# Tri-County Official Playing Rules

Recreational Girls Fastpitch Softball

Spring Season 2026

6u 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 (chin strap is optional). 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. Facemask are mandatory for ALL players.

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 soft covered training softball shall be used.

## 2. INNINGS, TIME AND RUN LIMITATIONS

a. Forfeit time is 10 minutes after scheduled start time without 30 min advanced communication from the traveling team.

b. A game will begin and be played with 6 players with no penalty. Pick up players count toward the minimum number of players.

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. 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. The inning shall end when a team has done one of the following:

- Made 3 outs
- Scored five (5) runs

f. Game duration will be limited to 1 hour, 10 minutes. No **NEW** inning will start after 1 hour, 10 minutes, except in the case of a tie game.

g. Games cannot end in a tie. If the score is tied at the end of regulation play or when time expires, the game will proceed to a Texas tiebreaker. 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. The Texas tiebreaker shall be played coach pitch only, per the pitching rules in Section 3.

h. No new inning may begin past 1 hour, 30 minutes, during regular season games, including any innings played under the Texas tiebreaker in item g above.

i. Games are official after 3 complete innings of play or time expires, unless the 10 run mercy rules are in effect.

j. The 10-Run Mercy Rule is **MANDATORY. No exceptions!** If one team is ahead by 10 runs after 4 innings of play or the home team is ahead by 10 runs after 3 ½ innings of play, the team with the 10-run lead will be declared the winner.

k. **Inning completion.** If the defense has taken the field for a new inning before time expires, that inning shall be started and completed. If time expires before the defense has taken the field, the game ends. Any inning that has been started must be completed in full, except that the game ends immediately if the home team is leading once the visiting team has made its third out. If the game is tied when this section would otherwise end it, item g above applies instead and the game proceeds to a Texas tiebreaker, subject to the outer time limit in item h.

## 3. PITCHING RULES

a. Any player on the team's roster is eligible to assume to pitching position

b. Coaches will pitch from the 25 feet mark, with both feet starting on the "pitchers' plate"

c. The coach can pitch up to 3 balls per batter, no strikes will be called, and the batter continues to bat if they foul off pitches.

d. After 3 coach pitches, the batter shall have 3 swings with the ball being placed on a batting tee.

e. When a coach is pitching, they must make a viable effort to move so there is no interference with the play. If the coach does not make an attempt a dead ball will be issued by the umpire / DOD.

f. 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, home facility Director On Duty (DOD) must sign both team's scorebooks for verification and record.

## 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 behind the batter.

f. Tee must be centered on home plate.

g. A batted ball must pass the 12-foot semi-circle from home plate to be a fair ball. Failure to pass the 12-foot line constitutes a foul ball. If the ball is batted into normal fair territory, then rolls/bounces back over the home plate line the ball would still be considered a fair and playable ball. Semi-circle must be lined before the game for visuals.

h. There is no stealing permitted in 6u/8u. Base runners may not leave the base until the ball is batted, not upon release of the pitch as in the older divisions, since 6u/8u are coach pitch divisions. A runner leaving early will be called out by the umpire.

i. On any throw to a base, if the throw is a true overthrow that could not reasonably have been caught by the fielder covering that base, all base runners are allowed to advance one base beyond the base they were attempting, at their own risk. Runners are not awarded an additional base for an overthrow. If the throw was catchable, hits the dirt, or is otherwise a fielding error by the fielder covering the base, the one base limitation does not apply and runners may advance further at their own risk.

## 6. DEFENSIVE PLAYER RULES:

a. All players in the lineup submitted prior to the game must play every inning.

b. Infield position shall be covered by players (1st base, 2nd base, Short Stop, 3rd Base, Pitcher, and catcher. All remaining players must be out of the infield in the grass.

c. If the pitcher fields a batted ball in fair territory, she may go with the natural progression that the ball takes her before doing one of the following:

- Attempting to tag a baserunner
- Throwing the ball (primary throw) to a teammate
- Returning to the pitcher's circle

d. The natural progression rule applies to everyone on the field. When a player fields the ball and the natural progression leads them to running to the base, they're able to keep going. If the player fields the ball and does not have any natural progression, they will need to throw the ball before the "hash marks" that will be placed between 1st and 2nd, 2nd and 3rd also 3rd and home.

e. Infielders may not stand closer than 35 feet from home plate. Players assuming the pitcher position may not be closer than 30' from home plate.

f. All catchers will wear full catcher's gear. **A BATTING HELMET IS PERMITTED IN 6U.**

g. Outfielders must begin each defensive play on the infield/outfield grass line.

h. There will be NO infield fly rule.

i. When the pitcher has possession of the ball in the pitcher's circle, it is a "dead ball" and time is called. Runners may not advance at this point.

j. A player who fields a batted ball may not run the ball to a base and try to beat the runner there if the play would normally be made by throwing. If the ball is fielded on the side of the fielder's position that pulls her away from the base where the play is being made, she must throw to get the out. For example, if a ground ball is hit to the pitcher on the third-base side and the play is at first base, the pitcher must throw to first; she may not race the runner there. Likewise, if the

shortstop fields a ball on the second-base side of her position and the play is at third base, she must throw. If the shortstop fields the ball on the third-base side of her position and the play is at third base, she is following natural progression toward the base and may carry the ball in to make the out.

## 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 10 players. Pick-up players count toward a team's minimum requirement of 6 players to begin a game.

a. A team may pick-up players to reach the defined team count of 10 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 must play in an outfield position for the duration of the game and bat in the last position in the batting order.

f. Pick-up players are committed for the full game.

g. 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.

h. 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/DOD'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.

e. **Cheers, chants, or shouts that intentionally increase in volume as the pitcher begins her windup, building to a peak at the release of the pitch, are not permitted. This applies regardless of content — even a "positive" cheer is prohibited if it is used to create a rising, distracting crescendo timed to the pitch.**

## 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 game will begin and the DOD will make determination if play shall continue. The Coaches shall control the field from that point on.

## 10. UMPIRES / DOD

An “umpire” or DOD will be provided by the “home” team/home park 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 / DOD must conduct a pre-game plate meeting with head coaches 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 umpire / 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. 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.

e. All leagues will receive a copy of the sign in sheet from umpire training for their official records.

f. 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

g. Every night a park is scheduled to host games, the home league or home park must provide either an umpire or a Director on Duty (DOD) for each game. If a park does not hire an umpire for a game, the DOD must be present on the field for the full duration of that game.

## 11. COACHES AND MANAGERS

a. Two adult base coaches must be present at all times. Coaches under the age of 17 are not permitted to act as base coaches. The Umpire/DOD may assist in retrieving passed balls to aid in pace of play.

b. During the game, a maximum of two defensive coaches may be in the infield/outfield working with the defense. They must remain behind the pitcher’s plate at all times.

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 at the discretion/decision of the Tri-county presidents.

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 will be for 1 hour, 10-minutes. The championship will be a maximum of five (5) innings played or 1 hour, 10-minute time limit.

f. In the event of a tie, the game will continue under the Texas Tiebreaker ruleset until a clear winner is determined.

g. The 15-run mercy rule will remain be 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. <u>Exceptions - The following items may be protested upon being made aware:</u>

- 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.