

# Machine Pitch Softball League Rules

## A. Objective of Machine Pitch Softball

The objective of the Wentworth Ball Program Machine Pitch Softball League is to teach softball skills and an understanding of the game to intermediate players in a context that promotes an appreciation of good sportsmanship and fair play. This machine pitch league is intended to be a logical transition into advanced level softball. Players further develop the skills of batting, fielding and base running in this moderately competitive league while learning the rules that closely resemble those of softball. Players are taught to bat at a ball that is safely pitched to them by a machine at a pre-set speed designed to provide a good transition to player pitched leagues. Emphasis is always placed on having fun, player safety, and sportsmanship! Safety has the highest priority in this program.

## B. Coaches

- It is the responsibility of the coaches to provide leadership and organization, to teach fundamental softball skills, to encourage voluntary cooperation and develop good rapport with players and their parents, to model good sportsmanship, and to observe all league policies and rules.
- Because of the instructional objectives of the program, every player will play in the field and bat at least one inning in every game. Coaches are advised to remain beyond the base paths and out of the infield when the ball is in play, and they must refrain from touching the players or the ball when the ball is in play.
- Typically, a team at bat will have coaches near 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base to coach runners when the ball is hit, plus a coach load the pitching machine. Coaches are to remain in the dugout while their team is in the field, except to align defensive players before play begins each inning.

## C. Umpires

Wentworth Ball Program will provide at least one umpire for each game. The umpire may call the game from behind home plate or from the pitching area and will be in charge of all facets of the game and will have final say in ALL calls. When possible, a second official will be assigned to assist in games from the field. The officials' responsibilities follow the usual lines, but also include judgment in four important areas of Machine Pitch. These are:

- Determining when the ball is thrown back to the pitcher by an infielder, ending play or when advanced to the infield area and time is called. Umpire will signify the end of a play by raising an arm in the air and calling "TIME."
- Determining whether or not a base runner should return to a previous base.
- Determining when the bat is thrown after batting.
- Determining foul balls.

## D. Scorekeepers

- Each team will designate a scorekeeper who will maintain the lineups and record hits, runs, and outs. Scorekeepers from each team should check scoring and agree on scores after each half inning. Scores will only be recorded until three outs or five (5) runs are made.
- Wentworth Ball Program will attempt to provide an official scorekeeper for each game to serve as the final arbiter of any disputes. In the event that a discrepancy occurs between the scorekeepers from each team, the Wentworth Ball Program official keeping score will be the final say. Should the team scorekeepers have the same results with the official scorekeeper being different, the official scorekeeper will revise his/her scorebook to reflect that of the team scorekeepers.

## E. The Playing Field

- The playing field is set up by official Little League standards.

## F. The Game

- All games are to be four full innings or 55 minutes IF four full innings have been played. Coaches must move their players on and off the field in a timely manner.
- The game is under control of the Wentworth Ball Program officials, with the home base umpire having charge of ALL judgment calls.
- All players will bat and play in the field throughout the game with each player batting and playing in field for at least two innings per game.
- There will be no tiebreakers or extra innings, except during playoffs. If a game ends in a tie, it will be scored as a tie. The only exception to this is during the playoffs, where additional innings will be played until a team wins. Playoff rules will be distributed at the end of the season.

## G. Safe Play

- In order to assure safety of the players, the batter and all base runners must wear a batting helmet. A batter may not remove her helmet at any time after beginning her turn at bat, until she returns to the dugout. If a player removes her helmet while running to a base, she will be called out.
- An official fast-pitch softball ball will be used by all batters during games. All bats, wooden, composite or aluminum, must be clearly labeled by the manufacturer as a fast-pitch softball bat. T-ball and slow-pitch softball bats WILL NOT be permitted. Any bat that has been altered in any way or bats altered to produce “juiced” bats are not permitted. Re-taping of the grip of a bat is permitted.
- Coaches are strongly urged to maintain, with the help of scorekeepers and parents, order on the bench. Players should remain behind the fences unless preparing to bat. No practice swings or “on-deck” batters are allowed.
- Should an injury occur, or appear to occur, the first coach or umpire who sees it should call an immediate time-out to attend to the player. Play will stop immediately. All players should sit on the ground where they were standing when the time-out is called. When play resumes, the coaches, with the agreement of the umpires, should determine where any base runners and/or batter should be fairly placed.

## H. Scoring

- While scores are kept in individual games, coaches are expected to minimize the importance of winning or losing. No team standings are published in Wentworth Ball Program machine pitch, however standings are maintained in order to allow seeding for the end of season tournament.
- Runs will be counted in each inning until the defensive team records three (3) outs or when the play ends (according to the rules below) after the offensive team scores five (5) runs, whichever comes first. After that, the teams will switch batting and fielding.

## I. Defensive Play: The Positions / Substitutions

- There may be no more than 10 players on the field for defense each inning. There are six infield positions: pitcher, 1<sup>st</sup> base, 2<sup>nd</sup> base, shortstop, 3<sup>rd</sup> base and catcher. There are four outfield positions, right field, right center field, left center field and left field. If more than ten players are to be playing, then the extra players must play defense behind the four outfielders.
- The defensive team must place a player at the pitcher position. The player must straddle the designated circle on either side of or behind the coach operating the pitching machine, but NOT forward of the machine. This allows the player to be a safe distance from the machine while maintaining a proper defensive stance.
- Substitutions will NOT be permitted for defensive players unless an injury or some other instance requiring a player to leave the field occurs. Players leaving the field because of a call or play they disagree with will not be allowed to continue to play for the rest of the game once they leave the field of play and will not be allowed to have a substitute replace them for the duration their team is in the field. Once the team comes in to

bat, a player may then be substituted for the player no longer eligible to continue to play.

- Player substitutions will take place when the visiting team comes in to bat for the beginning of the third inning. ALL players on the bench for the first two innings MUST be substituted into the game for players who have batted at least once. They must take that player's position in the batting order, but a coach may adjust defensive positions as he sees fit for the new players. Coaches must notify the official scorekeeper about substitutions BEFORE the first batter hits. Once a player is removed from the roster for substitution purposes, they are NOT allowed to return to the game unless a player is injured and no other players are available. The ONLY exception to this rule is when a game goes to extra innings during playoffs. In that scenario, players who were replaced by a substitute player during regulation ARE allowed to be added back to the roster during extra inning play ONLY.

## J. Defensive Play: Ending the Play

The defensive team should make every effort to make an out whenever possible, thus teaching softball situations and skills. However, when an out is made, play continues until it is stopped under any of the following rules:

- Play stops when the ball is advanced to the infield or thrown to an infield player who stops the advancement of the lead offensive base runner. Once the lead offensive base runner has stopped advancing and is on a base, the umpire will signal for the ball to be thrown back to the coach operating the pitching machine, thus ending the play.
- Balls thrown over or past a defensive player are considered in play until the defensive team stops the lead offensive base runner and the umpire signals the play over.
- Once a play is stopped it may not be resumed until the next batter puts the ball in play.

## K. Offensive Play: Batting

- Once the batting order is established, it must be followed throughout the game. A batting position on a lineup card may be maintained for a player who may arrive late until that position in the batting order comes up while the team is at bat for the first time. At that point, if the player has still not arrived, he/she is placed at the bottom of the lineup. Should the player not arrive before the rotation comes back around, they will be removed from the lineup card. That player MAY be added as a substitute for another player once they arrive per the guidelines above. Should the team not reach the end of the lineup before their at-bat ends, the player's position at the end of the lineup will remain until the rotation comes to that position, at which time the above rules govern that player's admittance into the game.
- No bunting will be allowed.
- Each batter gets 5 pitches to hit. If the batter does not hit after 5 pitches, the batter is out. Three missed swings constitute an out, regardless of how many pitches have been made. If a batter fouls the fifth pitch, she will be allowed to continue to bat until she swings and misses or puts the ball in play.
- In the event a fifth pitch is out of reach of a player or unhittable because of a malfunction of the machine, the coach may use an additional pitch for that batter. A coach may ONLY use two such additional pitches per game and they cannot be used for the same player twice.
- Any batted ball that hits the machine is a base hit and the ball is immediately ruled dead. Thrown balls hitting the machine are dead. Base runners may advance to the nearest base on these dead balls. Machine operators are considered part of the machine. Machine operators should try to stay out of the way of live softballs as best as possible.
- Any fly ball hit into the air and caught (pop-up) shall be an out, whether in fair or foul territory.
- Players must learn to lay down the bat and not throw it after a hit. If the umpire determines the bat has been thrown, he/she will warn a batter and the coach the first time the bat is thrown carelessly. If on this first violation the batter safely reaches base, the play stands. The second time the umpire deems the same batter to have thrown their bat, whether it is on the current at-bat or a later at-bat, the umpire should call the batter out. (The umpire should also notify scorekeepers so that warnings can be recorded.)

## **L. Offensive Play: Base Running**

- There will be no lead-offs. Base runners must be touching their respective bases when the ball is hit. If a runner is not touching a base when a hit occurs, the runner is out.
- A base runner may be forced out or tagged out with the ball in traditional softball fashion. A base runner that runs wide out of the base path to avoid being tagged out will be called out by the umpire. A base runner that is hit by a batted ball is not out unless she intentionally steps on or kicks the ball.
- When the defensive team overthrows the ball at a base and it goes out of control of the defensive player, either in fair or foul territory, the base runners may run to as many bases as they want, but they must earn it; it is not automatic.
- The advancement of ALL base runners will be determined by the lead runner. The lead base runner must indicate that she has finished advancing by returning to the closest base. Once the base runner has returned to the base and no other base runners try to advance, the umpire will signal the play over and the ball will be thrown to the coach operating the machine.
- Base runners may continue to advance until the umpire signals the play over, even if an out occurs with another base runner.
- Tagging base on fly balls is allowed.

## **M. Game Procedures and League Policies**

- Scorekeepers for each team should exchange lineups and batting orders prior to each game.
- Team jerseys should be worn for each game.
- Lightning requires immediate removal of all participants from the field. A rainstorm may interrupt or cause the postponement of a game. Games will not be postponed because of the threat of bad weather. If weather or field conditions are questionable, the Wentworth Ball Program officials will determine when a game is to be called and will notify the coaches who will notify their players. Rainouts will be rescheduled by the Wentworth Ball Program Coordinator.
- Each team should line up on the base line in front of their dugout immediately following the game to shake hands with the opposing team. Good sportsmanship will be encouraged at all times.
- Profanity, abusive language, or any taunting, abusive bantering or baiting will not be tolerated from players, coaches or anyone on the Wentworth premises. Arguments over rules and especially judgment calls by umpires should be avoided at all times. In the event of a controversy, coaches should continue the game in a sportsmanlike manner and discuss the problem with the Wentworth Ball Program official after the game so that all rules can be clarified. Should a coach feel a call cost them the game, they may file a formal complaint with the Wentworth Ball Program Softball director. A review of the game will be made and a final determination of the outcome will follow any investigation. The Ball Program Coordinator will have the final say in any dispute.
- The safety of the players is the foremost concern of the Wentworth Ball Program. As such, should there be any instance of a coach, parent or other adult physically or verbally abusing a player, that person will be asked to leave the premises immediately.