

BIG LEAGUE DREAMS

SPORTS PARK

SOFTBALL

2024 RULE BOOK



BIG LEAGUE DREAMS SPORTS PARK

1150 Big League Dreams Parkway
League City, TX 77573
281-316-3400

www.bigleaguedreams.com

Any rules not covered in this rule book will be covered by the current USSSA rulebook.

THE PLAYING FIELD

1. On fields where the fence does not run completely across the outfield **OR** down the sides of the field, an imaginary line exists which will be used as the out of play line and all appropriate bases will be awarded.
2. Only one on-deck batter is allowed outside the dugout at all times. All other players are to remain in the dugout or behind the out-of-play fence.
3. Only players on the roster may be in the dugout during the game. Children are prohibited from entering the dugout at any time during the game.
4. No smoking, vaping or alcohol is allowed in the dugouts or on the field of play. The umpire, UIC and/or league coordinator will issue one warning to the offending team. If continued, the game will be declared a forfeit and the team and/or offending player will be subject to suspension. Any guest caught consuming alcohol NOT purchased from BLD or smoking marijuana, will be escorted from the park and suspended for a minimum 6 months. BLD will not hear appeals for this type of suspension.
5. Big League Dreams utilizes a “Safety First Base”. Any batted ball hitting the white portion should be fair and any ball hitting the orange portion should be foul. On the initial throw to First Base from the infield or outfield, the batter-runner **MUST** touch the orange portion of the base but not the white. **EXCEPTION:** If the throw pulls the Fielder off the bag into foul territory or in another direction, then the base runner or the Fielder may use either bag for safety. If legally appealed by the defense, the runner may be called out. The defensive player **MUST** always touch the white portion. This rule is in effect only on the initial play at First Base. This does not include:
 1. Returning to the base after over running,
 2. Running on a base hit to the outfield (unless there is an initial play at first base) or
 3. Re-tagging to advance on fly ball.

EQUIPMENT

1. The use of any bat that exceeds 1.20 BPF, is on any current banned list or includes titanium will be prohibited in league play. All bats (with the exception of Senior leagues) must have one of the official USSSA stamps pictured below:



2. Altered Bats: Big League Dreams utilizes the same policy and procedures outlined in the USSSA rule book on any bat(s) found to have been altered and used in game play.

3. At the start of the game, the home team must furnish a usable BLD stamped game ball. When a ball goes out of play the responsible teams shall provide a back up ball until the game ball is brought back into play. Example: If the visiting team hits a ball out of play, they must supply the umpire with an approved back up ball. If the ball is retrieved, the umpire will return the backup ball to the proper team.
4. Uniforms are optional. ALL players must wear shoes. A shoe shall be considered legal if it is made with either leather or canvas uppers or similar materials. The soles may have soft or hard rubber cleats. **METAL CLEATS ARE PROHIBITED.** Shoe sole or heel projections other than the standard shoe plate are prohibited. The all-purpose molded cleat softball shoe is legal.
5. **PROTECTIVE GEAR:** As a rule, BLD permits players to determine the use of protective equipment when they deem appropriate. Game conditions (temperature, equipment, rain, wind, visibility, field conditions, humidity, etc.) vary from game to game and from field to field. In addition, the relative and absolute experience and skill levels of teams and players will vary from player to player and from team to team. Thus, BLD encourages players to utilize any protective equipment that they deem appropriate. Such protective gear will be allowed, unless by rule or by UIC/League Coordinator/Umpire ruling that such protective gear is disallowed as unsafe or as providing an unfair competitive advantage.

DEFINITIONS

The **LEAGUE COORDINATOR** is an individual that organizes and maintains league play for softball.

The **UMPIRE IN CHIEF (UIC)** is an individual who trains, evaluates and supervises the umpires and resolves protests pertaining to the playing rules. In most cases, the league coordinator serves as the umpire in chief.

A **PROTEST** is an action that involves a dispute over a play between teams or some action made by the umpire against a team. A protest must be made verbally to the umpire on the field at the time of the incident before the next pitch. The coach must inform the umpire of his/her intention to protest. A league coordinator or UIC must be called to the field to make a ruling before play continues. The ruling made by the League Coordinator or UIC is final with no exceptions. Protest of a judgment call will not be considered. Any protest after a game is complete will not be allowed.

An **EJECTION** is an action taken by an umpire, when an individual flagrantly violates rules, vigorously argues judgment calls, or shows unsportsmanlike conduct. An ejection results in an individual being suspended from all further league and/or tournament play for a minimum of one week. Longer suspensions may result depending on the severity of the infraction. League coordinators will listen to appeals/explanations on suspension only. An ejection or removal from a game is the umpire's decision. If a player/coach is ejected from a game, that player will not be allowed to play for the remainder of that day and for a minimum of one week of league and/or tournament play. If a player/coach is ejected a second time during the same season, that player/coach shall be suspended from all league and tournament play for a minimum of 30 days.

A **REMOVAL** is an action taken by an umpire when his/her judgment, a player is creating a hazard to his/herself or other players. This action is taken to avoid injury to any individual, or if the action did not warrant an ejection. Removal from a game is only for the remainder of the game.

The following actions may warrant a player ejection/removal:

- a) Fake tags, rough tactics or similar unsportsmanlike conduct.
- b) Flagrant rule violations such as fighting etc.
- c) Obscene or objectionable demonstrations toward an official, opponent, or fan (this includes the use of trash talk in an attempt to incite unsportsmanlike conduct).
- d) Intentional or unintentional bat throwing.
- e) Being under the influence of alcohol or any other substance that could cause the player to be at risk to themselves and others.
- f) Any action deemed by Big League Dreams that is not conducive to the park's atmosphere.

Big League Dreams is a family-oriented park. Any obscene language that is loud enough for the umpire to hear is loud enough for spectators to hear. Umpires need not give advance warning.

If a player/coach physically abuses any BIG LEAGUE DREAMS official or staff member, he/she is subject to a minimum 1-year suspension. Abuse of another player or spectator shall result in a minimum 30-day suspension.

BIG LEAGUE DREAMS SPORTS PARK IS PRIVATLEY OWNED AND OPERATED; WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO REFUSE PARK ACCESS TO ANYONE AT ANY TIME.

THE GAME

1. The home team will be designated on the schedule. The home team will be the official scorekeeper and should have an official score sheet properly kept for both teams. If the home team does not have a scorekeeper, the visiting team will be allowed to be the official scorekeeper. If neither team has a scorekeeper, the umpire will be the official scorekeeper and no protest or appeals involving the official score sheet will be allowed. **The umpire's decision will be final.** Exception: during the playoffs the higher seed will be the home team throughout all games.
2. A regulation game shall consist of 7 innings or 55 minutes (whichever transpires first). This includes all playoffs and championship games. No new inning may start after the time limit has expired. The time will be set at 55 minutes and will start once the umpire has made both coaches aware that the game started and is "ON THE CLOCK" (the umpire should notify both teams of the actual time the game will start). In the first game of the night on that individual field, when the clock reaches 44:59, the umpire will declare a forfeit if a team has not submitted a lineup card or shown up to play that game. In all subsequent games, if the clock reaches 49:59, the umpire will declare a forfeit if a team has not submitted a lineup card. Games may start early if both teams are ready and agree to start. Classification or Tournafication game times might differ from this based on the number of teams in the league and any scheduling restrictions that might occur.

TIES

During the Regular Season, games may end in a tie if: 7 innings have been completed or time has expired and the inning was finished. During a Playoff or Championship game, we will continue play in extra innings with the international tie-breaker (last official batter on 2B) and 1 pitch. The same shall happen with the home team. Play will continue until the tie is broken.

Courtesy runners are permitted, but at least one batter must have completed an at bat before this is allowed.

SUSPENDED/CALLED GAMES

1. In a suspended game, if less than 3 complete innings have been played, the game will start over. If more than 3 complete innings have been played, the game will continue from that point until time expires or 7 innings have been played. If the score is tied after 5 or more innings the game will be continued from that point at which it was called.
2. Games called due to rain, inclement weather, or circumstances beyond Big League Dream's control, will be a regulation game if 5 or more complete innings have been played or if the home teams is ahead after 4 ½ inning have been played.

RUN RULES

A 20 run mercy rule will be in effect after the 4th inning.

A 15 run mercy rule will be in effect after the 5th inning.

HOME RUN RULES

The following HOMERUN RULES will be used for designated divisions:

Men's & Coed Major and AAA Divisions:	5 homeruns
Men's & Coed AA Division:	3 homeruns
Men's & Coed A Division:	2 homeruns
Men's Rookie Division:	1 homerun
Coed Rookie Division	0 homeruns

After a team has used their home runs, any other home run will result in the batter being called **OUT**. All home runs will be "Hit n Sit".

PLAYER PROTESTS/INELIGIBLE PLAYERS

1. All protests will be handled on the spot. Coaches must protest immediately at the point in question. Protests after both teams have left the field will not be allowed.
2. Ineligible player protests must be made before the 3rd out of the bottom of the 3rd inning. Players can be protested after this point only if they enter the game as a substitute. Only one ineligible player protest per game is allowed and up to two players may be questioned. After the start of the 4th inning, players must be protested upon them taking an offensive or defensive position. If a team admits to having an illegal player before the coordinator checks the

eligibility, a forfeit will be awarded to the protesting team and no penalties will be imposed. The team penalty for an illegal player is forfeiture of that game and their next scheduled game. The coach and illegal player penalty are suspended from all league and tournament play for a period of 30 days. In the case of a forfeit the winning team has the option of taking a 7-0 score or the actual score of the game at the time of the forfeit. Rosters are frozen at the end of the night on Week 3. Ineligible player protests will not be allowed until after the roster freeze date.

The following situations can make you an ineligible player:

- a) A player who has not paid their player registration fee.
- b) A player not on the team roster after the roster freeze date.
- c) Playing on two teams in the same division on the same night after the roster freeze date.

THE PLAYERS AND SUBSTITUTES

Players must be at least 15 years old to participate in league play. Players under the age of 18 must have a parent or legal guardian signature on the player's waiver card before participation. All players must be able to produce valid picture I.D. upon request by a league coordinator.

1. The minimum number of players required to start is 7. Any number less than 7 at any point during the game shall be a forfeit. If a player shows up late, they **MUST** be added to the bottom of the lineup and enter the game immediately. If for any reason a player in the batting order has to leave the game, including injury, that position in the batting order becomes an out unless replaced by a substitute. USSSA substitution and Re-entry rules will apply for legal substitute.
2. Teams may bat as many rostered players as desired that are present at game time.

CLASSIFICATION

Teams assigned a classification level may be reevaluated and changed after a team's first game in order to maintain parity in each division. The league coordinator will make the final decisions as to the classifications of each team. If a team's level is changed, that team's record will be carried over to the team's new division.

ROSTER

Team rosters will be frozen after the third week of play. Teams must have at least **12** paid spots on their roster at this time. **EXCEPTION:** In all cases in which a player is dropped from the team's roster, that player must be replaced in order to maintain a minimum of **12** players. By dropping a player, the added player is then responsible to register and pay his or her player fee. Hardship cases will be heard by the league coordinators and evaluated on a case-by-case basis. **Under no circumstances will players be allowed to be added during playoffs.** It is the responsibility of the coach to make sure all the temp spots are assigned names by the end of the night on week 4. The coach will have to sign off on their team roster also by end of the night on week 4. This will be the Playoff Roster.

Players have until the start of their 1st game on Week 3 to pay their player's fee. After that point in time, the player's fee will be increased due to late payment. All players must pay the player's fee and be on the roster no later than the fourth week. Teams will not be allowed to play on the fourth week without the proper number of players registered.

SEASON TIE BREAKER

If teams are tied at the season's completion the following tie breaking rules will be in effect: Head to Head records will be the first determining factor followed by lowest runs allowed head to head. In the event that the tie is not broken, then the fewest runs allowed for the season will be the determining factor. In the event of a tie between 3 or more teams, run differential between the tied teams for the entire season will be the first determining factor. The team with the best record head to head will be the higher seed. If no team has a better record than the other teams, run differential between the tied teams will be the next determining factor. If the tie is not broken, then the fewest number of runs allowed for the season will be the determining factor. In a 3, or more, team tie break, the rules above are used to determine the best team then a new tie break will be used based on how many teams are left.

PITCHING RULE

A pitcher's box is used that extends 8 feet behind the rubber, 2 feet on each on side of the rubber and 3 feet (imaginary) above the pitcher's head. Any ball hit inside the box and beyond the rubber will result in an automatic out and will be declared a dead ball. All runners go back to the base at which they started. If the ball hits the ground before the rubber the ball is live and in play.

A legal delivery shall be a ball which is delivered to the batter with an underhand motion. **Pitchers can pitch from anywhere in the box but must have one foot completely inside the lines at the time of release.** The penalty for not having one foot in the box or on the pitching rubber will be an automatic "ball" declared by the umpire.

- a) The pitch shall be released at a moderate speed. The speed is left entirely up to the umpire.
- b) The ball must arc higher than the batter's head **or** 6'.
- c) The ball must not exceed a height of more than 12 feet above the ground.
- d) When the pitcher is in the pitching position, only a definite underhand motion is permitted in the delivery of the Pitch. No faking or juking of any kind is permitted.

STRIKE ZONE

The strike zone is 19" from the rear of the plate making a 21" x 36" rectangle with the plate extension (mat). A legally pitched ball not struck that lands on any part of the plate or mat will be a strike.

BATTING

All batters start their bat with a count of one ball and one strike. The batter is out after his/her second foul ball with two strikes.

SCORING

The 21"x36" rectangle made by the plate & mat shall count in all scoring plays. This includes the base runner touching any part of the rectangle in an attempt to score, as well as the defense touching any part of the rectangle on a force play at Home Plate.

BASE RUNNING/COURTESY RUNNERS

One courtesy runner per teams per inning may be used. Courtesy runner may be anyone in the lineup (**does not have to be the last out**). In Coed, only one male and one female per inning. The courtesy runner must be of the same gender. **However**, if the courtesy runner is on base and their turn to bat is due in the lineup, they will be declared out.

LEADOFF RULE

Base runners will be allowed to leave the base upon the release of the ball from the pitcher's hand. Base runners may not "steal" a base, however the lead off will allow "hit & run" strategies to be implemented into the game. By leading off, base runners will be subject to being "picked off". "Pick off" attempts will be governed by the "force play" rule. The ball must beat the runner to the base; tags are allowed. If the "pick off" throw gets by the fielder the base runner(s) may proceed to advance to as many bases as he/she may get. On any pitch called a ball (not on a pitch that is short and dead by rule) or a strike the ball shall remain alive and runners who were attempting to advance on a hit and run play or other wise leave their base early are in jeopardy of being put out under the aforementioned "force play" rule. When a batter receives a walk, the ball is alive and in play, unless the 4th ball is short and dead by rule. Base runners may not advance on an overthrow from the catcher to the pitcher. All pickoff attempts must be thrown directly from the catcher to the base they are attempting the play on. Pick off attempts will not be allowed on any pitch that falls in front of the home plate area. This is considered a dead ball.

PLAYOFFS

The following is the breakdown of the playoff participation:

- a) In each division with 5 or less teams 3 teams to playoffs*
- b) In a division with 6-8 teams 4 teams to playoffs*
- c) In a division with 9 or more teams 6 teams to playoffs*

The higher seed team will be home team throughout the playoffs. Playoffs will use the same format as regular season games including time limit and run rule. Championship game will consist of 7 innings or 55 minutes or until a winner is determined.

NOTE: *Picture I.D.'s will be required for all players to participate in the playoffs.*

COED RULES

1. A minimum of 4 females must be present to start the game. You may not play with a 6/4 ratio of either sex. Any player may take a position anywhere on defense.
2. Batting order must alternate male/female or female/male. **Males may not bat back-to-back in the lineup.** Teams may bat all players provided they are on the roster. If a team bats an odd number of males they must take an out in the first position of the batting order and start with a male at the beginning of the batting order. If the even number player arrives, she will enter that spot. If a team bats an odd number of girls no out will be taken. EXAMPLE: The

visitors have 4 females and 5 males at game time; the game will start with a male batter. An out is recorded every time that first position in the batting order comes up until the 5th female arrives.

3. Coed "A" and Coed "Rookie" Divisions: For the first 4 innings, no team can score more than 7 runs in an inning. Once 7 runs have been scored in one at-bat, the half-inning is over. Exception: **IF** a team is behind by more than 7 runs they can score as many runs as takes to **TIE** the score. **Beginning in the 5th inning, teams may score an unlimited number of runs.**
4. When a male receives a base on balls, **regardless of the pitch count**, he will be awarded first and second base. The next female batter has the option of going to first base, or taking her "at bat".
5. A minimum of 3 outfielders must be behind the outfield restriction line (160 foot arc from home plate) when the batter hits the pitch. **The rover can only be a female.** PENALTY: The batter and all base runners will be awarded one base unless each has advanced one base safely, in which case the play proceeds without reference to the violation. The ball does not have to be fielded by the outfielder committing the infraction to be deemed a penalty.
6. There will be no restrictions on a player (male or female) as to which defensive position he or she may play **except for the rover position.**

SPECIALTY LEAGUES AT BLD

If your team is participating in one of our specialty leagues, the coach will receive an addendum rules sheet that pertains to your specific specialty league at the time of registration.

It is the responsibility of the Coach to inform players of all rules and regulations of the league. Good sportsmanship is expected from all players at all times. Coaches will be held responsible for the conduct of their players and spectators.

Note: In the event of a returned check a \$25.00 fee will be charged to that team or player. A second returned check would be a \$40.00 fee. In the event of a third returned check a forfeit will be given to the team responsible. Players and/or teams will be ineligible for play until the returned check plus the fee has been satisfied.

THANK YOU FOR CHOOSING BIG LEAGUE DREAMS FOR YOUR SOFTBALL LEAGUE PLAY. OUR GOAL IS TO STRIVE TO ENSURE YOU HAVE A GREAT EXPERIENCE!! IF YOU HAVE ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS ABOUT LEAGUE RULES OR ANYTHING ELSE, PLEASE INQUIRE IN THE SPORTS OFFICE.