2021 West Shore Minors Spring Ball Rules

This program abides by the official A.S.A age group appropriate softball rules with the following exceptions. **If you have questions about the rules, contact the appropriate WSM Vice-President. For 12U/14U/16U contact Rich Elwell - elwellrich@yahoo.com. For 6U/8U/10U contact Sammy Southard - alansouthard12@gmail.com.**

1. **THE PLAYING FIELD**
    a. Set-up: Home team shall be responsible for setting up the field.
        i. Placing and removing the bases.
        ii. The pitching distance shall be set as follows:
            1. 8U - 30 feet.
            2. 10U - 35 feet.
            3. 12U - 40 feet.
            4. 14U and up - 43 feet
    b. A Double first base is required at all game fields and USA Softball rules will apply for its use.
    c. One new and one fairly new game ball.
        i. **6U -** The approved ball is an SB11" Dudley Fastpitch Softball.
        ii. **8U/10U** - The approved ball is an 11", Core .47, Red Stitch, 375 compression USA Softball approved fastpitch softball. Dudley 4A611Y.
        iii. **12U and up** - The approved ball is a 12" Core .47 375LB Compression Red Stitch yellow USA Softball approved softball. Dudley 4A311Y.
    d. Home team is responsible for scheduling make-up games.
    e. Smoking: Anyone attending the game must abide by the hosting complex rules for smoking restrictions.

2. **EQUIPMENT**
    a. Batting Helmets: Players must wear batting helmets with face shields when on the bases and batting. Chin straps are recommended but not required.
    b. Jewelry: Players must not wear any jewelry (except medical bracelets and headbands).
    c. General Equipment Guideline: Players may only use the equipment furnished by the sponsoring organization except:
        i. May use own bat with the approval of the minor league representative.
        ii. On all bats "Official Softball or ASA approved to 2004" must be displayed and be legible
        iii. **10U and under** - May use "T-Ball" bats.

d. Coach/Player Conduct with Equipment: Coaches and players cannot throw any equipment. Players throwing a bat: the first time is a team warning. The second time any player throws a bat the batter is declared out -dead ball. (No play).
e. No cell phone use during the game on the playing field by any coach or player, except for approved use for scorekeeping.
f. Uniform: Players must wear sneaker-type footwear or molded cleats. No metal cleats.
g. Mouthpieces or face guards are strongly recommended for all players.

3. PLAYERS, COACHES, SUBSTITUTES

a. Team Conduct: No intentional roughness by one player against another. For example: tripping, deliberately crashing into, pushing, pulling, and hitting. No swearing. No bad name calling of members of the other team. Terms such as: no hitter, easy out, swing, etc. are not allowed. Derogatory cheers or chants directed at the other team or an individual player on that team are not permitted.
    i. **12U and below** - Cheers and chants are permitted except when the pitcher places her foot on the pitching rubber until the ball is either hit or crosses home plate.
    ii. **14U and up** - Cheers and chants are permitted at all times.

b. Substitution: Free substitution of players in the field is allowed when batting the full lineup. If a coach chooses not to bat the entire lineup, all USA Softball substitution rules apply. (USA Softball Participant Manual Rule 4 Sections 1-6.)(In Disciplinary Action, the coach with that player must let the other coach know in advance.) Check age group specific rules for additional requirements regarding player participation and positioning.

4. THE GAME

a. Starting Time: All games will start at 6:15 p.m. Pre-game warm-ups are to be from 5:45 P.M. to 5:55 P.M. for the home team and from 5:55 P.M. to 6:05 P.M. for the visiting team. Coaches' conference with the umpire will be conducted at 6:05.

b. Game Stoppage: Games are to be stopped in case of inclement weather. **If you need to cancel an umpire, contact your league scheduler so that they can notify the umpire coordinator no later than 4:00PM. Otherwise, your organization will incur a $15 fee.** Once the game has started, the umpire shall decide if the game cannot be continued or when the last inning will begin. If a game cannot be resumed, it is officially over if at the conclusion of two and one

half (2½) innings and the home team is winning. If a game is called before it is official, the game is played from the beginning. **Exception:** If an USA Softball umpire does not show up for a game and another umpire cannot be found, the game may be rescheduled or the coaches may agree to select a parent/etc. to umpire the game. Volunteer umpires must have insurance, background checks, and be at least 18 years of age. Leagues should provide equipment to volunteer umpires. Coaches are not recommended to act as an umpire. ** In the event of lightning, the game will not be resumed until 30 minutes from the last lightning flash. (For more information refer to Safety Awareness Guide: USA Softball Guidelines for Lightning Safety in the USA Softball Participant Manual pages 192-194 of the 2020 edition).

c. Umpires: They must be respected with their judgment calls and decisions are final. Protests of games on an umpire's interpretation of softball rules must be made to the umpire before the next pitch or any subsequent play occurs. The umpire shall then notify the opposing coach and sign both scorebooks at the point of infraction. Verbal notification to a league officer shall follow within twenty-four (24) hours of the protest and shall be further followed with a written protest to the league president within forty-eight (48) hours. This written protest shall list all facts pertinent to the protest and shall also be made available to the umpire-in-chief of the umpires association. The league officers shall arbitrate the protest. Protests of games due to ineligible or illegal players may be made at anytime prior to the close of the regular season. In a protested game where the protest is upheld, the game will resume at the point of protest.

AGE GROUP SPECIFIC RULES - Any age group specific rule that conflicts with the general rules above will take precedence. Please inform WSM of the conflicting rules so they can be clarified.

1. **6U**
    a. Game Length: All regular season games are 4 innings or 60 minutes unless a different game length or time limit is mutually agreed upon by both coaches. The game may end in a tie.
    b. Game Stoppage: Games are to be stopped in case of inclement weather or lack of interest from the girls. The coaches shall decide if the games cannot be continued. ** In the event of lightning, all players, families, etc. should wait at least 30 minutes after the lightning flash to resume play. (Please refer to Safety Awareness Guide: USA Softball Guidelines for Lightning Safety in the USA Softball Participant Manual pages 192-194 of the 2019 edition)
    c. Batting Lineup: Both teams will bat the entire line-up. Coaches may use discretion based on flow and speed of game. (Except in Disciplinary Action the coach with that player must let the other coach know in advance.)

d. Players: Every player present for the game and in the lineup must play a minimum of 2 innings in the field.
    i. No minimum number of players
    ii. Up to 4 outfielders (outfielders must play at the edge of the outfield grass). Outfielders must throw the ball to an infielder, and can only throw to second or third base on a hit. Outfielders are allowed to throw to any base to get a force out on a runner who has left the base, or on any pop up caught to create a double play.
e. Each player is allowed to play a maximum of 2 innings at any one field position. This rule is in place to allow the young girls to not be stuck in one position the whole game. The object of the game at this level is to learn basic fielding and hitting techniques.
f. Infield Fly: No infield fly rule.
g. Batting:
    i. A designated adult, (coach or parent) will pitch 5 pitches to each batter. After the 5th pitch, the tee will be brought out.
    ii. Balls hit in the infield or that reach the outfield through a field error will be ground rule singles. All runners will advance one base.
    iii. No advancing on overthrows.
    iv. Batters and runners that get out must leave the bases.
h. Fielding: Bases must not be blocked by the fielders; they must be accessible to the base runner.
i. Catchers: A catcher must wear standard catching equipment including shin guards, chest protector, and catcher's mask. She must stand a safe distance from home plate. Either the coach or a player may return the ball to the coach/pitcher.

2. 8U

a. Game Length: All regular season games are 4 innings or 75 minutes unless a different game length or time limit is mutually agreed upon by both coaches. The game may end in a tie. In the event of inclement weather, the game will be complete after a minimum of 2.5 innings.
b. Game Stoppage: Games are to be stopped in case of inclement weather or lack of interest from the girls. The coaches shall decide if the games cannot be continued. ** In the event of lightning, all players, families, etc. should wait at least 30 minutes after the lightning flash to resume play. (Please refer to Safety Awareness Guide: USA Softball Guidelines for Lightning Safety in the USA Softball Participant Manual pages 192-194 of the 2019 edition)
c. Batting Lineup: Every player present for a game is in the batting line-up whether they are in the field or not. (Except in Disciplinary Action the coach with that player must let the other coach know in advance.)
d. Players: Every player present for the game and in the lineup must play a minimum of 2 innings in the field.
    i. No minimum number of players

ii. Up to 4 outfielders (outfielders must play at the edge of the outfield grass). Outfielders must throw the ball to an infielder, and can only throw to second or third base on a hit. Outfielders are allowed to throw to any base to get a force out on a runner who has left the base, or on any pop up caught to create a double play.

iii. Each player is allowed to play a maximum of 2 innings at any one field position. This rule is in place to allow the young girls to not be stuck in one position the whole game. The object of the game at this level is to learn basic fielding and hitting techniques.

e. Infield Fly: No infield fly rule.

f. Batting:

i. Players/Coaches are allowed 6 total pitches to attempt to hit the ball. After 6 pitches, the player will hit off of the tee. Foul balls count in the total pitch count.

ii. Balls hit in the infield or that reach the outfield through a field error will be ground rule singles. All runners will advance one base.

iii. All runners may advance two bases at their own risk for ground balls or fly balls hit past the infield.

iv. No advancing on overthrows.

v. The team at bat (the offensive team) may score no more than three (3) runs per inning during the game.

g. Fielding: Bases must not be blocked by the fielders; they must be accessible to the base runner.

h. Catchers: A catcher must wear standard catching equipment including shin guards, chest protector, and catcher's mask. She must stand a safe distance from home plate. Either the coach or a player may return the ball to the coach/pitcher.

i. PITCHING REGULATIONS

i. A. At the discretion of the coach, girls can throw a maximum of 3 pitches and the coach will come throw 3 more pitches. After 6 total pitches, the tee is used. No balls and strikes will be recorded. (Do not continue pitching to the girls.)

ii. A pitcher will be removed from the mound after hitting two batters with a pitched ball in the same inning. The pitcher may return in another inning. If a pitcher hits a total of four batters with a pitched ball they will be removed from the pitcher's position for the remainder of the game.

iii. Pitching distance is 30'. Modified motion (slingshot) is allowed. ** Coach may pitch for the player from 25 feet.

iv. Goal is for the pitcher to begin to pitch more consistent strikes and for players to hit off of the pitcher.

j. BASERUNNING

i. Stealing: Players may not steal any base or advance unless on a batted ball.

ii. Advancing Runners: No advancing runners on a dropped third strike.

iii. Getting a Lead: Runners may not leave the base until the ball passes home plate. Warnings will be issued to the players.

iv. Sliding: Sliding is not required at 8U, but collisions and blocking bases should be avoided.

3. 10U

a. Game Length: All games are 6 innings ONLY, no extra inning games. Games are 90 minutes in length. In the event the time limit is reached, finish the inning. The game may end in a tie.
b. Batting Lineup: Every player present for a game is in the batting line-up whether they are in the field or not. Thus, all players will bat and ten (10) at a time play in the field. (Except in Disciplinary Action the coach with that player must let the other coach know in advance.)
c. Players: Games must start with a minimum of 8 players; teams may go down 7 players once the game has started.
    i. There will be no cross-roster sharing of players.
    ii. If a team is short players, they must pull up from the younger age level.
    iii. Each player must play at least 2 innings in the field and bat at least once. Each player is allowed to play a maximum of 3 innings at any one field position, except the catcher position. Catchers have no limit to the amount of innings they can catch.
    iv. Any girl who is playing up, may always play down as long as they are not pitching at the higher level and they are league age eligible for that division as of January 1.
d. Infield Fly: No infield fly rule.
e. Batting:
    i. The team at bat (the offensive team) may score no more than three (3) runs per inning. The ball to the pitcher in the pitcher's circle denotes the end of the play unless there is already a runner in motion towards the base. THERE IS NO UNLIMITED LAST INNING.
    ii. Bunting is allowed. If a batter is in the act of bunting and does not pull their bat back away from the plate as the ball is crossing the plate, a strike will be called no matter where the pitch ends. The batter will be declared out for a ball bunted foul on the third strike.
f. Fielding:
    i. Bases must not be blocked by the fielders; they must be accessible to the base runner.
    ii. Teams will play with 10 fielders. (4 outfielders: must be positioned in the outfield. No short fielder)
g. **PITCHING REGULATIONS**
    i. Pitcher Eligibility: A pitcher will be removed from the mound after hitting two batters with a pitched ball in the same inning. The pitcher may return in another

inning. If a pitcher hits a total of four batters with a pitched ball they will be removed from the pitcher's position for the remainder of the game.

ii. Pitching Rules:
    1. Pitching rules shall be in accordance with USA Softball Rule 6A.
    2. Pitchers shall be limited to pitching only 3 innings per game.
    3. If a pitched ball hits a batter, the batter must take her base.
    4. Innings shall be determined in total innings, not in thirds. 1 pitch in any inning shall constitute 1 inning of pitching.
    5. Any player who pitches up at the next level, 12U or higher, will then be ineligible to pitch any future 10U game. The player will still be eligible to play any other fielding position.

iii. WSM 10U HYBRID RULES - the hybrid pitching rules will be followed up to the mid season 10U tournament date.
    1. No walks. After 4 balls are pitched by the player pitcher, the coach will pitch. Any strikes thrown by the player will remain.
    2. If two strikes exist from the player pitches, it is possible that the coach may strike the batter out on the first pitch.
    3. The coach will pitch from at least 30 feet, 35 if possible.
    4. The coach must make every attempt to throw a line-drive, minimal arc pitch to the batters.
    5. An umpire may call a coach pitch illegal
    6. While the coach is pitching, the player pitcher will have at least 1 foot in the pitching circle, and be even with or behind the pitching rubber.
    7. Stealing is not permitted when the coach is pitching.
    8. A player hit by the coach pitch will not be awarded first base.
    9. The coach should leave the field while the player is pitching.

h. VI. BASERUNNING

i. Stealing: Stealing shall be permitted to every base but home, only if the base the runner is stealing is open. A runner may attempt to go home only on a play that began as a result of a batted ball or a force play. No double steals will be allowed – only one steal play at a time. Any runner attempting to steal home on a non-batted ball will be sent back to third base.

ii. Advancing Runners: No advancing runners on a dropped third strike.

iii. Taking a lead: No taking a lead. Runners may not leave the base until the ball passes home plate. For the first violation a team warning is issued. For all other violations, the runner is out - dead ball (no play).

iv. Sliding: Runner must slide to avoid a collision. First violation will result in a warning. Second Violation will result in an out.

v. All overthrow rules apply (USA Softball 2020 Participant Manual Rule 8, Section 5, G-M)

vi. Runners may not advance on overthrows from catcher to pitcher.

4. Majors (12U and up) rules - any differences are noted

a. Game Length: All games are 105 minutes or 7 innings. At 90 minutes, the umpire will declare that inning to be the last and there will be an unlimited run rule for that inning. The inning must be completed unless the home team is winning. The unlimited inning is the final inning no matter what. The game may end in a tie.
b. Players:
    i. Each player must play at least 2 innings and bat at least once.
        1. **12U** - Each player is allowed to play a maximum of 3 innings at any one-field position. Catcher has no limit on the number of innings the same player can catch.
        2. **14U and up** - There are no restrictions on innings played at any one field position.

    ii. If a team is playing with nine (9) or more players and there are no available substitutes when a player is injured or becomes ill when advancing on an awarded base or after reaching base and is unable to continue:
        1. The previous batter, not on base, is allowed to replace that player as a courtesy runner until she is out, scores or the half inning ends.
        2. When a player cannot continue her at bat, her position in the batting order shall be skipped over and no out will be called.
        3. This injured or ill player may not re-enter the game even if she does have re-entry rights.
    iii. A courtesy runner may be used for the catcher; the player making the last out will be used.
    iv. Games must start with a minimum of 8 players; teams may go down 7 players once the game has started.
    v. There will be no cross-roster sharing of players.
    vi. If a team is short players, they must pull up from the younger age level.
    vii. Any girl who is playing up, may always play back down as long as they are league age eligible for that division as of January 1. League pitching rules must be followed. A player that has pitched at a higher level is no longer eligible to pitch at the lower level.
c. Infield Fly: The infield fly rule is in effect.
d. Batting:
    i. **12U** - The team at bat (the offensive team) may score no more than 4 runs per inning. The last inning will be unlimited runs as declared by the umpire.

ii. **14U and up** - The team at bat (the offensive team) may score no more than 5 runs per inning. The last inning will be unlimited as declared by the umpire.

e. Baserunning:
   i. Stealing: Stealing shall be permitted to every base. Double steals will be allowed.
   ii. Advancing Runners: Runners may advance on a dropped third strike.
   iii. Taking a lead: Leads are allowed. Runners may leave the base when the ball is released from the pitcher's hand. For the first violation a team warning is issued. For all other violations, the runner is out - dead ball (no play).
   iv. Sliding: Runner must slide to avoid a collision. First violation will result in a warning. Second violation will result in an out.
   v. All overthrow rules apply (USA Softball 2020 Participant Manual Rule 8, Section 5, G-M)
   vi. Runners may advance on overthrows from catcher to pitcher.

f. Fielding:
   i. Teams may play with 10 fielders. (4 outfielders: must be positioned in the outfield. No short fielder)
   ii. Bases must not be blocked by the fielders; they must be accessible to the base runner.
   iii. If a batted fly ball is caught in bounds and carried out of bounds by the defensive player, the batter is out, the ball is dead and one (1) base will be awarded to the base runner(s).

g. Run Ahead Rule: West Shore Minors will follow USA Softball Rule 5, Section 9, A.1.b which states that the game will end if there is a 12 run lead after 4, or 8 run lead after 5.

h. **PITCHING REGULATIONS**
   i. Pitcher Eligibility: A pitcher will be removed from the mound after hitting two batters with a pitched ball in the same inning. The pitcher may return in another inning. If the pitcher hits a total of four batters with a pitched ball in one game, they are to be removed from the mound for the remainder of the game.
   ii. Pitching Rules:
      1. Pitching rules shall be in accordance with USA Softball.
      2. Limitations
         a. **12U** - Pitchers shall be limited to pitching only 3 innings per game.

b. **14U and up** - Pitchers shall be limited to pitching only **4** innings per game.
c. Innings shall be determined in total innings, not in thirds. 1 pitch in any inning shall constitute 1 inning of pitching.

iii. ***Any player who pitches up at the next level, e.g. 14U or higher, will then be ineligible to pitch any future 12U game. The player will still be eligible to play any other fielding position***

Any rule interpretation or question that arises during the season will be decided by the Governing Body of the West Shore Minors