



Massachusetts Biotech Softball League Rules & Guidelines

May 2019

Participation

*The Mass Biotech Softball League is a co-ed league with the goal of providing an enjoyable, recreational activity for all participants, regardless of skill level. **The purpose of the Rules and Guidelines is to engender a spirit of friendly competition among the participants which emphasizes the social aspects of the games and minimizes opportunity for friction and confrontation.***

- Teams will be expected to share in all fees for playing fields, cost of softballs and other charges. This amount will be paid in advance and should be sent along with the invoice, individual waiver (which every player must sign), and team roster spreadsheet to the league co-commissioners. Checks are payable to Massachusetts Biotechnology Softball League.
Payments must be received by the due date stated on the invoice. Failure to pay on time may result in exclusion from divisional and state playoff games, and expulsion from the league.
- Captains are responsible for obtaining the field not the coordinators or the league co-commissioners (unless otherwise dictated).

General Conduct Rules

- Fields are expected to be maintained and left in an orderly fashion. All trash and bottles must be removed. Access to fields is difficult and littering can result in "blacklisting" of the league from the field or municipality.
- Drinking at the field is prohibited by the league.
- All participants are expected to demonstrate good sportsmanship and have a good attitude.
- No player in the league may play for more than one team.
- Teams cannot add players for the playoffs. Anyone playing in the playoffs must have played at least 1 regular season game.
- Divisional Coordinators and the League Executive Board have the right to declare a forfeit of any game played with an illegal player.
- **Captains are expected to lead by example regarding good sportsmanship and attitude.**
- Captains should contact each other on the day of the game to introduce themselves and communicate any issues regarding starting time, equipment, numbers of players, etc. Due to the brevity of the season and the scarcity of fields it is very important that games be played as scheduled whenever possible. Games should not be "rained out" unless field or weather conditions make play unsafe at game time. A Recreation Department website or hotline will often post the closure of a field due to inclement weather. In



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such cases, teams must honor the decision of the recreation department. If the field situation and weather allow, postponed games will be rescheduled by the divisional coordinator

- Captains must confer before the start of each game to decide any ground rules for the field (i.e., what is in/out of play, pinch runners, non-collapse rule, etc.) and how base coaches will call the plays. It is **strongly recommended** that the captain's use the Captain's Pre-Game Checklist document (available for download at www.mbssoftball.com) in order to cover all possible rules/scenarios.
- Only team captains can contest calls and only to the opposing captain.
- A team which forfeits two games in a given season is automatically out of the league (unless otherwise dictated).

Rules for Handling Misconduct

- Team captains will try to resolve the issue first.
- If the issue cannot be resolved the protesting team captain will contact the division coordinator who will issue a verbal warning to the offending player and team captain.
- If the division coordinator receives a second complaint against a player, a written warning will be sent to the player and team captain indicating the ramifications of continued misconduct.
- A third complaint received by the coordinator will result in immediate dismissal of the player for the remainder of the season. Other captains in the division will be advised that the offending player is no longer eligible for league play. If the player participates in games after his/her suspension those games will be subject to forfeit.
- In certain situations of serious misconduct the issue will be brought before the Executive Board of the League. The Executive Board may bypass the usual order of handling misconduct and render a decision that can include disciplinary action and immediate dismissal of an individual, individuals, team, or teams from the league. The Executive Board must have the majority of the vote in approving the terms of disciplinary action.

Game Rules

Equipment

- The home team is responsible for providing bases and a new game ball. Balls are supplied at the beginning of the season by the League. Should teams need to purchase additional balls, the **12 inch balls** should be designated as **.52 COR** with a maximum compression of **300 lbs**, and the



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11 inch balls should be designated as **.44 COR** with a maximum compression of **375 lbs.**

- No metal cleats are allowed.
- Only official softball bats may be used. Baseball bats are never permitted. If you are unsure as to the eligibility of a bat, please refer to the list of approved and excluded bats listed by USA Softball at <https://www.teamusa.org/usa-softball/certified-equipment>. Each captain should carry a print-out of this list to each game with their team's bats highlighted. This list includes bat models as well as actual pictures of the bats. Due to safety and potential injury issues Double walled, Triple walled and Composite bats have been banned from the league (even if these bats are listed as approved on the USA Softball bat list). Only USA Softball approved Single walled aluminum bats are allowed. Approved Single walled aluminum bats may have a non-aluminum handle - it is the barrel that must be aluminum. Each team will be required to check on their own bats (Google) and make sure they are USA Softball approved and NOT double walled, triple walled or composite. It may be difficult to determine if a bat is legal for use at the field of play, therefore we expect the cooperation of all league captains.
- If an opposing captain questions whether a bat is approved and a conclusion about whether the bat is legal for use cannot be made at the field, the captains should immediately remove it from the game and write down the name and model of the bat and inquire with your divisional coordinator whether the bat should be allowed in future games; this bat shall NOT be used for any MBSL play until it has been approved.
- If an illegal bat is inadvertently used: for a first offense your divisional coordinator will review the infraction with the captains from both teams & determine the appropriate penalty, up to and including forfeiture of the game. For a second offense, the offending team MUST forfeit and will not be eligible to play in the playoffs. For a third offense, the offending team will no longer be allowed to play in the league. Any bat infraction must be reported to the divisional coordinator for review.
- Umpires will be required to verify that all bats are approved for use at all league playoff games.
- Smaller 11 inch softballs can be used by women hitters. The decision is now left up to the individual per each at bat. The league will provide 4 of the 11 inch game balls to each team.

General Play

- Games are officially scheduled to start at 6:00 p.m. A team has 30 minutes from that time to field a team. After 6:30 p.m. the opposing team may demand a forfeit. All forfeits must be called at the field. Pending unique circumstances (i.e., a player is injured during a game, resulting in a team not having enough players), a forfeit cannot be called after a game has been started.



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- **Note** – Game start times may be adjusted by the division coordinator to accommodate the length of daylight in the early- or late-season.
- Teams will ideally play with 10 fielders on defense (four outfielders, four infielders, pitcher and catcher), however a team may play with 8 fielders (only 3 outfielders, no 2nd baseman) if they do not have enough players. A forfeit can be called if a team does not have 8 players.
- Teams must play at least 2 women in the field in every inning.
 - Note - If a team is unable to play 2 women in the field in any inning then only **nine** defensive players (8 men and 1 woman) may take the field for that inning and the team will have only **2 outs** when they bat in that same inning. If no women can take the field in any inning, the game is a forfeit.
 - If a team has only 2 women, and 1 is injured during the game and is unable to continue playing, then a special set of rules will apply. The team who lost the player must play with 1-fewer fielders for the remainder of the game, and will be assessed an automatic out each time the injured woman is due to bat. *Note: this differs from when a team starts a game with only 1 woman (in that case, the team with only 1 woman must play with 1-fewer fielder for the entire game, and must play with 1 fewer out EVERY inning).* This special set of rules cannot be applied when a woman leaves the game due to a non-injury related reason.
- All playoff games where a team does not have at least 8 players (1 of whom is a woman) should automatically be declared a forfeit. For regular season games - in the event that Team A does not have enough players (women, or total players), the captain(s) of Team B has the option of waiving the forfeiture, and loaning Team A the number of players of their choice.
- Games are slow pitch, swing -'til-you-hit, seven inning games.
- The losing team must have completed five times at bat for a game to be official. If a game must be discontinued due to inclement weather or darkness before this point, the game is void and must be replayed in its entirety at a later date.
 - If a game is tied after five complete innings and must be discontinued due to inclement weather or darkness, the game will resume where it was suspended and played to completion at a later date (note: when the game is resumed, teams will play one inning at a time until a winning team is decided. Each team will start the batting order at the top of their line-up upon resumption. If a game is starting to have issues with darkness, the captains should have a discussion about shortening the game (i.e., agree to shorten the length of the game from 7 innings to 5 innings). In the event that the visiting team takes the lead in the top half of an inning during a shortened game, the home team must complete their at-bats in the bottom half of the inning before the game can become official.



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- A game is automatically suspended if either captain wishes to call it due to lightning.
- Slaughter Rule - If either team is leading by 15 runs or more after the completion of 5 innings, the losing team captain has the option to end the game.
- The team listed last on the schedule will be the home team regardless of where the game is played.
- The team at bat will supply two coach/umpires, one at first base and one at third base. **Impartiality is a must.** As a rule, the first base coach will make calls at first base and home plate. The third base coach will make calls at second and third base. The catcher will make fair/foul calls. The team captains may agree to changes in this policy as they see fit prior to the start of the game. It is recommended to mark the fair/foul lines with cones to help with the calls.
- Final scores must be reported to the division coordinator by the winning team captain the day after the game is played. Standings will be circulated (or posted on the league website) on a regular basis provided that all scores are called in.
- In order to promote the spirit of friendly competition, it is recommended that the captain of all teams who participate in the divisional playoffs, shall serve as an impartial, volunteer umpire during another playoff game in his/her division. This will be scheduled by each divisional coordinator.

Batting

- **The batting order must remain constant throughout the entire game.**
CLARIFICATION: Once a batting order is set, players cannot be substituted into the batting order (i.e. Player A cannot be removed from the batting order and be replaced by Player B). The batting order must stay constant throughout the entire game (no substitution is allowed). If players arrive late they are to be inserted at the bottom of the order. If a player has to leave, their spot in the batting order must be scratched and no one is allowed to substitute into that batting position.
- You cannot remove a player from the batting order unless he/she is sick, injured, or must leave the field of play to attend another engagement. Once removed from the batting order, that player is not allowed to re-enter the game, either offensively or defensively. Free substitution is allowed in the field only (which means different players can switch positions by the inning – it does not mean that players can be taken out of the game and replaced by another player).
- Fielders cannot change position once an inning has begun (unless they must due to injury).
- All players that play in the field in for at least one inning must be included in the batting lineup. There will be no “DH.”



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- Should a batter have an injury that limits their ability to run, they may elect a pinch runner. However, the batter must run to 1st base by themselves prior to being run for by the pinch runner. The pinch runner shall be the person who made the last out.
AMENDMENT - When possible, the pinch runner should be of the same gender as the base runner being replaced. For example, if a woman needs a pinch runner, she should be replaced by her female teammate who made the last out. There will be situations where it is not possible to substitute a base runner with a pinch runner of the same gender (for example, only 2 women in Team A's line-up, and the 2nd woman is already a base runner). In these cases, the pinch runner should be the individual who made the last out.
- Deliberate bunting is prohibited.
- Foul Tip - The batter is out if the catcher catches a foul tip that is "above the batter's head." Foul Tips that do not travel higher than the batter's head should not result in an out.

Base Running

- Base runners are not allowed to lead. A runner may leave base once the batter has made contact with the ball. Stealing of bases is prohibited.
- Sliding is permitted, however the runner must make every effort to avoid any defensive player who is attempting to field a batted or thrown ball. A deliberate "take out" of a fielder to force him/her to drop the ball will result in the base runner being called out. If the "take out" disrupts a double play the succeeding runner is also out.
- When a base runner interferes with a fielder attempting to field a batted ball, the runner is out whether or not the interference was intentional.
- The base runner is out when a defensive player with the ball is between the runner and the next base and the runner initiates a collision. Two strides is deemed to be sufficient to change direction and avoid a defensive player
- A base which is dislodged from its position has no effect on subsequent play. A runner is safe if he/she is "in the neighborhood" of the dislodged base.
- In an effort to avoid collisions at home plate, runners should be instructed to run behind (or to a second home plate that is off to the 3rd base side but in line with the plate), rather than to tag the plate. The catcher should stand on the real home plate when receiving a throw to home. A runner shall be safe if they pass home plate or step on the 2nd home plate prior to the ball, providing the ball is caught and held. If the ball is caught and held prior to runner's arrival at home, the runner is out. If a base runner runs to the wrong home plate, and there is a play at the plate or player safety is compromised, then the runner should be called out.



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NOTE –Any runner who is caught in a rundown (or pickle) between 3rd base and home plate should be called out (Because of the position of the second home plate and the requirement that the base runner run towards the first home plate, the base runner has an unfair advantage in this situation).

- In order to prevent collisions, two side-by-side first base bags will be used at first base. One base shall be placed in fair territory, and the 2nd base should be placed next to it in foul territory (Note: If preferred, a pre-made "safety bag" can be used instead of 2 individual bags. The League, however, is not requiring captains to purchase a "safety bag"). The base runner should run to the "foul" side of the first base bag, while the first baseman should field his/her position on the "fair" side of the base. In the event of a collision, the runner should be ruled safe or out depending on who properly tagged their respective base.
On an extra base hit, when there clearly is no play at first base, the first basemen must allow the runner the opportunity to round the bag and run for extra bases (in this case, it does not matter if the runner touches the "fair" or "foul" side of the bag). Collisions which result from the first baseman failing to clear the way for the runner when there is no play at first base should result in an extra base being awarded to the runner.
- The first base, second base, and third base bags should be placed 70 feet from each other. On occasion, field conditions may require that bases be placed at varying distances (for example, some standing water from a recent rain shower). During these circumstances, both captains should agree that the bases have been placed in appropriate positions.

Fielding

- Fielders may not block a base or make a "fake tag" as a means to impede a base runner.
- In order to allow all players a chance to reach base safely on a well struck ball the outfielders are not permitted to "collapse" (take defensive positions immediately behind the infielders). Captains will agree before the game on a minimum distance between infielders and outfielders which must be maintained until the batter has made contact. It is a good idea to mark the arc of the collapse line with cones on the 1st and 3rd baselines. Teams are permitted one short fielder that may disregard minimum distance rule stated above, however no more than 4 infielders are permitted (excluding the pitcher and catcher) at any time.
- Short Fielder Rule Clarification: If a team chooses to use a short fielder they must do so for an entire game (therefore teams cannot choose to use a short fielder based upon the batter or based upon the inning). Using a short fielder is now an all or nothing approach. If a team chooses to use a short fielder, the short fielder must maintain a distance from the outfielders equivalent to the distance between the outfield cones and the infield (i.e. the short fielder is to be a true short fielder, and not to be a "4th outfielder")



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- **INFIELD FLY RULE:** The infield fly rule applies when there are fewer than two outs, and there is a force play at third base (runners on first and second base, or bases loaded). Under these conditions, if a fly ball is hit into fair territory and an infielder using ordinary effort would be able to catch the ball, the batter is automatically out. On a caught infield fly, the runners must tag up (retouch their base after the catch) in order to be eligible to advance to the next base. If the infield fly falls to fair ground untouched, or is touched and dropped, runners need not tag up. In either case, since the batter is out, the force play on the other runners is removed.

Pitching

- Pitching quality is an area of emphasis for the league.
- Pitching rubber should be placed 50 feet from home plate, On occasion, field conditions may require that pitching rubber be placed at a different distance (for example, some standing water from a recent rain shower or field limitations). During these circumstances, both captains should agree that the bases have been placed in appropriate positions
- All teams must make an effort with regards to pitching. Each team captain needs to make sure that their pitcher is consistently putting pitches over the plate. Every pitch does not have to be perfect, but the pitcher needs to be throwing hittable balls. **It is not acceptable to use pitching as a means to win a game. Examples of using pitching to an advantage include excessive height, intentional inaccuracy and intentionally applying spin to increase difficulty – these are to be discussed prior to the game and any infraction noted should be addressed immediately by the team captain.**
- For safety purposes, please note that it is recommended, though not required, that the pitcher wear a special face mask made specifically for pitchers.
- General rules for pitching:

VERY CRITICAL RULES:

- **Don't field a pitcher who is inexperienced and can't get the ball over the plate. This is frustrating for the opposing team and is dangerous for the pitcher (especially if he/she is not being able to react to hit balls).**
- **Don't field a pitcher who intentionally pitches badly in an effort to get a batter to swing at bad pitches.**
- **The pitcher must pitch from the vicinity of the mound and cannot be cheated over towards third or first base.**



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Ensuring quality pitches not only speeds up the games, but alleviates a lot of potential problems between teams.