

MIDDLE – ESSEX SOFTBALL LEAGUE

BYLAWS & POLICIES

PURPOSE:

The Middle – Essex Softball League is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting all the positive aspects of amateur girls' softball. Emphasis will be placed on the development of good sound softball skills without sacrificing the enjoyment of playing the game. Our goal is to ensure that softball is used as a tool to: Teach the girls softball fundamentals. Help the players build confidence and self-esteem. Foster social interaction in a team setting. Teach the responsibilities of being a good team player. The coaches are charged with promoting a high level of sportsmanship and leading by positive example.

MEMBERSHIP:

Teams – wishing to join the league must attend the annual meeting and be voted in by a majority of the towns in their particular division. In addition, a school district (such as Pentucket or Masconomet) is equal to an individual town when enforcing the residency rules.

Coaches – are selected by the softball administrators from their own towns and are expected to follow the rules of the Middle – Essex Softball League. Appropriate USA Softball Background checks and SafeSport Certification is Mandatory!

Players – It is the philosophy of the league to have teams represent the towns from which they come. However, each team is allowed to list three (3) non-residents. Only one of which may become a pitcher. (*Effect*; once one of your non-residents has thrown one pitch, the others may not go to the circle at all for the remainder of the season.) Also, your non-residents may not be from a town that has a team in the same division as your team. The 18A Division is considered an open league and as such there is no residency restriction.

DIVISIONS:

The league shall be divided into 8 different groups.

1. Division “18A” – Teams of a higher caliber of talent within the age group.
2. Division “18B” – Teams of a lower caliber of talent within the age group.
3. Division “14A” – Teams of a higher caliber of talent within the age group.
4. Division “14B” – Teams of a lower caliber of talent within the age group.
5. Division “12A” – Teams of a higher caliber of talent within the age group.
6. Division “12B” – Teams of a lower caliber of talent within the age group.
7. Division “10A” – Teams of a higher caliber of talent within the age group.
8. Division “10B” – Teams of a lower caliber of talent within the age group.

• In each age group, players are (18) (14) (12) (10) or under on January 1st of the current year. Girls who have just graduated from high school are allowed to play. If a team has more than two on its roster, that team must compete in 18A.

ROSTERS:

Any team in any Division (Except 18A) that has non-residents playing on their team is required to send a copy of their roster to the league President by the date of their first game. Rosters should include names, addresses and birth dates for all players. The penalty for not complying with this provision is a forfeit charged to your team for any game in which a non-resident has competed. Teams that only roster residents of their town do not need to send in a copy, but are expected to follow all the requirements of the league rules regarding eligibility.

Within a town, a player may only be listed on one (1) roster. If on a given night a team is going to be short on players, a girl may be called to play up one division. She may not play down even if age eligible. Likewise, she may not go from an "A" team to a "B" team. Furthermore, if there are two teams in the same division, she may not play for the "other" team. Roster violations will result in a loss by forfeit and a two game suspension of the coach.

GOVERNMENT:

The league president shall be the chief officer of the league. The president shall oversee the day-to-day operation of the league. The duties include but are not limited to: presiding at the annual meeting, scheduling games, handling paperwork and other administrative matters, controlling the finances of the league, settling disputes between coaches/teams and may consult the USA Softball Commissioner as needed.

A Board of Directors consisting of the coaches from the league shall have the power to amend this document at the annual meeting. The board may vote on matters that come before the association. – On matters pertaining to the league as a whole, each town is entitled to one (1) vote regardless of how many teams are entered. – On matters pertaining to just one division, such as rule changes, only coaches (teams) assigned to that division may vote.

ANNUAL MEETING:

The president will call the annual meeting approximately one month before the season starts. Teams are expected to have representation at the meeting so that proper planning can take place. This meeting typically takes place on the Sunday before Memorial Day Weekend.

FEES:

The league shall charge an entry fee to teams wishing to participate in the league as follows. The cost is \$250 per team. There is also a charge for insurance as explained in a subsequent section. Payment is expected in full on or before June 1st.

FORFEIT POLICY:

To eliminate the problem of teams failing to show up for games, the Middle-Essex Softball League employs a forfeit policy. Each town is required to post \$125 to be held in escrow in the league treasury. Any time a team creates a forfeit, \$50 is taken from the escrow account and put in with the general funds. If a team forfeits three games during a season their escrow account disappears and as a result the team is ejected from the league. The team may petition to re-enter the league the following year but must receive a 2/3-majority vote from the Board of Directors at the annual meeting. {Clarification – the forfeit fee covers an entire town so that each team does not have to post a separate bond.}

INSURANCE:

Players enrolled in the league are expected to purchase “individual insurance” from the certified insurance agent of USA Softball (Bollinger). Any other insurance is not acceptable. A roster form will be provided and must be filled out for each team. The cost per player is \$16.00. It is recommended that coaches purchase insurance as well at the same rate. Under this program, a player only has to pay an insurance charge once per calendar year. In other words, if a player is on a spring, summer club or fall team and has already purchased USA Softball individual insurance, she would not have to pay a second time.

UMPIRES:

Umpires will be hired from the appropriate USA Softball umpire districts. They will be paid by the home team at ground rules. The home team is responsible for canceling an umpire for rain or other factors. Phone numbers for the umpire assigners are posted in the league directory. Any cancellation, for a reason other than weather related, must be made before 8:00 PM the day before the game; otherwise you may be responsible for the umpire’s fee. The more notice you can provide, the better.

Umpire “no-shows” have been a problem in the past. This is often beyond the control of the league and is usually not known until game time. When this happens a knowledgeable volunteer should be encouraged to work the game (and be paid for it). Please don’t let the lack of an official umpire cheat the kids out of playing their game.

EQUIPMENT:

- USA Softball approved equipment must be used; including a safety base at first and a NOCSAE approved helmet and face- mask guard.
- Anyone warming up a pitcher must wear a mask.
- The league will supply the home team with one dozen game balls.
- Teams are responsible for their own uniforms and each player must wear a uniform if they are participating in the game.

GAMES:

- Scheduled game time is 6:15 PM – However, some games are played “under the lights.”
 - If a team has only 8 players, the shorthanded rule is in effect.
 - Umpires are responsible for ending games with regard to darkness or other factors once a game has begun.
 - Home teams should be off the field 15 minutes prior to the game so that the visitors may have infield practice.
 - Teams must play their games according to the league schedule. If for some reason your team is not able to play on an assigned date, you must take a forfeit. Teams are not allowed to reschedule games.
 - When posting a forfeit, the proper score per USA Softball is 7-0.
-
- Rainouts are an exception to this rule. If a game has to be postponed because of rain or other weather related events, it can be played on a new date. When coaches are in communication on the day of a rain-out, possible options for the rescheduled date should be offered at that time and confirmed within two days. If a new date is not confirmed within two days, either team may notify the league President who will then declare a new date for the game.

The intent of this rule is to ensure that teams account for all of their scheduled games.

RULES:

The current rules of USA Softball are in effect with the following notes, exceptions and highlights.

- Time limit --- No new inning may begin after 1 hour and 45 minutes. If the game is tied, the international tie- breaker rule will be put into effect in the next inning after the time limit has expired. {Coaches are not allowed to waive this rule... or any other rule...for that matter}
- Any game that plays to the time limit will be considered an official game regardless of the number of innings. If the home team doesn't get to bat at the end of a game, the score reverts to the last completed inning.
- Divisions 18A, 18B, 14A and 14B pitch from 43 feet. The 12's pitch from 40 feet and the 10's pitch from 35 feet.
- A team may use either a rule- book line up or a continuous batting order. The later allows for free substitution. – The only restriction here regards the pitcher, if removed she may not return to pitch in the same inning, but is free to pitch in any other inning.
- Each player **MUST** play three (3) defensive innings. Consideration should be given to games that will not go the entire seven innings to ensure players receive adequate playing time. {In other words, don't wait until the 5th inning to put a player in the game.} – If using a rule- book line up and there is a DP, the DP is exempted from the 3 defensive innings rule.
- The following Divisions are allowed (but not required) to play with ten (10) fielders – 14B, 12B and 10U. Each of the four outfielders must be positioned on the outfield grass and may not make a put-out in the infield except on a fly ball or double play. Other Divisions will play with 9 fielders.
- A 15 run slaughter...ok, mercy rule is in effect. It is invoked after 5 innings (4 ½ if home team) and at the point in which it occurs.

- Base coaches may be either adults or players (players must wear a helmet).
- Smoking by anyone near the softball diamond is prohibited. Coaches should actively enforce this rule.
 - Pitchers and 1st and 3rd basemen in 12A, 12B and 10U are required to wear an approved face guard while in the field. It is recommended for others.

SIX RUN RULE:

This rule applies to all Divisions except 18A. An inning will end early if a team scores six runs before they are put out three times. The play on which the sixth run scores will end at its normal conclusion. {Effect, if more than 6 runs score in the inning they all count.} The six run rule is lifted in the 7th inning. {Clarification... if the game is likely to end before the 7th, because of darkness or other circumstance, the six run rule is still in effect... It's only lifted in the 7th and beyond.}

SPECIAL RULES FOR THE 12B DIVISION:

- A runner may not leave the base until the pitched ball reaches the plate. (Same penalty as the rulebook, you're out for leaving early).
- There is no dropped third strike rule.
- The infield fly rule is in effect
- Coaches should go over these rules with the umpire during the pre-game conference.

SPECIAL RULES FOR THE 10U DIVISION:

- Players pitch from 35 feet. If having difficulty at this distance and with the consent of both coaches, a girl may modify her pitching stance so that only one foot is in contact with the pitching rubber. If that doesn't help, she may move in another step or two. This provision is made to make the game flow along more smoothly.
- Base runners may steal from second to third and third to home, but only two runs per inning may be scored in this fashion. Runners must wait until the pitched ball reaches home plate.
 - A runner may only advance from 1st to 2nd on action generated by an at bat.
- However, in the A Division, a runner may also steal from 1st to 2nd
- The catcher's throw to any base (to catch a stealing runner) is a live ball
- The "walk and run" play is not allowed. A player may not advance to second on a walk.
- The dropped third strike rule is not in effect.
- There is no infield fly rule.
- A **five** run rule & 15 run mercy rules are in effect as detailed in previous sections.
- Games will be played with 11- inch softball.
- 10U games in this league are 7 innings.
 - Pitchers, first and third basemen are required to wear an approved face guard.

SUSPENSION RULE:

This section is replaced by the Middle – Essex Softball League’s Zero Tolerance Policy as explained in a separate document.

ALL STAR GAME: - TBD FOR 2020

An All Star Game will be held on the 1st Saturday of August. The site shall rotate among interested towns that have four fields at the same location; at least one should have lights. The cut off date for determining how many all stars each team may select will be the Tuesday of the week before the game. All teams are expected to send representatives to the All Star Games. Those failing to do so will be fined \$100 and the remaining schedule for that team may be canceled. Teams may request in writing (for a legitimate reason) to “opt out” of the All Star Game. This must be done by July 15th.

First and second place coaches will be put in charge of organizing and coaching All Star teams. Players should play equally in the game. The league will supply T-Shirts to the participants. Instructions were provided in the coach’s packet. More details will be posted on the league website as the game approaches.

CHAMPIONSHIPS:

The league will provide the first place team in each division with a check for \$125. These funds can be used for trophies, a pizza party or in some other way to reward the girls for their efforts. Divisions with more than 15 teams will have two champions. Ties share the cash.

SCHOLARSHIP AWARD:

The Middle – Essex Softball League will award one scholarship to a graduating senior. The recipient must have played on Middle – Essex teams for at least five seasons and be nominated by a coach. Other factors will be taken into consideration such as: giving back to the softball community by helping out with teams, umpiring or in some other way promoting the game. Also, citizenship and financial need may be taken into account.

DISCLAIMER:

These by-laws cannot possibly cover every situation that may arise. It is the intent of the Middle – Essex Softball League to provide coaches with a set of guidelines to handle routine matters. Common sense and a spirit of cooperation among all those involved with the league are required to make things run smoothly. Any attempt to gain an advantage or to circumvent the rules is against the ethics of coaching youth sports.

