

2024 BIRMINGHAM GIRLS SOFTBALL RULES
Major Division 4
Revised 03.22.24

The Birmingham Girls Softball League operates under the 2024 NFHS Rules of Softball, except as superseded or modified by the local rules listed below.

1) Field and Equipment

a) THE FIELD

- i) Bases shall be 60 feet apart.
- ii) The rear tip of home plate and the front edge of the pitcher's plate shall be 36 feet.
- iii) The pitcher's plate shall be set inside a 14-foot diameter circle.
- iv) The field crew/umpires shall be responsible for setting the bases and pitching plate and chalking the field prior to the game.
- v) The home team coach shall be responsible for removing and storing the bases at the end of the game.
- vi) The home team shall sit on the third base side and the visiting team shall sit on the first base side of the field.
- vii) Players shall only be permitted to warm-up on the field or in designated warm-up areas (see Designated Warm-Up Area Map).
- viii) A double base shall be used at first base at all fields where one is provided.

b) SOFTBALLS

- i) The Major Division 4 shall use an 11-inch ball.

c) BATTING HELMETS

- i) A batting helmet with face mask is mandatory for each batter, on-deck batter, players in the coach's boxes, runners and retired runners.
- ii) The batting helmet shall protect both the top of the head and the base of the skull and have extended earflaps which cover both ears and temples.

d) CATCHER'S EQUIPMENT

- i) The catcher shall wear a catcher's helmet and mask combination, a body protector and baseball/softball shin guards.

e) FIELDER'S EQUIPMENT

- i) The pitcher and third baseman must wear a fielding mask. All other players are encouraged to wear a fielding mask when in the field.

f) CLEATS

- i) Metal cleats shall be prohibited from being worn.

g) EQUIPMENT

- i) All equipment shall be kept off the field of play, stored neatly behind the screen and out of pathways to avoid injury to the players during the game.

2) Umpires

- a) Two umpires shall be used, one behind the plate and one in the field. There may be games in which only one umpire is available, in which case, that umpire shall be positioned behind the plate.
- b) In the unlikely event that an umpire fails to show up, the home team shall provide a plate umpire (other than a coach) and the visiting team shall provide a field umpire (other than a coach) for the first 45 minutes of the game, at which point, they shall swap positions for the remaining 45 minutes.

3) Players, Substitutes and Coaches

a) PLAYERS, POSITIONS

- i) Each of the two teams must start with at least eight players. A team shall forfeit the game if it fails to have eight players in uniform and ready to play at the scheduled start time.
- ii) The Major Division 4 teams shall field a maximum of ten players, including four outfielders.
- iii) No more than six players, including the pitcher and the catcher, may be positioned in the infield.
- iv) On most fields, the outfield is clearly distinguished as the grass past the infield dirt, however, both managers and the umpire should agree upon the areas to be classified as infield and outfield prior to the start of the game. At the time of the pitch, all outfielders shall be positioned in fair ground, on the outfield grass and in a semi-circle to the infield until the ball crosses the plate.

b) SUBSTITUTING

- i) Teams shall bat the entire roster of players in good standing who are present and in uniform. In the event a player in full uniform arrives after the start of the game, that player shall be automatically placed at the end of the batting order. The coach shall notify the umpire and the opposing coach of the addition to the batting order.

- ii) There are no limits to substitutions for all fielding positions, assuming the substitutions comply with Rules 3(b)(iii), (iv), (v) and (vi) below. Coaches are encouraged to use the regular season games as an opportunity to develop players and expose them to as many positions as possible.
- iii) All players in good standing and in uniform shall play at least three innings, assuming the player arrives on time and assuming a six or more inning game. Whenever possible, a player should not sit out two innings in a row unless injured.
- iv) Infielders, including pitchers but excluding catchers, shall not play more than three innings at the same position. In the Major Division 4, there is no catching limit, however, rotating catchers is greatly encouraged.
- v) For the first half of the season, players shall play at least one inning in the infield and one inning in the outfield. For the second half of the season, coaches are asked to use their best efforts to substitute all players in the infield and the outfield and are encouraged to do so for at least one inning per game.
- vi) A player shall not be removed from the field or moved to a different position during the middle of an inning for making an error (i.e., missing the ball). This rule does not apply to removing a pitcher or if the coach customarily rotates positions during an inning (i.e., each time an out is recorded).
- vii) A substitute runner may be used in the event of an injury to a batter/base runner, which occurred while the player was batting or running the bases. The substitute shall be the last player in the batting order to have made an out.
- viii) Teams may elect to use a courtesy runner for their catcher in an effort to save time between innings. The courtesy runner shall be the last player in the batting order to have made an out. Otherwise, there are no "courtesy" runners as a player with an injury which prevents her from running, shall be removed from the game.

c) COACHING

- i) All coaches must pass a background check and complete a concussion training course prior to coaching.
- ii) Only coaches may speak to the umpires regarding a call and only between innings. The umpires are not required to justify their calls to the coaches. Any yelling at the umpires shall result in immediate ejection from the game. Coaches are encouraged to keep parents from heckling and/or arguing with the umpires.
- iii) Only adult coaches may occupy the coach's box. Coaches may not be on the field with the exception of the coach pitcher.
- iv) Coaches shall be responsible for monitoring all player warm-ups.

4) Starting and Ending Game

a) STARTING A GAME

- i) All games shall start promptly at 6:30 PM.
- ii) The home team shall take the field and warm-up between 6:00 PM and 6:15 PM and the visiting team between 6:15 PM and 6:30 PM.
- iii) The home team shall provide the umpire with three new game balls.
- iv) Games may be postponed or rescheduled due to inclement weather or unplayable field conditions. Unless otherwise directed by the League President, the umpires shall decide whether the grounds and other conditions are suitable for starting the game.
- v) The League President shall be responsible for rescheduling postponed games. After determining field availability, the League President shall notify the managers as to the date and time for the make-up game. It may not be possible to reschedule all postponed games. Postponed games which are not rescheduled shall be considered a tie game.

b) ENDING A GAME

- i) All regular season, playoff and championship games shall be six innings in length unless time expires as explained below. If the games end because of weather conditions or darkness, it shall be considered a complete game provided three full innings have been played. If less than three innings have been played, the umpire shall declare the contest “no game” and the game shall be rescheduled.
- ii) During the regular season, games shall be 1:45 in length with a drop-dead time limit. At the 1:45 mark, the umpire shall announce “last batter” and the game ends at the conclusion of that at bat. If the final inning is incomplete and the home team is losing at the time limit, the score reverts back to the last completed inning. If the home team is tied or winning, the score stands.
- iii) During the playoffs, games shall be 2:00 hours in length with a drop-dead time limit. If the games end because of weather conditions or darkness, it shall be considered a complete game provided five full innings have been played. If less than five innings have been played, the umpire shall declare the contest “no game” and the game shall be rescheduled.
- iv) For the championship game, a game ends when the team behind in score has completed its turn at bat in the sixth inning, with no time limit. If the games end because of weather conditions or darkness, it shall be considered a complete game provided five full innings have been played. If less than five innings have been played, the umpire shall declare the contest “no game” and the game shall be rescheduled.
- v) During the regular season, if a game ends with a tie score, for any reason, the game shall not be replayed and shall be recorded as a tie.

- vi) At the conclusion of the game, teams shall line up for handshakes, “high-fives” or any other congratulatory expression.

5) **Pitching**

a) PITCHING REGULATIONS

- i) There is a three inning limit for pitchers in the Major Division 4. For purposes of this rule, one pitch constitutes having pitched a complete inning. The pitching limit resets should extra innings be necessary in the event of a tie.
- ii) The ball is live and in play when the ball leaves the pitcher’s hand. The ball is dead when the pitcher (must be the pitcher) has control of the ball within the area defined as the pitcher’s circle. The ball shall remain dead even if the pitcher attempts to make a play after gaining control of the ball in the pitcher’s circle.

b) PLAYER/COACH PITCH

- i) The player pitcher shall be allowed to pitch until the ball count reaches 3 (i.e., 3-0, 3-1 or 3-2). At this point, if the batter has not struck out or hit the ball, the offensive coach shall pitch to his/her batter. The number of pitches the coach pitcher shall be allowed is determined by the number of strikes remaining. Thus, if the count is 3-0, the coach pitcher is entitled to three pitches, 3-1, two pitches and 3-2, one pitch. If the batter fouls off the last pitch, she will be given another pitch. If the batter cannot hit any of the pitches, she will be out. Balls and strikes are irrelevant when the coach pitcher is pitching as the number of pitches allowed is defined.
- ii) While the player pitcher is pitching, the coach pitcher shall remain in the dugout until it is their turn to pitch, at which point, they shall jog on to the field. The coach pitcher must keep a foot on the pitching rubber when throwing the ball. The player pitcher shall have at least one foot in the circle when not pitching.
- iii) In the event the coach pitcher interferes with the player pitcher (or is hit by the ball), a “no pitch” shall be declared and the batter shall return to continue her at bat.
- iv) When the player pitcher is pitching, the coach pitcher and coach catcher are to remain absolutely silent. They may not question or comment on balls and strikes which includes asking if the last pitch was called a ball or strike. Additionally, physical gestures and sighs are also forbidden. Once the coach pitcher takes over for the player pitcher, the coach may ask the umpire for the count. Advice or comments directed to the batter should come from the coaches at first or third base.
- v) The player pitcher is allowed to hit four batters an inning before being taken out (pitcher may re-enter the next inning as long as this is in compliance with our Pitching Regulations stated above). If the pitcher hits five batters in one game, she is done pitching in that game.

6) Batting

a) BATTING REGULATIONS

- i) When a pitched ball that is entirely within the batter's box strikes the batter or her clothing in the air, the ball is dead immediately and the batter is awarded first base. No attempt to avoid being hit by the pitch is required, however, the batter may not obviously try to get hit by the pitch. No base shall be awarded in the event the pitched ball bounces or rolls on the ground prior to striking the batter. Only applies when player pitcher is pitching.
- ii) A batter is not entitled to try to reach first base when a third strike is not caught.
- iii) In the Major Division 4, a batter may not bunt.

7) Batter-Runner and Runner

a) BATTER-RUNNER

- i) A batter-runner shall be called out when the batter-runner throws her bat after having received one warning from the umpire covering both teams.
- ii) The infield fly rule shall not apply.

b) RUNNER

- i) On plays at any base, a runner shall do everything they can to avoid a collision with the fielder at the base by either making a legal slide, giving themselves up or moving in a way to avoid a collision. In the opinion of the Umpire, if the runner fails to make a legal slide or avoid a collision with the fielder, the runner shall be called out. This rule assumes either the ball and runner arrived at the base at the same time or the fielder already has the ball.
- ii) There is no stealing in the Major Division 4.
- iii) A runner may advance on a fair or foul fly out if caught with less than two outs, provided the runner tags the base after the catch.
- iv) The look-back rule shall not be in effect.
- v) In the Major Division 4, runners who are less than half way to the next base when the pitcher has control of the ball within the area defined as the pitcher's circle, must return to the last base.

8) Scoring

a) SCORING LIMITS

- i) During the regular season, no team may score more than six runs in a single inning with the exception of the sixth inning.

9) Playoffs

- a) All teams, regardless of record, shall qualify for the playoffs.
- b) Playoff seeding shall be determined by regular season record.

10) Rule Interpretations and Changes

- a) The League President shall be in charge of interpreting all rules whether they be from the 2023 National Federation of State High School (“NFHS”) Softball Rules or these local rules.
- b) The League President reserves the right to make changes to these rules and/or adopt new rules throughout the season.

11) Ejection of Players, Managers, Coaches and Spectators

- a) BGS Umpires have the power and authority to eject players, managers, coaches and spectators from both the game and the field (as defined by our field permit).
- b) When a player, manager, coach or spectator is ejected from a game, they shall leave the field immediately and take no further part in the game. They may not sit in the stands or otherwise be present at the game site for the remainder of that game. Any player, manager, coach or spectator ejected from a game is automatically suspended for his or her team’s next played game and may not be in attendance at the game and the field.
- c) Any player, manager, coach or spectator ejected from a game must meet with the League President, who may elect to take further disciplinary action, including expulsion.
- d) Additionally, any player, manager, coach or spectator who is not ejected from the game but whose poor conduct is reported to the League President, may face the same disciplinary action as stated above.
- e) Any umpire ejecting or reporting a player, manager, coach or spectator must immediately notify the League President. They must also provide a written report (email) within 48 hours.
- f) Managers are responsible for controlling the behavior of the team’s parents. In the event that a spectator is ejected, they will be ordered to leave the field immediately. If they refuse to go and continue to cause a problem, the umpire will halt the game and ask the manager of the team to handle the problem. If that does not work, the umpire will find a board member to enforce his or her ruling.