
LITTLE LEAGUE SOFTBALL RULE CHANGES FOR 2013 SEASON

The following is a summary of the changes between the 2013 Little League Softball rules and their 2012 counterparts. Items have been loosely categorized as to whether the change represents a clarification from the previous year, or whether it represents an actual rule change or new rule. Note that the items listed here deal with on-field play. Regulation changes that are administration-related are not listed here.

MULTIPLE LOCATIONS

CLARIFICATION

Previously, the rules frequently used the term “put out” as in “a runner is put out.” This has, in most places, been replaced by the term “retired.” “Retired” is, of course, a more general term, and includes situations in which a player is declared out by the umpire, but not “put out” by the defense. (Interference is one such example.) This affects the following rules:

- Regulation IV(i) – (mandatory play definition)
- 2.00 AT BAT
- 2.00 BATTER-RUNNER
- 3.05(a) & (b)
- 6.04
- 6.06(c) EXCEPTION
- 6.07(a-c)

REGULATION III(D)

NEW RULE

The following note has been added:

NOTE 3: *If a medical professional, Umpire in Chief, the player’s coach, the player’s manager or the player’s parent has determined a player sustains a possible concussion, the player must be, at a minimum, removed from the game and/or practice for the remainder of that day. The league must also be aware of its respective state/provincial/municipal laws with regards to concussions and impose any additional requirements as necessary. His/her return to full participation is subject to 1.) the league’s adherence to its respective state/provincial/municipal laws, 2.) an evaluation and a written clearance from a physician or other accredited medical provider and 3.) written acknowledgement of the parents.*

Little League International strongly encourages all leagues and teams to not only comply with any applicable state/provincial/municipal laws, but also, to review the information and training materials on concussions that are available free of charge on the Centers For Disease Control website, accessible from the link below. This link provides concussion information from all 50 states: <http://www.littleleague.org/learn/programs/childprotection/concussions.htm>.

This change to the regulations gives umpires (among others) the authority to remove a player who appears to have sustained a possible concussion.

REGULATION V(C) – PLAYER POOLS

CLARIFICATION

Phrases have been added to this rule to explicitly restrict players who participate in the pool to playing only within their own division. Presumably this was done in order to keep, say, a Junior League player from filling a vacancy on a Major-level team.

1.07 – PITCHING DISTANCE

RULE CHANGE

The pitching distance for the Junior division has been increased from 40 feet to 43 feet, matching the distance for Seniors and Big League.

1.10 – BATS

RULE CHANGE

In all division of play, non-wood bats must now be marked with a BPF (bat performance factor) of 1.20.

2.00 – ILLEGAL BAT

NEW RULE

The softball rulebook has added a definition of the term “illegal bat,” matching that in the baseball rulebook.

3.03 – SENIOR / BIG LEAGUE DESIGNATED HITTER

REMOVAL

Item number 4 has been removed. Previously, it read:

(4) This rule does not change the regular rule governing the use of pinch-hitters.

Presumably it was felt that this was unnecessary.

5.07 – MINOR LEAGUE RUN LIMITS

CLARIFICATION

For the purposes of the Minor and Tee-Ball “inning limiting” rules, the phrase “*legally put out or when all players on the roster have batted*” has been changed to “*legally put out, called out by the umpire or when all players on the roster have batted*”

This would appear to close a minor loophole in the rule covering situations in which a player is called out by the umpire – such as for interference – but was not technically “put out” by the defense. (This seems to be the one place where the term “retired” was not introduced.)

6.05(B) – UNCAUGHT THIRD STRIKE APPROVED RULING

REORGANIZATION

The following approved ruling now appears in this rule:

APPROVED RULING (Major/Intermediate (50-70) Division/Junior/ Senior/Big League): When a batter becomes a runner on a third strike that is not caught, and starts for the bench or his/her position, that batter may advance to first base at any time before entering the bench. To put the batter out, the defense must tag the batter or first base before the batter touches first base.

This identical approved ruling previously appeared in 7.08(a). It has simply been moved from Rule 7.08 (which governs the runners) to rule 6.05 (which governs the batter).

TOURNAMENT ROSTER SIZE

RULE CHANGE

Senior League Tournament teams may now have a maximum of 16 players. Big League Tournament teams may now have a maximum of 17 players. Previously, the limits were 14 and 15, respectively. The new limits now match the corresponding ones in baseball.

TOURNAMENT RULE 3(A) – ILLEGAL BAT

RULE CHANGE

Tournament Rule 3 has been rewritten to provide the penalty for the use of an illegal bat:

- 3(a). *In all Tournament levels and divisions, the penalty for use of an illegal bat [see Rule 6.06 (d)], if discovered before the next player enters the batter’s box following the turn at bat of the player who used an illegal bat, is:*
- i. *The batter is out (NOTE: The manager of the defense may advise the plate umpire of a decision to decline this portion of the penalty and accept the play. Such election shall be made immediately at the end of the play), and;*
 - ii. *The manager of the team will be ejected from the game, the batter who violated the rule will be ejected from the game, and the offensive team will lose one eligible adult base coach for the duration of the game.*

Previously, Rule 6.06(d) governed the use of an illegal bat during both regular season and tournament play. Rule 6.06(d) stipulates that the batter is out, and that the manager is only ejected for the second violation. Thus, in 2013 tournament play, the penalty is harsher – the batter and the manager are ejected.

TOURNAMENT RULE 9 – MANDATORY PLAY

RULE CHANGE

The rule has been changed to read:

9. *MANDATORY PLAY: 9-10 Year Old Division, 10-11 Year Old Division, Little League, Intermediate (50-70) Division, Junior League: If a tournament team has thirteen (13) or more eligible players in uniform at a game, then every player on a team roster shall participate in each game for a minimum of one (1) at bat. If a tournament has twelve (12) or fewer eligible players in uniform at a game, then every player on a team roster shall participate in each game for a minimum of six (6) consecutive defensive outs and bat at least one (1) time.*

In 2012, a team with 13 or more eligible players was required to get each player one at bat and three consecutive defensive outs. In 2013, a team with 13 or more eligible players is no longer required to have all its players play defensively – it is permissible for certain players to participate offensively but not defensively. The rule is unchanged for teams with 12 or fewer players.