



## BRONCO LEAGUE RULES

Last Updated November 2025

### SECTION A: Game Preliminaries

- 1) The home team manager has the responsibility of assessing field conditions, and if appropriate, calling the game prior to the first pitch. Every effort must be made to alert umpires and the away team's manager of a cancellation at least 1 hour prior to the scheduled start time.
- 2) A full game will be six (6) innings in length.
- 3) The home team shall record the time of the first pitch, as no new innings can be started after **2 hours** from the first pitch (regardless of whether there is a game scheduled afterwards or not). Each manager must keep his team playing at a steady pace with no interruptions. No stalling or extended conferences. NOTE: There is no time limit for League Playoff elimination games.
- 4) Once a game begins, the umpire has the responsibility to call or suspend a game due to darkness or inclement weather. Lightning and/or the approach of a dangerous storm will immediately suspend play. See Section H for the NHAA's Inclement Weather Policy.
- 5) A game that becomes suspended will be considered a "regulation game" if:
  - a) Four (4) innings have been completed.
  - b) The home team is winning after 3 ½ innings.
  - c) The home team takes the lead in the bottom of the fourth inning, but that inning is not completed.
- 6) If a regulation game is suspended prior to the completion of a full inning (in the 5<sup>th</sup> inning or later), then the score shall revert to the last completed inning – even if the result is a tie.
- 7) Games that remain tied at the end of 6 innings will end in a tie. No extra innings will be played. NOTE: League Playoff eliminations games cannot end in a tie and extra innings will be played until a winner is determined.
- 8) If a game becomes suspended prior to qualifying as a regulation game, the game will be replayed at a later date from the point where the game became suspended.
  - a) The home team is responsible for recording the inning, score, outs, batter count, and any runners on base when the game becomes suspended.
  - b) If players that were NOT playing during the original game are now available to play on a later date, those players can enter the game and must be added to the end of the line-up (i.e.. As the 10<sup>th</sup> batter if there were 9 players batting in the original game.
  - c) Suspended or postponed games will be rescheduled by the managers or commissioner at the next available open date.
- 9) No game shall begin after 8:30pm, nor shall any inning begin after 10:15pm. Games will have a 2- hour time limit. No inning shall start after the 2-hour time limit has expired. The umpire will verify start time with the home team scorebook.
- 9) Teams will exchange lineups prior to the start of the game.
- 10) If a team is winning by fifteen (15) or more runs after four (4) innings, or by ten (10) or more runs after five (5) innings, then the game will end early. If the home team is leading in either situation, then they will not bat in the home half of that inning.
- 11) The home team manager should have the field in game ready shape with bases down, the field lined, and the batter's box ready at least 15 minutes before game time. Managers should also have two (2) new game balls and as many good spares as needed at the start of the game.
- 12) The home team manager is responsible for paying the umpire(s) prior to the game.

### SECTION B: Player Eligibility

- 1) A maximum of nine (9) defensive players are allowed in the field.
- 2) A team must have at least eight (8) players to begin a game.
  - a) There will be a 15-minute grace period to allow 8 players to show up for the game.
  - b) If a team has less than eight (8) players and the 15-minute grace period has expired, the game will be a forfeit. If this occurs,

coaches should make every effort to play a practice game.

c) If a game is played with eight (8) players, the ninth spot in the batting order will NOT be an out.

- 3) If a team is reduced to eight (8) players or less during a game for any reason, play will continue to completion. Outs will not be assessed at-bats due to a player injury, but if a player voluntarily leaves the game or is ejected from the game for unsportsmanlike conduct, an out will be recorded each time their spot in the order comes up.
- 4) A player that shows up late (after a game has already started) can only enter the game and play if his team has NOT yet batted through the lineup (ie, if the lead-off batter has not been up to bat twice already). The late player must be added as the last batter in the lineup.
- 5) If a team knows it will start or finish a game with eight (8) players or less, one or more Minor League players may be used to bring the team up to full strength.
  - a) Minor League players must bat at the bottom of the batting order and should play right field (or other outfield positions if more than one are being used).
  - b) Minor League players cannot pitch in Bronco games.
  - c) If a Bronco player arrives late (or wasn't expected to be there at all) and the game starts with one or more Minor League players, it is at the coach's discretion on whether to let the Bronco player play or not. NOTE: If the coach allows both the Bronco player and the Minor League Player to play – bringing the total number of players to 10 at any point in the game - no Bronco player on the team can sit for more innings than the Minor League Player does.
- 6) There is free substitution on defense, except for the pitcher.
- 7) Courtesy base runners
  - a) A courtesy base runner is permitted to replace an injured base runner. The courtesy runner must be the player who made the last out. This can only be used one time for a player. If that same player cannot run again in the same game, then they must be removed from the game.
  - b) A courtesy runner may also be used for the catcher with two outs to speed-up the game. Again, the runner must be the player who made the last out, and the player who was subbed for must enter the game as the catcher in the next half inning.
- 8) No batting out of order will be charged due to an injury. An injured player can return to his original position in the batting order once during a game
- 9) A non-injured player cannot sit on the bench for more than two (2) defensive innings of a six (6) inning game. Coaches may waiver from this rule if necessary, due to player attendance or for disciplinary reasons.

### **SECTION C: Pitching Eligibility**

- 1) A pitcher cannot pitch more than three (3) innings in a single game – including scenarios where a suspended game is resumed at a later date.
- 2) If a team plays two or more games in one day, the combined innings of one pitcher cannot exceed four (4) innings for the day
- 3) One pitch thrown in an inning constitutes an inning pitched.
- 4) Once a pitcher is replaced by another pitcher, they cannot pitch again in that game.
- 5) The following pitch count restrictions must be adhered to, including the maximum 85 pitches per day limit, and required rest period as defined below:
  - a) If a player pitches 61 or more pitches in a day, three (3) calendar days of rest must be observed
  - b) If a player pitches 41 - 60 pitches in a day, two (2) calendar days of rest must be observed
  - c) If a player pitches 21 - 40 pitches in a day, one (1) calendar days of rest must be observed
  - d) If a player pitches 1-20 pitches in a day, no (0) calendar day of rest is required
- 6) If a pitcher reaches a pitch count threshold while facing a batter, the pitcher may continue to pitch until any one of the following conditions occurs:
  - a) That batter reaches base;
  - b) That batter is put out;
  - c) The third out is made to complete the half-inning.

As long as a pitcher does not face another batter *after* reaching a pitch count threshold, their official pitch count shall be reported as the threshold reached, i.e. 20, 40, 60, or 85.

- 7) Managers should consult between innings to confirm that pitch counts are the same.
- 8) Managers must notify all other coaches (via text or email) if any pitcher throws more than 40 pitches in a game

- 9) A pitcher is allowed a maximum of six (6) warm up pitches between innings.
- 10) If a pitcher hits two (2) batters in an inning or three (3) batters in a game, they must be removed from pitching immediately.
- 11) There are no minimum requirements for how many innings must be pitched by an 11- or 12-year-old pitcher.

#### **SECTION D: General Playing Rules**

- 1) There will be a continuous batting order.
- 2) There is a five (5) run limit per inning for innings one (1) through five (5). NO continuation will be in effect except in the event of an over the fence home run. There is no run limit for the last inning (inning 6) or in extra innings.
- 3) Leading from and stealing of bases is permitted while the ball is live.
- 4) Dropped 3<sup>rd</sup> strike is in effect. If there are two outs, a batter may attempt to advance to first base after a dropped third strike. If there are less than 2 outs, the batter may attempt to advance to first base after a dropped third strike *only* if first base is not occupied.
- 5) The infield fly rule is in effect when a fair fly ball (not including a line drive or a bunt) can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort, when first and second, or first, second, and third bases are occupied before two are out. The ball is live, and runners may advance at the risk of being caught or retouch and advance *after* the ball is touched, the same as on any fly ball. If the hit becomes a foul ball, it is treated the same as any foul ball.
- 6) Balks.: Umpires and/or coaches will explain the reason for a pitcher's balk upon each occurrence. One warning to be given to each pitcher per inning. (Coaches are to discuss the need for more warnings in each game.)
- 7) If a batter squares around to bunt they cannot pull back and take a full swing. The batter will be automatically called out, with no advancement by any base runners
- 8) No intentional walks are allowed.
- 9) Coaches may have one (1) conference visit per inning without changing the pitcher. On the second and all subsequent mound visits in an inning, the pitcher must be replaced. If a pitcher is injured, the trip to the mound will not count as an official trip.
- 10) Accidental throwing of the bat the first time will result in a team warning. Any additional offenses will result in a dead-ball on a batted ball with no runners advancing and the batter being called out.
- 12) Intentional throwing of a bat or helmet (which will be a judgment call by the umpire and not subject to protest) will result in both a) the player being ejected from the game and a dead ball on a batted ball with no runners advancing and the batter being called out
- 13) Adults may coach first and third bases and warm-up pitchers.
- 14) Any player warming up a pitcher must wear a catcher's mask.
- 15) Base running:
  - a) A runner must avoid contact with the fielder on a play at any base or the runner will be called out. Any attempt to jump over a fielder in a position to receive a thrown ball at a base is not considered avoiding contact and the runner will be called out.
  - b) A runner may not slide headfirst, except when returning to a base that had already been achieved. Any player sliding headfirst to an advancing base will be called out.
  - c) Runners can steal any base on a live ball.
  - d) The ball is considered dead when the pitcher is in possession of the ball on the mound.
  - e) If the catcher makes a play to third base (or any other base) or throws the ball errantly back to the pitcher, the play is considered "live"
  - f) Third base runner "jockeying" is not allowed. Runners on third base aren't permitted to steal home by timing the throw back from the catcher, or if they have "given themselves up" and retreated back towards third base during a play while the catcher possesses the ball or is in the third to home base path.)
  - g) For safety reasons, straight steals of home are not allowed unless there is a passed ball. Baserunners cannot enter the home plate area during the delivery of a pitch.
  - h) A base runner is out if a base coach touches the runner with the intent to assist or restrain the runner while the ball is in play. This is a judgment call by the umpire and cannot be protested.

## **SECTION E: Equipment**

- 1) All rostered players should be in full uniform. Hats are mandatory for all defensive players, and protective helmets must be worn by offensive players in the field of play.
- 2) Metal spikes are prohibited.
- 3) Catchers must wear appropriate protective gear [cup, chest protector, helmet, mask, shin guards, catcher's mitt].
- 4) Only USA Baseball approved bats (including those that are 2-5/8" diameter) will be allowed in league play. Bats manufactured prior to 2018 that were previously approved for Little League play are no longer allowed.

## **SECTION F: Protests**

- 1) No protest can be made on an umpire's judgment call.
- 2) No manager can overrule an umpire's judgment call.
- 3) Any protest due to misinterpretation of a rule must be submitted to the Bronco Commissioners within forty-eight (48) hours.
- 4) Managers may dispute a rule interpretation, provided that the dispute is presented in a calm, gentlemanly manner. No Assistant Coach, Parent, Player or others are permitted to engage in a protest with an umpire, especially in matters that involve judgment calls on close plays.
- 5) The protesting manager must inform the opposing manager and the umpire that he is protesting the game at the point of disagreement. At that time and prior to the next pitch, the protesting manager must have the umpire sign their name in the score book and outline a description of the disagreement. If intentions to protest the game have not been recorded before the game continues, the protest is invalid.
- 6) A protested game must be played to completion.
- 7) If the protesting team wins, the protest is dropped.
- 8) Before ruling on a protest, the Bronco Commissioner must contact the umpire and both managers to understand the situation.
- 9) If the protest is upheld, the game will be resumed from the point of protest.
- 10) All protests will be decided by independent Commissioners not involved in the game. If a Commissioner is a coach on a team involved with the protest, the Director of Baseball will handle the protest. (If both the Commissioner and Director of Baseball are involved, then the President will handle the protest)
- 11) All Commissioner rulings are final.

## **SECTION G: Discipline**

- 1) Umpires have the ability to eject anyone, including parents and spectators, from the field of play for unbecoming conduct.
- 2) Any player found to be using illegal equipment will be ejected from the game, unless the opposing manager is willing to issue a one-time warning instead (with an automatic ejection for 2<sup>nd</sup> offense).
- 3) Use of an illegal pitcher (one who pitches more than three (3) innings in a game or violates the pitch count rule) will result in a forfeiture of the game. However, in the spirit of sportsmanship, both teams should make their best effort to notify the other team before such a violation occurs.
- 4) Unsportsmanlike conduct, including vulgarity or violence directed at another person by a player, manager, coach or parent is a serious issue and warrants ejection from the game by the umpire without warning. Each case will also be reviewed by both Boards of Directors, and punishments could range from a warning being given in the event of a less serious occurrence...to a suspension for extreme violations.
- 5) An ejected person must leave the ballpark. Any adult that has been ejected from a game by an umpire must immediately leave the field and must remain at least 100 yards away from the nearest part of the field through the completion of the game.
- 6) The use of tobacco or alcohol is not permitted in the ballpark by any coach, player, scorekeeper or umpire.

- 7) A manager has the right to suspend a player. The suspension and length of suspension by the manager will be reviewed by the Commissioner.
- 8) NHAA has a right to suspend a player for repetitive occurrences of unsportsmanlike conduct. This suspension requires a review by the Board of Directors.

#### **SECTION H: Playoff Rules**

- 1) All teams make the playoffs.
- 2) All playoff rounds will be single elimination, including the championship
- 3) Higher seeded teams will be the home team.
- 4) Seeding of tiebreakers is as follows:
  - a) Head-to-Head
  - b) Winning percentage for all games played
  - c) Run Differential for the season
  - d) Coin Flip
- 5) All rules will be the same as the regular season rules.
- 6) The regular season pitch counts and days of rest will be in effect for the playoffs.
- 7) All playoff games must be played to completion. If a playoff game is suspended for any reason. The completion of the game will be scheduled for another date/time. The game will resume from that point and be played to completion, a full 6 innings or extra inning if necessary.

#### **Section I: Game & Practice Inclement Weather Policy**

NHAA will be utilizing Weather Bug, a free app, to assist with determining the best course of action pre- and in-game or practice.

In all circumstances, if Weather Bug reports a flash of lightning within 8 miles, the field and seating areas must be cleared for at least 30 minutes.

Players and parents must wait in their vehicles and NOT in their dugouts or batting cage.

The 30-minute clock is to be reset with any additional lightning strikes detected by Weather Bug within the 8-mile radius.

Players, coaches and/or umpires may return to the field once lightning has not been detected for 30 minutes. Fans may also return to spectator areas at the same time.