

**BIG LEAGUE DREAMS**

**SPORTS PARK**

**SOFTBALL**

**2023 RULE BOOK**



**BIG LEAGUE DREAMS SPORTS PARK**

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**Any rule not in the Big League Dreams rule book shall be governed by the  
2020 USSSA rule book.**

## 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.
4. No smoking or alcohol is allowed in the dugouts or on the field of play. The umpire 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 the offending player will be subject to suspension.
5. Big League Dreams uses 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. If legally appealed by the defense, the runner will 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:
  - a) Returning to the base after over-running,
  - b) Running on a ball hit to the outfield (unless there is an initial play at first base) or
  - c) Re-tagging to advance on a fly ball.

## EQUIPMENT

1. The use of any bat that exceeds 1.20 BPF or includes titanium will be prohibited in league play. **The Approved Bat List can be found on the Internet ([www.usssa.com](http://www.usssa.com)).** All bats must be USSSA Approved.
2. Big League Dreams will furnish one new 12" softball for all men's games and one new 11" softball for all women's league games. In coed games, one new 12" or 11" softball and a used 12" or 11" softball will be provided. At the start of the game, the home team must furnish a usable backup 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. All balls used must have the BLD stamped logo.
3. Uniforms are optional; however softball attire is required.

## 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. Protest of a judgment call will not be considered.

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.

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 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 plus bonus time. No new inning may start after the time limit has expired. The time will be set at 60 minutes as soon as the prior game finishes (or at the next scheduled game time if a game ends early). In the first game of the night, when the clock reaches 44:59, the umpire will declare a forfeit if a team has not submitted a lineup card. In all subsequent games, if the clock reaches 54:59, 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.
3. If time permits, a game that is tied after 7 innings shall be continued by playing the next inning with the visiting team placing the last official batter (not the last out) during the previous inning on second base. The same shall happen with the home team. Play will continue until the tie is broken. If the last official batter was out due to a vacant spot in the lineup, then no runner will be put on second base for that team. ***Courtesy runners are permitted.*** No new inning may start after time expires. The game will then be declared a tie. 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 inning have been played or if the home team is ahead after 4 ½ innings have been played.
4. A 20 run mercy rule will be in effect after the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> innings.

5. The following HOMERUN RULES will be used for designated divisions:
 

Men's & Coed Major and AAA Divisions:	5 homeruns, then one-up
Men's & Coed AA Division:	3 homeruns, then one-up
Men's & Coed A Division:	1 homerun, then one-up
Men's Rookie Division:	1 homerun one only
Coed Rookie Division	0 homeruns
  
6. EXPLANATION: Once team "A" has hit their total of homeruns in a game, they can not hit their next homerun until team "B" has hit their allowed homeruns. At that point, both teams may continue hitting homeruns, but neither team can be more than 1 homerun ahead of the other. PENALTY: **OUT**.
  
7. 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.
  
8. 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.
  
9. Ineligible player protests must be made before the 3<sup>rd</sup> out of the bottom of the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 is suspension 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.
  
10. 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.
  - c) Playing on two teams in the same division on the same night.
  - d) A player who has been suspended from that game.

## 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. Any player can take a defensive position at any point of the game, even if they are not in the batting order. ***You must bat at least 9 (or you may not bat fewer players than are on defense).***

2. 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 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.
3. Teams may bat as many rostered players as desired that are present at game time. Late players may be added to the bottom of the lineup as they arrive.
4. 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.**

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. BIG LEAGUE DREAMS SPORTS PARK IS PRIVATELY OWNED AND OPERATED;  
WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO REFUSE PARK ACCESS TO ANYONE AT ANY 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 with the following exceptions: In all cases in which a player is dropped from the teams' 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.**

## **TIE BREAKER**

If two 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 determined (unless one team is undefeated against the other tied teams).

## **PITCHING RULE**

1. A pitcher's box is used that extends 8 feet behind the rubber, 2 feet on each 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.
2. A legal delivery shall be a ball which is delivered to the batter with a definite underhand motion. Pitchers can pitch from anywhere in the box but must have both feet inside the lines at the time of release. The penalty for not having both feet in the box 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.
  - c) The ball must not exceed a height of more than 12 feet above the ground.
  - d) When the pitcher has started the delivery, the pitch must be released in one complete, underhand forward motion. No over exaggerated movement with either arm or the body is allowed such as pumping, windmill, fake starts or any other movement to confuse the batter.
  - e) One warm-up pitch is allowed after the first inning unless a new pitcher is entering.

## **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. Any pitch landing short of the plate is a dead ball.

## **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.

## **BASE RUNNING**

One courtesy runner per teams per inning may be used. In Coed, only one male or female may be a courtesy runner per inning (not both). The courtesy runner must be of the same gender. The last out will be the courtesy runner. If there are no outs, the last out of the previous inning will be used.

## **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; no tags are allowed. If the "pick off" throw gets by the fielder the base runner must re-tag the base and then 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.

## **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.

**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 males to females. Any ratio of females to males is legal. Any player may take a position anywhere on defense.
2. Batting order must alternate male/female, female/male, or female/female. **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 5<sup>th</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> inning, teams may score an unlimited amount of runs.
4. When a male receives a base on balls without a strike being thrown or an intentional walk, 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.

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.