



**PONY MAJOR DIVISION
RULES
(April 1, 2011)**

INTRODUCTION

The goals of this division are instructional: to learn and improve athletic skills, to become physically conditioned, to learn to control emotions, to develop positive feelings of self worth, to learn the use and importance of team work, to learn to solve problems, and to learn sportsmanship and how to play by rules. A coaches' first responsibility is to help young and impressionable children reach these goals safely while having fun. Each player must be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of athletic ability. Coaches should know and study the fundamentals of the sport; know the rules of the game; stress effort, teamwork and sportsmanship; give all players a chance to become well rounded and to find their place in the sport by allowing them to play as many different positions as possible; keep ego out of coaching; and set performance goals that are related to the fundamentals of the game and are divorced from all won/loss records or individual statistics.

CODE OF CONDUCT

1) **Proper Conduct:** Players, coaches and fans shall exhibit good sportsmanship and shall respect the judgment of the umpire. Negative rooting, taunting, or distracting is strictly prohibited. The only rooting for one's own team is permitted. No coach, player, or spectator 1/ shall use foul language or gestures, 2/ shall threaten or cause, or participate in violence or 3/ shall challenge any judgment call of the umpire. An umpire's interpretation of a rule may be challenged, but only by the head coach in a courteous and respectful manner. At no time once the game begins and until it ends shall a spectator be on the playing field or in foul territory that is not out of bounds.

The umpire shall have the discretion to eject, with or without a prior warning, any coach, player, or spectator for exhibiting bad sportsmanship, respect for any player, coach, or umpire. Umpires have been advised to give one warning, but it is not required. If an umpire gives a warning or requests that a coach give a warning, all coaches shall assist in executing the umpire's request.

2) **Suspension of Ejected Coach:** Any manager or coach ejected from a game will be subject to the disciplinary rules of the 78thPYC, including suspension.

3) **Fighting:** Fighting warrants an automatic ejection from a game for all parties.

4) **Suspension of Ejected Player:** Any player ejected from a game is automatically suspended the next game. Any player ejected from two games will be required to appear before the division director at which time the player may be permanently suspended.

5) **Post-Game Handshake:** Players and coaches shall shake hands in Stanley Cup style after each game.

6) **Forfeit based on Improper Conduct:** The umpire has the power to terminate a game and rule it a forfeit if coaches, parents, or spectators become abusive or hinder the playing of the game.

REGARDING UMPIRES

- 1) **Respect and Use of Umpires:** It is important for coaches to teach their players to respect the authority of the umpire. No game shall be played without their participation.
- 2) **Challenging Umpire Calls:** An umpire's judgment call can never be challenged. An umpire can only be politely challenged on the interpretation of a rule, and only by the head coach.
- 3) **Addressing Umpires and Their Authority to Eject & Call Forfeits:** All discussion with the umpires must be carried out in a courteous voice and manner. The umpire has the authority to eject coaches and abusive spectators under penalty of forfeit.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- 1) **Rosters; Schedules; Adult Supervision:** Managers must comply with all rules that apply to them as set forth by the 78thPYC, including creating, submitting, and distributing rosters to the 78thPYC and a lineup to the opposing coach prior to the start of each game. Each team shall contain no more than 15 players on its roster, unless an exception is approved by the 78thPYC. Coaches must notify each player of practice and game schedules. Coaches must insure that no game or practice is ever held without the supervision of a responsible adult. SAFETY FIRST!
- 2) **Rescheduling Cancelled Games:** When games are cancelled or postponed, the contest may be rescheduled subject to approval of the 78thPYC. Unless you are told by your coach that a game has been cancelled or postponed for it is posted on the organization hot line, players must show up. The general rule is, if in doubt, show up on time.

GENERAL RULES

- 1) **Official Baseball Rules Apply:** All games are played under the "Official Baseball Rules" as adopted by the professional baseball playing rules committee," unless specifically modified in these rules.
- 2) **Team Size; Outfield Positioning:** Teams may field 10 players, the standard 9 baseball positions and an additional outfielder stationed at the discretion of the manager. However, all outfielders must be positioned at least 15 feet beyond infield base line.
- 3) **Batting:** Universal batting shall apply: All players must bat each time through the order, whether the player has played a defensive position in that inning or not. Latecomers must be placed at the bottom of the batting order. If a batter bats out of turn, and it is appealed to the umpire by the opposing team before that illegal time at bat is complete, the batter is out. Otherwise, the order continues from its proper place without penalty.
- 4) **Playing Time for Players:** All players must play in every game they attend, provided they have been to at least one practice. Coaches must inform the director, umpire and opposing coach whenever a player might be sitting out a game. No player shall sit out during playoff games unless approved by the Division Director. Decisions may be appealed to the director.
- 5) **Substitution:** Unlimited free defensive substitution is allowed. However, every team member must play at least one full inning of the first two & two full innings of the first four. It is the responsibility of the coaches, not the umpires, to track compliance with this rule. If convinced by one coach of another's non-compliance of this rule, the umpire shall have the power to require a player to take the field for as many innings as the umpire shall deem proper. Prior to a game, coaches must inform the director, umpire, and opposing coach whenever a player might not fully participate in the game. Decisions may be appealed to the director.

- 6) **Playing Defensive Positions:** Coaches are encouraged to allow players to try different positions. However minimal skill is necessary for all positions to avoid being hurt, such as catcher, pitcher and first base. Coaches therefore have the discretion to put players at specific positions. However they must allow players to prove in practice that they are skilled enough to play in a position they desire. The coach shall use objective criteria at practices to determine if players are skilled enough to play different positions. For example, to pitch a player must be able to throw a minimum number of strikes (such as five) out of ten attempts; to catch a player must be able to keep a minimum number of balls from getting behind him/her and must be able to make long accurate throws (even if on a bounce).
- 7) **Shoes Permitted:** No metal cleats are permitted to be used by a player. Rubber soled athletic shoes with or without rubber cleats are permitted.
- 8) **Game Time Length:** Regular season and non-championship tournament games shall be six innings or 110 minutes from the scheduled start time, whichever comes first. No new inning of play may begin after 100 minutes from the scheduled start time have been played. The umpire shall inform the head coaches when an inning is the last. Tied games may be played until a winner as long as no new inning of play begins after 100 minutes from the scheduled start time. During tournament championship games, there shall be no time limit and games shall be played until a winner is declared.
- 9) **Forfeits:** A team failing to field at least 7 players at game time, after a 10 minute grace period, shall forfeit. Teams then choose up sides and play among themselves and the umpire shall umpire the game.
- 10) **Exchange Batting Orders:** Managers must exchange a written batting order before each game.
- 11) **5 Run Limit:** For the first three innings, no team may score more than five runs in their offensive half of their inning. Thereafter there shall be no limit on the amount of runs either team may score.
- 12) **Throwing Bat:** Throwing the bat is not permitted. A player should receive one warning and shall be called out on subsequent violations. It shall be the responsibility of both coaches, not the umpire, to track the players who have received such warning.
- 13) **Food or Drink on Field:** No food or drink (except water or sports drinks) is permitted in the dugout. There is no picnicking during game time. Coaches may not smoke, nor consume alcoholic beverages when the game is underway.
- 14) **Coaches in the Dugout and on the Playing Field:** Only players, coaches and scorekeepers (totaling 4 adults) are represent each team and occupy the dugout and proper coaching positions on the field. Relatives, friends, and other visitors must watch the game from out of bounds.
- 15) **Uniform Required:** All players must be in full uniform (including hats) in order to play.
- 16) **Protective Equipment Required:** All batters and base runners must wear protective helmets. Catchers must wear a mask, a helmet, a chest protector, protective cup, and shin guards.
- 17) **Sliding Rules:** Head first sliding at any base is prohibited except when diving back to base that had already been acquired. A player violating this rule shall called out. The umpire will decide whether a runner has stumbled head first (and is safe) or slid head first (and is out). A player must either slide or avoid contact when there is a play at any base, except for a play at first base. If a player fails to slide or avoid contact as required by this rule, the player shall be called out. If a base runner initiates a dangerous play, the runner will be called out. If contact is made intentionally the player will be ejected from the game. In addition, rule 7.06 of the "Official Baseball Rules" will be strictly enforced: "The catcher, without the ball in his or her possession has no right to block the pathway of a runner attempting to score. The base line belongs to the runner and the catcher should be there only when he or she is fielding a ball or ... already has the ball in his or her hands."

18) **Player Eligibility:** Unless a player is granted the right to play down by the league, only players who will be eight years old or younger on April 30 of the current year shall be eligible to play. Lineup cards must be exchanged before the game, which must contain the full name and shirt number of each player in order of how they will bat.

19) **Official Ball:** The official ball is a soft baseball provided by the organization. Only that ball can be used. It shall be a Worth Rif5 or equivalent approved by the 78thPYC.

* * * These rules may not be amended by managers at game time. Suggestions for rule changes should be brought to the attention of the division director(s).

DIVISION RULES

1) **Base Distances:** Bases shall be 50 feet apart.

2) **Pitching Distances:** The pitching for player-pitching shall be 33'. The pitching distance for coach-pitching shall be no less than 20'. Pitching distance is measured distance from the back point of home plate to the front of the pitching plate.

3) **No Balks; Bunting; Leading; Stealing; Dropped 3rd Strike; Infield Fly Rule:** There are no balks, bunting, leading, stealing, dropped third strike or infield fly rules.

4) **Pitching 1st Two Games:** For the first two games of the season, pitching shall be done by a coach from the offensive team. Pitching must be overhand and may be made from a standing or kneeling position. The defensive team shall also field a "pitcher" whose responsibility is to play any ball hit to him or her. Balls and strikes are not called. Each batter is entitled to look at 10 pitches (excluding foul balls from the tenth pitch on). If the batter has not struck out after three swings nor gotten a hit after looking at his or her 10 pitches, the at bat shall be terminated, but no out shall be recorded. A pitch that hits a batter shall be a no-pitch which will not count against the 10 pitches nor permit the batter to go to first base. If the "pitcher coach" is unintentionally hit by a batted ball the ball is dead, it is no pitch, the hitter is awarded first base, and the base runners advance one base.

5) **Pitching Games 3-4:** For games 3 and 4 of the season, for the first two innings only, pitching shall be identical to how it is done in the first two games of the season. Thereafter, from the 3rd inning on, players on the defensive team will pitch to the opposing team the balance of the game. In games 3 and 4, each pitcher is limited to one inning of work, where an inning of work is defined as any number of pitches thrown to any number of batters in one defensive half of an inning or until the pitcher is removed from the mound; hence, a portion of an inning counts as one complete inning.

6) **Pitching Games 5+:** After both teams have played four games, players will pitch to opposing batters in all innings and each pitcher is limited to two innings of pitching per game, including during playoffs, except that if a game goes to extra innings during playoffs, each pitcher shall be allowed to pitch a third inning. No pitcher can pitch more than 6 innings per seven day period, except during playoffs.

7) **Balls and Strikes when Players Pitch; Intentional Walks:** Whenever players pitch: Balls and strikes are called by the umpire according to the rules of baseball with only the following exceptions: It will take 6 balls for a walk unless the bases are loaded, when it will take 8. The strike zone shall be as follows: The vertical dimensions shall be from the bottom of the kneecap to a horizontal line connecting the armpits. The horizontal dimensions shall be vertical lines arising from both sides of home plate (17"). A strike shall be called when any part of the pitched ball goes across the strike zone directly on a fly.

Intentional walks are prohibited. Determining whether a walk is intentional shall be a judgment call of the umpire. A pitch determined to be intended to walk a batter shall be deemed a "no pitch" and shall not count

against the batter's ten pitch limit. Continued violation of this rule shall subject the pitcher to removal and/or the coach to ejection, either at the discretion of the umpire.

8) **Hit Batters:** A pitcher that hits a batter two times in the same inning must be replaced and cannot pitch for the rest of the game. (That means that when a pitcher is allowed to pitch two innings in one game, the following would apply: If a pitcher hits one batter in each of two innings, that pitcher may continue to pitch until he or she hits a second batter in that pitcher's second inning of pitching.) The batter must make all attempts to avoid being hit. The umpire shall rule the batter was hit by a pitch if, in the judgment of the umpire, the batter could not have avoided being hit; otherwise it shall be called a ball. A ball thrown in the strike zone which hits a batter is a strike and the pitcher cannot be charged with hitting a batter.

9) **Dead Ball; Advancing Bases; Out of Bounds & Ground Rules:** The following applies to all games, including playoff games:

Batted balls hit to the outfield: The ball is dead once a ball thrown from the outfield crosses an imaginary straight line that connects the bases, except for throws to a base (or if the outfielder runs to the base carrying the ball) in an attempt (in the judgment of the umpire) to make a play at that base. Where a throw is made to a base (or the outfielder runs to the base carrying the ball) in an attempt to make a play at that base, the ball is live until the player releases the ball in a throw back to the pitcher.

Batted balls that thrown from within the infield: The ball is dead once the infielder releases the ball in a throw back to the pitcher. (It shall be in the discretion of the umpire to determine if it was the intent of the player to throw the ball back to the pitcher.) It is irrelevant whether the ball actually reaches or is caught by the pitcher. A player cannot field a ball and throw it directly to the pitcher to stop a play. A good faith attempt to make a play must occur first.

Under this section, once the ball is dead, a base runner may continue to the base to which he/she is already headed, as long as he/she was at least halfway to that base at the time the ball became dead. Otherwise the base runner must return to the prior base without risk of being put out. No new bases may be taken. Base runners should also know that they are not guaranteed the base, and that they may be put out anytime the ball is live and they are off the base. They should always play as if the ball were live and let the umpire return players to their last legal base after "time" has been called.

Tagging up is permitted and required but subject to the above rules relating to when the ball is dead.

Balls hit into fair territory are live and in play until 1/ they land out of bounds, or 2/ they cross the imaginary straight line that connects the bases from the outfield but not directly to a base to make a play, or 3/ when a batted ball that remained in the infield is thrown to the pitcher, or 4/ the umpire declares a time out. (A baserunner who runs while the ball is dead is in effect attempting to steal a base, which is prohibited. In such case, the umpire shall require the base runner to return to the originating base.) A player cannot field a ball and throw it directly to the pitcher to stop a play. A good faith attempt to make a play must occur first.

In the artificial turf fields, a ball is out of bounds once it touches concrete, goes into a dugout, or goes beyond the outer field fence; hence a ball that otherwise touches a fence is not out of bounds. In Prospect Park grass fields, a ball is out of bound when it passes a line drawn on the field to indicate when out of bounds begins – which line shall be 20' from first base and 20' from third base.

If a ball goes out of bounds, the base runners are entitled to the base to which there were heading and one additional base.

10) **Catcher to Leave Bases if Two Outs:**

To conserve playing time, when the catcher is a base runner and his team is assessed a second out, the catcher shall be replaced on the base path by the teammate that made the last out (at bat or on the bases) so that the catcher may put on the equipment. This rule is not optional.

11) **Coaches Allowed:** Each offensive team may field a first base coach, a third base coach, and, during the first four games, a coach-pitcher. Defensive coaches are not allowed on the field, with two exceptions: 1) before each inning for every game, defensive coaches are allowed on the field for up to two minutes to position their players; and 2) one defensive coach is allowed in the outfield during the first game only to give defensive instructions to the players in the field. Coaches may not physically assist base runners or touch the ball while the ball is in play (if they do, the base runner will be called out). Coaches may make one visit to the pitcher's mound per pitcher without removing the pitcher. The pitcher must be removed upon the second visit to the mound in an inning.

12) **Team Duties:** The home team, when applicable, supplies the bases and both teams shall supply one game ball to the umpire.

Unless supplied by the league, the Away team shall supply a courtesy 1st base which shall have the same dimensions as the bases supplied by the Home team. The courtesy 1st base shall be placed along side and touching the right side of 1st base, resting in foul territory. A courtesy 1st base shall be used for the runner to touch while the fielder must touch the 1st base in fair territory only to achieve a put out.

13) **No Umpire; Time Outs:** In the event the paid umpire is late or is absent, the opposing managers will together agree and designate the game's umpire(s). Only the umpire can call time out.

14) **Movement of the Base:**
If a base moves out of position, the base runner that arrives at that base shall not be tagged out as long as the baserunner is standing at or near where the base should have been and was not, in the umpire's judgment, attempting to advance to the next base.

15) **Backstop and Pitcher's Mound Lockup:**
The coaches of the first game shall assist in obtaining and placing the portable pitcher's mound and backup and the coaches of the final game of the day shall assist in storing both items. If they forget and either is stolen or damaged, they will be expected to bear the costs of replacement.

Email the division director any questions or comments – pony@78youthsports.org

* * *

Instructions Given to Umpires

When calling ball and strikes, do it from behind home plate wearing at least a catcher's mask and shin guards.

Obtain the catcher's equipment, pitching mound, thin rubber bases, and backstop (for Prospect Park Field A) prior to the first game and return them after the game, both with the assistance of the coaches.

Make sure the catcher's are not resting on their knees, thereby exposing their upper thighs to pitched balls.

Ask each coach to get a parent to backup the catcher to speed the game.

When the umpire or parent throws the ball back to the pitcher, throw it on one bounce.

With two outs, have the offensive team dress their catcher with his equipment.

Make sure that the areas beyond first and third base are clear of spectators. On the Van Voorhees field, the spectators can sit on the concrete to the left of third base, but no one or equipment should be on the artificial turf to the right of 1st base – the ball is live in that whole area.

Before the first game have the coaches get the parents to inspect and clean the field for dangerous objects (glass, etc.)

After each game the teams must clean their dugouts and leave quickly so the other teams can get started.

After a ball is hit into play, clear the bat from the home plate area so that none of the players will trip and hurt themselves on it.

All players should have their shirts tucked in and their shoe laces tied.

Warn the 1st basemen not to put their foot across the base, but on the corner closest to the field.