



2019 RULES AND REGULATIONS

Overview

The Traverse Area Girls Softball League (TAGS) provides opportunity for all eligible girls in the Grand Traverse region to learn, participate, and enjoy the game of softball regardless of skill level and experience. The focus of the league is participation, sportsmanship, and fun. The league is instructional by nature.

TAGS recognizes that healthy, fair, and skilled competition can be fun and rewarding, but the emphasis must always be on participation and sportsmanship. The league is operated by volunteer board members, coaches, and parents who strive to keep this in mind at all times, while remembering that the league's success shall be determined by focusing on what this league is all about; the girls.

MHSAA rules apply in all instances, except as otherwise provided below:

Innings/Games:

1. **Game Times.** Games begin at the following times:
 - A league** - 6:30 pm at the Northwestern Michigan College and Traverse Heights fields
If doubleheaders are necessary, the first game will start at 5:30 pm and the second game will start at 7:00 pm.
 - B league** - 6:30 pm at the Oak Park fields
 - C and D league** - 6:30 pm at the Traverse Heights fields;

2. **Pre-Game Practice.** To insure prompt game start times, before game infield practice shall be as follows:
 - With the exception of the 2nd game in any double-header, the visiting team will have the field one-half (**1/2**) hour before game time for a period of 15 minutes. The home team will have the field 15 minutes before game time, for a period of 15 minutes.
 - No batting practice on the infield surface before the games and no pitching from on the field of play prior to the start of the game.
 - Batting practice prior to a game must be with whiffle balls only unless a portable hitting net is used.
 - Any time prior to the one-half-hour before game time is considered "first come, first serve".
 - On picture day, times may be adjusted in a fair manner.

3. **Innings.** A and B leagues, teams will play 6-inning games. In A and B league games, no inning will start after 8:30 pm. C league plays 5 inning games. In C league, no innings start after 8:15 pm. D league games last three innings, with each team batting through the batting order each inning. No score is kept in D league games.

The time limit for doubleheaders in A league is 80 minutes. For games that start at 5:30, no inning will start after 6:50. The 2nd game will begin 10 minutes after the end of the first game.

Games during the regular season can end in a tie. If, at any point, the time limit is reached and the game is tied, the game will end in a tie.

If a regulation game has been completed and the time limit has not been reached, extra innings must be played as per the ASA rules. The visiting team will start the extra inning off with a runner on second base. That runner shall be the last batter in the previous inning. The same shall be done for the home team when they come to bat. During extra innings, if the time limit is reached and the game is still tied, the game will end in a tie.

4. **Official Game.** 2½ innings will constitute a game in case of rain or adverse conditions, provided the home team is ahead.

5. **Mercy Rule**

In A & B leagues, if after three or four innings a team is 15 runs ahead, or after 5 innings a team is 8 runs ahead, the game is called and the winning team is awarded a victory.

In C league, if after three innings a team is 11 runs ahead, after 4 innings a team is 6 runs ahead the game is called and the winning team is awarded a victory.

6. **Run Limits**

In C league, a maximum of 5 runs is allowed per ½ inning.

In A and B leagues, each team can score a maximum of 7 runs in any inning.

7. **Game Dates.** The dates of regularly scheduled games may not be changed. No exceptions. If a team does not have the required number of players, that team forfeits.

8. **Cherry Festival and the Fourth of July week.** In 2019, the first round of playoffs will be played on Monday, July 1 and Tuesday, July 2.

9. **Make-up Games.** Make-up games will only be allowed due to inclement weather conditions. The first rain out will automatically be scheduled at the same field for Friday of the same week at 6:30 pm. If the field at which the game was to be played is open prior to Friday, and both teams are available, and umpires are available, a makeup can occur earlier than Friday. If there are already Friday games scheduled, the make-up game will automatically be scheduled for Saturday at 10:00 a.m.
10. **“Home Team” and Home Team Responsibilities.** Third-base side is the “home team” in all league play (no exceptions).
The home team in tournament play will be determined by league finish.
The home team should provide one new game softball and a second softball in good condition. Game balls are kept in the sheds at Oak Park and Traverse Heights.
11. **Tournament Seeding.** In A, B, and C leagues, league finish will determine the order of tournament seeding.
12. **Game Protest.** Results of the game are determined on the field; there are no contests.
13. **Coaches.** All coaches are appointed and/or approved by the TAGS board. Any adult involved in coaching must complete the required background check process.

Players/Teams:

14. Age Eligibility.
 - All girls born in 2011 through 2014 will be eligible for the D league;
 - All girls born in 2009 or 2010 will be eligible for C league;
 - All girls born in 2007 or 2008 will be eligible for B league;
 - All girls born in 2003 through 2006 will be eligible for A league;

The Board may request proof of age and may allow waivers under special circumstances. All players may request to "play up" or "play down" a league, but the Board shall reserve the final determination.

15. **Team Assignments.** All players will play with the team to which they are assigned.

16. **No Playing on More than one Team or League.** No player may play on more than one team or in more than one TAGS league. Any player doing so shall be suspended from play for the equivalent amount of games that they are in violation of this rule. The suspended player may resume play on their originally assigned team once the suspension is served. Games played by that player, while in violation of this rule, shall be considered forfeited in league standings for the associated teams.
17. **Changing Teams.** Once the season begins, no player may change teams or leagues without approval of the Board and without compelling and extraordinary reason.
18. **Player Conflict / "Player Agent".** Any player having difficulty may consult with the designated "Player Agent" to resolve the conflict.
19. **Team Composition, 7 Players Required, Late Arrivals, Early Departures.** In A, B and C leagues, (10) players make up a defensive team. Seven (7) players are required in order to avoid a forfeit. Depending on team numbers, the board may decide the regulation 9 players make up a defensive team in A or B leagues. **Note: In 2019, 9 players will make up a defensive team in A and B leagues.**

If a team starts with 7 players and additional players arrive, such players must be added immediately to the defensive alignment. All players arriving after the commencement of the game must be inserted at the bottom of the batting order. If a team has less than 7 players, the game must be forfeited, including when then number of players is reduced to fewer than 7 due to injury.

In D league, all players play in the field with extra defensive players in the outfield. In A, B and C leagues, the 10th player is an outfielder only.

In A, B, C and D leagues, batting order will consist of all players present. If a player leaves early or is injured, no forced out will occur.

20. **Team Forfeit.** Forfeit games shall be called only when a team does not show up within ten (10) minutes after the scheduled start of the game. No exceptions. An unofficial game may be played with the players who are present. The game may start earlier if both coaches' consent. The game must commence if the minimum numbers of players (7) are present for each team. A team cannot wait beyond the scheduled game time for the arrival of a ninth or tenth player. Also see # 7, 15, 18, 30 and 34 for rules that may result in forfeiture.

In D league there are no forfeits and no minimum number of players required. If turnout is low, whether to play a game is at the discretion of the coaches of the two teams involved.

21. **Mandatory Defensive Positions.** In A, B, and C leagues, each player must play a defensive position at least every other inning. For B and C leagues, each player must also play at least 2 innings in the infield in a regular length game; one inning during a shortened game. For purposes of this rule, an inning shall consist of three outs. A player may be removed due to injury or emergency. Players can request not to play in the infield; any such request must be approved by the board.
22. **Substitutions.** Free substitutions are allowed. **Courtesy runners** may be used for the offensive player scheduled to play catcher the following inning. The courtesy runner will be the player who made the last out (in that inning or the previous inning). If the last out is a pitcher or catcher, move to the out prior to that player.
23. **Uniform Requirements and Prohibitions.** In A, B, C and D leagues, players must wear sneakers, street shoes or rubber cleats.

In A, B, and C leagues, players must wear helmets with facemasks per ASA rules. In D league a facemask is not required.

In A, B, C, and D leagues, long pants or uniforms must be worn with numbered shirts. No girl will be allowed to play in shorts. No jewelry of any kind will be worn, including cloth or string types, barrettes or other cosmetic or decorative items that are hard. Plastic visors and bandanas are prohibited. Exception: "piercing", if not able to be removed, may be covered with tape or a bandage.

Pitching:

24. **Number of Innings.**
- In A League, a pitcher may pitch a maximum of 4 innings per game, with no more than 3 innings consecutively.
 - In B League, a pitcher may pitch a maximum of 4 innings per game, with no more than 2 innings consecutively.
 - In C League, a pitcher may pitch a maximum of 3 innings per Game, with no more than 2 innings consecutively.
- For purposes of this rule, if the pitcher throws one pitch in an inning, that shall constitute one inning.
- Pitchers are allowed 1 extra inning in an extra inning game.
25. **Pitching Distance.** The pitching distance shall be:
- A league - 43 feet; B league - 37 feet; C league - 34 feet.

Safety/Sportsmanship:

26. **Player Injury.** In case of injury to a player, the play shall stop until the injury is addressed.
27. **Sliding.** Players are not required to slide. If they do slide, they must do so in a legal manner. Players who choose not to slide must attempt to avoid contact with the defensive player. Please refer to the legal manner as referenced in Rule 215, Article I.
28. **Helmets When Batting.** Players must wear helmets at all times while batting, base running, in the warm-up circle, or if coaching a base. Intentionally removing a helmet or tossing it to the ground prior to leaving the playing field is an automatic out.
29. **Throwing the Bat.** On the first occasion in a game, if the bat is thrown over 10 feet in the judgment of the umpire, or if the bat strikes another person while being thrown, the umpire shall warn both teams that the next occurrence shall result in an out; the second and subsequent occurrence in any game is an out, regardless which team is in violation.
30. **Backstop.** No one (player, coach or fan) shall be behind the backstop. It is the coach's responsibility to monitor this and ask those violating this rule to move.
31. **Profane language.** Swearing or profanity by a coach or player will result in his or her ejection from the game and playing area. Further argument may result in an automatic forfeit of the game.
32. **Heckling.** There will be no heckling of players, coaches, or the umpire by any coach, player, or spectator.
33. **Umpire Judgment Calls.** Coaches, players or spectators shall not question the judgment calls of Umpires. The head coach of a team, or acting head coach in the event the head coach is absent, may question the interpretation of the rules; however, this shall not be done on an excessive basis as determined by the Umpire, and the ruling shall not be debated.
34. **Smoking, Alcohol, Illegal Substances.** No smoking, alcoholic beverages or illegal substances are allowed in any playing or spectator area.

35. **Rule Violations.** Any violation of these rules, unless otherwise specified, shall be addressed in the following manner:
During minor, less severe, and/or unintentional violations, umpires may elect, at his/her discretion, to warn the head coach of the team associated with this behavior on the first occurrence.
Any subsequent violations may result in the assessment of an out or base advancement as determined by the violating teams offensive or defensive position in that inning at the time of violation.
- Umpires may eject any violator at any time from the game and spectator area, as they deem necessary while considering the behavior and severity of violation. In severe and/or reoccurring cases, umpires may elect to declare the game forfeit and award the win to the team not in violation of these rules.
36. **Rule Violation resulting in Ejection or Forfeit, Emergency Board Session.** In all instances of ejection, game forfeit, or physical assault, or otherwise as determined by the Board while considering eligibility status of a person in violation of these rules, the Board shall convene in an emergency session prior to the next scheduled game of the team associated with the person in violation of these rules.
37. **Board Member calling Emergency Meeting.** Any Board member may call for an emergency session **where there is** cause to believe there has been a serious violation of these rules.
38. **Emergency Board Quota.** An emergency Board session shall include 51% or more of all Board members.
39. **Notices of an Emergency Board Meeting.** Emergency sessions shall be posted on the TAGS web site no later than one day prior to the scheduled date and time. The posting shall include the location, date, and time of the session.
40. **Purpose of Emergency Board Meeting.** During the emergency session, the Board shall make a determination concerning the person allegedly in violation of these rules, and their eligibility to continue participation and/or attendance in TAGS games and/or functions. Functions include games, practices, gatherings, or any other instances of TAGS sponsored events.
41. **Procedure at Emergency Board Meeting.** The Board meeting shall be open to the public, and the person in question shall be afforded an opportunity to address the board in person, either verbally and/or in writing, at the meeting. Only written communications in which the author has identified his/her self shall be read out loud and considered by the board. Written communications shall be read out loud by the board secretary. Any other persons associated with TAGS or having knowledge or legitimate input concerning the event or events that prompted the emergency meeting, shall also be given the opportunity to address the Board during this session.

42. **Emergency Board Voting.** After all witnesses, writings and evidence have been presented, the Board shall convene in private to determine the eligibility of the person in question. A vote shall determine the decision of the Board. Fifty-one percent (51%) of the Board members must agree on the action in order for it to be effected.
43. **Announcing the Decision of Emergency Board Meeting.** Immediately following the decision, the President shall announce the Board's decision at a re-convening of the open session. The person in question shall also receive the Board's decision in writing, post marked no later than three days from the conclusion of the emergency session.
44. **Written Decision of Violation by Emergency Board.** In instances in which the alleged violation was found to occur, the written decision shall specify the rule violated the basis to support the violation, and the decision of the board as to eligibility to participate in TAGS functions. The written decision shall clearly specify events and/or the level of participation the person is suspended from, and the duration of suspension.
45. **Appeal of Emergency Board Decision.** No decision may be appealed, and the Board's decision is final.

Equipment/Uniforms/Fields:

46. **Equipment and Uniform Return.** Coaches are responsible for turning in equipment immediately following the last game to the equipment manager. Players are responsible for turning in their uniforms to the coaches. Coaches are responsible for collecting uniforms and turning them in to their sponsors or as otherwise agreed upon with the sponsors.
47. **Purchasing Equipment – Board Consent.** The League assumes no financial responsibility for any equipment or uniforms purchased without the prior consent of the Board.
48. **Clean-Up.** The teams, and specifically the head coach of each team, are responsible for "policing" their bench area after the conclusion of each game. Refuse containers are available at each TAGS location and shall be used to dispose of all garbage and refuse.

Special Rules – A League:

49. **A League Rules:** With the exception of the player participation requirements (including the limits on pitching), and batting lineup, A league will play following MHSAA rules.

Special Rules – B and C Leagues:

50. **Out.** In C league, in the third strike (called or swinging), the batter is out and may not run. In B league, the batter is not out on a 3rd strike that touches the ground in the 1st through 3rd innings only.

51. **Stealing.** In C league, a base runner cannot steal bases. A runner is allowed a "walking start" after the pitch leaves the pitcher's hand; the lead can be a maximum of 2 steps.

In B league, stealing is allowed throughout the game unless the offensive team is ahead by 7 or more runs. Stealing home, however, is not allowed. In addition, there will be no advance on an errant throw during steal attempts or pick-off attempts..

52. **In-Field Fly Rule.** The infield fly-rule shall not be in effect.

53. **Bunting:** Bunting is allowed in B league, but not in C league.

54. **Base running and Control of the Ball:** In B league, players may not advance any additional bases once the ball is in possession on the infield dirt.

In C league, players may not advance any additional bases once the ball is in the infield dirt (they may continue to the base to which they are advancing). Possession on the ball is not necessary.

55. Any batter that is hit by a pitch they will be awarded first base, as long as an effort is made to avoid contact as determined by the Umpire.

56. **Umpire Discretion.** The umpire shall have full discretion to stop play when the ball is in the control of a defensive infield player in the infield in B league or is on the infield dirt in C league.

57. **Coach pitch.** In C League only, on the fourth ball, the batter will not be given first base. A designated coach will throw a maximum of 3 pitches to the batter. Any contact with the ball resulting in the ball in fair territory will be played. If the batter does not put the ball in play in 3 pitches, it will result in an out.

Bunting is not allowed in C league.

58. **Softball size.** In C league an 11 inch "softie" is used for play. In B league, an 11 inch regulation softball (hard) is used.

Special Rules - D League:

59. **Game Location.** All games shall be played on Fields One and Five at Traverse Heights.
60. **Double-Header.** In the event a double header is scheduled on the same field, the first game begins at 6:00 p.m. and the second game begins immediately following the first, but no later than 7:30 p.m. No inning in the first game will begin after 7:15 pm.
61. **Number of Innings.** Games consist of three innings. An inning will be determined by batting through the batting order.
62. **Coach Pitch.** The coaches shall pitch to their own team for all innings. Each coach may move in no more than twenty feet in front of the plate for younger or smaller players, and may not move back past the pitching rubber.
63. **Softball size.** In D league an 11 inch "softie" is used for play.
64. **Player Positions.** All players present will play in the field each inning. The regular compliment of infielders may be on the infield and the remainder of the players shall be in the outfield.
65. **Field Coaches.** There may be no more than two coaches on the field inside the lines of play. No parent shall be allowed inside the lines of play with the exception of an emergency.
66. **Five (5) Pitches.** Each batter is allowed **no more than five pitches** from their coach. After five pitches, a tee will be brought out and the batter will be given three swings. If the player fails to put the ball into play they will be called out. The batter must hit a portion of the ball to put it in play.
67. **No Bunting.** There shall be no bunting.
68. **In-Field Fly Rule.** The infield fly-rule shall not be in effect.
69. **Infielder Positions.** Defensive infielders must remain a minimum of 40 feet from the plate, except the player in the pitcher's position.
70. **Catcher Position.** The catcher will be in a squat position or take a knee a safe distance from the batter; no standing.
71. **Scores.** Coaches, players, spectators, or any other persons shall not keep score. This is strictly an instructional league.
72. **Standings.** Standings will not be kept for league play.

73. **“Control of the Ball”**. The ball is “in control” when the ball is in possession of a defensive player on the infield. Once this control of the ball is obtained the offensive team may not continue running. If a runner is caught between bases when control of the ball is gained, the runner may proceed to the base they are going to. There shall be no extra bases earned by the offensive-team in any case of an overthrow.