

The Official Rulebook of Big League Softball

1. Foreword

- 1.1 This code of rules governs the playing of Softball games in Big League Sports divisions.
- 1.2 Any rule or situation not expressly defined here will default to ASA Softball Rules.
- 1.3 All calls will ultimately be made by the Game Head Referee. Their call is final.
- 1.4 BLS follows the ASA softball rules, with the exception of these specific league rules. Only captains can discuss a rule with the umpire and no judgment calls will be discussed. Players will be ejected for unsportsmanlike conduct towards an umpire.

2. Golden Rules

- 2.1. NO WHINING! – The first and foremost rule of the game is to have fun. If you are hoping to recapture your athletic glories from the past, this is not the league for you. Absolutely no whining will be tolerated during the course of a game.
- 2.2. NO ALCOHOL AT THE FIELDS! – The consumption of alcohol is PROHIBITED BY STATE LAW at all Big League Sports playing fields. Anyone seen violating field policies will be immediately asked to leave the grounds. Continued violations by individuals or groups will result in permanent removal of the players from the league and/or team forfeits.

3. The Season

3.1. Season Length

- 3.1.1. Big League Sports seasons are 8 weeks in length, weather permitting, including 1 or 2 weeks of playoffs.
- 3.1.2. In the event of multiple weather-related cancellations, the season may be condensed.

3.2. Game Length

- 3.2.1 A regular season game lasts 7 innings or 50 minutes, whichever comes first.
- 3.2.2. No new inning after the fourth inning can be started after 50 minutes past a game's scheduled start time.
- 3.2.3. If the score is tied at the end of 7 innings or after any inning completed after 50 minutes from the scheduled start of the game, the game is a tie.
- 3.2.4. A postseason game will continue until there is a winner, ultimately being decided by a Last Tiebreaker if necessary. [For more postseason rules, see Section 8]

3.3. Game Start Time

- 3.3.1. Games must start at the scheduled start time. No extra time will be given for games that do not start on time.
- 3.3.2. If a team does not have the minimum required players at game time, that team forfeits the game.

3.4. Game Cancellations

- 3.4.1. Games may be cancelled before or during scheduled games due to inclement weather if the fields are unplayable or closed. The rules for game cancellation are defined by the parks in which we play.
- 3.4.2. All games in progress called off for any reason with less than 25 minutes from the scheduled starting time, will be rescheduled and replayed starting at 0-0, top of the 1st.
- 3.4.3. All games in progress called off for any reason with 25 or more minutes from the starting time, will be considered final as of the end of the last complete full inning.

3.5. Determining Home/Away Teams

- 3.5.1. In the regular season, the Game Head Referee will determine Home/Away team with the Team Captains using Rock-Paper-Scissors (RPS).

3.6. Mercy Rule

- 3.6.1. If there is a 12-run difference at the end of the fourth inning or at the end of any full inning thereafter, the trailing team may choose to end the game.

4. Field and Equipment

4.1. Field

- 4.1.1. All Field setups will be made, reviewed and approved by the Field Manager prior to the start of play.
- 4.1.2. The field of play is equal to the dimensions of a standard softball field
- 4.1.3. The far edges of bases are 60' apart.
- 4.1.4. The far corners of diagonally opposite bases (1st & 3rd, 2nd & Home) are 84'10" apart.
- 4.1.5. The pitcher's plate is 42'5" from the back corner of home plate and equidistant from 1st and 3rd bases.
- 4.1.6. A safety base is placed one base-length outside first 1st base.
- 4.1.7. Tall cones are placed behind the outside edges of 1st and 3rd base, and behind the back corner of 2nd base. Tall cones are also places approximately 30' behind 1st and 3rd bases in alignment with 1st and 3rd base cones.
- 4.1.8. Lines may be highlighted with spray paint or chalk.

4.2. Provided Equipment

- 4.2.1. Big League Sports will provide an official softball, bases, and cones
- 4.2.2. Field measurement aids, a first aid kit, umpire clickers, BLS score sheets and pens will be provided to the Field Manager

4.2.3. BLS will provide team t-shirts to all players who signed up by the season's registration deadline.

4.3. Player Equipment

4.3.1. Any equipment on the player (jersey, clothing, footwear, braces, costumes, etc) is an extension of the player.

4.3.2. Players should wear their official t-shirt during all games, but teams are encouraged to be creative with names and t-shirts. Shirts should arrive on week 2 of each season unless there is an unforeseen problem. Shirt sizes and ink colors are not guaranteed based on availability.

4.3.3. Athletic shoes are required.

4.3.4. Metal cleats are not allowed.

4.3.5. Baseball/Softball gloves are required on defense.

4.3.6. Should a player be found in violation of the Player Equipment rules, that player will be warned by the Game Head Referee to remove the disallowed equipment. Failure to comply will subject the player to ejection from the game, and possible suspension or expulsion from league as determined by League Officials.

5. Teams and Players

5.1. Eligibility

5.1.1. Players, Rosters, Lineups, and Teams must meet Eligibility Requirements at all times.

5.1.2. All players must be 18 years of age or older.

5.1.3. All players must be registered.

5.1.4. Any team using a player who is not registered will automatically forfeit that game, and that team may lose the right to play in a postseason games. Please do not put BLS in a compromising position where a game has to be forfeited due to an illegal player.

5.1.5. Players may only play on a team on which they are registered.

5.1.6. If any Eligibility infraction is claimed during the game, the team accused of the infraction bears the burden of proof and must provide a photo ID to the field manager. If any Eligibility infraction is claimed after a game, the infraction must be reported to the Field Manager before the end of the next scheduled game or 1 week after the game, whichever comes first. The burden of proof rests with the team claiming the infraction.

5.2. Rosters

5.2.1. Each team roster must have a minimum of 15 players. There is no maximum number of players.

5.2.2. Teams with fewer than 15 players (including at least 4 of each gender) will be given Free Agents to complete their roster. BLS reserves the right to add players to teams to make sure that all teams have a balance in numbers.

5.2.3. If a team cannot field at least 8 players, the game is forfeited unless captains agree to play.

5.2.4. Players may not be added to a team roster after week 4 of a season unless authorized by the League President, Maurice Reep.

5.2.5. If a team has less than the minimum required number of players, they can pick up other BLS players to reach the minimum requirement during the regular season. Teams must have at least 5 players from their team to be allowed.

5.2.6. If this is not possible, the game will be ruled a forfeit. Both the umpire and opposing team captain must be made aware of any picked-up players.

5.2.7. The team receiving the forfeit will receive a -1 point in the Standings the game will be scored 0-7.

5.2.8. Free Agent Social Teams captained or created by BLS staff will not be penalized for not meeting roster number or female requirements. They are also allowed to borrow BLS players from the same league (as long as opposing captains approve) without penalties.

5.3. Offense

5.3.1. Team Captains must exchange lineups with each other and the Game Head Referee before the start of the game.

5.3.2. Every player present who is prepared to play is required to be in the batting line up.

5.3.3. The batting lineup may contain more than the 10 fielders.

5.3.4. You must never bat more than 3 men in a row (this includes the end of the lineup/ beginning lineup wrap around). In situations where a team has more men than women present, some women may need to bat twice in the rotation. This includes teams taking an out at the bottom of their batting order.

5.3.5. Men may never bat twice in the rotation.

5.3.6. If a team is only playing with 1 woman and she is on base when due up again:

- It is an automatic out
- The last male to make an out replaces her on base and she is at bat

5.3.7. A player may be in the batting order and not play in the field (designated hitter). While in the batting order, a player may enter, leave, or re-enter the fielding team (free substitution).

5.3.8. No player may be dropped from the batting order, absent extenuating circumstances such as serious injury. Gaining a tactical advantage is not an exigent circumstance. If an injury occurs and/or a player leaves the field location the next batter "moves up" to bat with no penalty.

5.3.9. If a female is injured, the batting order may be adjusted to accommodate for too many males hitting in a row. Any player who is not available to bat when due up receives an automatic out.

5.3.10. If the error is discovered while the incorrect batter is hitting, then the correct batter will assume the ball/strike count of the incorrect batter. If the incorrect batter reaches base safely and the error is discovered, the correct batter will be called out. All runners will return to their original base and the incorrect batter will return to the bench. The opposing team must make the umpire aware of "batting out of order" before a pitch is thrown to the next batter. If not, then the incorrect batter will stay on base.

5.3.11. There is no limit on the number of foul balls a batter may hit. A foul ball will count as strike 1 and/or 2, but not strike 3 unless caught by the catcher. A batter may hit 1 additional foul ball after having 2 strikes in their count. A second foul ball after 2 strikes will count as an out. A foul ball above the batter's head may be caught for an out.

5.3.12. All batters will begin the at bat (AB) with one (1) ball and one (1) strike.

5.4. Defense

5.4.1. A team may not play more than 10 players or more than 7 male players at a time in the field.

5.4.2. Each team is required to have at least 3 female players in the field in each inning. If a team doesn't have 3 female players, the opposing captain has the option to allow the team to play with an out at the end of the lineup for each female they are missing, or play as is, or take a forfeit.

5.4.3. Maximum number of players in the field is 10, with no more than 7 males. There are no position requirements of any players.

5.4.4. Teams can't have more than 6 players in the infield, including the pitcher and catcher. Minimum number of players in the field/your starting line-up is 8 (at least 1 woman). There is no maximum number of women allowed on the field/in your line-up. A player arriving late may be inserted at the bottom of the order even if you have batted around one or more times.

5.5. Substitutions

5.5.1. Pinch runners are only allowed in cases of injury or illness to a baserunner.

5.5.2. The pinch runner must be the player of the same gender who most recently made an out.

5.5.3. An injured or ill player who is removed for a pinch runner may not return to the game.

5.6. Ejection

5.6.1. Any player who is ejected from the game will become an automatic out in the lineup.

5.6.2. Ejected players may not return to the game, and may be asked to leave the premises. Noncompliance may result in a team forfeit/suspension.

5.7. Sportsmanship

5.7.1. BLS prides itself in promoting a league based on sportsmanship and integrity. If teams cannot abide by the rules set forth by BLS, those teams should not participate in our league.

5.7.2. Players should have no intentional or unwelcome physical contact with opposing players. Doing so will be considered unsportsmanlike conduct and it will be at the discretion of the referee to issue warnings or eject offending players. A player must make the referee aware if he or she feels any contact was unwarranted.

5.7.3. Trash talking is permitted as long as it is not abusive, cruel, racially motivated, hateful, or a personal attack on another player. Any trash talking must be good natured and is not allowed to get out of hand.

5.7.4. Threats of physical violence are in no way allowed, and will result in disciplinary measures as determined by League Officials.

5.8. Further Disciplinary Measures

5.8.1. BLS reserves the right to suspend any player at any time for any length of time for any unsportsmanlike conduct, violation of any rules, failure to pay appropriate dues, or for being a general pain in the ass, without any refund whatsoever.

5.8.2. Any team wishing to suspend a team member for just reasons may do so, but must provide BLS a written reason as to why. No refunds.

5.8.3. At the discretion of Big League Sports, any suspended player may not be allowed to participate in any further Big League Sports events.

5.9. Captains

5.9.1. Each team should have one Captain and one Co-captain.

5.9.2. Captains must ensure that everyone on his or her team is eligible to play.

5.9.3. Captains must exchange lineups with opposing Captains and Game Head Referee before the game. Captains and Co-captains must be named on the lineups.

5.9.4. Only Captains and Co-captains may discuss a call with a referee, and must always remain cool, calm and collected in doing so. All Captains and Co-captains are expected to read and understand the BLS rules, and must ensure all their players understand the rules as well.

5.9.4. Captains must be aware of all field policies, and make sure that these policies are being enforced. Failure of players to abide by this rule could result in loss of the field for the division.

5.9.5. Captains are ultimately responsible for making sure their team provides referees. Failure to provide referees will result in severe penalties for your team, including forfeits in the standings. Please provide players that are knowledgeable with BLS rules.

5.9.6. Captains are responsible for the conduct of their players and team as a whole at all times while on the grounds. Any harassment of other players, BLS representatives, or referees must be dealt with immediately.

- 5.9.7. Captains must stay in contact with their BLS Field Manager and must communicate any scheduling changes to their team.
- 5.9.8. Captains should notify the league of a forfeit if it is known in advance.
- 5.9.9. Failure to comply with these rules may result in any of the following actions at the discretion of BLS: removal from the captain's position, forfeits in the standings or automatic game forfeits, game suspensions.
- 5.9.10. Any team that forfeits three or more games may be removed from the remaining schedule and may not be allowed to participate in any postseason games. No refunds will be given and a team dropped by the league may, at BLS's discretion, not be allowed to rejoin the next season.

5.10. Team Names

- 5.10.1. Teams in the same division are not allowed to have the same name
- 5.10.2. Team names may not be sexually explicit, and may not contain references to political agendas, issues, candidates, elected officials, religions, or drugs.
- 5.10.3. Big League Sports may decide against team names for any reason, and retains the ultimate right to reject or accept any and all team names.
- 5.10.4. Changes to team names can only be made prior to the season start unless there is a very unusual circumstance requiring a change afterwards.

6. Officials

6.1. Assigned Referees

- 6.1.1. Teams will be assigned games to provide 1 or 2 players to officiate a game immediately before or after their own game.
- 6.1.2. The Game Head Referee (home plate referee) issues all final rulings. The referee has jurisdiction over the play and may penalize any player, up to and including game ejection, for unsportsmanlike conduct.
- 6.1.3. Only a team Captain or Co-captain may dispute a call with the referee.
- 6.1.4. Any team failing to provide a schedule referee will be penalized five (5) runs.

6.2. Referee positioning

- 6.2.1. Game Head Referees should referee home plate.
- 6.2.2. Other referees should referee first base.
- 6.2.3. Additional referees will be placed by the Field Manager.

6.3. Warnings and Ejections

- 6.3.1. A player may receive a warning for committing any of the following towards another player, referee, or person in attendance: taunting; physical/verbal abuse; excessively delaying, play; entering the field of play without the Game Head Referee's permission; deliberately leaving the field to delay the Game; stalling; colluding; inappropriately discussing of calls with the referees; repeatedly failing to comply with instructions of referees or league officials concerning Rules and Game Play; engaging in any activity otherwise prohibited by the facility rules, or local/state/federal law; and/or engaging in other unsportsmanlike behavior, as determined by the Game Head Referee.
- 6.3.2. A player in repeated violation after a warning is subject to ejection, though no warning is required.

7. Game Play

7.1. PITCH ARC

- 7.1.1. The arc on pitches must be between six feet and twelve feet above the ground. The umpire will call a ball not within the prescribed limits an "illegal pitch" as soon as possible. If the batter swings, the pitch shall be treated as though it were thrown within the legal limits. The umpire's call on a pitch is absolutely final!
- 7.1.2. Strike Zone – The strike zone is home plate and the home plate mat.

7.2. INTENTIONAL WALK

- 7.2.1. Any intentional walk will result in an automatic home run.
- 7.2.2. The home plate umpire has discretion of what constitutes an intentional walk

7.3. OUTFIELD LINE

- 7.3.1. An imaginary outfield line exists approximately 10 yards into the outfield. No outfielder may step in front of this line until after the ball is hit.
- 7.3.2. First violation is a warning and choice for the offense to replay the at-bat.
- 7.3.3. Following violations of this rule will result in a single being awarded to the batter, and ALL runners advancing one base, regardless if the awarded single caused a forced advance or not.

7.4. NO LEADING/ NO STEALING

7.5. NO BUNTING

- 7.5.1. Bunting, defined as a batter gently tapping a pitched ball in an attempt to make it more difficult to field, is not allowed.
- 7.5.2. It is up to the umpire's discretion to determine if a full swing was attempted. A warning will be issued to the offending team and a strike will be charged. On the second offense, the batter will be called out.

7.6. OUT OF PLAY / DEAD BALL

- 7.6.1. Runners are awarded two bases on a throw that goes out of play. The two bases are awarded from the base the player had obtained when the ball was thrown. An obtained base means the runner is currently standing on or passed that base.

- 7.6.2. All thrown balls are deemed out of play when the ball is thrown over/beyond the fence or beyond the imaginary line extending from the end of the backstop (if there is no fence). This imaginary line applies to overthrows and caught fly foul balls. Ground rules will be addressed before the game to determine dead ball areas.
- 7.6.3. If the ball is overthrown and hits the fence behind the 1st or 3rd base lines, this is NOT considered out of play and the runner may advance, BUT at his/her own risk.
- 7.7. INFIELD FLY RULE**
- 7.7.1. An infield fly can only occur with less than 2 outs and runners on 1st and 2nd or 1st, 2nd and 3rd. If a high fly ball is hit in the infield that can easily lead to a double play, an infield fly will be called. The batter is automatically out.
- 7.7.2. Tagging up still applies if the ball is caught. An infield fly only applies to balls that would land in fair territory.
- 7.8. GROUND RULE DOUBLES/HOME RUNS**
- 7.8.1. Several BLS fields have a fence or a wall. Balls hit over the fence/wall are considered a ground rule double or home runs depending on the field and the ground rules established by the umpire at the game.
- 7.8.2. The team hitting the ball over the fence/wall is responsible for retrieving the ball immediately and getting it back into play. The same applies for foul balls.
- 7.8.3. A ground rule double is a two base award for the batter and any runners currently on base.
- 7.8.4. For fields with fences teams will each be allowed 3 home runs over the fence. After that a home run will be an out.
- 7.9. FIRST BASE / SAFETY BASE**
- 7.9.1. Two bases will be placed at first base to avoid collisions. The hitter/runner must tag the outside base only when running to first and the 1st baseman must tag the inside base only to avoid collisions.
- 7.9.2. If the defensive player tags the outside base, the runner can be awarded first base.
- 7.9.3. If the runner tags the inside base, he/she can be called out. Once the runner has reached first base and attempts to go beyond first base, the inside base is the only playable portion of the base.
- 7.9.4. A batted ball hitting the inside base is declared fair, and a batted ball hitting the outside base is declared foul.
- 7.10. INTERFERENCE / BASE RUNNING**
- 7.10.1. When a runner interferes with a fielder attempting to field a batted ball or interferes with a throw, the runner is out.
- 7.10.2. If the runner interferes with a fielder during a possible double play and the runner did not slide, get out of the way, or slid with excessive contact to disrupt throw, the immediate succeeding runner will also be called out.
- 7.10.3. Interference can be physical contact, verbal distraction, or any other type of distraction that would hinder the fielder in the execution of a play.
- 7.11. HOME PLATE RULE**
- 7.11.1. If there is a play at the plate, it is the runner's responsibility to avoid contact. The umpire has discretion to decide whether the runner initiated contact and should be called out.
- 7.11.2. Any excessive contact or collision will result in an out and/or ejection. This includes contact with the catcher. **Sliding is allowed but not required.**
- 7.11.3. It is also the catcher's responsibility to give the runner a clear path to home plate.

8. Postseason Play

8.1. Determining Postseason Brackets and Seeding

- 8.1.1. Postseason seeding will be determined by a team's rank in the League Standings.
- 8.1.2. The tiebreakers in the League Standings are, in order: Points ((2*Wins) + Ties - Forfeits), Head to Head performance among all tied teams, Runs Against, Runs Scored, Coin Flip)
- 8.1.3. Postseason brackets may be divided into different levels of competition.

8.2. Postseason Extra Innings

- 8.2.1. Postseason games tied after 7 innings may play as many innings as possible within 50 minutes. No inning may start after 50 minutes from the scheduled start time. If a team is leading after the end of any extra inning, the game is over.

8.3. Last Tiebreaker - TBD

8.4. Postseason Mercy Rule

- 8.4.1. If there is a 12-run difference at the end of the fourth inning or at the end of any full inning thereafter, the leading team may choose to end the game.

8.5. Postseason Home/Away

- 8.5.1. In the postseason, the team with the better starting seed may choose Home/Away

8.6. Postseason referees

- 8.6.1. Additional referees may be assigned in the postseason.