



# HFLM YOUTH BASEBALL GROUND RULES

## ARTICLE I. GENERAL LEAGUE RULES

### 1.1 FACILITIES

- A. No smoking/vaping allowed on the premises.
- B. No alcohol allowed on the premises.

### 1.2 FIELD MAINTENANCE

- A. The safety of the players and overall experience depends on the condition of our fields. HFL-Mendon Youth Baseball (HFLMYB) asks that parents and players help maintain the condition of the fields.
- B. Before each season, a Field Cleanup Day is held at the fields in Mendon. Parents and players can help hang signs, prepare the fields for the upcoming season, and raise the batting cages.
- C. During the season, the home team is responsible for raking the infield, mound, and home plate dirt areas at the conclusion of each game. The visiting team is responsible for emptying the garbage can at the conclusion of each game. Each team is also responsible for picking up trash in the bleacher and bench areas.
- D. At the end of each season, a Field Closing Day is held at the fields in Mendon. Parents and players can help remove signs, put away bases, and lower the batting cages.

### 1.3 GAME CONDUCT

- A. The decision of the umpire is **final**.
- B. Discussion of the rules and plays of the game are to be between the umpire and coaches **only**.
- C. The umpire has the right to ask any coach, player, or parent who (in the umpire's opinion) is causing a disturbance to leave the field/area after one warning. If the cited individual refuses the umpire's direction to leave the area in a timely fashion, the game will be forfeited by the offending team (to the extent scores are being recorded).
- D. All coaches will set good examples of sportsmanship for the players and conduct themselves ethically with the umpires and other coaches.
  - i. All coaches will be subject to a background check.
  - ii. Any coach ejected from a HFLMYB-sponsored baseball game must appear before the board to explain his/her actions at the next scheduled board meeting. The executive board (president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer) shall decide if the coach may resume coaching activities after a mandatory one-game suspension. If a second offense should occur within the same season, the coach shall be ejected for the remainder of the season.
- E. All players will conduct themselves with the utmost sportsmanship and ethics for the rules of baseball. **Any player ejected from a game for disciplinary purposes shall attend one game in uniform in which he/she is not permitted to play prior to returning to active player status.**

- F. Spectators may only enter in the field of play in the case of injury to a player (T-Ball and Intermediate exception: If asked by coaches, parents/helpers may position themselves in the outfield to instruct players during the game).
- G. **Coaches must do their best to ensure no child on their team is left alone at the field after a game or practice.**
- H. Coaches may not use any tobacco products during games or practices.

#### 1.4 GAME PLAY

- A. The visiting team may take the field for warmups 30 minutes prior to the start of the game. The home team may take the field for warmups 15 minutes before game time. Umpires are to see that the game begins promptly at their scheduled time regardless of how long the infield practice lasts. On rare occasions, it might be necessary to alter this; and then only upon agreement between both coaches and the umpire.
- B. The home team is responsible for raking the infield, mound, and home plate dirt areas at the conclusion of each game. The visiting team is responsible for emptying the garbage can at the conclusion of each game. Each team is also responsible for picking up trash in the bleacher and bench areas.
- C. A continuous batting order will be used in each game for all leagues. The initial batting order will be used for the entire game. Players not present at the start of the game will be added to the end of the batting order once they arrive.
- D. Any player who sustains an injury that prevents him or her from immediately resuming/continuing play must be removed from the game for the remainder of the inning and shall return to the game at the discretion of the parents (first) and coach. The ball shall be declared dead at the time of injury (umpire's call) and the play shall cease. Any runner advancement will then be determined by the umpire.
- E. Makeup games should be made up within 7 calendar days of the postponement date. This may be waived upon agreement by the impacted coaches and league representative.
- F. Only HFLMYB-issued baseballs will be used.
- G. The home team is on the first base side of the field. The coaches may agree to waive this rule before the start of a game.
- H. On-deck batters shall use the designated on-deck area for warmup swings. No players shall swing bats outside the fenced playing area.
- I. It is the coach's option to assign coaches, players, or parents as base coaches.
  - i. For T-Ball and Intermediate, players are **not** allowed to coach bases.
  - ii. For Minors and Majors, players must wear batting helmets when coaching bases.
- J. A player cannot be a regularly-rostered player on more than one team within the HFLMYB league. There is no prohibition of a player playing in the HFLMYB league and on a team in another town at the same time; in this case, we ask that the player be considerate of the team to which he/she committed to initially.

## 1.5 INCLEMENT WEATHER

- A. All players are to arrive at the field ready to play as scheduled unless contacted by the league and/or coach and directed otherwise.
- B. In the case of darkness or threatening weather, and upon discussion with the coaches, the umpire will determine whether conditions are safe. In the T-Ball and Intermediate leagues, the coaches will make the decision. **The final decision related to whether a player continues to play is always deferred to the player's parent(s).**
- C. If possible, the umpire should notify both coaches at the beginning of an inning of his/her intention to call a game.
- D. All games will be stopped at the first sight of lightning (by anyone at the field) and all players must leave the field of play. Play may resume 20 minutes after the most recent sight of lightning **at the umpire's discretion.**

## 1.6 MEDICAL TREATMENT

- A. HFLMYB does not carry insurance covering a significant portion of any player's medical expenses. We encourage all parents to review their own medical insurance to assess their child's coverage.
- B. Any player who is hospitalized and/or treated in an emergency facility, undergoes outpatient surgery, or suffers a concussion during the season (including pre-season practices) **must** provide a physician's release to his/her coach before being allowed to practice or play in a game. The coach in turn will deliver the release in a timely fashion to a league representative.

## 1.7 UNIFORMS

- A. Hats, shirts, and pants are included in the registration fee and will be provided to the players at the beginning of the season (T-Ball players receive hats and shirts only).
- B. The official uniform for coaches is the matching shirt and hat of their respective teams.
- C. All players must wear non-metal cleats or sneakers.

## ARTICLE II: T-BALL LEAGUE GROUND RULES

### 2.1. GENERAL

- A. Except as otherwise noted below, play will generally follow the rules of Little League Baseball.
- B. Scores and team records are **not** maintained. Coaches umpire all games.
- C. The only ball to be used shall be the “RIF 5” ball distributed by the league.
- D. Games consist of 3 innings or 1 hour and 15 minutes, whichever comes first.
- E. All players must play in the field each inning to be eligible to bat each inning.
- F. Outs are not recorded. A half inning consists of each team member getting one at bat.
- G. The defensive team may position coaches and/or parents/helpers in the field for instructional purposes.

### 2.2. DEFENSE/PITCHING

- A. A tee shall be used or a coach may pitch to a batter.
- B. There are no strikeouts.
- C. If the coach pitches and the count reaches 3 strikes, the batter must then hit off a tee.
- D. If a coach is pitching, the player in the pitching position must be no closer to the batter than the coach/pitcher is to the batter.
- E. The infield fly rule is not in effect.

### 2.3. HITTING/BASERUNNING

- A. All players must wear a batting helmet with face shield when hitting and running.
- B. In addition to all wood bats, the following types of non-wood bats are allowed.

<b>Certification Stamp</b>	<b>Barrel Diameter</b>	<b>Length</b>
USSSA 1.15 BPF	Cannot exceed 2 3/4”	Cannot exceed 33”
USA Baseball	Cannot exceed 2 5/8”	Cannot exceed 34”

- C. A weighted bat donut may be used by the player in the on-deck area.
- D. No bunting allowed.
- E. No base stealing allowed. Baserunners may not leave the base occupied until the ball is hit.
- F. Baserunners cannot advance on an overthrow.
- G. Baserunners may advance only one base per hit unless the ball is hit to the outfield. The last batter of the inning shall run through every base (i.e., hit a home run), and the defensive team shall remain in the field until all baserunners have crossed home plate.
- H. So that different players experience a home run (i.e., be the last batter of an inning), the batting order should be changed during the game, as long as each player has the opportunity to bat once per inning.
- I. Any player who throws the bat shall be given a warning for the first offense. Subsequent bat throwing will result in the player missing his/her next at bat (will be assessed).

## ARTICLE III: INTERMEDIATE LEAGUE GROUND RULES

### 3.1 GENERAL

- A. Except as otherwise noted below, play will generally follow the rules of Little League Baseball.
- B. Scores and team records are **not** maintained. Coaches umpire all games.
- C. The only ball to be used shall be the "RIF 5" ball distributed by the league.
- D. Frequency of practices is at the discretion of the coach.
- E. Games consist of 4 innings, subject to the following constraints: 1) no new inning may begin after 8:00 p.m. on a weeknight and 2) no new inning may begin 1 hour and 30 minutes after the actual start time of the game on a Saturday.
- F. A half inning will consist of three outs or a certain number of batters, whichever occurs first. The number of batters will be based on the number of players on the team with the most players. For example, if a team has 8 players and the other team has 7 players, each team would bat a maximum of 8 players per half inning.
- G. The respective base coaches will judge plays at the bases.
- H. The defensive team may position a coach or parent/helper in the outfield for instructional purposes.

### 3.2 DEFENSE/PITCHING

- A. All players must play equal time in the field when possible. Outfielders must be a minimum of 10 feet behind the baseline.
- B. Four outfielders are to be used if 10 or more players are present for the game. This rule is in effect even when the opposing team has fewer than 10 players present. The fourth outfielder may not be positioned as a "short center fielder."
- C. Pitching machines will be used exclusively for the first half of the season. The coach of the offensive team will run the machine and call balls and strikes. The player in the pitching position must have one foot in the dirt, one in the grass, and be even with the pitching rubber when the pitching machine is being used. The player in the pitching position must wear a helmet with a face shield when the pitching machine is being used.
- D. For the first half of the season, players will be called out after 6 swinging strikes. For the second half of the season, players will be called out after 4 strikes (swinging or called).
- E. There are no balks.
- F. There are no walks.
- G. The infield fly rule is **not** in effect.
- H. For the first half of the season, there will be no double plays when the first out is a fly out, pop out, or line drive. Otherwise, teams may turn double plays.

### 3.3 HITTING/BASERUNNING

- A. All players must wear a batting helmet with a face shield when hitting or running.
- B. In addition to all wood bats, the following types of non-wood bats are allowed.

<b>Certification Stamp</b>	<b>Barrel Diameter</b>	<b>Length</b>
USSSA 1.15 BPF	Cannot exceed 2 3/4"	Cannot exceed 33"
USA Baseball	Cannot exceed 2 5/8"	Cannot exceed 34"

- C. A weighted bat donut may be used by the player in the on-deck area.
- D. No bunting allowed.
- E. No base stealing allowed. Baserunners may not leave the base occupied until the ball is hit.
- F. Baserunners cannot advance on an overthrow.
- G. On a ball hit to the outfield, all runners must stop at the closest base when the ball is under control in the infield. If between bases at the time the ball is first under control in the infield, the runner can advance to the next base.
- H. Any player who throws the bat shall be given a warning for the first offense. Subsequent bat throwing will result in the player missing his/her next at bat (no out will be assessed).

## ARTICLE IV: MINOR LEAGUE GROUND RULES

### 4.1 GENERAL

- A. Except as otherwise noted below, play will generally follow the rules of Little League Baseball.
- B. Scores and team records are maintained. The home team shall report the game score on the league's website.
- C. Playoff seedings are based won-lost record during the regular season (excluding any inter-town games). In the event that multiple teams have the same record during the regular season, the tie-breaker is based on the following:
  - i. Head-to-head record during the regular season
  - ii. Least runs allowed head-to-head during the regular season
  - iii. Least runs allowed against all HFLMYB teams during the regular season
  - iv. Coin flip
- D. The only ball to be used shall be the ball distributed by the league.
- E. Frequency of practices is at the discretion of the coach.
- F. Games generally consist of 6 innings, with extra innings if tied at the end of 6 innings. No new inning may begin after 8:15 p.m. on a weeknight. On weekends, no new inning may begin 2 hours and 15 minutes after the actual start time of the game.
- G. Three outs or 5 runs, whichever occurs first, constitute a half inning. Exceptions:
  - i. If a home run is hit over the fence, all runs crossing home plate, including the batter, will count.
  - ii. The 5-run maximum per half inning will be waived in the 6<sup>th</sup> inning (and any extra innings) during playoffs only.
- H. When a regular season game is called, it is a regulation game if 4 innings have been completed or if the home team is winning after 3½ innings have been completed. **All playoff games must be completed through 6 innings (5½ innings when the home team is ahead)**. Any game that is called before it has become a regulation game, but after one or more innings have been played, shall resume exactly where it left off. All records, including pitching, shall be counted.
- I. If a team is behind by 10 or more runs, the coach of the losing team may elect to end a game after 3 or more innings. If the losing coach does not invoke this 10-run mercy rule, the game is not over and the result of the game will be based on the final score.
- J. All present team members must play in the field at least 3 innings in all games that go at least 5 innings. The only exception will be for disciplinary reasons, and this will only be done when the opposing coach has been notified.
- K. A minimum of 8 players must be present to begin a game. When fewer than 8 players are present 15 minutes past game time, a forfeit may be declared (no makeup game is required).
- L. Borrowing players
  - i. Teams with fewer than 9 regularly-rostered players at the start of a game (**excluding playoff games**) may borrow players from other HFLMYB Minor League teams in order to start the game with 9 players, but may not use borrowed players at the start of the game to exceed 9 players. Borrowed players must play the outfield and must be placed at the end of the batting order after all regularly-rostered players. For example, if two players are borrowed,

they must bat 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> and play outfield the entire game. If a regularly-rostered player arrives after the game has started, he/she must be inserted in the lineup ahead of the borrowed players if the borrowed players have not yet come up to bat. If the borrowed players have already been up to bat, any late arriving regularly-rostered player must be inserted at the end of the lineup after the borrowed players.

- ii. **Teams may not borrow players for playoff games.** When fewer than 8 players are present 15 minutes past game time, the game shall be postponed and rescheduled as soon as possible so that other scheduled playoff games are not impacted. The league representative will resolve any disputes.

- M. In the event an injury results in the interruption of a game (resulting in fewer than 8 players), the game will be resumed at exactly the same point (i.e., same lineup, batting order, and balls/strikes). Other amicable arrangements between coaches are acceptable. The league representative will resolve any disputes.

#### 4.2 DEFENSE/PITCHING

- A. There will be a regular infield of players.
- B. Four outfielders are to be used if 10 or more players are present for the game. This rule is in effect even when the opposing team has fewer than 10 players present. The fourth outfielder may not be positioned as a “short center fielder.” Two outfielders will be used if fewer than 9 players are present for the game.
- C. Pitching rules differ between the first and second halves of the season.
  - i. For the first half of the season, when the count reaches four balls, the batter’s coach (or another member of the coaching staff) will pitch to the batter (overhand only, no closer to home plate). The strike count will continue with balls and strikes being determined by the umpire. **The coach is expected to pitch to the level of the batter’s ability.** The batter may strike out by “swinging” or on a called strike. There will be no walks. Any ball that hits the pitching coach will be considered in play. The player in the pitching position must have one foot in the dirt, one in the grass, and be even with the pitching rubber.
  - ii. For the second half of the season, the remaining games and playoffs will have no coach pitching and all four-ball counts will be considered walks.
  - iii. The league representative shall communicate to the coaches when the second half of the season begins
- D. Once a pitcher has been relieved, he/she cannot return to that position again during the game.
- E. There is no pitch count. Each pitcher can pitch a **maximum of 9 consecutive outs** in one game.
- F. A player **cannot** pitch two consecutive calendar days. A day of rest is required. **Exception for playoff games only:** **If a pitcher was not able to pitch 9 consecutive outs due to the suspension of a game, the pitcher may pitch the next day in the continuation of the same game up until the 9<sup>th</sup> consecutive out is made. A pitcher may not pitch more than 9 outs in total between the suspended and continued portion of the game. A pitcher may not pitch on consecutive days during the playoffs in two different games. This exception only applies to the completion of a suspended playoff game.**
- G. A pitcher may wear glasses, including prescription glasses or sunglasses.
- H. There are no balks.
- I. The infield fly rule is **not** in effect.

### 4.3 HITTING/BASERUNNING

A. All players must wear a batting helmet with a face shield when hitting, running, or coaching the bases. A protective vest must also be worn when hitting or coaching the bases. **The face shield and vest requirements may be waived if a parent/guardian signs and returns the league-provided waiver form to the player's coach.** A helmet without a face shield is the minimum requirement.

B. In addition to all wood bats, the following types of non-wood bats are allowed.

Certification Stamp	Barrel Diameter	Length
USSSA 1.15 BPF	Cannot exceed 2 3/4"	Cannot exceed 33"
USA Baseball	Cannot exceed 2 5/8"	Cannot exceed 34"

C. A weighted bat donut may be used by the player in the on-deck area.

D. No bunting allowed.

E. Baserunners must remain on occupied base until the ball is hit or crosses home plate when pitched.

F. **There is no "must-slide rule."** However, if a baserunner fails to slide at second base, third base, or home and contact is made when there is a play at that base, the runner may be called out at the umpire's discretion.

G. Stealing

i. Stealing is only allowed during games with no coach pitching.

ii. Each team is allowed one steal event per inning. This may be first base to second base, second base to third base, or both.

iii. The baserunner may leave the occupied base only after the ball has crossed home plate. A baserunner leaving early will be warned and returned to his/her base.

iv. In an effort to encourage catchers to throw on a steal, no advancement on an overthrow is permitted.

H. Overthrows

i. An overthrow is a misplayed ball at a base; not a throw to a cut-off person. This excludes an overthrow by the catcher when attempting to throw out a baserunner who is stealing (see "Stealing" above).

ii. On an overthrow outside the field of play, the ball is considered dead and all baserunners are awarded the base to which they were running **plus** the next base.

iii. On an overthrow inside the field of play, all baserunners are allowed, at their own risk, to advance to the base to which they were running and the next base. There is no advancement on a second overthrow during the same play.

I. Dropped third strike rule is **not** in effect.

J. Any player who throws the bat shall be given a warning for the first offense. Subsequent bat throwing will result in the play being called dead, the batter called out, and any baserunners returned to the bases they occupied at the start of the play.

## ARTICLE V: MAJOR LEAGUE GROUND RULES

### 5.2 GENERAL

- A. Except as otherwise noted below, play will generally follow the rules of Little League Baseball.
- B. Scores and team records are maintained (games against teams from other towns do not count toward the standings). The home team shall report the game score on the league's website.
- C. Playoff seedings are based won-lost record during the regular season (excluding any inter-town games). In the event that multiple teams have the same record during the regular season, the tie-breaker is based on the following:
  - i. Head-to-head record during the regular season
  - ii. Least runs allowed head-to-head during the regular season
  - iii. Least runs allowed against all HFLMYB teams during the regular season
  - iv. Coin flip
- D. The only ball to be used shall be the ball distributed by the league.
- E. Frequency of practices is at the discretion of the coach.
- F. Games generally consist of 6 innings, with extra innings if tied at the end of 6 innings. No new inning may begin after 8:15 p.m. on a weeknight. On weekends, no new inning may begin 2 hours and 15 minutes after the actual start time of the game.
- G. There is no run limit.
- H. When a regular season game is called, it is a regulation game if 4 innings have been completed or if the home team is winning after 3½ innings have been completed. **All playoff games must be completed through 6 innings (5½ when the home team is ahead).** Any game that is called before it has become a regulation game, but after one or more innings have been played, shall resume exactly where it left off. All records, including pitching, shall be counted.
- I. All present team members must play in the field at least 3 innings in all games that go at least 5 innings. The only exception will be for disciplinary reasons, and this will only be done when the opposing coach has been notified.
- J. A minimum of 8 players must be present to begin a game. When fewer than 8 players are present 15 minutes past game time, a forfeit may be declared (no makeup game is required).
- K. Borrowing players
  - i. Teams with fewer than 9 regularly-rostered players at the start of a game (**excluding playoff games**) may borrow players from other HFLMYB Major League teams in order to start the game with 9 players, but may not use borrowed players at the start of the game to exceed 9 players. Borrowed players must play the outfield and must be placed at the end of the batting order after all regularly-rostered players. For example, if two players are borrowed, they must bat 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> and play outfield the entire game. If a regularly-rostered player arrives after the game has started, he/she must be inserted in the lineup ahead of the borrowed players if the borrowed players have not yet come up to bat. If the borrowed players have already been up to bat, any late arriving regularly-rostered player must be inserted at the end of the lineup after the borrowed players.
  - ii. **Teams may not borrow players for playoff games.** When fewer than 8 players are present 15 minutes past game time, the game shall be postponed and rescheduled as

soon as possible so that other scheduled playoff games are not impacted. The league representative will resolve any disputes.

- L. In the event an injury results in the interruption of a game (resulting in fewer than 8 players), the game will be resumed at exactly the same point (i.e., same lineup, batting order, and balls/strikes). Other amicable arrangements between coaches are acceptable. The league representative will resolve any disputes.

### 5.3 DEFENSE/PITCHING

- A. There will be a regular infield of players.
- B. Three outfielders will be used (fewer outfielders may be used if less than 9 players are present for the game).
- C. Once a pitcher has been relieved, he/she cannot return to that position again during the game.
- D. There is no pitch count. Each pitcher can pitch a **maximum of 9 consecutive outs** in one game.
- E. A player **cannot** pitch two consecutive calendar days. A day of rest is required. **Exception for playoff games only: If a pitcher was not able to pitch 9 consecutive outs due to the suspension of a game, the pitcher may pitch the next day in the continuation of the same game up until the 9<sup>th</sup> consecutive out is made. A pitcher may not pitch more than 9 outs in total between the suspended and continued portion of the game. A pitcher may not pitch on consecutive days during the playoffs in two different games. This exception only applies to the completion of a suspended playoff game.**
- F. A pitcher may wear glasses, including prescription glasses or sunglasses.
- G. The defensive team may declare an intentional walk by notifying the umpire at any point during a player's at bat. Upon a coach declaring an intentional walk, the ball is dead and the batter is awarded first base with any other baserunners advancing if "forced." This option may be exercised only once per player per game.
- H. If a pitcher stops his/her motion toward home plate upon seeing the batter square to bunt, the umpire shall declare the pitch a ball.
- I. Illegal Pitch
  - i. A pitch shall be considered illegal if 1) it is delivered to the batter when the pitcher does not have the pivot foot in contact with the pitching rubber or 2) it is deemed by the umpire to be a quick return pitch.
  - ii. Penalty for an illegal pitch
    - a. One warning per pitcher per game for the first offense. Any subsequent offenses in the same game will result in the pitch being called a ball.
    - b. If a runner is on base, the umpire may declare a balk (see "Balk" below).
    - c. If the pitch is still delivered, the batter reaches first base on a hit, an error, a base on balls, a hit by pitch, or otherwise, and any other baserunners advance at least one base, the play shall proceed without reference to the illegal pitch.

## J. Balk

- i. With at least one runner on base, an umpire may declare a balk in the following cases:
  - a. The pitcher, while touching the pitching rubber, makes any motion naturally associated with the pitch and fails to make such delivery.
  - b. The pitcher, while touching the pitching rubber, feints a throw to first base and fails to complete the throw.
  - c. The pitcher, while touching the pitching rubber, fails to step directly toward a base before throwing to that base.
  - d. The pitcher, while touching the pitching rubber, throws, or feints a throw to an unoccupied base, except for the purpose of making a play.
  - e. The umpire declares an illegal pitch (see "Illegal Pitch" above).
  - f. The pitcher delivers the ball to the batter while not facing the batter.
  - g. The pitcher makes any motion naturally associated with the pitch while not touching the pitching rubber.
  - h. The pitcher unnecessarily delays the game.
  - i. The pitcher, without having the ball, stands on or astride the pitching rubber, or feints a pitch while off the pitching rubber.
  - j. The pitcher, while touching the pitching rubber, accidentally or intentionally drops the ball.
  - k. The pitcher, after coming to a legal position, removes one hand from the ball other than in an actual pitch or in throwing to a base.
  - l. The pitcher delivers the pitch from the set position without coming to a stop.
  - m. While not in possession of the ball, the pitcher stands with either foot or both feet on any part of the dirt area (circle) of the mound during a hidden-ball-play attempt.
- ii. Penalty for a balk
  - a. One warning per pitcher per game for the first offense. A balk may be called on subsequent offenses if the umpire determines the intent of pitcher is to deceive the runner.
  - b. When a balk is called, the ball is generally dead and each baserunner shall advance one base. However, if the pitch is still delivered, the batter reaches first base on a hit, an error, a base on balls, a hit by pitch, or otherwise, and any other baserunners advance at least one base, the play shall proceed without reference to the balk.
  - c. When a balk is called and the pitch is delivered, it will be considered neither a ball nor a strike unless the pitch is ball four. If ball four is delivered, the batter will be awarded first base and all runners on base will advance if forced.
- iii. After any balk warning or balk call, the coach may go to the mound to instruct the pitcher about the balk without being charged a visit to the mound.
- iv. Umpires should bear in mind that the purpose of the balk rule is to prevent the pitcher from deliberately deceiving the baserunner. If there is doubt in the umpire's mind, the "intent" of the pitcher should govern. However, certain specifics should be borne in mind:
  - a. Straddling the pitching rubber without the ball is to be interpreted as intent to deceive and ruled a balk.

- b. With a baserunner on first base, and the baserunner attempting to steal second base, the pitcher may make a complete turn, without hesitating toward first base, and throw to second base. This is not to be interpreted as throwing to an unoccupied base.
- v. If the pitcher balks and throws wild to a base, the baserunners may advance at their own risk (delayed dead ball). If a baserunner misses the base to which he/she is first advancing and is called out on appeal, he/she shall be sent back to that base and the out will not be recorded (i.e., treat the play as if the baserunner did not try to advance at his/her own risk).

K. Infield fly rule is in effect.

- i. An infield fly is a fair fly ball or pop up (not including a line drive or an attempted bunt), which can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort when there are fewer than two outs and a potential force play at third base.
- ii. The pitcher, catcher, and any outfielder who stations himself/herself in the infield on the play shall be considered infielders for the purpose of this rule.
- iii. The batter will be out if an infield fly is declared by the umpire.
- iv. The ball is considered live and players already on base at the time the ball is hit may advance at the risk of the ball being caught, or retouch and advance after the ball is touched by an infielder (the same as on any fly ball).
- v. If an infield fly is declared by the umpire and the ball becomes a foul ball, it is treated the same as any foul ball.

#### 5.4 HITTING/BASERUNNING

A. All players must wear a batting helmet when hitting, running, or coaching the bases.

B. In addition to all wood bats, the following types of non-wood bats are allowed.

Certification Stamp	Barrel Diameter	Length
USSSA 1.15 BPF	Cannot exceed 2 3/4"	Cannot exceed 33"
USA Baseball	Cannot exceed 2 5/8"	Cannot exceed 34"

C. A weighted bat donut may be used by the player in the on-deck area.

D. Bunting is allowed.

- i. The batter may **not** swing after partially or fully squaring to bunt. Once the batter has assumed any stage of a bunt position, the batter must either attempt the bunt or pull the bat back to take the pitch.
- ii. If the batter swings or check swings after assuming any stage of a bunt position, he/she shall be called out regardless of the result of the swing and the play shall be called dead and baserunners returned to their base.

E. **There is no “must-slide rule.”** However, if a baserunner fails to slide at second base, third base, or home and contact is made when there is a play at that base, the runner may be called out at the umpire’s discretion.

F. Runners may lead off or steal any base at any time at their own peril. There are no restrictions on leading or stealing.

G. A headfirst slide is only permitted when retreating back to the last attained base. If a baserunner slides headfirst while advancing, he/she will be called out.

## H. Overthrows

- i. On an overthrow outside the field of play, the ball is considered dead and all baserunners are awarded the base to which they were running **plus** the next base. However, if the pitcher steps off the rubber in a pickoff attempt and then throws the ball out of play, the runner is only entitled to advance to the next base. **There is no “one plus one” advancement when the pitcher throws the ball out of play on a pickoff attempt.**
- ii. On an overthrow inside the field of play, all baserunners are allowed to advance at the their own risk.

## I. Dropped third strike rule is in effect.

- i. A batter is out when 1) a third strike is legally caught by the catcher or 2) a third strike is not caught by the catcher when first base is occupied before two outs. First base is considered occupied even if a baserunner on first base is attempting to steal second base.
- ii. The batter becomes a runner when the third strike called by the umpire is not caught, providing 1) first base is unoccupied or 2) first base is occupied with two outs.
- iii. A batter forfeits his/her opportunity to advance to first base when he/she enters the dugout or other dead ball area.

## J. Any player who throws the bat shall be given a warning. Subsequent bat throwing will result in the play being called dead, the batter called out, and any baserunners returned to the bases they occupied at the start of the play.