

FREDERICK COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Men's Softball

SUMMER/FALL LEAGUE RULES

(All rules not outlined below will reference the USSSA rulebook)

Revised 5/30/23

A. PLAYERS/TEAMS/ROSTERS

1. **All Participants must be at least 18 years old to play in the league.**
2. Players must have photo identification with them during all FCPRD games.
3. Only managers, coaches and sponsors are allowed in the dug-outs.
4. It is the responsibility of the team's representative to manage their team's roster.
5. Each team must complete a roster with each player's full legal name, address, and phone number.
Coaches/Managers must be included on the team's roster. **Failure to turn in your team's roster before your third game will result in a forfeit!**
6. Maximum of 25 players per team.
7. Players may be added to the roster until **1 week prior to the start of the tournament.** Updated rosters will be emailed to team coaches immediately following this deadline.
8. A player may be added to the roster **prior** to any game in one of the following ways:
Phone 540-665-5678, fax 540-665-9687 or email (tmurphy@fcva.us) by 2:30p.m. daily.
9. A player can play for only 1- county men's softball team.
10. Any player that is not on the roster is ineligible to participate in any contest. If such players are discovered that player will be ejected from the game.
11. The manager, acting manager or captain of the protesting team shall immediately notify the home plate umpire that the game is being played under protest. The umpire shall then notify the opposing manager and scorekeeper. The protest must be noted in both scorebooks and on the scorecard prior to the next pitch of the game.
12. A protest regarding player eligibility must be done before the completion of the **third inning** for starting players or before the **completion of the inning in which an ineligible substitute entered the game.** The umpire will have the protested player(s) produce a legal photo ID. (Example- Driver's License, Work ID, School ID). If the protested player(s) are found to be illegal the team that protested will win the game.
13. In the event that a team withdraws from competition or is dropped from the league, all contests will stand as scheduled. There are no refunds.

B. SCHEDULES

1. League schedule will be produced by FCPRD.
2. All contests must be played according to the schedule. **No games will be rescheduled due to vacations, other league conflicts, etc.**
3. Home team will be the second team listed on the schedule.
4. FCPRD will attempt to re-schedule any missed games. All rescheduled games are subject to be played outside of the normal playing nights. Games that have not been completed due to weather related issues **(Example- canceled game in the bottom of the 2nd inning)** will be rescheduled as a new game. In cases of weather related issues a game will be considered complete after 5 innings of play, or 4 ½ innings if the home team is ahead.
5. FCPRD reserves the right to reassign any team based upon past record and other considerations for the best interest of the league.
6. **Cancellation Line – 540-665-5678 after 3:30 p.m. M-F.** Field conditions after 5 p.m. are left to the decision of the park ranger and the cancellation line will be updated once they make a decision.

7. **The first scheduled game will begin on time. All other games will begin 5 minutes after the conclusion of the previous game.**

C. GENERAL RULES

1. Softballs must be optic yellow and clearly marked **12 inch, USSSA Classic M**. Teams will hit their own ball. All balls entering the field of play must be inspected by the umpire before they can be used in the game. If the umpire cannot determine if the ball is clearly marked and optic yellow (example: Classic M), it will not be allowed. Both teams should have extra playable balls on hand in case replacements are needed for balls that are lost or damaged during game play.
2. Bats must meet the new or old USSSA bat stamped standards. A list of approved bats can be found at <http://www.ussa.com/slowpitch/>, and then click on the “Rules/Legal Info” tab found midway on the top part of the page. Bats that are considered to be “Senior Bats” or wood bats are not allowed to be used in this league. If you are found using a bat that is altered or not on the approved bat list, you will be removed from the league and subject to stiffer punishments by FCPRD.
3. **Time Limit: When 55 minutes has been reached during the game, the next full inning will be the last inning of the game. No matter what part of the inning the game is in (top, middle, end) the umpire will make this announcement.** Please note game starting time in your respective scorebook. All players should be encouraged to hustle between innings. The game will not conclude until each team has batted in their half of the inning. **In the case of a mercy rule, when 55 minutes has been reached during the game, the next full inning will be the last inning of the game no matter what inning the game is in (Example- bottom of 3rd).** However, in cases of weather related issues a game will be considered complete after 4 ½ innings have been played.
4. In the event a game is tied and the full inning after the 55 minute mark has been played **or** 7 innings have been played, teams will receive 1 inning to break the tie using the International Tiebreaker Rule. Teams will start the next inning with the **player of their choice** on 2nd base. There will be zero outs and each team will get a chance to score. If the game is still tied after the extra inning, the game will end as a tie.
5. I. SUMMER & FALL RECREATIONAL: Run Rule – 10 runs after 5 innings of play.
II. SUMMER & FALL COMPETITIVE: Run Rule – 20 runs after 3 innings, 15 runs after 4 innings and 10 runs after 5 innings of play. The Run Rule will be used in all season ending tournament games including the Championship Game(s).
6. **Flip/Flop Rule**
**FCPRD League Flip/Flop Rule EXCEPTION to the USSSA rule below- the winning visiting team must be winning by 15 or more runs in or after the 4th inning. **

From the USSSA Rule Book: (rule book- https://ussa.com/docs/2021/SP_RuleBook_21.pdf page 25- mid-page)

F. Flip/Flop Rule—All Programs: In the inning when the run rule for that particular program is exceeded and the home team is losing, the home team will remain at bat and become the visiting team. If the team (new visiting team) does not score enough runs to reduce the run difference below the run rule, the game is over. If they reduce the run difference to below the run rule then the new home team will bat. If they subsequently score enough runs to exceed the run rule, the game will be over; if they do not, the game will continue under that format. If the situation reverses, the teams would flip/flop again.

7. A pitcher may have a total of three warm up pitches prior to the start of all innings.
8. The league will use a 3 ball, 2 strike count (3-2), **No Courtesy Foul**.
Three balls = walk, two strikes = Out
- If first pitch is called strike, next foul is an out- NO COURTESY FOUL BALL

9. The pitch must be underhanded at slow speed and with an arc that must have a minimum height of **3 feet from the pitcher's release and a maximum of 10 feet** from the ground, in the umpire's judgment. Pitchers can pump fake in ALL DIVISIONS. Pitchers must **release the ball within 5 seconds** of the start of their wind-up. Any time after 5 seconds, a "ball" will be called by the umpire.
10. Team must furnish scorebooks for their team. Team representatives must sign a scorecard after each game to verify the correct final game score with the umpire. Once a scorecard is signed by a team representative the game is considered final.
11. Teams must have a minimum of 9 players to start a game. Teams unable to field nine eligible players at the scheduled starting time will have to forfeit that game. If at any point your teams falls below 9 players the game will be considered a forfeit.
12. Teams that start with 9 players may ONLY add a 10th player to their line-up (scorebook) at any time after the game has started without penalty. Any player added will be placed at the bottom of the line-up.
13. Teams with more than 10 players present have the option of batting up to 12 players or using 2 Designated Hitters (DH). The DH(s) must be declared prior to the start of the game. These players may enter the game on defense but must remain in the same batting position the entire game. The DH can be substituted by a player not yet in the game. The starting DH is eligible to re-enter.
14. If a team falls below the total number of players that started the game (player leaves the game, injured player, quits, etc.), and no legal substitute players are available, that players position in the line-up will continually receive an out every time throughout the remainder of the game. The opposing pitcher may walk batter(s) to get to the free out.
15. Any team that forfeits 5 games during the regular season will receive a warning from FCPRD; a team forfeiting 6 games will not be eligible for tournament play.
16. The bases will be positioned at 70 feet.

D. COURTESY RUNNER

One courtesy runner per inning (one time) may be used. The courtesy runner must be any player in the lineup. If the courtesy runner is still on base at the time his/her turn at bat comes up, that spot in the batting order will be an out. The next batter in the line-up will then go to bat.

E. HOMERUN RULE

1. I. SUMMER/FALL COMPETITIVE: Homerun rule- 5 home runs per game. Exceeding homeruns are outs.
 II. SUMMER/FALL **UPPER** REC: Home run rule- 3 home runs per game. Exceeding homeruns are outs.
 III. SUMMER/FALL **LOWER** REC: Home run rule- 3 home runs per game. Exceeding homeruns are **INNING ENDERS**.
2. The team that hits an over the fence home run is responsible for retrieving the ball or supplying a clearly marked replacement ball.
3. After a player hits a homerun over the fence, they **Do Not** need to touch 1st base or any other base.

F. EQUIPMENT

1. If a bat is in question whether it is legal/illegal, you may protest the bat. At this point the umpire will notify both teams that the rest of the game will be played under protest. The umpire will then document the details (inning, situation, outs, etc.) and send us the information for us to decide. We will follow up with both teams the next day with our decision.
2. Cast, splints and braces must be padded. Any of this equipment judged by the umpire to be dangerous is illegal and you will not be permitted to play with them.

3. No exposed jewelry will be permitted. If it is unable to be removed, it must be taped to the body before that player is allowed to play. If a player refuses to remove or tape item to his/her body, that player will be removed from the game. (**Note: medical alert bracelets and necklaces are not considered jewelry, but, if worn, must be taped to the body.**)
4. Rubber sole footwear, metal cleats are not allowed.

G. PROTEST

1. Judgment calls by the umpire may not be protested (**Example- balls/strikes, safe calls, etc**).
2. Protests regarding rule interpretations must be made aware to the umpire and noted in both scorebooks and on the scorecard prior to the next pitch of the game.
3. Notice of the protest must be submitted in writing by the team representative to FCPRD within 24 hours of the incident. No phone calls will be taken regarding a protest.
4. FCPRD will review the protest and notify teams of the decision regarding the protest within 48 hours.

A protest regarding player eligibility must be done before the completion of the **third inning** for starting players or before the **completion of the inning in which an ineligible substitute entered the game.** The umpire will have the protested player(s) produce a legal photo ID. (**Example- Driver's License, Work ID, School ID**). If the protested player(s) are found to be illegal the team that protested will win the game.

H. EJECTIONS

1. A coach or player who is ejected from a game is automatically suspended for that night, plus he or she will be suspended for the next **game night**, including tournament play.
2. **In addition to the suspension**, the player ejected will also be fined \$40.
3. The fine must be paid to FCPRD before that player can be reinstated. No onsite payments will be received. That player's team will also forfeit all games until the fine is paid. The team may drop the player from their roster to avoid any forfeits. The player is considered ineligible and may not play on any other team(s).
4. However, if a player is ejected twice in a season, they are automatically removed from the league.
5. All ejections must be reported on the scorecard by the umpire and coaches.
6. The following offenses will be considered grounds for ejection:
 - i. Foul language
 - ii. Verbal/Physical abuse of umpire or FCPRD staff member
 - iii. Fighting
 - iv. Unnecessary poor sportsmanship
7. **All EJECTIONS ARE SUBJECT UP TO A 2-YEAR BAN FROM ALL FCPRD PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES.**

I. POST SEASON PLAY BRACKET PLAY

1. FCPRD staff will determine the tournament format.
2. Awards will be given to the champion and runner up in each division.
3. Regular season ties in the standings will be settled according to head-to-head, then run difference to determine tournament seeding.
4. The higher seed will be the home team.
5. Teams will hit their own ball. All balls entering the field of play must be inspected by the umpire before they can be used in the game.
6. **Rapid succession** will be enforced for playoff games. Teams must be at the field **ready to play 30 minutes prior to their game time.**

7. All tournament games will use the international tiebreaker rule. Teams will start the next inning with the **player of their choice** on 2nd base. There will be zero outs and each team will get a chance to score. The game will continue until a winner is decided.

CHAMPIONSHIP GAME(S)

1. The championship game(s) will be played without a time limit.
2. The Run Rule will be used in all season ending tournament games including the Championship Game(s). However in cases of weather related issues revert to the FCPRD softball weather policy (in section B).
3. If the game is tied after seven complete innings, the game will continue until a winner is declared.
4. During the first championship game the undefeated team chooses to be the home or away team. If a second game is needed then the previous home & visitor teams will switch.

J. WEATHER

Thunder/Lighting

- Removal of all players from the field area (go to your cars) for a duration of 30 minutes each time **lightning is seen or thunder is heard (no exceptions)**.
- Games can resume after thunder and or lightning has stopped for 30 minutes not to exceed 40 minutes. If thunder/lightning continues for 10 minutes or more the current game (example: 6:30 game) will be canceled. If the storm clears, potentially the 7:30 & 8:30 games can be played (if fields are deemed playable).

Inclement Weather Check:

- Cancellation line 540-665-5678 cancellations will be updated after 3:30 p.m. during the week or as needed during games.
- FCPRD Face Book and twitter
- www.fcprd.net

-NO ALCOHOL is permitted in FCPRD Parks.

-NO SMOKING within 50 feet of the softball complex.

-NO DOGS within 50 feet of the softball complex.

Anyone who does not adhere to these rules is subject to being banned from the Parks and ejected from the league for a period of two years.