

RULE VIII (B) – YOUTH FAST PITCH SOFTBALL

ARTICLE I – ELIGIBILITY

SECTION A – AGE DIVISION

1. There are six divisions for fast pitch softball. Participants must be 6 by the age control date: on September 1st of current year. The Age Divisions are as follows:
 - a. 8 & Under Machine Pitch
 - b. 8 & Under Coach Pitch
 - c. 10 & Under
 - d. 10 & Under Machine Pitch
 - e. 12 & Under
 - f. 14 & Under
 - g. 17 & Under
2. For all team sports allow within district lines for individuals to compete in the nearest or adjoin departments with the following restrictions:
 - a. Home County or Agency has no program.
 - b. Cannot cross district lines.
 - c. Cannot pass over a program to participate in another agency.
 - d. Must participate in the sport program in the host agency.
 - e. Host agency must endorse participant.
 - f. Participant must be approved by District Athletic Chair. Once approved, they are legal throughout District and State.
 - g. Host agency must notify the District Athletic Chair with list and Home County of each crossover participant. The district must forward info to the State Host and Athletic Chair.
3. There shall be two classifications in youth competition: A/ B and C
4. Youth coaches must be certified by one of the following programs: NYSCA, ACEP, GHSA, HIGHER GROUND, DOYLE, MVP, or USA SOFTBALL ACE.
5. Any player or coach ejected from a game for unsportsmanlike conduct will be suspended for one game, in addition to the game from which ejected; or, in the case of an individual event within a meet or match, for the duration of that event.

ARTICLE II – REGULATIONS

SECTION A – GOVERNING RULES

1. Official USA Softball Fast Pitch Softball Rules (for use in all championship games of USA Softball) printed in the current edition of the Official Guide for National USA Softball is accepted guide for GRPA games with the exceptions found in this manual.
 - a. The use of National Federation and current GHSA rules and regulations for pitching requirements pertaining to only having to have the pivot foot (one foot) in contact with the pitching plate is allowed.

2. Courtesy Runners

- a. At any time, the team at-bat may use courtesy runners for the pitcher and/or the catcher. The same runner may not be used for both positions. Neither the pitcher nor the catcher will be required to leave the game under such circumstances.
- b. The courtesy runner must be anyone not currently in the batting order. It cannot be the same person for both. If no subs are available then the last batted out is to be utilized as the courtesy runner.
- c. A player may not run as a courtesy runner for the pitcher or the catcher and then be used as a substitute for another player in the half inning.
- d. In 10U with machine and in 8U, no courtesy runner for the pitcher is allowed.
- e. Extra Players (EP) – A maximum of 2 EP’s can be used at all levels of GRPA softball. **No flex allowed.**

- 3. **DROPPED THIRD STRIKE INTERPRETATION:** Become batter/runner, when the catcher fails to catch the third strike before the ball touches the ground and there are fewer than two outs and first base is not occupied at the time of the pitch, or any time there are two outs. USA/ASA Rule 8; Section 18.
- 4. Per the “Return to Play Act of 2013”, effective January 1, 2014, all agencies are required to provide concussion education material to all youth participants and their parents. The verification of compliance to this law is affirmed by the signature of the agency director on the GRPA roster.
- 5. All head and assistant coaches that are coaching youth teams participating in all levels of GRPA Athletics must have undergone a criminal background check through their Department. By signing the teams GRPA roster, the Department Director or their designee attests that this has taken place.
- 6. Use of audio or visual recording devices, including a cell phone, is not permitted in changing areas, rest rooms, or locker rooms. The use of audio or visual recording devices is not allowed in resolution of protested matters.

SECTION B – LENGTH OF GAMES

- 1. A regulation game shall consist of:

Division	Innings	Time*
8U 10U 12U	6	one hour thirty minutes (1:30)
8U Machine Pitch 10U Machine Pitch	6	one hour thirty minutes (1:30)
14U 17U	7	one hour thirty minutes (1:30)

Game clock shall start at the first pitch of the game.

**Time Limit Exception – Championship & “if” games.*

- 2. International Tie-breaker: After the regulation game or time limit has expired, the International tie-breaker will be used. The last scheduled batter will be placed on second base. This will continue until a winner is determined. Refer to USA Softball rule 5, Section 11
- 3. The score of a forfeiture game shall be recorded as 7-0.
- 4. All GRPA district and state level tournament games must be played to conclusion. (EXAMPLE: Game starts on Monday and is rained out in the second inning – game resumes at the next playable opportunity

regardless of length of delay or postponement from the exact point that the game was delayed or postponed.)

5. State Tournaments in softball shall be double-elimination, and it is recommended that district level tournaments also be double-elimination.
6. A game shall be considered complete after five innings with eight runs, four innings with twelve runs, three innings with fifteen runs or two innings with twenty runs ahead including championship game and the if-needed championship game. The run rule will apply at all times.

SECTION C – SPECIAL PROVISIONS

There is no mandatory participation requirement for any GRPA sport.

1. SHORTHANDED RULE

a. To start a game:

- i. a game may begin or finish with one less than required to start.
- ii. The vacant position must be listed last in the batting order.
- iii. An out will be recorded when the vacant position in the batting order is scheduled to bat.

b. To continue a game once started with a full team listed on the line-up card:

- i. If a team begins play with the required number of players as listed, that team may continue a game with one less player than is currently in the batting order whenever a player leaves the game for any reason other than ejection. Under no circumstances shall a team be permitted to bat:
 1. less than 8 in fast pitch.
 2. less than 10 in fast pitch when using two EP's.
- ii. If playing shorthanded and a substitute arrives, the substitute must be inserted immediately into the vacant spot. If the substitute refuses to enter for any reason that player becomes ineligible for the remainder of the game.
- iii. If the player leaving the game is a runner or batter, the runner or batter shall be declared out.
- iv. When the player who has left the game is scheduled to bat, an out shall be declared for each turn at bat. An inning or the game can end with an automatic out. The player who has left the game cannot return to the line-up.
EXCEPTION: A player who has left the game under the blood rule may return even after missing a turn at bat.
EFFECT: Failure to have the required number of eligible players to start or continue a game will result in a forfeit.

2. A team can start and/or continue a game with eight players, whenever a player leaves the game for any reason other than ejection. In addition, whenever the player who has left the game under this exception cannot return to the line-up (exception not used in co-ed). A player on the team bench that has participated in the game may enter the game to replace an injured player in any spot in batting order when all players have played. No player removed by an umpire from the game because of injury or ejection may re-enter.
3. A substitute removed may re-enter as a **legal** substitute for an injured player only if all other players have played when the team is reduced to less than 8 players (less than 9 players for pitching machine division).

4. The manager, coach or captain of a team making a substitution must immediately notify the plateumpire who will suspend play and announce the change. Substitutes do not have to be listed on line- up card.
5. The choice of first or last at-bat (home – visitors designation) shall be determined immediately prior to a tournament game by a coin toss supervised by the Tournament Director or his/her representative, except championship game is(a) below.
 - a. In the Championship Game, the undefeated team will have the choice of home or visitor. In the “IF” game, home or visitor will be determined by coin toss.
6. During the school year, youth cannot start a new game after 10:00 PM on weekdays. All games will be scheduled to start no later than 10:00 PM on Friday and Saturday nights but may be played in emergency situations (rain, delay of game, etc.).
7. A maximum of 2 EP’s (Extra Players) will be allowed in GRPA softball.
8. No team may play more than 3 games in a day except under extenuating circumstances. (weather, power failure, etc.)
9. A starter and a substitute will be allowed to re-enter one time during a game.

ARTICLE III – EQUIPMENT

SECTION A – APPROVED EQUIPMENT

1. Rubber-molded, cleated shoes are approved for use in 8U, 10U, and 12U divisions. Steel spikes are EXPRESSLY PROHIBITED and shall be treated as illegal equipment in the 8U, 10U and 12U divisions. **Steel cleats are allowed in the 14U and 17U divisions of fast-pitch softball.** All othershoes must meet USA Softball Rule Book Standards. Smooth and soft-soled athletic shoes including tennis or basketball shoes are acceptable.
2. A minimum of three new USA Softball approved softballs must be available for each game. The official ball shall be that as permitted for play in USA Softball. 12U and up will hit 12” softballs, and 10U youth will hit 11” softballs core .47 Optic Yellow ball. **Must comply with USA Softball Rule 3 – Equipment, Official Softball.** Allow USA Softball and/or GHSA approved ball and it must be Optic yellow with raised seam .47 cor. (375 maximum) and can have a synthetic cover. The 8U and 10U with machine ball may be smooth seam.
3. Regulation home plate, pitcher’s plate, and bases shall be used for all girls’ divisions.
4. Gloves or mitts may be worn by any player as long as the glove or mitt meets National Federation Standards.
5. Helmets with face mask must be worn by batters, base-runners, and on deck participants in youth softball. No player can play without a face mask. The penalty will be treated as illegal equipment. Chinstraps are recommended. No head first sliding is allowed. A dive back to a base is not considered a slide.
6. For all 8U and 10U pitching machine and coach pitch it is mandatory that the pitcher wear a face mask. It is optional for all other infield players.
7. Youth catchers must wear mask with throat protectors and a catcher’s helmet with ear flaps or a batting helmet with a wire face guard and throat protector. (The helmets must cover the ears and back of the head. (Wearing a chest protector and shin guards is MANDATORY.)
8. The double base is mandatory for first base. In the 12U, 14U, and 17U divisions, the batter/runner and the defensive player may use the colored or the white section of first base **ONLY** on the occasion of a dropped third strike. *See case book for double first base clarifications (#43, page 201).*
9. Check www.usasoftball.com for complete and up-to-date list of legal bats.

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- a. If a team is found using an **ILLEGAL/ALTERED/NON APPROVED** bat prior to player entering batter’s box the equipment shall be removed and play continued. **After player enters batter’s box the player will be ejected and an out declared.**

10. A slung bat will result in a team warning for the offending team on the first offense. Each additional slung bat for that team will result in the batter being called out. If the same player continues to violate the rule, he can be removed from the game. **EXCEPTION:** unsportsmanlike conduct.

SECTION B – UNIFORM REQUIREMENTS

1. Team uniforms for softball will consist of matching or like-colored jerseys with a factory-type non-duplicating number on the back at least six inches in height. It is strongly recommended that all team personnel be attired alike. The basic body color determines matching jerseys. The logos, numbers, trim, etc., do not have to match if the basic color is the same. No other youth sports organization patches will be allowed on uniforms in GRPA tournaments. Penalty – Illegal Equipment.
 - Approved uniform: (1) plain shirts with numbers, (2) agency name or agency abbreviation, or (3) agency logo with department/school mascot name. *(EFFECTIVE January 2025)*
2. Team caps are not mandatory. If caps or visors are worn, they must be baseball/softball style caps with no vulgar or obscene words or graphics will be allowed. Tournament Director will make final decision. Caps do not have to match.
3. Shorts are acceptable. It is recommended, but not required, that all players on a team wear the same color shorts. GRPA does not adhere to USA Softball pants/sliding pants rule.
4. Illegal uniforms will be treated as illegal equipment.
5. Coaches and non-player personnel must be attired in a manner that puts GRPA and its member agencies in a positive light. Tournament Directors, Officials, and GRPA State Athletic Committee members reserve the right to remove those from the contest who do not adhere to the standards set forth by the GRPA State Athletic Committee.
6. Managers, coaches, or team scorers who coach the bases must be attired in staff shirts or jerseys that are identical in style and color of each other. Only three adults are allowed in dugout area.
7. The bat boy/girl shall wear a uniform as required in this rule except that is it not mandatory that his/her uniform be identical in style or color with the team. Bat boy/girl must be in that age group or younger. They must wear batting helmets.

SECTION C – PLAYING FIELD REQUIREMENTS

1. The following field specifications are required for all games:

Base Distance		Pitching Distance	
8U	60'	8U	40'
10U		10U Machine Pitch	
12U		12U	
14U		10U Live	35'
17U		14U	43'
	17U		

Batter’s Box		Safety Line	
8U	4’ x 6’	8U Coach Pitch	46’
10U & Up	3’ x 7’	8U & 10U Machine Pitch	40’
		10U Live & Up	none

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Outfield Distance	
10U	Min. – 150' Max – 225'
12U	Min. – 175' Max – 225'
14U 17U	Min. – 200' Max – 225'

2. The batter's box, coach's boxes, and three-foot line halfway from home plate to first base shall be in accordance with current USA Softball rules.
3. It is required that a loud-speaker public announcement system and scorer's area located favorably to the umpires and conducive to accurate and timely scoring be made available for the game.
4. The Agency Host shall be responsible for seeing that the playing field requirements meet GRPA specifications.

ARTICLE IV – GAMES AND AWARDS

SECTION A – DISTRICT

1. A minimum of two registered USA Softball or GHSA officials must be used in district level games.
2. District level competition in girls' softball is to be completed as follows:
 - a. 8U, 10U, 12U, 14U, and 17U Divisions district levels completed a minimum of 10 days prior to the State Tournament.

SECTION B – STAFF

1. **Procedure:** In the event a state tournament cannot be completed within the scheduled time frame and more than 40 percent of the scheduled games have been completed, the following procedures may be used to break ties among teams in the same spot in the bracket. The tournament may be extended by the tournament director after conferring with the State Athletic Committee Chairman.
 - a. The team which advanced the farthest in the winner's bracket.
 - b. Win-lose records, except among undefeated teams.
 - c. If only two teams are tied for a position and have played each other, the winner of the game will be declared champion. EXCEPTION: If Championship is not played and teams did not play each other in tournament, then they shall be declared co-champions.
 - d. The teams shall be ranked according to the fewest runs allowed per game played.
 - e. If a tie still exists, the team shall be ranked according to the most runs scored per game played.
 - f. If a tie still exists, by a coin toss.
 - g. There shall be no mound on the field for State Tournaments.

ARTICLE V – OFFICIALS AND PARTICIPANTS

SECTION A – GAME OFFICIALS, PLAYERS, AND OTHER TEAM MEMBERS

1. A minimum of two registered USA Softball or GHSA game officials that are a member of an approved association in USA Softball or GHSA and of a chartered USA Softball or GHSA Umpires Association must be used in District and State play.
2. All team members not actually participating in the game, to include coaches and manager, must stay within the confines of the dugout or dugout area except to coach the bases from the coach's box or talk with players during a called time.

ARTICLE VI – PROTESTS AND APPEALS

SECTION A – PROTESTS FOR SOFTBALL RULES INFRACTIONS

1. The judgment decision by an umpire on any play shall not be protested.
2. Protests on misinterpretation of the rules are allowed to the Umpire-in-Chief and if accepted as valid by the Tournament Director. The Tournament Director shall coordinate any such protest and shall serve as the odd-numbered member of the tournament protest committee as determined prior to the game by the Agency Host in coordination with the District Commissioner for District level competition and with the State Athletic Committee Chair for State Levels of competition. If a protest is accepted by the Tournament Director, it must be made by the certified coach or responsible person in charge of the team at the time of the alleged infraction. A full explanation of the protest will be recorded by the official scorer and retained in the official scorebook for reference. All such protests are to be immediately acted upon by the Protest Committee and before play is continued. If the decision of the Protest Committee is appealed to the State Athletic Committee, it must be done so in time for any action to be resolved prior to the next game of either team involved.
3. No protest on rules interpretation will be accepted after the next pitch (legal or illegal).

For more information regarding protests and appeals, see: Rule I, Article IV, Section C-11. For more information on protest committee organization and responsibility, see Rule II, Article I, Section A.

8U AND 10U PITCHING MACHINE FAST PITCH SOFTBALL RULES

All rules governing 8U and 10U in GRPA athletics will be in effect with exceptions the following:

1. All pitching will be done by an electric powered pitching machine using an underhanded delivery from forty feet at 37 mph except for 8U, which will be forty feet at 34 mph. The machine must be a minimum of 12” off the ground with a maximum of 24” from the bottom of the wheel. In the employment of the electric-powered pitching machine, machine height is important. The machine will be mounted on flat ground and the short legs will be used.
2. If a Jugs Jr. machine is used, ball should be placed in machine from top.
3. A qualified official will be stationed behind the catcher to call balls and strikes. The second official will be stationed behind the machine to feed machine and act as base umpire. Machine officials will be responsible for any adjustments to the machine and will present the ball to each batter prior to feeding machine.
4. When a batted ball hits a pitching machine, the umpire feeding the machine, or the extension cord off the ground, it is considered a “DEAD BALL SINGLE” and batter/runner will be awarded first base with all runners moving forward if forced. If a batted ball hits a defensive player then hits the machine, the batter is awarded first base and all other runners move up one base, if forced. Ball is dead when ball hits machine. When a thrown ball hits the pitching machine or the extension cord off the ground, it is considered a “DEAD BALL” and played as if thrown out of bounds.
5. An 8’ deep by 12’ wide rectangle box centered on the pitching plate in which the player in the pitching position must remain until the pitch is delivered. Defensive player must have at least one foot inside the box at time of the pitch.
6. No player shall be intentionally walked more than once per game. Count remains 3 and 2 until ball is hit or a strike-out occurs.
7. Players will be eligible for only one 8U or 10U division.
8. Ten defensive players shall be used in accordance with the following positions: one each of catcher, pitcher, first baseman, second baseman, third baseman, and short stop; and four outfielders. It is

mandatory that the pitcher wear a face mask. In pitching machine and coach-pitch there must always be players in the pitcher and catcher roles. If playing shorthand, the player must come from the in-field or outfield. The team must have a battery.

- a. No defensive coaches allowed on the field in 8U or 10U pitching machine.
9. Two EP's (Extra Players) may be used in accordance to GRPA rules.
10. A line shall be drawn in the infield at the same distance as the pitching distance. No infielder is allowed **in front of the restrictive line until after** the ball is delivered through the machine, outfielders remain in outfield grass area (**behind a 60' radius from the front edge of pitchers rubber**), and the pitcher must remain in the box. **Penalty: The penalty for violation of this rule is a delayed dead ball and the batting team having the choice of the result of the play or no pitch will be declared. A team warning will be issued on the 2nd offense, 3rd offense head coach ejected.**
Count remains 3 and 2 until ball is hit or a strike out occurs except each player may be intentionally walked once per game. No player may be walked any more than once per game.
Bunting is not allowed in the 8U machine pitch. If a batter shows bunt, an out will be called. Bunting is allowed in 10U machine pitch. Fake bunts are not allowed. A fake bunt is when you pretend to bunt the ball and you get in bunting position, once the ball is released you pull the bat back and attempt to hit the ball.
11. **Stealing is not allowed in the 8U or 10U division.**
12. Infield fly rule is in effect for 10U ONLY.
13. In 10U pitching machine ONLY, a runner cannot run on a drop 3rd strike.
14. A courtesy runner may be used for catcher only.
15. Youth Softball with machine– when play has ceased the umpire will call time and all play will be stopped in machine pitch softball. The USA Softball look back rule does not apply in pitching machine softball.

10U LIVE FAST PITCH SOFTBALL SPECIAL RULES

1. Infield fly rule is in effect.
2. Helmets with face mask are required. A player cannot play without a face mask. The penalty will be treated as illegal equipment.
3. Runners may steal per USA Softball guidelines. Penalty is an out if leave too soon.
4. Nine defensive players will be used (three outfield players).
5. A courtesy runner may be used for catcher or pitcher.
6. No drop third strike.

8U COACH PITCH SOFTBALL SPECIAL RULES

Pitching Rules

1. An offensive coach will pitch to his/her own team.
2. The coach may only coach the batter until she reaches first base or after she leaves third base. (Penalty: The coach will be replaced after the second occurrence for the remainder of the game.)
3. The pitcher may pitch anywhere from outside of the 20' foul arc and the pitching circle.
4. Pitcher may not cross the foul arc or enter the pitching circle (while pitching).
5. Pitcher must keep one foot on or straddle the pitching line.

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6. Pitcher must pitch under-handed and may be without arch, but with moderate speed. (Any batted ball that hits the pitching coach will be a dead ball and called no pitch).
7. If the pitching coach intentionally allows the ball to hit him/her. (Penalty: batter is out - Umpire's Judgment). No runner may advance.
8. The offensive coach (pitcher) must attempt to avoid interference and try to pick-up the batter's bat provided he/she does not interfere with the play.
9. If the offensive coach (pitcher) does not attempt to get off the field and/or interferes with the defensive player to keep him/her from making a play will result in the batter being called out. No runner will advance.
10. It is mandatory that the pitcher wear a face mask.

Offense

1. After one warning per game, per player for slinging her bat, the batter will be out, a dead ball called, and no runner advance.
2. Batter will receive five pitches before being declared out.
3. Batter will be called out on three swinging strikes.
4. If fifth pitch is fouled, she may continue to bat.
5. If fifth pitch is fouled and caught, it is an out.
6. No bunting allowed. If batter squares to bunt and then swings, she will be called out; this will be umpire's judgment.
7. Any base runner leaving the base before the ball reaches home plate is out. (Penalty: The ball is dead and all other runners return to base occupied prior to pitch – umpire's judgement). The pitch will not count.
8. Any runner is out when she does not slide or attempt to avoid the fielder who has the ball in the proximity of the base and is waiting to make a tag or if they maliciously run into a fielder.
9. Bat boys/girls will not be allowed in this division.
10. No offensive coaches allowed on the playing field.

Defense

1. No rolling the ball intentionally will be allowed.
2. The infield fly rule will not be in effect.
3. Only ten players on the field: six infielders (including pitcher & catcher) and four outfielders. In pitching machine and coach-pitch there must always be players in the pitcher and catcher roles. If playing shorthand, the player must come from the in-field or outfield. The team must have a battery.
4. The defensive player listed as a pitcher will stay in the 10' circle until the ball is hit. The player/pitcher may have one foot outside the circle. (Penalty: Offense gets choice of the play or no pitch).
5. Play shall not be stopped by the defensive team heading off or stopping the front runner. Trailing runners may advance at their own risk.
6. If a player is injured by being hit with a batted or thrown ball, time out will be called immediately. Bases will be awarded/outs will be called at the umpire's discretion based on each individual situation.
7. No defensive coaches allowed on the field.

