

**RULES FOR LENAPE VALLEY SOFTBALL**  
**COUGARS DIVISION (8 and Under) (REVISED 2016)**

The following rules are specific to the Lenape Valley 8U Division Intramural Softball Teams. These rules are intended to guide coaches and parents so that we ensure that the children enjoy playing softball in an atmosphere that promotes safety, friendship and sportsmanship. **WINNING IS NOT THE GOAL!** We want to stress fundamentals and increase the player's knowledge of the game so that they are prepared for participation at the next level.

No rules are intended to supersede ASA Softball guidelines. Coaches and parents are to apply the rules in a sportsmanlike manner depending on the various situations. Do not put your three best players at pitcher, short and first and then simply rotate them! Give every player an opportunity to play every position (assuming there are no safety concerns). We want the players to understand the proper response to real game situations. Please do not confuse them by using "loopholes" to win. Your record will not be a reflection of your ability as a coach!

Most importantly – HAVE FUN!! If you're not laughing and kidding around with your players and the opposing coaches, something is wrong. Praise players on either team when they do well.

## **1.0 Umpires**

- 1.1 Umpires shall be utilized from either a volunteer pool as indicated on the registration forms or be recruited from the stands.
- 1.2 The home team will provide an umpire behind home plate.
- 1.3 The decisions of the umpires are final.
- 1.4 The umpire shall be shown respect at all times. It is the responsibility of the coaches to demonstrate good sportsmanship and proper conduct both on and off the field toward the umpire. Coaches are also responsible for the conduct of their team's parents.
- 1.5 Once the game has begun, the head umpire shall have complete authority and may eject from the game or general area of the playing field, any player, coach or spectator for unsportsmanlike conduct, use of profanity, unnecessary arguing, needling or fighting. The umpire may issue a first warning before ejection, and can terminate a game and award a forfeit as appropriate. **Any remark by a player, coach or spectator, which tends to undermine players self-confidence will be considered unsportsmanlike conduct.** Cheers and chants can only be positive, in support of your own team. No chants directed in a negative way toward the opposing team shall be permitted.
- 1.6 Once the game has begun, the Umpire shall have control of the game. He or she may suspend play because of field conditions, weather, time limits and rules that apply to the general game requirements.
- 1.7 The home team shall provide the umpire with the game ball and umpire's counter.
- 1.8 It is the umpire's responsibility to get the game started on time. All players must report to their team bench 5 minutes prior to the posted start time of the game
- 1.9 Only the Head Coach (or acting head coach) is permitted to participate in discussions between the umpire and the Head Coach of the opposing team.

## **2.0 Playing Fields**

- 2.1 The playing field shall have 60-ft. baselines.
- 2.2 The distance from the front of the pitcher's rubber to the rear point of home plate shall be 30 feet.
- 2.3 Batters boxes are not required. Umpires and coaches should keep the players within a reasonable proximity of this area if not marked.
- 2.4 Safety is everyone's responsibility! Coaches and Field Crew must inspect the playing field prior to each practice and game to ensure that it is safe for play. Chuckholes, divots and loose objects should be repaired or removed. Problems must be reported to the U8 commissioner- Nicole White 215-290-3617.
- 2.5 Teams are responsible for keeping the dugout areas clean. Please have the team police the area and remove all trash, after each practice or game.
- 2.6 The base path is defined as being three feet (3') on either side of a straight line between the bases.

### 3.0 Pitching

- 3.1 This year we will attempt to utilize the pitching machine in order for pitches to be more consistent. If the pitching machine does not prove to be useful, all 4 coaches plus U8 commissioner will make the decision to coach pitch. A coach from the team at bat will pitch to his/her own players. Coaches should begin from the pitching rubber – however, the object is for the kids to hit, so accommodations may be made for weaker players.
- 3.2 The pitching machine is used at this level.
- 3.3 The pitching machine should be placed at 30 feet from the tip of home plate.
- 3.4 A circle shall be chalked for the mound area from this point. (Tools for marking and chalking the circle are available in all field boxes)
- 3.5 A small box may be drawn in the dirt around the pitching machine for safety. If a playable ball passes through this area to the extent that the umpire judges that the pitcher could have reasonably fielded the ball, the ball shall be considered dead.
- 3.6 If the ball hits any part of the machine, ball bucket or extension cord reel the ball is considered dead a single will be awarded to the batter. The intent of these rules is for safety reasons. We do not want a player to attempt to field a ball near the machine and get hurt.

### 4.0 Batting

- 4.1 Every player that comes to a game is placed on the roster and bats in turn whether or not they are playing in the field that inning. All members of the team will bat in the order established prior to the start of the game. Players, who arrive late, will be inserted at the end of the batting order. An injured player may skip their turn at bat, but must return to their original place in the order if they are able to return to the game.
- 4.2 There shall be ten (10) batters or three (3) outs per inning. The tenth batter automatically puts the inning into a two (2) out situation. The tenth batter must put the ball in play or strike out. The defensive team can get an out anywhere on the field that they have a play on a hit ball to end the inning, or having the catcher touch home plate with possession and control of the ball. During playoffs, the exception to rule 4.2 shall be the sixth inning, when three (3) outs are required.
- 4.3 If a batter throws the bat, a warning will be issued by the umpire (both benches must be notified). If the same player throws a bat after the warning, she shall be called out.
- 4.4 Only official softball bats will be allowed.
- 4.5 There will be no bunting or chopping at the ball. If in the determination of the umpire, a ball has been bunted or chopped, a strike will be called on the batter and all base runners must return to their positions prior to the pitch.
- 4.6 All batters and base runners must wear approved batting helmets with mouth (face) cage and chin strap to protect their face.
- 4.7 The batter is out if a foul ball goes 6 feet high (in the opinion of the umpire), and is caught by the catcher
- 4.8 Batters must swing and miss three times before being called out on strikes. Foul balls **DO NOT** count as strikes.
- 4.9 If any fielder catches a fly ball, the batter is out. We're trying to teach the proper rules of the game.
- 4.10 The batter will be awarded first base if the catcher interferes with the batters swing

### 5.0 Fielding

- 5.1 Each team will field eight (8) players each inning. The positions shall include the following:

1 Pitcher

1 Catcher

4 Infielders (First Base, Second Base, Short Stop & Third Base)

2-3 Outfielders (Left Field, Center Field & Right Field)

There shall be free substitution at the start of any inning.

- 5.2 The infield fly rule shall be in effect, except if in the opinion of the umpire, a fielder deliberately drops the ball in order to make a double play. In this case, the batter will be out, and all other runners will return to their previous bases.
- 5.3 Each player will play a minimum of three innings in the infield, and a minimum of one inning in the outfield. Coaches are encouraged to move players into different positions throughout the game. No player shall play the same position more than twice in a game. Try to play girls at different positions every inning. Use caution when assigning pitchers and first base, as those are positions that require better (self) defensive skills.

- 5.4 No player shall sit on the bench, one more inning than any other player. With a full roster of players, some players may sit out for one inning while some may sit out for two. No child shall sit two consecutive innings. The only exception to this rule is if the player:
- \* Shows up after the game begins
  - \* Leaves before the game ends
  - \* Is injured or becomes ill
  - \* The player is disruptive or is a disciplinary problem

Coaches should see to it that all players sit out an equal number of times for the entire season. (In other words, the same players should not sit out twice during each game.)

- 5.5 The fielder must have control of the ball – in their hand – to be considered a catch.
- 5.6 A tag must be made with the ball, either in the hand or in the glove or both. Holding the ball in one hand, while tagging with an empty glove or the other hand does not constitute a legal tag.
- 5.7 Fielders must allow access to the base – especially when no play is being made at the base in question, or interference must be called. When a play is being made, the runner must be given access to at least half the base. (Rule is intended to avoid collisions.) At first base, the fielder is entitled to the white side of the bag while the runner is entitled to the orange side. PLEASE ENFORCE THIS RULE FOR EVERYONE’S SAFETY!
- 5.8 Infielders must start within ten feet (10’) of the base line when the pitch is released. “Walling” is not permitted. It is the responsibility of the base coaches at first and third to bring an infraction of this rule to the umpire’s attention. Exception: If the play is only at home, the coach may call “infield in”, but must explain what they are doing, so everyone understands the purpose of the call. Outfielders must start ten feet (10’) from behind the base line or on the grass. Outfielders are permitted to make plays at the bases; however, infielders should be instructed to cover the proper position during play. We do not want to confuse the players by teaching outfielders to cover bases.
- 5.9 It is **STRONGLY ENCOURAGED** to teach the infield players proper play at home plate. Coaches should teach that if the player should either try to tag the runner coming home from third. If the tag play is not possible, the infielder should attempt the throw to the catcher if the catcher is in position covering a play at home plate. This rule is intended for several reasons. 1. For safety of all players. There is a potential for a 3 way collision if the infielder is running the ball to the plate at the same time as the catcher is standing on the plate and the runner coming home. 2. This also teaches the players the proper method for making the play at home when there’s a force out.

## 6.0 Coaching

- 6.1 Two coaches will be permitted on the field while their team is on defense. At no time will the coach interfere with a ball in play. Coaches may not touch fielders; only offer (soft and encouraging) verbal instructions. During playoffs, no defensive coaches will be permitted on the field. We would hope by then the girls have an idea of the concept of the game.
- 6.2 Managers and Coaches should lead by example. Praise players even while correcting them.
- 6.3 The offensive team is only permitted to have one first and one third base coach. The base coaches will act as base umpires since they are closest to the play. The coaches must stay back at least four feet from the base when the ball is in play.
- 6.4 Each team will be allowed two time outs per offensive inning and one time out per defensive inning

## 7.0 Base Running

- 7.1 When a thrown ball (not pitched) leaves the field of play (the area past the fence lines or backstop), the umpire shall immediately declare the ball out of play. The umpire shall award all base runners the base to which they were going. when the ball left the hand of the thrower
- 7.2 If the umpire calls a dead ball, base runners may not advance.
- 7.3 Base coaches are not allowed to touch, push or pull a base runner other than to congratulate a runner after a hit.
- 7.4 Runners may not leave the base until the ball crosses the plate. If a runner leaves early, she will receive one warning from the umpire. If she leaves early again, she may be called out.
- 7.5 A base runner will be called out if they intentionally run into a fielder attempting to put a tag on them. If the umpire views the act as malicious, the runner will be ejected from the game. No appeal is permitted.
- 7.6 If a runner misses a base, the umpire shall call the runner out. No appeal is necessary.
- 7.7 Runners shall be called out if they slide headfirst (except if they dive back to a base they overran)
- 7.8 Runners will NOT be awarded a base on an overthrow

- 7.9 Runners may not advance to an additional base once the ball is in possession of any player in the infield. Note: runners may continue to the next base, if they have touched the preceding base prior to the infielder having possession, however, the runner is proceeding at their own risk, and may be put out. (Use the major league mind-set when sending runners.) NOTE: Under normal circumstances, runners should only proceed to one base on an infield hit, or two bases on an outfield hit. Base coaches are not to take advantage of weak fielders by sending runners at will.
- 7.10 During the course of a game, if the catcher for the next inning makes it to base a coach **MAY** put in a pinch runner for the player to allow the catcher to get suited up. However, this is at the coaches' discretion, not that of the umpire.

## 8.0 Official game

- 8.1 There shall be six (6) innings per game. At least three (3) complete innings must be played for an official game.
- 8.2 Each team must have a minimum of six players present to start a game. If there are less than six players after 15 minutes from the scheduled start time, the shorthanded team must forfeit, and the score will be recorded as 6-0. However, so it's not a total loss, the teams may use the field for a practice game
- 8.3 If after the fourth inning either team is ahead by 10 runs or more, the game may be called by agreement of both coaches.
- 8.4 No game shall continue for more than two hours from the scheduled start time or 15 minutes from the scheduled start time (if not enough players were there by scheduled start time) . The last inning will not start after 1 hour and 45 min after the official start time.
- 8.5 One extra inning may be played as long as the extra inning begins within the game time limits described in section 9.0.
- 8.6 Lightning: At the first flash of lightning, games will be suspended immediately, and all players must leave the field for the safety of their cars. No game can resume until 30 minutes after the last flash of lightning is seen.
- 8.7 Rainouts: If a game in progress is halted by rain or lightning, it must go three full innings to be "official" (or 21.2 innings if the home team is in the lead). Games halted prior to completing three full innings will be replayed in their entirety.
- 8.8 No playoff game may end in a rainout as described in 8.7. If a playoff game is halted due to rain, play will continue after either the rain has passed or a rescheduled date. The score and lineups (etc and within reason) from where the game was halted will continue at the next opportunity to continue. i.e. next rescheduled day.
- 8.9 A game can be postponed for school and community activities only if a team is unable to field 6 players. Twenty-four hours notice must be given to the U8 commissioner and opposing coach. The coach who cancels the game is responsible for re-scheduling.
- 8.10 The home team is responsible for keeping the "official" scorebook and must report the game score to the U8 commissioner following the conclusion of the game. Please review the score with the opposing team to avoid disputes.
- 8.11 It is strongly encouraged for coaches to exchange lineup cards for all games, just to get into good habit. However, exchange of lineup cards for playoffs will be mandatory and the U8 commissioner is responsible for checking the lineups and fielding positions against the official rules.
- 8.12 The U8 commissioner is also responsible for any disputes that arise regarding lineup card exchanges.

## 9.0 Game Time

- 9.1 Games begin at 6:00 PM on weeknights.
- 9.2 No new inning may start more than one and three quarters (1.34) hours after the game's SCHEDULED start time. (7:45 on school nights.) When school is not an issue, games during the week may continue until the umpire calls the game due to darkness.
- 9.3 Time permitting; the home team will occupy the field until 20 minutes prior to the game time, at which time the visiting team will take the field for practice. Home team has the field from 5:25 until 5:40, and the visiting team has the field from 5:40 until 5:55. **PLAYERS ARE NOT ENTITLED TO TAKE BATTING PRACTICE!** It is the coach's responsibility to get all players warmed up during their 15 minutes on the field. No accommodation will be made for players who arrive late!
- 9.4 Weekend games must stay on schedule. If an earlier game runs late, pre-game warm-ups must be cut short. No game may start more than 10 minutes after it is scheduled to start.
- 9.5 Games that must be halted due to time constraints may end in a tie.
- 9.6 Incomplete innings: If a game is halted due to weather or darkness, the score shall revert back to what it was at the end of the last completed inning.

## 10.0 Safety

- 10.1 Each team shall have a designated team parent in charge of first aid. It is the responsibility of that parent to bring natural ice (no chemical ice is permitted) to games and practices.
- 10.2 There is no headfirst sliding permitted.
- 10.3 Catchers must wear facemasks with a throat protector, chest protectors and shin guards during practices, warm-ups and games.
- 10.4 On-deck batters are not permitted to take practice swings.
- 10.5 Players may wear sneakers or shoes with rubber cleats only – no metal cleats or spikes are permitted.
- 10.6 Instruct players to bring water bottles, and be sure they drink during practices and games.
- 10.7 Coaches should encourage the use of mouth-guards for all players, especially pitchers.
- 10.8 Pitchers are required to wear a fielding mask. (The league shall supply a fielding mask to each team)
- 10.9 Only 11” softballs and approved softball bats will be permitted during games or practices.
- 10.10 Practices and games can **only be conducted on designated fields** that are covered by Lenape Valley Softball insurance. **NO PRACTICES MAY BEGIN UNTIL OFFICIAL APPROVAL OF THE LEAGUE COMMISSIONER.**
- 10.11 Only official ASA bats can be used in U8. No T-ball bats should be used at this age group.

## 11.0 General

- 11.1 The home team shall sit behind the first base line and the visiting team shall sit behind the third base line. Home team designation shall be defined on the schedule.
- 11.2 Teams are not permitted to schedule additional practices without the express approval of the league commissioner. Intent of this rule is to prevent any team from gaining an unfair advantage by practicing more than an opponent. (Also see rule 10.9). Unlimited visits to area batting cages are permitted.
- 11.3 Remember coaches, how you treat the players, other coaches, umpires and spectators will be what is viewed as normal and acceptable behavior. This is also an opportunity for instructing parents on how to behave during games!!
- 11.4 Good sportsmanship will be practiced by all. Please make every reasonable attempt to keep the score competitive. Use weaker players in key infield positions if you have a substantial lead.
- 11.5 This is still an instructional league. During the course of a game, if there is an unusual call, or interesting situation, feel free to stop the game to explain what is going on to the players of both teams.
- 11.6 The 8U Division is for players who are 6, 7 or 8 (not yet 9) years old on January 1, prior to the start of the season. The league commissioner must approve any exceptions to the age restriction. Parents, who wish to have a 9-year-old stay in the 8U Division, must notify the head coach of their team and the league commissioner prior to the end of the season so that the player can be evaluated.
- 11.7 HAVE FUN and remember it's only a game. Our goal is for 100% of the players to sign up again next year. If they have fun, we'll achieve our goal.