

Tri-County Official Playing Rules

Recreational Girls Fastpitch Softball

Spring Season 2026

8u Age Division

Participating Leagues:

Miss Charlotte

Miss Desoto

Miss Englewood

Miss North Port

Miss Punta Gorda

Miss Venice

Attention All Coaches:

If you have any issues involving the conduct and/or actions of any manager, coach, team mom/dad, and/or representative of a team, regardless of "home city", at any time during the season, please contact your board and voice your concerns immediately. Do not wait several days or weeks to address the situation. Issues can be best handled at the time of the occurrence rather than waiting.

Thank You,

The Tri-County League Presidents

Per county laws no tobacco, e-cigarettes, or alcohol products are permitted on the fields, dugouts or in the stands.

The Tri-County girl's recreational girl's fastpitch softball games will be played under **USSSA** rules with the following exceptions: If there is no local rule, **USSSA rules will prevail.**

1. UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT

- a. All players must wear uniforms as provided by their league. This may include jerseys, pants or shorts, and socks. Pants or shorts must be the same color as those mandated by their league. Hats or visors are optional. **The use of metal cleats is prohibited.** Players not in proper uniform will be removed from the game.
- b. All batting helmets must be properly fitting, include a full-face guard and have a chin strap. Helmets must be worn until the player returns to the dugout.
- c. Pitchers are not permitted to wear sleeves that are the same color as the ball on their pitching arm. Facemasks are mandatory for all infielders.
- d. Jewelry can be worn with the intent that no jewelry obstruct or cause a safety hazard of snagging or catching on equipment, uniforms or other players. No bracelets, no hoop earrings (studs only), and necklaces need to be tucked into jerseys. If necessary, band aids or appropriate covering can be used to cover earrings.
- e. An 11-inch softball shall be used.

2. INNINGS, TIME AND RUN LIMITATIONS

- a. Forfeit time is 10 minutes after scheduled start time without advanced communication from the traveling team.
- b. A game will begin and be played with 8 players with no penalty. Pick up players count toward the minimum number of players. A game may begin with 7 players with the 8th batting position being vacant. An out will be recorded for the missing player. Once a player arrives, they are to be placed in the 8th batting position and there is no longer an out recorded for the position.
- c. All players' names and numbers must be listed on their team's official lineup submitted prior to the start of the game, in order to be eligible to enter the game once it is in progress. The starting pitcher **must** be identified on the official lineup. Players not present at the start of the game should be listed as substitutes on the lineup sheet. Late players shall be added at the bottom of the batting order and may enter the game when their position in the batting order comes up or when then their team enters the field defensively.

- d. The Drop Dead 5 run rule will be in effect every inning on a batted ball. This means if the 5th runner is on base, once the 5th run scores, time is called and no more runners can score regardless of the play.
- e. Game duration will be limited to 1 hours, 20 minutes. No new inning will start after 1 hour, 20 minutes, **except** in the case of a tie game. 8u will play 6 innings, if time allows.
- f. If the game is tied at the end of regulation play, the international tiebreaker rule will be in effect for 1 inning. The inning shall begin with the last batter of the previous inning to complete an at-bat, assuming the base running position at 2nd base with no outs.
- g. No new inning may begin past the 2-hour game mark, during regular season games.
- h. Games are official after 4 complete innings of play or time expires, unless the 10 run mercy rules are in effect.
- i. The 10-Run Mercy Rule is **MANDATORY. No exceptions!** If one team is ahead by 10 runs after 5 innings of play or the home team is ahead by 10 runs after 4 ½ innings of play, the team with the 10-run lead will be declared the winner. **(15/12/10 AFTER 3/4/5)**

3. PITCHING RULES

- a. Any player on the team's roster is eligible to pitch
- b. The pitching distance shall be 30 feet. Coaches will pitch from the 35 feet mark, with both feet starting on the "pitchers' plate"
- c. 8U pitchers may pitch continuously until they reach 3 walked batter. A hit by pitch (HBP) counts as one walk per occurrence.
- d. The umpire will call true count on the 8u pitcher, after 3 walks (if this happens) the coach will finish the inning.
- e. The coach can pitch up to 5 balls per batter or 3 strikes, and the player continues to bat if they foul off pitches.
- f. After the 3rd walked batter, the game will proceed for the remainder of allotted time as coach pitch only.

- g. The coach that is pitching is not allowed to speak to the batter or another base runner while he or she is on the field. From the time they step into the field over foul lines they will not be able to talk with the batter or runners. Coaching will be relied on from the base coaches.
- h. When a coach is pitching, he or she must make a viable effort to move so there is no interference with the play. If the coach does not make an attempt to move, a dead ball will be issued by the umpire and the batter will be called out.
- i. 8u Pitchers will be granted 5 warm-up pitches at the start of the game. **Coaches may warm-up pitchers while the catcher is getting gear on, these are considered as part of the allotted warm-up pitches.**
- j. There will not be any illegal pitches called in the 8u division. Umpires will call the pitch based on how it crossed the plate and not if it was pitched illegal.
- k. Coaches may call 3-timeouts per game. Time outs shall not exceed 60 seconds in length.

4. SCOREBOOK VERIFICATION:

- a. A "team" scorebook must be available for review, by the opposing manager if so requested. It must include all games for the current week.
- b. At the end of the game, opposing managers, coaches or team mom/dad must sign each other's scorebook to verify.

5. BATTING RULES AND BASERUNNING:

- a. All teams must bat their entire roster.
- b. Batting out of order will result in an out, unless caused by injury/illness.
- c. If a player is injured during an at-bat and awarded first base by the umpire, she may request a "courtesy runner". The last batter out will assume her base running position on first.
- d. If a player misses an at-bat due to injury or illness, then she shall be considered to have left the game and may not re-enter the game further. **This will not be counted as out for the at-bat.**

- e. The on-deck batter will be allowed and must stand in the on-deck area on their team's side.
- f. There is no stealing permitted in 8u.
- g. There shall be **only one** overthrow granted per batted ball, ALL base runners are allowed to progress only one base.

6. DEFENSIVE PLAYER RULES:

- a. All players in the lineup submitted prior to the game must play in the field a minimum of two (2) defensive innings or six (6) defensive outs, unless the game is ended by the 15-run mercy rule.
- b. Modified 2 step rule (Miss Florida USSSA).
- c. 10 defensive players are permitted on the field. This will be at the discretion of each team's manager. Infielders may not stand closer than 35 feet from home plate...
- d. Catchers must wear full catchers' gear.
- e. Outfielders must begin each defensive play in the grass behind the baseline nearest to them.
- f. There will be NO infield fly rule.
- g. "Time" must be called to stop the natural progression of the play. Time can be called in the following circumstances:
 - The pitcher may call "time" when she has control of the ball and is in the pitcher's circle.
 - Any infield player may call "time" when a play is made DIRECTLY in front of the LEAD runner. Baserunners, ahead of the ball, may continue to the next base if they are more than halfway when "time" is granted.
- h. "Time" is only granted once the umpire calls "time".
- i. An attempt to make a play on a runner will forfeit a request for "time"

7. PICKUP PLAYERS:

A team may use a pick-up player if they cannot field a team. The definition of fielding a team is having 9 players. Pick-up players count toward a team's minimum requirement of 7 players to begin a game.

- a. A team may pick-up a maximum of 2 players per game.
- b. Managers must indicate all pick-up players on the official lineup and notify the umpire and opposing team at the plate meeting.
- c. Pick-up players must wear their own team's uniform.
- d. Pick-up players must play on a team in the same league as the team borrowing them.
- e. Pick-up players may be borrowed from a lower age division but will be expected to comply with all age division rules in which they are playing.
- f. Pick-up players must play in an outfield position for the duration of the game and bat in the last position in the batting order.
- g. Pick-up players are committed for the full game.
- h. If a regular team player arrives after the official game has started, they may enter the game as long as the total number of players does not exceed 9 players including already identified pick-up players.
- i. If an additional regular team player is added, they will be added to the bottom of the official lineup at that time.

8. SPORTSMANSHIP:

The following will be enforced at the umpire's discretion:

- a. Taunting of the opposing pitcher.
- b. No negative cheers directed at the opposing team. Cheers of a positive nature, at a reasonable level are acceptable.

- c. Profane, negative, excessive, loud or argumentative comments are not acceptable.
- d. Failure to shake hands at the end of a game or arguing with the umpire(s) is not acceptable and may result in a penalty. Penalty to be determined by the offending party's league president.

9. CANCELLATION OF GAMES:

Games may be called due to inclement weather and/or unplayable field conditions. The following will be followed.

- a. The DOD will call any game(s) due to inclement weather and/or unplayable field conditions at least one hour before game time when possible.
- b. The DOD must contact the umpires and the president or designated contact person (scheduler) of the league whose team(s) is involved in the scheduled games.
- c. The DOD makes the final determination if play shall occur prior to game(s) starting.
- d. If the DOD did not call the game ahead of time, the umpire will make the final determination if play shall begin and/or continue. The umpire shall control the field from that point on.

10. UMPIRES / DOD

An "umpire" or DOD will be provided by the "home" team to ensure that the rules of play are being followed.

- a. An umpire / DOD controls the field from the moment official game play begins.
- b. The umpire must conduct a pre-game plate meeting asking each team if
 - Teams are legally and properly equipped
 - Receiving batting orders from both teams
 - Announcing special group rules when applicable
 - Starting the official game clock

- c. The DOD will ensure mound distances and field lining is accurate to the appropriate age group prior to start of game. If, in the case a team notices that the mound is not at the correct distance, the inning must be finished prior to the repositioning of mound meaning that both teams have to pitch from the initial mound distance. No mounds can be moved mid-inning.
- d. The umpire / DOD shall stand in the infield for the duration of the game.
- e. All new umpires must attend the Tri-County conducted umpire training prior to the season start to be eligible to umpire end of season (EOS) tournaments.
- f. All leagues will receive a copy of the sign in sheet from umpire training for their official records.
- g. All leagues must submit their EOS tournament brackets with the umpire's name prior to tournament start to ensure only approved umpires are used.
- h. Umpires / DOD who are also parents and/or board members may only umpire under these conditions:
 - They DO NOT umpire / DOD a game in which their own child is playing

11. COACHES AND MANAGERS

- a. Two adult base coaches must be present at all times. Players under the age of 17 are not permitted to act as base coaches.
- b. During the game two defensive coaches may be on the field, stationed in the outfield behind players.
- c. Only team players, managers, coaches, team mom/dad and official scorekeepers are allowed in the dugout.
- d. There **MUST** be an adult female either on the field or in the dugout at all times.
- e. Managers or coaches ejected from a regular season game will automatically be suspended for their team's next game.
- f. Any manager or coach ejected from an EOS tournament game will automatically be suspended for the remainder of the tournament.
- g. Offensive and defensive coaches must make every effort to stay out of the way of the players. If in an umpire's / DOD's judgment, a coach is out of position or in the way, he/she will be asked to remain in the dugout.

12. DRAFTS

- a. Drafts **SHALL** be conducted every season for all organizations that have more than one team at a particular age group (ie: having two 12U teams must participate in a draft in order to make all teams in an age group **equally competitive**). The idea of Recreational Softball is to be a place for young girls to learn the game and fundamental skills of softball while having fun and falling in love with the sport in order to progress while also being competitively fair.
- b. There will be a maximum of FOUR players allowed to be kept from previous season. Players that our related to Coaches or Assistant Coaches count towards these FOUR players. For example, if a Coach has ONE daughter in which is a player and Assistant Coach has TWO daughters in which are both players, they can in turn pick up ONE player from their team from the previous season totaling at FOUR players. Additionally, if one of the three daughters plays a skilled position (ie; pitcher or catcher), their picks from the previous season cannot be the same additional skilled position player (if a daughter is a pitcher, the very next pick cannot be a pitcher).
- c. New teams at a particular age group will always have the first pick while also having continuous and simultaneous picks until they have the equal FOUR players as the returning team from the same age group. They will in turn have the FIRST "draft pick" amongst the remaining players to be selected. This team will also not pick more than one skilled position player simultaneously (ie; picking two pitchers and one catcher as their first three picks). The idea is to have the teams be equally competitive and not STACKED with skilled position players and/or travel ball players.
- d. Travel ball players will be identified prior to draft and will be equally distributed on teams to make teams equally competitive as possible.
- e. After the FOUR return players have been selected the draft will be initiated by the new team having the first pick. If there are more than one teams from the previous season, the team with the lower record from the previous season will have the first pick. The picks will continue until all players participating in the draft have been picked. In the case that there are players not present at the draft, they will be picked as well at the tail end of the draft. This will prevent Coaches from intentionally telling players to not show up and picking them based on their knowledge of the player's skill level.

- f. All players that are not in attendance for evaluations will be placed into a blind draw. After all players in attendance have been drafted, coaches will blindly draw players not in attendance.

13. END OF SEASON (EOS) TOURNAMENT RULES:

- a. End of season (EOS) tournament seeding will be based on the win/loss average and allowed runs of the season.
- b. In all tournament games, teams with the higher seed will be considered the home team.
- c. There will be **NO** pickups during (EOS)
- d. Tournament play will be single elimination.
- e. All games with the exception of the championship game will be 1 hour, 10 minutes. There will be no time limit in the championship game, but there will be a maximum of five (5) innings played or a maximum of 2hrs. No new inning will start after the 2hr mark and the game will go to a Texas tie-breaker.
- f. The tournament will follow the same pitching rules as noted in Section 3.
- g. The 15-run mercy rule will remain in effect for the duration of the EOS tournament.
- h. To be eligible for postseason play which includes the Tri-County EOS tournament and Miss Florida All-Stars, players must play in at least 51% of all regular season games played by their own team.
- i. Any requests for exceptions to the 51% rule due to extraordinary circumstances will be reviewed and decided by the Tri-County league presidents.
- j. Once the EOS tournament schedule is published, games will not be rescheduled, unless for weather. Any requests or exceptions due to extraordinary circumstances will be reviewed and decided by the Tri-County league presidents.
- k. In the event a team is not able to play and/or does not show up to play in the scheduled championship game the next team in line will be given an opportunity to play.

14. PROTESTS:

- a. Protests will not be allowed or considered if they are based solely upon the decision involving judgment on the part of the umpire / DOD.
- b. Valid protests will be considered concerning matters of the following types:
 - Failure of an umpire / DOD to apply the correct rule to a given situation
 - Failure of an umpires / DOD interpretation of a given rule
 - Failure to impose the correct penalty for given violation
- c. **Notification of intent to protest items identified in section 13 PART B must be given before the next pitch or it WILL NOT BE HEARD.**
- d. The umpire and scorekeepers will record the conditions and circumstances at the time of the protest.
- e. The protesting manager **MUST** present \$50.00 cash to the DOD at the time of protest notification. **PROTESTS WITHOUT PAYMENT WILL NOT BE HEARD.**
- f. The protesting manager will submit a formal written email protest to their league president within 24 hours. The written protest must be in standard rulebook form and include:
 - Date, time and place of the game in protest.
 - The names of all umpires, and scorekeepers present
 - The rule and section on which the protest is based.
 - All facts involving the protest.
- g. A protest committee shall deliberate and rule on all properly filed protests. This committee shall meet within 48 hours after the protest has been filed. All inter-league protests shall be decided by a protest committee of equal representation of the leagues involved, consisting of at least two (2) board members from each league and the umpire on duty during the game.
- h. When a protest involves a misinterpretation of a rule, the game will be replayed from the point of the incorrect, with the decision corrected.
- i. If the protest is found valid, the game stands as played.
- j. If a protest is turned down the \$50.00 will go to the league that wins the protest. If the protest is upheld, the money will be refunded. This must occur within one week of the protest committee's decision.
- k. **Exceptions - The following items may be protested upon being made aware:**
 - **Misrepresentation of pitcher's eligibility when verified prior to the game.**

- **Age eligibility of players in a particular age division.**

- l. The protesting manager must follow **SECTION 13 PART F** to have their protest heard.
- m. In the event of pitcher eligibility, the protest committee will review the score books from all games that occurred in that week to determine eligibility.
- n. In the event of age eligibility, the player in question's birth certificate must be presented within 24 hours of the protest by the league president.
- o. **NO** request by any team to view birth certificates will be upheld prior to, during or after game play. Eligibility of players must be determined per the official protest rules.

OFFICIAL