

WMLL Fall Ball Local Policies & Rules – Minor League Baseball (August 2011)

All national “minor” division Little League rules in current season rule book apply to the WMLL Minor Fall League, unless specifically changed in these local rules, or by past practice. The WMLL Safety Plan contains further regulations which will be enforced as local rules.

Fall Ball is part of Little League’s Training and Development Program. It is intended to provide additional opportunity for all players to hone skills and try new positions. Game scores are the least important part of Fall Ball. Coaches are encouraged to “ratchet it down a notch” to adhere to the purpose of Fall Ball. Coaches not adhering to this philosophy will not be asked back in the future.

Home Team. The home team occupies the first base dugout. The home team will provide two new regulation baseballs, a concession stand volunteer worker, a volunteer base umpire, and a post game field crew member to replace the tarps.

Visiting Team. The visiting team occupies the third base dugout and is responsible for operating the scoreboard. The visiting team is also responsible for providing a volunteer base umpire, and a post game field crew member to replace the tarps.

(Note: Volunteer umpires should work at 1st and 3rd. They should change positions every one to two innings.)

Time Limit & Curfew. The time limit is 1 hr., 20 mins. and games can end in a tie (see “Game Time Limits” below for further details. **Please note the "Hard Time Limit" rule**). **Curfew is 9:00 PM Sunday through Thursday and supersedes both time limits, if applicable.**

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Base Coaches. Adults may be base coaches when their team is at bat. All coaches, if not coaching a base, must stay within three feet of the dugout entrance.

Base on Balls -- Intentional. There will be no intentional walks allowed in this league.

Bat Throwing. A player will receive one warning each game for inappropriately throwing the bat. For any subsequent instance of throwing the bat in that same game the player will be called out. The warning and out can be on the same at bat. If a hitter is called out for throwing the bat, the ball will be dead and any runners must return to the base which he/she occupied prior to the pitch. Note: this rule applies to accidental bat throwing while or after swinging at a pitch, not to bat throwing in anger or protest.

Batting Cages and Surrounding Spaces. Batting cages are for pregame practice for Major, Junior and Senior league teams. Minor league teams can use the batting cages but must vacate them if asked to do so by an older age team, which will be playing a game from the Major, Junior or Senior leagues. Soft toss and other pre-game batting practice can take place only in a batting cage or soft-toss station.

Batting Order. All players present must be in the batting order. If a player is unable to continue play there will be no penalty to the offensive team when that individual is scheduled to bat. If able, the player can reenter the batting order without penalty.

Courtesy Runner. A courtesy runner may be used for the catcher at any time, but is mandatory when there are two outs. This runner will be the individual who made the last out.

Defensive Positions. Each Minor League team shall field ten players when on defense. Four of those players must be outfielders and take positions on the outfield grass.

Dugouts. Only uniformed players, the manager, one coach and one scorekeeper are permitted on the bench. The manager should require all others to leave the dugout. Players must stay in the playing area or on the bench during the game unless the manager permits them to leave. During a game, the only individuals allowed outside of the dugout are the defense team, the batter, base runners, manager and base coaches. Each team must clean up their respective dugout and area after a game or practice.

Forfeits for Lack of Players. If a team does not have seven players to participate in a game, that team will forfeit the game. A team has fifteen minutes from the scheduled starting time to obtain seven players before a forfeit is declared (see Replacement Player section below). When both teams have less than seven players, a double forfeit occurs. If a team expects to be short of players, the team manager should obtain replacement players from the Rookie Lg (9 year olds only). If a team forfeits a game, the game will not be replayed.

Game Time Limits. All games shall have a length and time limit of 6 innings or 1 hour and 20 minutes (known as the "No New Inning" time limit). An inning starts when the last out of the prior inning is made. If an inning starts prior to the "no new inning" time limit expiring, that inning may be completed, subject to the "Hard Time Limit" rule below. If game is tied at the end of an inning and the "no new inning" time limit has expired, the game is over and a tie is recorded. A game which ends due to the time limit will be considered a complete game regardless of the number of innings played.

****** When the "Hard Time Limit" is reached (10 minutes after the "No New Inning" Time Limit), the game ends immediately (current batter may finish at bat). If the home team is at bat and the game is still tied, the game ends in a tie. If the home team is at bat and takes the lead, the game ends immediately. In all other instances, the outcome is determined by the score at the end of the last complete inning (which may also be a tie)***

Please begin the initial game of the day on time unless the field is not playable or the umpires are not present. The umpires will enforce the scheduled starting time and the time limits for each league. Insist that your players hustle on and off the field between offense and defense so that the game proceeds quickly. The official game starting time and ending time, when the last out in the last inning is made, should be recorded on the scorecard. The first pitch of a half inning must be delivered not longer than 90 seconds after the third out of the previous half inning. Penalty: the umpire may call a strike on the batter if the violation is by the offensive team, or a ball on the batter if the violation is by the defensive team. The umpire may continue to call strikes or balls each 20 seconds until the first pitch is delivered .

Harassment of and Disputes with Umpires.

1. The league will not tolerate ANY harassment of the umpires by managers, coaches, players or fans or any harassment / organized cheering against any opposing player or team.
2. The umpires will not tolerate any abusive language, equipment throwing or other violent behavior by managers, coaches, players or fans.
3. Any person guilty of participating in these actions will be warned once by the umpires. Second violation will result in ejection from the game and removal from the WMLL field areas. In severe instances the offending party will be immediately ejected. The umpire will report such ejections to the umpire coordinator who will notify the Baseball Operations Committee Chairperson. Unsportsmanlike behavior which results in a game ejection carries with it another one game suspension. For a second game ejection there will be an automatic three game suspension and for a third game suspension, the individual will receive a season ending suspension.

4. To question an umpire's ruling, only the manager is to represent the team. He/she must call time out and calmly consult with the umpire. A manager must not run out of the dugout or yell objections. The manager should provide the players and fans with an exemplary model of sportsmanship.
5. During all consultations with umpires about their rulings, the manager must remain in foul territory. To check on an injured player's status, the manager/coach may be on the playing field after an umpire requests their assistance.

Helmets. For league games, helmets with face masks will be used by batters, youth base coaches and runners. The home and visiting managers will be responsible for getting a set of six helmets for each game from the coaches mailbox room in the new storage building and returning them after the last game of the day.

Infield Fly. There will be no infield fly rule in this league.

Line up Cards. Line up cards are to be exchanged between the managers at the beginning of the game to indicate the starting players, all eligible substitutes, absent and injured players and players who are being disciplined by not participating.

Maximum Number of Hitters/Runs in Inning. A batting team has a ten run maximum per inning, and there is no maximum to the number of hitters who may bat before the tenth run is scored. Any half inning which does not end by national rule will end as soon as the tenth run is scored.

Pitchers – Breaking Balls for Younger Pitchers. WMLL believes it is potentially harmful for pitchers younger than the Senior League level to throw breaking pitches. Coaches below the Senior League level should not teach or permit pitchers to throw breaking balls. *Note: the above statement represents the philosophy of WMLL; it is not a national or local rule. Umpires will not enforce any sanction for the alleged throwing of breaking balls. Anyone concerned that a team or coach is not adhering to this philosophy should contact the appropriate league coordinator.*

Pitching Rules. A pitcher may pitch no more than two innings in a game. After having been removed as a pitcher, a player may not return to the mound in the same game. Each team is encouraged to use at least two 10 and two 11 year old pitching innings per calendar week, as this is a developmental program.

Note: While we will not officially count pitches and exchange pitch count information with opposing coaches, it is expected that coaches will generally track pitches and follow the philosophy for resting pitchers arms as used during the regular season and described below:

- If a player pitches 61 or more pitches in a day, 3 calendar days.
- If a player pitches 41-60 pitches in a day, 2 calendar days.
- If a player pitches 21-40 pitches in a day, 1 calendar day
- If a player pitches 1-20 pitches in a day, 0 calendar days

Examples:

- W throws 66 pitches on Saturday. The earliest W should pitch again is Wednesday
- X throws 60 pitches on Saturday. The earliest X should pitch again is Tuesday
- Y throws 22 pitches on Saturday. The earliest Y should pitch again is Monday
- Z throws 20 pitches on Saturday. The earliest Z should pitch again is Sunday

Pitching – Time Limit Considerations. Only 4 warm up pitches are allowed between innings to help move the game along. The first pitch of a half inning must be delivered not longer than 90 seconds in baseball after the third out of the previous half inning. Penalty: the umpire may call a strike on the batter if the violation is by the offensive team, or a ball on the batter if the violation is by the defensive team. The umpire may continue to call strikes or balls each 20 seconds until the first pitch is delivered.

Playing Time. Each player shall be in the batting order. Each player shall play at least four innings defensively. Minimum defensive innings in this rule must be full half innings.

Playing Time Rule Exceptions. The only exceptions to the playing time rule will be:

1. If a player misses practices and/or games without a valid reason, the coach may decide to reduce the number of innings played in the field for the next game by a minimum of one inning. Absences due to family vacations should not affect playing time.
2. If a player arrives late for a game, the manager can decide to reduce the number of innings at his/her discretion.
3. If a player is being disciplined, a manager must inform the opposing manager prior to the game or immediately after an incident which requires removal, for the participation rule to be satisfied. The player who is being disciplined should be advised of why he/she is not participating. If the discipline results in the player being “docked” more than one inning below the league minimum, the coach must inform the League Coordinator in writing of the discipline and the cause. This method of disciplining should be used with reasonable discretion.
4. If a game is shortened because of the time limit, inclement weather or run limit, all players will not be required to satisfy the playing rule.
5. If an eligible player does not fulfill the participation rule, that player must be a starter in the team’s next game and play the whole game. Any manager who violates this rule will be subject to dismissal by the league’s Baseball Operation Committee.

Pre-game Practices. The teams may warm up prior to games in appropriately designated areas. Players should be cautioned to be careful when warming up so other individuals are not injured. No infield practice will be allowed on the diamond prior to the game, but practice in the outfield is permitted.

Replacement Players. If a team expects to be short of players, the team manager should obtain replacement players from the Rookie Lg (9 year olds only). The replacement player(s) must be last in the batting order and cannot pitch. If an unanticipated roster player shows up bringing the total of the regular roster players to ten or more, the replacement(s) may still play, but may play defensively only 3 innings, maximum.

Roster Maintenance. Each team must maintain a roster of at least eleven players. If a player roster drops below eleven due to injuries and/or lengthy vacations (more than two weeks), a replacement will be selected from the waiting list (if there is a waiting list) by contacting the league coordinator.

Sliding. On close plays at 2nd base, 3rd base or home plate, the runner is required to slide or to avoid collision with a defensive player who has the ball while located within the batter’s box area or within the vicinity of another base. If a contact is made and the runner did not slide, the umpire shall call the runner out for offensive interference. A defensive player without the ball who impedes a runner, whether intentional or unintentional, or who fakes a tag will be penalized for defensive obstruction. The umpire will award the runner the base or bases they are attempting to reach. When a runner initiates malicious contact with any fielder, with or without the ball, in or out of the baseline, the umpire shall eject the runner for the game. The runner has the primary responsibility to avoid a collision with the defensive player.

Stealing. No base stealing is permitted in the first three weeks of the Fall Ball season. **Effective 9-19-11, stealing will be permitted once a pitched ball has crossed the plate,** except that a base runner may not steal home. If a runner is on 3rd base when the pitcher delivers a pitch, the runner may not score on a wild pitch, a passed ball, or throws by the catcher (immediately after the pitch) to the pitcher, first, second, or third base. In all other situations, the runner may advance as allowed by normal baseball rules.

Strike Zone. The strike zone is larger than the standard – the width of the plate from the middle of the shin to the shoulder. The intent of a larger strike zone is to get hitters to become more aggressive and to speed the game along.

Uniforms. Players must be in full uniform (white pants) to be eligible to play in a game. Umpires will be instructed to strictly enforce this rule. Replacement players may wear their team uniform if no regular team uniforms are available. Managers are responsible for collecting WMLL-provided pants at the end of the season which will be turned into the league coordinator.

Weather.

1. If inclement weather has occurred, the field manager will determine if and when the field is in playable condition. A sign in the parking lot and a message on the answering machine (274-6556) will indicate when games are postponed because of weather. The WMLL website (www.wml.org) will also be updated.
2. If a field is not playable at game time, but might be playable in a short period of time, the game will be delayed no more than fifteen minutes. The conditions will be checked after fifteen minutes and, if the field is still unplayable, the game will be canceled and rescheduled by the coordinator. Do not ask for or expect preferential treatment in the rescheduling of games.
3. If a rain / lightning / lighting failure delay occurs after a game has started the first fifteen minutes of the total delay time does not count as part of the game time limit. When the game has been delayed for thirty minutes or more, the game will be considered either a suspended contest or an officially completed contest depending on the inning and the score.
4. When lightning is visible, the Board of Director(s) / umpires present will suspend the game for fifteen minutes and all coaches, players, spectators and umpires will take immediate shelter in the dugouts, near the concession stand or in private vehicles to insure their safety. After this fifteen minute delay, if lightening continues the board of director(s) / umpires present will call the game.
5. A game called after completion of two innings and before it is an official completed contest will be considered a suspended game. A suspended game shall be resumed at the exact point of suspension. The line ups and batting order of the teams shall be the same as the moment of suspension, subject to the substitution rules. A player who was not at the original game may be used as a substitute when the game is resumed. Prior to leaving the field of play, the coaches will verify the line ups, score and exact point at which play has been stopped i.e. outs, balls and strikes batter, runners score, etc. Any dispute should be referred to the league coordinator and/or Baseball Operations Committee for resolution. The league coordinator shall attempt to reschedule the suspended game at the time when the two teams will be playing each other again. The suspended game will be played prior to the regulation game or another suspended game. All pitching regulations will be determined by the week during which the suspended game is being resumed.
6. These rules will not restrict the Board of Director(s) present at the field from immediately canceling play at WMLL fields in order to insure the appropriate safety of coaches, players, spectators, umpires and concession workers.