

# **In it For the Girls**

## **Cobb County Girls Fast Pitch Inter-Park League**

### *Spring 2023 Play Rules*

*OFFICIAL USA SOFTBALL RULES WILL GOVERN ALL PLAY EXCEPT AS HEREINAFTER PROVIDED.*

#### 1. SECTION 1 - TEAMS (OR PLAYING AGES)

- a. Playing age group will be determined by the actual age of the player on January 1st of each year. Meaning - if Sally's birthday is 01/01/14 then she will play as an 8 year old in 2022.
- b. Players may, at the discretion of their home park, play in an older age group. Meaning - Sally is an 8 year old but she could "play up" with a 10U team.
- c. No player may "play down" under any circumstances. Violations of this will result in forfeitures.
- d. Teams will fall into the following categories;
  - i. 6U
  - ii. 8U
  - iii. 10U
  - iv. 12U
  - v. 13+

#### 2. SECTION 2 - PLAYERS

- a. All players present will be in the lineup and bat.
- b. A player(s) arriving after the game begins will be added upon arrival to the bottom of the lineup and bat in that spot. If a player(s) is not able to take her turn at bat for any reason other than injury, the Umpire and opposing Coach shall be notified and the turn will be skipped with a recorded out. A player(s) missing a turn at bat for any reason may bat later in the game in the same spot. The umpires and opposing Coach shall be advised of her return.
- c. If a runner is unable to continue due to injury (injury sustained while running the bases), the umpires and opposing Coach shall be notified. The previous batter not on base is allowed to replace that runner as a temporary runner until she is put out, scores or the inning ends.
- d. A player will have only one offensive return per game. The second time a player leaves the game for any reason it will be an out if they are unable to bat or if they leave the bases.
- e. No player may sit out more than one inning per game until all other active players, excluding the starting pitcher and catcher if they are still in those positions, have sat out. If it is determined that the play time rules are not followed, a warning will be given to that team. If a second offense of this manner takes place, the batter of the opposing team gets first base automatically. If a third offense is recorded, the coach will be ejected from the game.

### 3. SECTION 3 - UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT

- a. Metal cleats are prohibited for 12u and under, rubber cleats or sneakers are allowed. Metal cleats are allowed in 13+.
- b. No jewelry is allowed except in the case of newly pierced ears and they must be fully covered by tape. Hair clips must be made of rubber or fabric, no metal or plastic is allowed.
- c. Each player must wear her team jersey. The number must be visible while at bat. At the discretion of the umpire, a cover-up without a number may be worn while at bat. Cover-ups are allowed during defensive play.
- d. Catchers must wear an approved masked helmet and chest protector.
- e. Fast-pitch catchers must also wear shin guards (ages 10U and up).
- f. Catchers who are warming up a fast-pitch pitcher, either on or off the field of play, must wear full protective gear.
- g. Bats must be official softball bats. No bats on the USA Softball disapproved list may be used. Multi-walled and composite bats are permitted in the 8U and older age groups only. During play, violation of these rules is subject to the Umpire's interpretation of the USA Softball rule book. Any team in violation of this rule a second time may receive a forfeit.
- h. All pitchers 8u and older are required to wear a facemask. All other Infielders are highly recommended to wear a facemask, but not required.
- i. The batter, on deck batter, and base runners must wear an approved batting helmet. Facemask on the helmet is recommended for 6u and 8u and is required for 10u and older. The helmet must remain on until they exit the field of play.
- j. Double bases will be used at first base when available. Runners should be directed to run to the outside bag when possible.
- k. One new ball and one, umpire approved, used ball will be provided by the home team for each game.

### 4. SECTION 4 - GAMES

- a. For scheduling purposes, all games will blocked at 90 minutes.
- b. Game time will be 70 minutes (1 hour 10 minutes) or 7 innings, whichever is shorter.
- c. There will be no new inning started after 1 hour and 10 minutes (70 minutes) of play. Once the inning starts it must be completed for the game to end. The clock will be set at 70 minutes. A full 7 inning games shall be played unless the time limit is reached. The Home team must complete their at bat unless they are mathematically eliminated. A game can end in a tie when regulation time has expired and the home team has completed their at bat. The game will be recorded as a tie. Mercy rule will consist of 1 of the following situations: Eight (8) run lead after the completion of five (5) innings of play. Ten (10) runs after four (4) innings. Twelve (12) runs after three (3) innings. Any of these shall constitute a game regardless of time.

- d. The official starting time shall be determined by the plate umpire and recorded in the official book of the home team. The expirations of time shall be determined by the home plate umpire.
- e. Open innings have an 8 run limit.
- f. Forfeit time will be fifteen (15) minutes after the scheduled start time of the first game of the day.
- g. Umpires are responsible for the official game time and rule interpretations.
- h. There will be no protest of a judgment call.
- i. Only one Coach may approach an Umpire to question a rules interpretation. Before the next pitch, the Manager or Coach must request time out then approach the Umpire.
- j. The umpire's call is final. If there is a dispute of a rule, a time out may be requested from the umpire to discuss the rules in question and it is the discretion of the umpire to grant a time out.
- k. There are **NO** protests of games. All decisions made by the umpires at the time of the game will stand.
- l. Any registered team may borrow players from another registered team, within the same park, to avoid a forfeit.
- m. The borrowed player must be from the same age division or lower.
- n. The borrowed player can pitch or catch for the borrowing team as long as the borrowing team's pitcher or catcher is unavailable.
- o. The borrowed players must bat at the bottom of the order.
- p. The borrowed player cannot take the borrowing team above 10 players for 12u and younger (9 players for 13+).

#### 5. SECTION 5 - ADDITIONAL RULES

- a. Fields
  - i. Base distances will be 60 feet for all age groups
  - ii. Pitching rubbers
    - 1. 8U = 35 feet
    - 2. 10U = 35 feet
    - 3. 12U = 40 feet
    - 4. 13+ = 43 feet
- b. No infield practice will be allowed after the scheduled game start time.
- c. Pitchers will be allowed a maximum of five warm-up pitches before the start of the game.
- d. The home team is in the 1<sup>st</sup> base dugout. The away team is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> base dugout. The only time that a team may stay in the same dugout is if they have a double header. That team can then stay in the dugout they were assigned for the first game.
- e. An adult Coach is required at 1st and 3rd base, or a helmet is required for players who are coaching.
- f. Coaches and Spectators. Head Coaches are responsible for the conduct of their coaches, players and spectators at all times.

- g. If the Head Coach is removed from the game for any reason, he/she will be suspended for the next IFTG game.
    - i. This rule applies to all players and spectators.
  - h. If the Head Coach is removed from a second game during the same season, he/she will be suspended for the next two (2) IFTG games.
    - i. This rule applies to all players and spectators.
  - i. the Head Coach is removed from a third game during the season, he/she will be suspended for the remainder of the current IFTG season.
    - i. This rule applies to all players and spectators.
  - j. Bat slinging is not allowed and the player may be ruled out. No warning is necessary and the Umpire's judgment prevails.
  - k. Scorekeeping: The Home team should keep the scorebook (it's recommended that both teams keep scorebooks) and the Visiting team should provide an individual to operate the scoreboard. The person running scoreboard is a NEUTRAL role and should not be showing favoritism or criticizing any calls made by the umpire.
    - i. Lineups may be changed at any time prior to the first pitch.
    - ii. List all players by name and number including those not present at game time so they can be added upon arrival and become eligible for play.
    - iii. In the event of a scoring dispute, that the umpire does not have a clear ruling, the books will be compared. If only one team is keeping a book, that team's score will be the official score regardless of whether they are the home team or the away team, as long as the umpire is in agreement with the score provided by the bookkeeper.
6. SECTION 6 - END OF SEASON TOURNAMENT - *Subject to change if approved by all parks.*
- a. The end of season tournament is NOT optional and all teams are expected to play as scheduled.
  - b. The format for the tournament may change from time depending on the overall makeup of the league.
  - c. Regular season record will impact your seeding or pool placement for the tournament.
  - d. Tie breakers
    - i. Record (win percentage)
    - ii. Head to Head (if only two teams)
    - iii. Run Differential (highest "plus" number)
    - iv. Runs Allowed (lowest)
    - v. Runs Scored (highest)
    - vi. Coin flip by the Commissioner
  - e. There can be no ties during the bracket portion of the tournament. If time has expired (or 6 innings have been played) and the teams are tied then tie breaker rules will be instituted.
    - i. The batting team will place a runner on second base and a runner on third base (the last two batted out from the previous inning)

- ii. The batting team will begin with 1 out on the board.
- iii. This will continue until a winner can be declared.

## 7. SECTION 7 - MISCELLANEOUS RULES BY AGE GROUP

- a. **6U Universal Rules** - The purpose of this age group is to have fun, work on basic skills and build enthusiasm for the game. No score will be kept, all players are WINNERS.

- i. 60 minute time limit
- ii. An 11-inch "softie" softball will be used for games.
- iii. When lining the field, the field must contain the following
  1. Hash marks to identify the halfway point between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> and home.
  2. An arc 8 feet in diameter will be drawn in front of home plate from the foul lines.
  3. Any batted ball that stops or is fielded within the arc is considered foul unless caught by the pitcher, which shall be considered an out.
- iv. Two (2) base coaches may be on the field to assist base runners and three (3) coaches may be on the field to assist the defense. Coaches must remain behind the defensive players and cannot interfere in any play.
- v. All players present will be on the field defensively and will bat regardless of the number of players present.
- vi. No substitution is required and there are no forfeits due to the number of players.
- vii. If there are more than 10 defensive players, infield positions will be fielded and the rest of the players may play outfield, starting on the grass before each play.
- viii. Each team will bat through their entire batting order once each inning. If the number of batters is not the same between the two teams, the team with fewer players may bat up to the number of batters on the team with the highest number of players.
- ix. Batters will have six (6) opportunities to put the ball in play. They can receive any combination of pitches from the coach or swings off the T. The Coach may pitch from any appropriate distance in order to give the batter an opportunity to hit the ball. All efforts should be made to let the batter put the ball in play, but time should be considered. A 10" or 11" softie ball will be used for all games, with the home team providing the game ball(s).
- x. If possible, defensive players should be rotated to different positions except in situations where injury or embarrassment may occur.
- xi. All balls hit within the infield will result in a single, unless an out is made on the batter. Play will continue if the ball is hit into the outfield. All play stops once the ball breaks the plane of the infield after being hit into the outfield. If the player is past the halfway point, identified by the hash

marks between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> and home, she may continue on towards the next base, if not, she must return to the previous base.

- xii. After the 1<sup>st</sup> two games, when an offensive player is ruled out, she must vacate the base and return to the dugout. (Continue encouraging the players, but help them understand the game by vacating the base).

**b. 8U Universal Rules**

- i. USA Softball approved, 11" balls will be used..
- ii. A team may start the game with seven (7) players but not fall below seven once the game has started. If a team falls below seven players, the game will be forfeited.
  - 1. Exception; if a team has only seven players and one is injured during game play, that team may continue to play with six (6) players.
- iii. All eligible players must be included in the batting line-up and they must bat in the order listed in the official scorebook.
  - 1. If an injured player taken out of the game cannot bat, the batting position is passed over and no out is recorded.
  - 2. The injured player may return to the game in their original batting position.
- iv. Any players arriving late will be added at the bottom of the batting order.
- v. An injured runner (a player who is injured while running the bases) can be substituted for with the player who made the last out, without penalty.
- vi. Five (5) pitches or three swinging misses shall be an out (no called strikes). On the fifth pitch or with two strikes, a foul ball keeps the batter alive if not caught for an out.
- vii. On any attempt to get an out at first base should the ball be overthrown, the runner reaching 1st base may at their own risk advance to 2nd base and stop there. Runners already on base may advance up to two bases at their own risk.
  - 1. example, a runner that began play at 2nd may advance to home. A runner that began at 1st base may advance to 3rd base. There will be no more than two (2) overthrows to any base allowed per batter. The batter will only be able to advance up to 3rd base on the second overthrow. Base runners already on base can advance at their own risk.
- viii. When four (4) runs are scored, the half inning is complete regardless of the number of outs.
- ix. When 60 minutes or four innings of play are complete, whichever comes first, the next inning(s) will be an open inning(s). The open inning(s) will have a run limit of eight (8). Once the open inning starts then every inning after is also an open inning.
- x. Bunting is not allowed.
- xi. No bases on balls or hit by pitch.

- xii. Stealing is not permitted.
- xiii. Base runners may not leave the base until the ball is stuck.
- xiv. No dropped third strike advancement.
- xv. Pitching
  - 1. There will be an 8' radius circle around the front of the 35' pitching mound. The Coach- Pitcher will start their pitching motion from the 35' rubber. At least one foot must be on the rubber. No more than one step may be taken before the ball is released during the pitch.
  - 2. When the ball is hit, the Coach-Pitcher must exit the playing field opposite the direction of play. It is proper and advised for the Coach-Pitcher to remove the bat from play if possible.
  - 3. If a batted ball hits the Coach-Pitcher, the ball is dead, considered a no-pitch and is replayed.
  - 4. The Coach-Pitcher should make an attempt to deliver a flat pitch to each batter. The umpire should determine if the pitchers are delivered with an arch and address accordingly.
  - 5. There should be no more than 20 seconds between pitches to maintain an adequate pace of the game.
- xvi. Base coaches at first and third may not come into contact with the base runner during the play. The play is considered live until the umpire indicates that time has been called. If a coach makes contact with a base runner, the runner will be ruled out.
- xvii. All on deck batters must remain in the on deck circle until the previous play has concluded.
- xviii. A maximum of two (2) coaches may be positioned in the outfield beyond the outfielder's area of play. They may not enter the playing area or interfere with play in any manner.
- xix. The Player-Pitcher may be positioned anywhere in or around the 8' radius circle as long as one foot is positioned inside or touching the circle. There is no restriction once the ball is hit.
- xx. Players will be positioned as pitcher, catcher, four infielders and four outfielders. Infielders shall not be closer than 45' from home plate until the ball is hit. Outfielders shall be placed in the grass until the ball is hit.
- xxi. Players may not play a position for more than 2 consecutive innings in a game. The 1<sup>st</sup> base player can play that position the entire game if you do not have another 1<sup>st</sup> base player. If it is determined that a player takes the field in the same position for the third inning, a warning will be given to that team. If a second offense of this manner takes place, the batter of the opposing team gets first base automatically. If a third offense is recorded, the coach will be ejected from the game.
- xxii. There is no infield fly rule.
- xxiii. A ball hit foul and caught by the catcher must travel in an upward arch to be considered an out.

1. A tipped ball that goes directly to the catcher's glove is a strike unless it is the third strike, in which case the batter will receive an additional pitch.
- xxiv. Defensive play that can stop runner advancement:
1. The defensive team throws the ball to the base in front of the lead runner and the fielder at the base has control of the ball or the umpire waits to see if the lead runner is tagged out. Once the lead runner is tagged out, reaches the base safely or goes back to the previous base, play is called dead.
  2. Throwing the ball to the pitcher in the circle does not stop play.
  3. If the defensive team throws the ball to a base other than the base in front of the lead runner, play will not stop until all runners ahead of the defensive play stop their advancement.
  4. For example, with a runner on 2nd base, the ball is hit to left field. The left fielder throws the ball to 2nd base and stops the advancement of the batter. The runner, who started at 2nd base, going to 3rd, does not have to stop running because the play was made at 2nd base. However, if the runner hesitates or stops momentarily at 3rd for any reason, the Umpire may call time and the runner cannot advance.
  5. The overthrow rule should not be confused with a throw made to a base other than the base in front of the lead runner. An overthrow by definition is a throw that is intended for a base and by passes that base without being fielded by the defensive player.
- xxv. If the pitcher fields a batted ball in the pitcher circle, one foot is considered in the circle, and the pitcher has to make a throw to respected base and cannot run to 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- xxvi. Teams can have a coach behind home plate to throw the ball back to the coach-pitcher. They can not coach players from that position and can not interfere once the ball is in play.
- c. **10U & 12U Universal Rules**
- i. USA Softball approved 11" balls will be used in the 10U
  - ii. USA Softball approved 12" ball will be used in the 12U
  - iii. Teams will be comprised of ten (10) players if available, if not the game may be played with eight (8) players minimum to be considered a regulation game.
  - iv. When four (4) runs are scored, the half inning is complete regardless of the number of outs.
  - v. When 60 minutes or four innings of play are complete, whichever comes first, the next inning(s) will be an open inning(s). The open inning(s) will have a run limit of eight (8). Once the open inning starts then every inning after is also an open inning.
  - vi. When a play at home plate occurs, the base runner should make every attempt to avoid a collision with the Catcher.



- vii. The Look Back rule is in effect. The rule states that when the pitcher has possession of the ball within the 8' radius circle and is not making a play on a runner, a runner must immediately return to her base or proceed to the next base without hesitation or be liable to be called out by the umpires. No runner may leave a base when the pitcher has possession of the ball in the circle and is not making a play on a runner. If the circle is not marked, the Umpire will approximate the circle radius when making this judgment call. Exception: when a batter receives a walk, runners on 2nd or 3rd can remain off their bases until the batter-runner reaches 1st base. As soon as the batter-runner reaches 1st base and the pitcher has the ball in the circle, the other runners must return to their base or commit to the next base.

**d. 10U Specific Rules**

- i. No infield fly
- ii. No dropped third strike
- iii. Runners may only advance one base on an overthrow
- iv. The Player-Pitcher should make every effort to finish the batter. If four balls are thrown, a Coach-Pitcher will enter the game and complete the at-bat.
- v. There is no "5 pitch rule" if the first 4 pitches are balls. If it is a full count (3-2) then the player-pitcher is allowed to finish the batter until she pitches the 4th ball or the batter strikes out or the ball is batted in play.
- vi. The Player-Pitcher will then assume a "pitcher's helper" position. The Coach-Pitcher must make every attempt to deliver flat pitches, with minimal arch.
- vii. The Coach-Pitcher will be allowed a maximum number of pitches equal to the number of strikes remaining for the batter. The final coach pitch must be put in play or hit foul. If neither occurs the batter is declared out. The Coach-Pitcher must start with 2 feet on the pitching rubber.
- viii. A 3rd strike foul against the Coach-Pitcher entitles the batter to another pitch until the ball is put in play or a non-strike is pitched. If neither occurs the batter is declared out.
- ix. A batter who is hit by a pitch from a Player-Pitcher is entitled to 1st base. A batter who is hit by a pitch from a Coach-Pitcher is not entitled to 1st base, and this pitch counts against the overall number of pitches awarded to the coach-pitcher.
- x. If the Coach-Pitcher is struck with a batted ball or makes incidental contact with a player attempting to field a batted ball, play will stop and the ball shall be declared a dead ball. All runners will return to the base they occupied when the pitch was made. The pitch does not count in the pitch total or the pitch count and the batter is awarded another pitch.
- xi. If in an Umpire's judgment, interference by the Coach-Pitcher is intentional, the batter is out and all runners will return to the base they occupied when the pitch was made.

- xii. There will be no stealing during Coach-Pitch. A base runner leaving early may be called out. If the Catcher attempts to throw out an advancing base runner and the ball is overthrown, the runners may not advance beyond that base.
  - 1. (Example 1). A runner already on 3rd base may not attempt to advance in this situation.
  - 2. (Example 2). A runner on 3rd may only advance home on a force play or a batted ball. On a batted ball the runner can only advance one base on an overthrow when no additional attempt is made for a play.
- xiii. Bunting is not permitted during Coach-Pitch.

**e. 12U and 13+ Specific Rules**

- i. Once the pitched ball leaves the Pitcher's hand, the runners may attempt to advance (steal).
- ii. A base runner leaving early may be called out.
- iii. If the Catcher attempts to throw out an advancing base runner and the ball is overthrown, the runner(s) may continue to advance at their own risk.
- iv. Intentional walks are permitted (one per game in 12U and 13+). If a pitcher intends to intentionally walk a batter, all pitches must be legally delivered to the batter.
  - 1. EXCEPTION - If there are no runners on base, a pitcher wishing to intentionally walk a batter will be granted such by signaling the Umpire of her intention. No pitches need be thrown for an intentional walk to be granted in this situation.
- v. The infield fly rule is in effect for 12U and older play.
- vi. The dropped 3rd strike rule is in effect for 12U and older play. The batter may attempt to advance to 1st base provided the base is open.
  - 1. EXCEPTION - if there are 2 outs, then the batter may attempt to advance with a runner on 1st.