

## PREFACE:

The Board of Directors of the Spring Branch-Memorial Sports Association hereby empowers the Board of Girls' Softball Commissioners to administer all phases of this program (that are not specifically reserved for the Board of Directors action) as outlined in these rules, or that are not in direct violation of said Association's by-laws. Within these limits the decisions of the Board of Girls' Softball Commissioners will be official with a majority vote of two-thirds of the voting members present, one of which must be either the Director of Softball or the Assistant Director.

I. GENERAL RULES

A. League of divisions shall be comprised of areas designated by the Board of Softball Commissioners.

B. Teams

1. One or more Ponytail teams will be formed from players residing in each elementary school area, at the discretion of the Ponytail League Commissioner(s) with the approval of the Board of Softball Commissioners. Two or more schools may be combined at the discretion of the Ponytail Commissioner.
2. Roster limits for teams for the current season shall be not fewer than eleven (11) nor more than thirteen (13) players, unless otherwise approved by the Ponytail Commissioners with Softball Board approval.
3. All girls who were on the team roster the preceding year may return provided that they are still within the age limit and the age talent.
4. Special Education, private school and out-of-district students may play at the school attended or at the nearest elementary school.

C. Players

Players shall be duly registered girls who will be 6, 7 or 8 years old on July 31st of the current year, and have turned in completed registration/parent consent/medical release forms, proof of age, and have paid the required player fee or been granted a waiver of fee.

If a team uses an ineligible player, it should be reported to the Division Commissioner, the League Commissioner or the Director of Softball. A committee of three (3) commissioners shall be appointed by the League commissioner to conduct an investigation, hold a hearing at which all concerned parties are afforded the opportunity to be present and to render a decision. If the committee determined that an ineligible player was used, it may then declare a forfeit of any games played using said player, suspend the manager, or take any other appropriate action.

D. Additional Guidelines Regarding Team Formation

1. All players should be divided and assigned to teams by ages as equally as possible.
2. After the assignment of players to teams, all new prospective players expressing a desire to play shall be placed on a waiting list, and shall be

added to teams by the League Commissioner on a space available basis.

E. Registration and Fee Information

1. Fees are set by the Spring Branch-Memorial Sports Association Board of Directors annually.
2. No girl shall be deprived of participation solely due to finances. If the age level Commissioner is satisfied that a hardship exists, the girl will be allowed to play at no cost provided all necessary forms are completed and approved by the Director of Softball.
3. Registration forms should be completed and mailed in with fee to complete registration. The manager will be furnished a copy of the registration by the commissioner. Any player desiring to play after the registration deadline must submit the fee, proof of age, and registration form to the SBMSA office where they will be placed on a waiting list for team assignment if and when a position becomes available.
4. One clear copy of a complete team roster is to be mailed, emailed or FAXed to the Commissioner AND to the SBMSA office on the day specified by the Softball Board.
5. Any girl whose registration and fee are not in the Commissioner's possession by the date set by the Softball Board will not be allowed to participate in practice sessions, be issued a uniform nor allowed to play in any game until these requirements are met.
6. Any team whose roster, registrations and all player fees have not been submitted by the specified date may not participate in league games until the missing items are produced. Any scheduled games will be forfeited and such forfeit may not be reversed.
7. It shall be the responsibility of the Commissioner to work with his or her managers to assist in meeting these requirements.

F. Schedules

1. Game schedules will be prepared by the Scheduling Commissioner for distribution to all teams.
2. It shall be the duty of the manager of the winning team to inform his/her Division Commissioner of the final score within twenty-four (24) hours of the completion of the game.

G. Postponed Games

1. If, in the opinion of the Duty Commissioner, a game cannot be played because of rain, wet field, etc., the game will be postponed.
2. If a game is postponed, the Division Commissioner shall notify the managers in time to notify the team members before game time. If this decision to postpone can be made in time, the game(s) postponement will be noted by 4:45 p.m. (week-day games) on the Voice Mail rain-out number, 281-583-3600. (Saturday games at least one hour and thirty minutes prior to game time.)

H. Practice Games

Ponytail team managers may schedule practice games with other teams if so desired. If other team is not in our program, approval of the League

Commissioner must be obtained.

I. Equipment

1. Game equipment, consisting of at least bats, helmets, catcher's mask and helmet, knee pads, body protector and 4 balls will be furnished each team by the Sports Association.

2. Manager may request replacement of broken or worn-out equipment through his or her Division Commissioner. The equipment being replaced shall be turned in to the Commissioner when new equipment is received.
3. Uniforms shall include a shirt and cap/visor.  
At least a four inch number is required on the back center in a visible position on the shirt. Shorts or full length pants, and tennis or rubber-cleated shoes, and hightop socks are the responsibility of the player and having them match is optional.
4. ASA rules on bats will be waived at this age level. Players must wear a batting helmet with chin strap.
5. At the end of the season it will be the responsibility of each Team Manager to return all provided equipment. The cost of any equipment (which was signed for when received) not turned in at the end of the season may be charged to the team manager.

II. OFFICIAL PLAYING RULES. All Ponytail League games shall be played in accordance with rules outlined in official ASA softball rule book with the exceptions or explanations noted in the following paragraphs.

- A. The Playing Field Exceptions. The playing field shall be laid out according to the following instructions, supplemented by the diagrams at the end of these rules.
  1. A Ponytail League infield shall be a 50 foot square. The outfield shall be the area between the two foul lines formed by extending two sides of the square as shown in the diagram.
  2. The Infield and Outfield, including the boundary lines, are fair territory, and all other area is foul territory.
  3. The Batters' Boxes, the Coaches' Boxes and the three foot first base lines shall be laid out as shown in the diagram.
  4. The Catcher's Box shall be the area behind home plate extending to the backstop. The Batter's Box shall be rectangular, 6 feet by 3 feet. The inside line shall be parallel to and 4 inches from each side of home plate. It shall extend forward from the center of home plate 3 feet and to the rear 3 feet.
  5. The Defensive Pitcher's Position shall be on the edge of the 4 foot circle drawn around the pitching rubber as shown in the diagram.
  6. It is the responsibility of both managers to verify the proper marking of the distance between bases, and pitching rubber and home plate at least 10 minutes prior to game time. If a game field is improperly marked, and is discovered while the game is in progress, the game shall be halted, the field properly marked, and the game continued from that point without loss of playing time.
- B. Special Rule Modifications for Coach-Pitch Softball. Each coach will pitch to his/her own players, and:
  1. The defensive player, playing the position of pitcher, shall remain outside of the pitcher's circle until the pitched ball has been delivered to the batter.
  2. The coach-pitcher shall not make, attempt to make or interfere with any

defensive player. Penalty for interference: Ball is dead; batter is out; no runners advance. If it is determined that the interference was unavoidable, ball is dead; no runners advance; batter is allowed one extra pitch.

3. Only the coach-pitcher may instruct the batter and only from within the pitcher's circle until the batter becomes a base runner at which time only base coaches may instruct the batter-base runner.
4. A maximum of six (6) pitches shall be delivered to any one batter. If, at the end of six pitches the batter has not put the ball in play or struck out swinging, the batter is out. A batter shall not become a baserunner unless she puts the ball in play.
5. Designated pitcher-player must stand outside the 4 foot circle.
6. Coach-pitcher must pitch from the pitching rubber, and may not warm up at any time on the playing field.
7. After a batted ball, the coach-pitcher must remove himself/herself to outside the foul lines until the ball is dead.

C. Playing field

1. The distance between bases shall be 50 feet.
2. The distance between the point of home plate and the front edge of the pitcher's rubber shall be 25 feet. The pitching rubber shall be the center of the four foot circle in which the pitcher plays.

D. Failure to Appear. Game will be forfeited if a team fails to appear at the field within fifteen minutes of scheduled game time. For a team to be declared a forfeit winner it must have the required team numbers for a regulation game present at the field. If neither team appears, a double forfeit shall be declared. All games will count at the end of the regular season in determining division winners.

E. Players and Substitutes

1. A team shall consist of ten (10) players. The tenth player may be used as a short fielder or fifth infielder.
2. The catcher shall play in the regular catcher's position, just behind the home plate.
3. Unlimited substitution in the field is allowed except as limited by other rules.
4. There may be no more than seven (7) infielders including the pitcher and catcher; three outfielders must play behind the base lines.

F. LENGTH OF GAME

1. Regulation game shall be five innings, or when:
  - a. The home team leads by more than five runs at the end of four and one-half innings, or
  - b. The home team scores the winning run in the fifth inning before the inning is complete, or
  - c. The score is tied at the end of five innings, then the game is terminated. No extra innings are played, and such tie games count as 1/2 game won and 1/2 game lost.
  - d. Terminated by umpire on account of weather, darkness, or other causes which make further play impossible provided three or more

innings have been played, or the home team has scored more runs

before the completion of the third inning than the visiting team has scored in 3 innings. If terminated before a minimum of 2 1/2 innings, game shall be rescheduled; if terminated beyond a minimum point, the score as it stands at the point of termination shall be final.

- e. If game is terminated by umpire after three completed innings the score of the game shall be the score at the end of the last complete inning. If, however, the home team shall have scored as many or more runs as the visiting team when the game is terminated while the home team is at bat, the score of such game shall be the total number of runs scored by each team.
2. Maximum Runs Per Inning - In addition to any other rules affecting the game, a team's turn at bat, in any inning, shall terminate when such team scores a total of five runs during the inning.
3. Run Rule - The fifth and final inning of any game shall not be started when one team is more than five (5) runs ahead. Any game in which this rule is involved shall be declared an official game.
4. Regulation Time Limit - No inning shall start after one hour and fifteen minutes of playing time has elapsed from the start of the game. Loss of playing time due to injury, delay on account of rain, etc., shall not count in this noted time limit. Injury timeouts will be called by umpire. Managers must notify umpire of any injury.

#### G. MANDATORY PLAYING

It is the aim of the Association for each girl to participate in each game. An exception may be made in case a girl is ill or injured and unable to play, or being disciplined by her manager. In such case the opposing manager and official scorekeeper shall be notified prior to the start of the game, and the reason for the discipline stated in writing on the lineup sheet.

1. Batting - A team must bat its entire roster of all girls present consecutively in the order appearing in lineup sheet submitted at the start of the game. Players arriving late must be added at the end of the roster. If a player is unable to finish the game, her position in the batting order is passed over, with the opposing manager and official scorekeeper being notified.
2. Playing in the Field - Every player must play defensively a minimum of every other inning.
3. Penalty for Violation - It shall be the duty of the Division Commissioner to see that the Mandatory Playing Rule is complied with. Periodic checks should be made to assure that this occurs.

This rule will be enforced by a standing Committee of 3 Commissioners - the League Commissioner, the Assistant Director of Softball (who shall be the Chairman) and one other Commissioner appointed by the Director of Softball (or by the Chairman in his or her absence).

Violation of this rule shall result in the suspension of the manager for one or more games, and may result in a forfeit of the game against the offending team, at the discretion of the Committee. If the Committee determines that a Manager or person in charge willfully violated this Rule, the penalty shall be automatic suspension for the remainder of the season, including playoff and post season games, in addition to other penalties, including forfeiture.



Any violation should be reported to the Division Commissioner or Director of Softball by any interested person aware of such.

#### H. Player Limit

1. To begin a regulation game, a team must field at least nine (9) players, not fewer than eight of whom must be players on the team roster. No more than two players can be borrowed. Borrowed players must play in the outfield and bat last.
2. If a team cannot field at least eight of its own players at the start of a game, a forfeit game shall be declared.
3. If necessary to borrow players, they will be borrowed as follows:
  - a. If some teams need to borrow players, they should be borrowed first from some other team in their age division, or second, from the opposing team. None of the opposing team's starting defensive players may be chosen, and any chosen player is subject to challenge and disapproval by the opposing manager. The manager is limited to two such challenges.
  - b. Any borrowed player must meet the participation rule the same as other players on the team.
  - c. The borrowed player and her parents must agree to the conditions under which the player is borrowed.
  - d. If additional team members become available after the game starts, they must be added to the end of the batting order and the borrowed player(s) may continue to the end of the game if they desire.
  - e. If a forfeit game is declared because a team cannot field the required number of players at the outset, team members should be divided or borrowed in some manner possible to form two teams and a "fun" game played in lieu of a regulation game. Players must be registered players.
  - f. Borrowed players must wear their own team's uniform or regular clothing. Borrowed players cannot wear the uniform of the team for whom they are playing.
  - g. Opposing managers must be informed of the borrowed player(s) prior to the start of the game.
  - h. If any of the above rules concerning borrowed players are not followed, it will result in a forfeiture.

#### I. BATTING

1. Batter shall be declared out for thrown bat. The ball is dead and all baserunners must return to previously occupied bases.
  - a. Whether a bat was thrown or not shall be solely a decision of the umpire, and is not subject to protest. One warning shall be issued.
  - b. This rule is inserted to protect the players.
  - c. Player is out whether bat was thrown on purpose or not.

2. Protective headgear must be worn while batting and running. Batting helmets must have chin straps and can have (but not required by league) full face guard as required by ASA as of 2005.

3. The batter shall not hinder the catcher from fielding or throwing the ball by stepping out of the batter's box or intentionally hinder the catcher while standing in the batter's box.
4. The infield fly rule will not be enforced.
5. Batter is out on the third strike (or after six pitches without hitting a fair ball). All fouls are strikes except on third strike.
6. Bunting is not allowed.
7. When a batted ball hits the coach-pitcher, if it is determined by the umpire that the interference was unavoidable, ball is dead, no runners advance, batter is allowed one more pitch. Otherwise, the batter is out.

J. Baserunning

1. No stealing. Runners cannot advance until batter hits ball.
2. Overthrows. Batter-runner and base runners may advance only one base when any ball is overthrown at a base when a player is attempting to make a play on a base runner or the batter-runner. Rolling the ball is not allowed.
3. Advancing.
  - a) With the exception of Rule J.2. above, runners may advance until the ball is in the possession of any player in the pitching circle.

At this time, the ball shall be declared dead in a loud voice by the umpire. A base runner advancing to any unoccupied base shall be held at the base to which she is advancing. Base runners occupying a base shall remain at that base. Coaches are expected to abide by and not take advantage of this rule at anytime.

**b) As an alternative- to Rule 3(a) AN INFIELDER IN POSSESSION OF THE BALL MAY FREEZE THE RUNNER AT A BASE BY APPROACHING THE BASERUNNER AND PRESENTING THE BALL.**  
**AT THIS TIME THE BALL SHALL BE DECLARED DEAD IN A LOUD VOICE BY THE UMPIRE.**

K. INSTRUCTIONS FOR PLAYERS

1. Base runners are to run across the home plate but not over the catcher.
2. Catchers are not to block the plate.
3. Catcher must wear mask and body protector at all time while catching.
4. Managers, Coaches and others must wear mask while catching or umpiring behind the plate.

L. Coaches. The offensive team shall be allowed only four coaches on the field. Two must remain in the coaches' boxes, one being the coach-pitcher and the fourth may be in the dugout to maintain batting alignment.

1. Coaches must be Managers, Assistant Managers, parents or players.
2. Defensive Manager and Assistant Managers must remain in the dugout.

3. No more than four (4) adults for each team may be within the playing field at any time.
4. All adults other than two base coaches and the coach-pitcher must remain in the dugout.

## M. Definition of Terms

1. Base Coach - A team member, manager or assistant manager who is stationed in the coach's box at first or third base to direct the batter and base runners.
2. Base Runner - A term that identifies the offensive player who has just finished her time at bat until she is put out or until the play on where she becomes a runner ends.
3. Batter's Box - The area within which the batter must stand during the time at bat.
4. Bunt - For Ponytail games the umpire shall make the determination as to whether the batter is attempting to bunt.
5. Catch - The act of a fielder in getting secure possession in her hand or glove of a ball in flight, and she does not use her cap, body protector, pocket or any other part of her uniform in getting possession.
6. Catcher's Box - That area within which the catcher is positioned behind home plate to be able to catch a pitch thrown over the plate. A catcher must position herself in the catcher's box.
7. Foul ball - A batted ball that settles on foul territory between home and first base, or between home and third base, or that bounds past first or third base on or over foul territory, or that first falls on foul territory beyond first or third base, or that, while on or over foul territory, touches the person of an umpire or player, or any object foreign to the natural ground.
8. Defensive Pitcher - The fielder designated to occupy the pitcher's position at the edge of the 4-foot circle drawn around the pitching rubber.
9. Strike - Is called on the batter when the ball:
  - a. Is struck by the batter and missed, or
  - b. Is fouled by the batter, or
  - c. Becomes a foul tip.

## H. Field Decorum

1. The designated Team Manager will be solely responsible for the conduct of his or her team and its followers. In his or her absence the first Assistant Manager shall assume that responsibility. **ONLY THE RESPONSIBLE PERSON SHALL QUESTION OR PROTEST ANY RULING BY THE UMPIRE.**
2. At no time shall any team manager, coach, parent or player harass or make disparaging or insulting remarks to or about any players, officials, spectators or umpires.
3. After the last game played for the day on the field, the team manager is responsible not only for policing the dugout area, but also for depositing trash from the field and his dugout area in the trash dumpster.
4. Smoking or the use of other tobacco products is not allowed in the dugout or on the playing field.

5. Steel cleats are prohibited for managers and coaches.
6. Positive team cheering will be allowed. Saying "Swing, batter" or calling the batter's name or number in an attempt to distract the batter will not be allowed.
7. Penalty for violation of Rule 2 above - Prompt removal of the offender from the game and grounds. For the first offense manager or coaches may be warned, but for a second offense, they are removed from the game, and shall leave the grounds. Failure to do so will warrant forfeiture of the game.

### III. CODE OF ETHICS

It shall be considered improper and inconsistent with honorable and dignified bearing for any commissioner, manager, coach, umpire, parent or player:

- A. To conduct himself or herself in any unsportsman-like manner on or near any practice or playing field, or
- B. To enter a practice or playing field while intoxicated, or to indulge in the use of intoxicating beverages or controlled substances, or to be under the influence of intoxicating beverages or controlled substances while on or near the practice or playing fields, or
- C. To use obscene or abusive language at practice or during games, or
- D. To conduct himself or herself in any other manner that could be considered detrimental to the Softball Program and not in the best interests of the Sports Association.

Anyone violating any of the above Code of Ethics shall be subject to expulsion and removal from the practice or playing field and/or from his or her position in the program.

**PLAY HARD, BUT PLAY FAIR AND REMEMBER IT IS A FUN PROGRAM!  
IF YOU TAKE THE FUN OUT OF PLAYING, THERE IS NOTHING LEFT.**

Sportsmanship is mandatory at all times.

Coaches make sure dugouts and field are clear on trash/litter after each game. Make sure your players and fans clean up after themselves.

Home teams put out bases first game and puts away bases last game. Make sure equipment room is locked at all times.

Visiting team turns on lights first game and turns off lights last game. Make sure lock to light switch cage is locked at all times.

Coaches rake fields before/after games as needed.

Home team report game scores to age division commissioner.

(updated March 2005)