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# LITTLE LEAGUE SOFTBALL 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 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.

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## 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 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.

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## 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.

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## DISENGAGING THE PITCHER’S PLATE

## APPROVED RULING

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.

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## 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:

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.

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 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.