

Machine Pitch Softball (3rd Grade) 2024

League Philosophy:

The Machine Pitch Division serves as the transition between Tee Ball and Player Pitch. We have found that all players gain confidence throughout the season hitting off the machine, and it makes for action packed games, which is good for so many reasons. All coaches and parents should remember the primary objectives are to teach the children how to play the game, to develop their softball skills, to instill a sense of teamwork, and to create an environment that allows them to enjoy the game.

Sportsmanship and respect for others is essential. Any coach, parent, fan, or player behaving in a hostile or threatening manner towards another coach, player, parent, fan, or umpire shall be brought to the attention of the Board of Directors, which may respond with the appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion from the league.

All little league playing rules apply, except where modified here.

Game Length: Regular Season: **6 innings or 1 hour and 45 minutes maximum** (you may finish the inning at the time limit, but please be courteous to the next game so that we do not run late). **No new inning shall start after 1 hour and 30 minutes.** A new inning officially starts once the 3rd out (or final run) is recorded at the bottom of the previous inning. In the event of a tie after regulations, extra innings may be played but are still **subject to the maximum time limit above.** Play-off games are played to full completion and until a winner is determined.

Keeping Score: Bench coaches should confirm runs scored at the end of each inning. The final score should be reported by the winning team via email to the league commissioner (chllsbgamescores@gmail.com) and will be posted online. Please be sure to CC the opposing coach in order to prevent discrepancies.

Ball Size: Each team has been supplied with a bucket of correctly sized softballs for practice. This level uses the 11 inch Little League approved yellow softballs. Each team has also been provided with official Little League game balls. **Each** team will provide one (1) **NEW** game ball to the umpire prior to each game. At the conclusion of the game, each team will be returned a game ball for the coach to do with as they please.

Field Size: Base path shall be set at 55ft. This is the closer pegs at Norfolk and Eccles. Hosek pegs are set at 55 ft.

Batting Lineup: All players shall be included in the batting line up, and teams shall use a continuous batting order. Coaches are encouraged to rotate the line up throughout the season so that players have the experience of batting in different spots in the order. There is no limit to the number of batters per inning. Maximum of 5 runs per half inning (4 runs maximum for the leading team if leading by more than 10 runs).

Defensive Positions: 9 Players in normal positions on defense, including a Catcher. Each player must play a minimum of ½ the game on defense (more is encouraged). Players are only allowed to play the same position for two (2) innings in a row. No player shall sit twice before every player has sat once. Each player must play one (1) inning in the infield.

One (1) player shall occupy the pitching circle on defense and must start within two (2) steps of the pitching rubber, on either side the pitching machine, NOT in front of it. Players must fill all other normal fielding positions and are not allowed to shift or overload their defense based on the hitter.

Infielders must start no closer to the batter than the base path.

Outfielders must start in the outfield which is defined as both feet in the grass.

Coaches are NOT allowed on the field while their team is on defense. One (1) Coach is allowed to be 1-2 steps from the dugout but coaching between plays should be limited so as not to cause a delay.

Playing the game:

All pitches shall come from the machine operated by an adult Coach of the batting team.

Balls and strikes are called, but batters cannot walk. They can strike out by swinging or on a called 3rd strike. The Strike zone is the shoulders to the knees in height, and one (1) ball on either side of the plate in width. The pitching machine will be set at 4-3-3, and positioned approximately 27 feet from home plate, in front of the pitching plate.

No Bunts: Players may NOT square to bunt. Encourage your players to swing the bat, they are going to see a lot of good pitches to hit. If a “swinging bunt” occurs, it is played as normal, if in fair territory.

Lead-Offs are NOT allowed: Baserunners may not leave base until the ball crosses the plate.

Stealing is not allowed at the machine pitch level.

Base Running Rules:

On a batted ball (either a fly ball or a hard ground ball) that reaches the outfield grass (outfield is defined as touching the grass beyond the infield dirt) or is played on by an outfielder (a player who started the play with both feet in the grass), batters/baserunners may advance as far as possible at their own risk, until the ball is controlled by the defense in the infield. “Control” is defined by the ball being stopped by or in possession of a defensive player anywhere within 2 steps of the baselines of the infield or around home plate. Any base runner that has not advanced more than halfway to the next base must go back to the previous base. Though a player could sneak in from 3rd base, we are trying to eliminate the “track meet” mentality. It is important that your 3rd base coach be aware of this “control” rule so as not to over aggressively send runners home. It is recommended that the Head Coach is the 3rd base Coach.

On any hit that does not leave the infield, batters/baserunners are limited to only advance 1 base initially. If an overthrow occurs, please see the “overthrow” rules below.

Overthrows:

Out of Play – runners may advance ONLY ONE BASE on an overthrow that goes out of play (over or beyond the fence line. This will occur frequently at Hosek).

In Play – Runners may attempt to advance 1 base (and only one) on an overthrow that remains in play, at their own risk. The defense is encouraged to back each other up and hustle to retrieve the ball and can still make a play on a runner trying to advance. If a second overthrow occurs in the same play, no baserunner may advance any further. Any runner that leaves a base (even momentarily) as a move to advance is subject to being tagged out.

***Wall at 3rd base** – No runner may advance to home as an extra base on an overthrow anywhere in the infield. Example: If a play starts with runners on 1st and 2nd, and there is an infield hit with an overthrow at any base, the runner who initially advances to 3rd must stay there, and therefore no other runner may advance because all bases are occupied. Any runner that leaves a base (even momentarily) as a move to advance is subject to being tagged out.

Overthrows of a ball that was hit to the outfield from an outfielder to an infielder are not considered “overthrows”, and runners may still advance at their own risk until the ball is “controlled” as described above.

Pitching Machine is IN PLAY: If a ball hits the pitching machine (either batted or thrown), it is still IN PLAY, unless it rolls out of play immediately after hitting the machine

Runner for your Catcher: With two (2) outs (and only once there are 2 outs), if the planned catcher for the next inning is on base, the coach MUST use a courtesy runner, who shall be the player who made the last out. This is a “speed up rule” so that the catcher is prepared with gear on for the next half inning.

Umpires: Umpires calls are final. There is never a good reason to argue with an Umpire.

Regular Season Games will use at least one (1) umpire. The umpire will call the game from a position behind the pitcher. We use local minors as umpires for this league. Remember, just as the players are learning how to play the game, the umpires are also learning how to officiate a softball game.

During the post-season play-offs there will be two umpires, one behind home plate and one in the field

Player Safety

“Must Avoid Contact” Rule:

Any runner is out when the runner does not slide or attempt to avoid a fielder who has possession of the ball and is attempting to make a tag. This rule is often misinterpreted as a “must slide rule”. The purpose of the rule is to prevent collisions and injuries. The runner does not have to slide, they have three (3) choices: 1 – slide; 2 - go around the fielder while still staying within the base path; or 3 - retreat to the previous base.

Also remember a fielder without the ball has NO right to block the base path. On a thrown ball, the runner has the right of way. This does not give the runner the right to charge into or violently collide with a fielder. Unsportsmanlike conduct covers this action. On a play at the plate, catchers should be taught to defend the inside of the diamond, while allowing a clear path to the base.

No Headfirst Sliding: A runner WILL NOT slide headfirst into a base on a dead run. They may dive back into a base if they are nearby. “Diving” is defined from a stationary or a position relatively close to the base that only requires 1 or 2 steps.

Spirit of Play:

- 1.) All players should get an opportunity to play both infield and outfield positions
- 2.) All players should get an opportunity to bat in different positions in the batting order. At the end of the season, the number of plate appearances should be equal for all players.
- 3.) This is an ALL-INCLUSIVE league. Everyone pays the same registration fee.
- 4.) Every team makes the play-offs. There is no regular season champion.
- 5.) During the Play-offs, it becomes more acceptable to shorten your fielding rotation and place players in the batting order and at fielding positions that will best help the team be more competitive, while still meeting the minimum play requirements and never sitting for 2 consecutive innings.

These rules are meant to serve as guidelines for the league. There are endless scenarios that will challenge interpretations that cannot be explicitly covered in this summary. At the end of the day, common sense and sportsmanship should prevail on all issues. These rules are not meant to be argued to make a play go your way. Disagreements can be discussed between Head Coaches and conducted in a reasonable manner. Coaches cannot overturn a judgment call by an Umpire.

At any point during the season, the CHLL Board reserves the right to alter, add or eliminate certain rules that it determines will better serve the league.