the team's dugout area while a game is being conducted.
2. All players are to remain on the bench except for the player at bat, the “on deck” player, the “player in the hole” and a pitcher and/or catcher warming up.

### **Coach conduct**

1. A coach or player ejected for any reason will sit out the next game. If the same coach or player is ejected from a second game, in the same or any other WPPA league, within the same season, he or she will be suspended indefinitely and will be required to appear before a disciplinary committee made up of board members before reinstatement.
2. A coach shall not use, or be under the influence of drugs or alcohol at any game or practice. Violation will mean immediate and permanent dismissal from coaching in WPPA.
3. Only head coaches may talk to the umpires.
4. Any head coach who has a complaint about how an umpire conducts him or herself in games is to submit that complaint to the board in writing. No one should address the umpire

directly with complaints.

### **PARENT/SPECTATOR CONDUCT**

1. Coaches for both teams are responsible for ensuring that parents and spectators follow these guidelines:
  - Parents/spectators may not stay on or behind the player bench unless they are actively volunteering as head/assistant coach, base coach or scorekeeper. Spectators are not allowed on a team bench for any reason.
  - Parents/spectators may not intentionally stand behind the backstop (at home plate) to coach their player or make comments for or against either team or to the umpire. (Taking photos or videos is an exception to this.)
  - Parents/spectators may not cheer *inappropriately* for or against either team to the point of antagonizing or distracting pitchers, batters or other players. Parents/fans who violate this rule will be asked by the coach to remove themselves from the earshot of both teams.
  - For the safety of players, non-players, parents, et al, non-players may not warm up or otherwise be in fair territory (including the outfield), even if believed to be far enough away from the field as to not interfere. Parents and coaches should make sure siblings of players and other non-players remain safely in foul territory throughout the course of the game.
  - At the end of a game, coaches and parents/spectators must quickly clean up and empty out each dugout area before the next team enters the dugout area. They are also responsible for cleaning up any litter left in the viewing stand area from the spectators watching the game.
  - Parents who don't comply with this conduct may result in future ban from attending Welles Park games.
  - Any parent/spectator who has a complaint about how an umpire conducts him or herself in games is to submit that complaint to the board in writing. No one should address the umpire directly.

### **GENERAL WPPA GUIDELINES**

1. All previous unwritten rules, "gentlemen's agreements", or understandings as practiced by veteran coaches and players are hereby null and void unless endorsed by their written inclusion in these "2019 WPPA 14U Division Softball Rules." These rules are intended to achieve the goals stipulated herein and are reviewed and modified on an annual basis to make the games in each league consistent with these goals and to provide a more meaningful experience for all participants.
2. The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Softball Rules Book shall act as the basis of the WPPA Youth Softball program except for any revisions and additions as stated herein. Rules that are specific to Slow Pitch (S.P.) do not apply to this league unless otherwise stated and shall automatically be omitted without notation. To the extent any conflicts exist between the NFHS rules and these WPPA rules, the WPPA rules shall prevail. Head coaches are responsible for knowing NFHS and WPPA rules and for having a copy of each rule book in his or her possession during every game.
3. The WPPA Youth Softball Program emphasizes the highest standards of ethics and sportsmanship and expects that all players, parents, coaches, umpires and spectators will maintain and endorse these high standards. The ethics and sportsmanship of the players, coaches, officials, spectators and others associated with the game must be exemplary and beyond reproach. Everyone participating must conduct himself or herself in a way that is a

credit to the league and community.

4. All coaches, parents, and spectators are reminded that alcohol is not permitted on Park District property. This rule is enforced by Chicago Ordinance and subject to the City's enforcement policy.

**Objectives of the WPPA**

1. To provide a meaningful athletic experience for children while providing them the opportunity to have a good time.
2. To teach teamwork and respect for teammates, opponents, coaches and umpires, and to emphasize good sportsmanship.
3. To teach the fundamentals and rules of softball and sharpen existing softball skills.
4. To teach the players to strive hard to win—fairly!