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# LITTLE LEAGUE RULE/REGULATION CHANGES FOR 2019 SEASON

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Last Updated Feb 23, 2019

The following is a summary of the changes between the 2019 Little League Baseball and Softball regulations and rules and their 2018 counterparts. Items have been loosely categorized as to whether the change represents a clarification of existing practice that was simply added to the rulebook, or whether it represents an actual change to the rules or regulations.

Throughout this document, text that is underlined represents the modified or newly added text.

## CATCHING AFTER PITCHING

## REGULATION/RULE CHANGE

### Baseball Only

The rules related to player moving from catcher to pitcher and back have been tightened. A player who catches for four or more innings still cannot then pitch. Similarly, if a pitcher throws 41 or more pitches, that player cannot then catch. However, before this year, a player could catch three innings, pitch for 40 pitches, then return and play catcher for the rest of the game. Regulation IV(a) has had the following restriction added:

A player who played the position of catcher for three (3) innings or less, moves to the pitcher position, and delivers 21 pitches or more (15- and 16-year-olds: 31 pitches or more) in the same day, may not return to the catcher position on that calendar day. EXCEPTION: If the pitcher reaches the 20-pitch limit (15- and 16-year-olds: 30-pitch limit) while facing a batter, the pitcher may continue to pitch, and maintain their eligibility to return to the catcher position, until any one of the following conditions occur: (1) that batter reaches base; (2) that batter is retired; or (3) the third out is made to complete the half-inning or the game.

Thus, a player can still catch, pitch and then catch again, but only if 20 or fewer pitchers were thrown as a pitcher.

In addition, Regulation IV(c) has been amended to include the underlined text:

NOTE: If a pitcher reaches 40 pitches while facing a batter, the pitcher may continue to pitch, and maintain their eligibility to play the position of catcher for the remainder of that day, until any one of the following conditions occurs:  
(1) that batter reaches base; (2) that batter is retired; or (3) the third out is made to complete the half-inning or the game. The pitcher would be allowed to play the catcher position provided that pitcher is moved, removed or the game is completed before delivering a pitch to another batter. If a player delivers 41 or more pitches, and is not covered by the threshold exception, the player may not play the position of catcher for the remainder of that day.

This now treats the threshold for catching the same as the game limit on pitches and the rest requirement – that the pitcher may complete the current batter, even if the threshold is crossed during that at-bat, without being considered in violation.

Tournament Rule 4 has also had the corresponding update:

A player who played the position of catcher for three (3) innings or less, moves to the pitcher position, and delivers 21 pitches or more in the same day, may not return to the catcher position on that calendar day. EXCEPTION: If the pitcher reaches the 20-pitch limit while facing a batter, the pitcher may continue to pitch, and maintain their eligibility to return to the catcher position, until any one of the following conditions occur: (1) that batter reaches base; (2) that batter is retired; or (3) the third out is made to complete the half-inning or the game.

Thus, the tournament and regular season rules are the same for this.

## **DOUBLE-HEADER ELIGIBILITY**

## **REGULATION/RULE CHANGE**

### **Baseball Only**

The conditions under which Junior and Senior pitchers can pitch in two games in the same day have been tightened. Regulation VI(k) has had the underlined text added:

**Junior League and Senior League** – A player may be used as a pitcher in up to two games in a day. NOTE: If a pitcher reaches 30 pitches while facing a batter in the first game, the pitcher may continue to pitch, and maintain their eligibility to pitch in the second game on that day, until any one of the following conditions occurs: (1) that batter reaches base; (2) that batter is retired; or (3) the third out is made to complete the half-inning or the game. The pitcher would be allowed to pitch in a second game provided that pitcher is moved, removed, or the game is completed before delivering a pitch to another batter. If a player delivers 31 or more pitches in the first game, and is not covered under the threshold exception, the player may not pitch in the second game that day)

In addition, Rule 4.12 Exception has had the underlined text added:

**Junior League and Senior League** – A player may be used as a pitcher in up to two games in a day. NOTE: If a pitcher reaches 30 pitches while facing a batter in the first game, the pitcher may continue to pitch, and maintain their eligibility to pitch in the second game on that day, until any one of the following conditions occurs: (1) that batter reaches base; (2) that batter is retired; or (3) the third out is made to complete the half-inning or the game. The pitcher would be allowed to pitch in a second game provided that pitcher is moved, removed, or the game is completed before delivering a pitch to another batter. If a player delivers 31 or more pitches in the first game, and is not covered under the threshold exception, the player may not pitch in the second game that day);

Again, these rules now follow the rules on rest requirements and game limits in allowing a pitcher to complete a batter's at-bat.

## **LEGAL BATS**

## **RULE CHANGE**

### **Baseball Only**

Rule 1.10 has been amended to allow the use of Tee Ball bats in Coach Pitch divisions, and to allow BBCOR bats in Intermediate and Junior divisions. The following text has been added:

**Tee Ball;** NOTE 2: Approved Tee Ball bats may also be used for Coach Pitch/Machine Pitch Minor Divisions only with the use of approved Tee Balls.

**Minor/Major Divisions;** NOTE 2: Approved Tee Ball bats may also be used for Coach Pitch/Machine Pitch Minor Divisions only with the use of approved Tee Balls.

Note that the Tee Ball bats in question must have been approved by Little League. A list of the approved bats can be found at <https://www.littleleague.org/partnerships/licensing/baseballs-softballs/>.

**Intermediate (50-70) Division and Junior League;** NOTE 2: Also, permitted for the Intermediate (50-70) Division and Junior League Division are bats meeting the BBCOR performance standard, and so labeled with a silkscreen or other permanent certification mark. The certification mark shall be rectangular, a minimum of a half-inch on each side and located on the barrel of the bat in any contrasting color. Aluminum/alloy and composite bats shall be marked as to their material makeup being aluminum/alloy or composite. This marking shall be silkscreen or other permanent certification mark, a minimum of one-half-inch on each side, and located on the barrel of the bat in any contrasting color

Previously, only "USA Bat" certified bats could be used in the Intermediate and Junior divisions. Now either "USA Bat" or "BBCOR" certified bats may be used in those division.

## **DEFINITION OF "DEAD BALL AREA"**

## **CLARIFICATION**

Rule 2.00 has had a definition of the term "dead ball area" added:

**DEAD BALL AREA** is the area beyond any intended physical boundary, such as a fence, rope, chalk line, any stands, bleachers, dugouts, player's benches, or designated

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media areas, or any other boundary line as determined in the pregame conference. If a ball becomes lodged in a fence, backstop, umpire's equipment, or catcher's equipment, it is considered to be in a dead ball area.

This does not introduce any playing changes – it merely provides a concrete definition of a term that is used elsewhere in the rulebook.

### **DOUBLE-HEADERS**

### **REMOVAL OF DUPLICATE RULE**

Prior to this year, Little League had two separate rules that covered double-headers: Rule 3.11 and Rule 4.13. The two rules both said essentially the same thing, so Little League has decided to delete Rule 3.11 from the rulebook so that the topic is only covered in one spot.

### **DISENGAGING THE PITCHER'S PLATE**

### **APPROVED RULING**

#### **Softball Only**

Rule 8.01(g) has had an approved ruling added:

A.R. 2 – For the pitcher to remove himself/herself from the pitching position after the hands have been brought together but prior to the start of the pitch as noted in 8.01(k), the pitcher must legally step back from the pitcher's plate with the pivot foot first.

Previously, the rulebook was silent as to how a softball pitcher was to legally disengage. Thus, now once the pitcher has brought his/her hands together, if he/she steps back with the non-pivot foot, this represents the beginning of a pitching motion.

### **PITCHER'S HANDS TO THE MOUTH**

### **RULE CHANGE**

The rules regarding a pitcher bringing his/her pitching hand to the mouth have been relaxed slightly:

#### **Baseball:**

8.02 – The pitcher shall not –

- (a) (1) bring the pitching hand in contact with the mouth or lips while in contact with the pitcher's plate. EXCEPTION: The pitcher may bring the hand in contact with the mouth or lips while in the 10-foot circle (Intermediate (50-70) Division/Junior/Senior: 18-foot circle) surrounding the pitcher's plate provided he/she distinctly wipes off the pitching hand before contacting the ball.

Previously, there was an absolute prohibition on bringing the hand to the mouth within the 10-foot or 18-foot circle around the pitcher's plate.

#### **Softball –**

8.02 – The pitcher shall not –

- (a) (1) apply a foreign substance of any kind to the ball, pitching hand, or fingers. The pitcher may bring the hand in contact with the mouth or lips provided he/she distinctly wipes off the pitching hand before contacting the ball. Under the supervision of the umpire, powder rosin may be used to dry the hands; NOTE: A pitcher may use a rosin bag for the purpose of applying rosin to the bare hand or hands. Neither the pitcher nor any other player shall dust the ball with the rosin bag; neither shall the pitcher nor any other player be permitted to apply rosin from the bag to their glove or dust any part of the uniform with the rosin bag.

Previously, the softball rules contained no prohibition on a pitcher bringing his/her pitching hand to the mouth.

**DEFENSIVE CONFERENCES**

**APPROVED RULING**

Approved Rulings have been added to rule 8.06 in both baseball and softball to clarify that when a manager makes a pitching change, this shall not be considered a defensive conference unless the manager speaks to one of the players first.

**Baseball**

A.R. 1 - When a manager requests timeout to make a pitching change, it shall not be considered a visit to the pitcher provided the manager makes the pitching substitution prior to speaking to any defensive player. Intermediate (50-70) Division/Junior/Senior: This applies when a pitcher moves to another position and returns as a pitcher later in the same game.

**Softball**

A.R 1 - When a manager requests timeout to make a pitching change, it shall not be considered a visit to the pitcher provided the manager makes the pitching substitution prior to speaking to any defensive player. This applies when a pitcher moves to another position, Junior/Senior: or removed from the game, and returns as a pitcher later in the same game.

Since the rule uses the wording "any defensive player," this seems to imply that if the manager goes out and confers with the pitcher and then makes the change, this would constitute a defensive conference.

**TOURNAMENT MANAGERS/COACHES**

**RULE CHANGE**

Little League has again returned to a policy it had some years ago during Tournament play, in which a team below a certain number of players loses an adult coach:

If a tournament team has twelve (12) or more eligible players in uniform at the game site at the start of a game, then the maximum of three (3) adults who are named on the affidavit (or authorized replacements as noted on the affidavit) will be permitted to act as manager/coaches for that game. However, if a tournament team has eleven (11) or fewer eligible players in uniform at the game site at the start of a game, then a maximum of two (2) adults must be named at the start of the game as manager and coach. The two named adults must be listed on the affidavit, or must be authorized temporary replacements as noted on the affidavit. If there is a third adult listed on the affidavit, that adult is not permitted to be in the dugout or on the field during that game. NOTE: Base coaches may be adults and/or players provided at least one adult manager or coach remains in the dugout. See 4.05(b)

This is in addition to the provisions of the Mandatory Play rule. Thus, for 2019:

- A team with 11 or fewer players may use only two adult coaches, and players must play at least six consecutive defensive outs and bat at least once.
- A team with exactly 12 players may use three adult coaches, but players must still play at least six consecutive defensive outs and bat at least once.
- A team with 13 or more players may use only three adult coaches, and players must only bat at least once.

**TOURNAMENT TIME-BREAKER**

**RULE CHANGE**

Little League has added a new tie-breaker rule for Tournament Play, presumably to cut down on the number of games that require a significant number of extra innings:

14. TIE GAME: When the completion of six innings [Intermediate (50-70) Division/ Junior/Senior League: seven innings] and the score is tied, the following tie-breaker will be played to determine a winning team:
  - a. The seventh inning [Intermediate (50-70) Division/Junior/Senior League: eighth inning] will be played as normal.
  - b. Starting in the top of the eighth inning [Intermediate (50-70) Division/Junior/ Senior League: ninth inning], and each half inning thereafter, the offensive team shall begin its turn at bat with the player who is scheduled to bat last in that respective half inning being placed on

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second base. EXAMPLE: If the number five batter is the lead-off batter, the number four batter in the batting order will be placed on second base. An eligible substitute or special pinch runner may be inserted for the runner.

Thus, one extra inning is played “as normal,” and thereafter the offensive team starts with a player on second base.