

EMERALD NECKLACE GIRLS FASTPITCH SOFTBALL ASSOCIATION

GENERAL RULES and PLAYING RULES

TEAM ELIGIBILITY

1. All players should reside in or attend school in an Emerald Necklace Girls Fastpitch Softball Association chartered community/school or any other community/school which does not offer a fastpitch program.
2. **If at any time a player is found to be ineligible, that game and any other game in which she has participated will be forfeited.**
3. Teams may not play unless their roster has been submitted prior to their first game.
4. A player may be rostered on only one team in the Emerald Necklace Girls Fastpitch Softball Association.

ROSTER FORMATION AND RESTRICTIONS

1. The cutoff birth date for all divisions is January 1 of the playing year.
2. Divisions will include 10 & under, 12 & under, 14 & under, 18 & under JV and 18 & under Varsity. (Note: an 18 year old player graduating from her senior year in high school and was a member of a high school fastpitch team is not eligible to play in the JV division.).
3. A girl may not play in any division more than one division beyond her own age. Teams may not play nor roster younger girls who do not qualify within this restriction for any reason. A player may not play in an age division below the division in which she is rostered for any reason (i.e. a player who is eligible for 12U but is rostered on a 14U team cannot play in the 12U division.)
4. For the purposes of this Association, the following definitions will be used:
 - a.) Free Player: a player from a community which has no team at the age level for which she is eligible to play.
 - b.) Restricted Player: a player who lives in a "Member Community" which has a team or teams at the age level for which she is eligible to play or is enrolled in a "Member Organization" which has a team or teams at the level for which she is eligible to play
 - c.) Released Player: a "Restricted Player" who elects not to play for her resident "Member Community" team and/or the "Member Organization" team of the organization in which she is enrolled; or there is no position on the team available for her.

- d.) Declared Player: a player who lives within the geographic boundaries of a “Member Community” team and is also enrolled as a member of an “Organizational Member”, *or a player who lives within a “Member Community” which is part of the same school system as another “Member Community”*. This player may player for either team by declaring her intent when her name is placed on a team’s roster.
 - e.) Resident Community: a player's residence will be consistent with the address of residence that she uses for the purpose of enrollment in the school in which she attended in the immediate-past school year.
 - f.) Extended Resident: a player who has been originally rostered on a team within a “Member Community” within the past two seasons but no longer resides in that original community. This player is eligible to enroll on a team in that “Member Community” and will not require a release from that “Member Community” in which she currently resides.
5. A Restricted Player who elects Released Player status must obtain a "Release Form" (ENGFSA RF-95) from her resident "Member Community" team and/or her "Member Organization" team on which she is enrolled.
 6. All Released Player requests are subject to review by the Association's Executive Committee and must be approved or disapproved at the time of final roster submission.
 7. Each team must roster 50% of its' players from its' Association-approved boundaries.
 8. Any team may roster no more than four (4) Released Players.
 9. The Association may approve two "Member Communities" and/or "Member Organizations" to form a team, provided neither of the two parties has enough participants to form a team. The roster of this team shall be made up of at least 50% participants from the two members' Association-approved boundaries.
 10. Any “Member community” who has not declared the status of the teams they are fielding in regard to the number of teams and age bracket / divisions in which these teams will be placed by May 1 of the current season will waive release rights for any players from within their “member Community” who have signed up under “Free Player” status in another “member Community” prior to May 1 of the current season.
 11. A player that has been released two (2) consecutive years to the same team will not be required to obtain a release if she elects to play with that same team for a third consecutive year and beyond. If she elects to play for a new and/or different team, a release will then be needed from her community.
 12. Any and all coaches who actively participate on the playing field in a coaching capacity in leagues games must be listed with the required information on the official team roster and must meet the approval of the league-mandated background check.

CALL UP RULES

1. Call up players are to be used to fill a temporary need to prevent a team from forfeiting (i.e. vacations, injury, illness, etc.) in order to play with a regulation number of players (9 for 12U, 14U, 18U; 10 for 10U).
2. A call up player must be rostered on an Emerald Necklace team from the age division just below the division of the team needing to use a call up player (i.e. 18U Varsity calls up an 18U JV or 14U player, 14U calls up 12U, etc.) No lateral call ups are permitted.
3. The call up player is required to be rostered to the same “member community” or “member organization” of the team needing the player.
4. A call up player must give priority to and attend her regular team’s game if a conflict exists in game times.
5. A player cannot be “called down” (i.e. a player who is eligible for 14U but is rostered to an 18U team cannot play in the 14U division). Refer to Rule 3 of Roster Formation and Restrictions.
6. Since there is no division below 10U, the 10U teams do not have the ability to call up players, therefore, should legally roster enough players to avoid forfeits.

UMPIRES

1. All umpires for all classes behind the plate must be assigned by a recognized fast pitch umpire's association. At least one (1) umpire must hold a current card in fast pitch softball from the Ohio High School Athletic Association and will be designated as Umpire-in-chief for that game. (effective 2004)
2. The umpire is in charge of the game upon the start of the game.
3. Parents, guardians, or relatives of a player or coach in any class in the ENGFSA may not umpire any game in which that player or coach is involved or any game in any community in which that player or coach is actively involved. If a coach is an umpire, he may not umpire a game that involves his home community. If a player is an umpire, she may not umpire a game involving her home community in any division. A coach may not umpire his own game.
4. Each 14U and 18U team will be responsible for paying one umpire's fee for each game in which they participate. (Two umpires are to be used in these games.)
5. One umpire will be used for 10U and 12U division game and each team will split the cost of that umpire.

NOTIFICATION OF CANCELLATION

1. Cancellation of games due to prior rain must be done at least two (2) hours prior to the scheduled game time.
2. Cancellation of games for reasons other than weather/field conditions must be done no later than 6:00 P.M. of the day prior to the scheduled game. The coach of the team which is canceling must notify the opposing coach, the class co-coordinator, and the umpire association. Failure to comply will result in a forfeit and **full payment of all umpire fees.**
3. Make-up games shall be scheduled within two weeks. The home team is responsible for rescheduling. The Association Vice-president must be consulted if rescheduling is not done within two weeks.
4. Games, once begun, that are stopped for any valid reason (i.e. weather, etc.) will be played from the point of suspension.

FORFEIT TIME

1. Starting time is a time mutually agreed upon at scheduling by home and visiting teams' coached. Forfeit time will be 15 minutes after the scheduled starting time.
2. In the event that scheduled umpires do not arrive at the playing site, the game will be rescheduled. Any change in starting time must be mutually agreed upon by coaches of both teams.
3. **In the event of forfeit (whether due to insufficient number of players or other similar situations) the forfeiting team will absorb any game expenses, such as umpires' fees. A forfeit fee annually determined by the association treasurer will be collected with team registration fees. If used, this fee must be replenished to the association treasurer within 10 days of notification in order to continue with league participation.**

PRE-GAME PRACTICE

1. The home team shall have their warm-up practice completed twenty (20) minutes prior to the scheduled game time. The visiting team must be given the field for their warm-up practice for at least twenty (20) minutes prior to the start of the game.
2. In case of poor weather conditions, it is advisable that neither team hold warm-up practice on the playing field.

RULES OF CONDUCT

1. **The team managers are responsible for their team's conduct and that of their fans.** Coaches are responsible for the behavior and sportsmanship of their spectators.
2. If a coach is ejected from a game, the umpire will notify the league president who will take appropriate action.
3. Good sportsmanship and adult attitudes must prevail no matter what level of competition. Umpires shall have authority to eject players/coaches before, during or after games for any of the following infractions, which the league considers to be unsportsmanlike behavior:
 - a) Threats of physical intimidation of umpires, players/coaches or spectators, including threatening physical contact. (In case of no ejection or where umpires are unaware of such an incident, managers/coaches need to report the incident to league officials for further action)
 - b) Verbal abuse of umpires, players/coaches or spectators, such as profanity, name-calling, belittlement or excessive harassment. (Balls and strikes calls and judgment calls are not debatable.)
 - c) Throwing of equipment (Bats, helmets, gloves, etc.)
 - d) Fighting: Players/coaches involved in fights (regardless of who may have been the instigator) will be suspended for the remainder of the season and may petition for reinstatement before the following season.
4. Any ejection (player or coach) will carry a 2-game suspension. Suspensions will carry over from season to season. Any player/coach, who is ejected twice in the same season will be suspended for the remainder of the season and may petition for reinstatement prior to the following season. Any physical contact with an umpire or other league official will result in an automatic suspension from any league participation for the remainder of the season. Such individual may petition for reinstatement for the following season.
5. A coach or player ejected from an Emerald Necklace Girls Fastpitch Association tournament game for flagrant misconduct shall not be permitted to participate during the remainder of the tournament in any capacity.
6. Smoking is prohibited on the field of play or in the dugouts and their immediate area, before, during and after games. Coaches who wish to smoke must go to the stands or the parking lot – subject to local smoking rules. Coaches found in violation of tobacco regulations at playing sites will be ejected and subject to subsequent penalties.
Alcohol and/or drug use by any participant, coach or player, is prohibited prior to or during any contest.
7. Players/coaches responsible for damage or vandalism to facilities and/or property used by ENGFSA will be suspended from play, pending an automatic review of his/her actions by league officials. It is the responsibility of the coach to advise and monitor his/her spectators' behavior in regard to this policy.

PLAYING RULES

Unless otherwise stated by ENGFSA rules, games will be played by OHIO HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION RULES (National Federation Rulebook).

1. All games in all divisions are to be played within a two-hour time limit. No new inning will begin after 2 hours of play.
2. One inning rule: Every girl on a 10U, 12U and 14U team must play at least one inning in the field in every game. This rule does not apply to 18U or in tournament play.
3. Each team shall furnish one new ball for each league game. 10U will use an 11-inch ASA approved optic yellow game ball. 12U, 14U and 18U teams will use the ball as specified by the OHSAA (Ohio High School Athletic Association) - currently it is 12-inch, .47 core, 375lbs max, optic yellow. All teams and communities will purchase and provide game balls as approved by this association.
4. If there are two umpires scheduled for a game and only one is present at game time, the game may still be played.
5. A pitcher who hits three batters in one inning must be removed from that position for the remainder of the inning with the option to reenter that player in that position in a subsequent inning.
6. Prior to the start of the game, the manager will declare whether one of the following is the structure of his team's line-up:
 - a.) an offensive line-up that will allow every player to bat in set order or
 - b.) an offensive line-up according to the rule book of the OHSAA.The team must then stay within that structure for the entire game.
A team that uses the option of batting 10 or more players and loses a player during the game will skip that spot in the order and not be charged with an out.
Exception: Refer to Rule #13 regarding 8 players.
7. An additional hitter (AH) may be used. She may bat in any spot in the batting order and may be inserted into the field later in the game. The use of the AH must be declared before the game and by using the AH a team will be batting 10 players.
8. Coaches on the playing field must be in uniform (i. e. team shirt) or a shirt in team colors.
9. For ALL age divisions the game shall be declared over if one team is leading by 10 or more runs after 5 innings of play. For 14U and 18U the game shall also be declared over if one team is leading by 20 or more runs after 3 innings of play.
10. A team may start the game with only 8 players -- any less and it is declared a forfeit. The ninth spot will be recorded as an out each time through the batting order. A team that starts with 9 players may end with 8 players provided there are no eligible players on the bench. If a player leaves the game for any purpose and her spot cannot be filled with an eligible bench player, an out will be recorded for every time that spot is due to bat in the order.

11. In the 10U and 12U divisions, a 6-run limit per team per inning will be in effect. This rule shall be eliminated for each team upon declaration of the final inning by the umpire, upon which no new inning can be started.
12. In the 10U and 12U divisions, if a play is made on a runner who attempts to steal second or third base and the ball is overthrown, that runner may continue to steal and advance to home at her own risk.
13. In the 10U division, ten players may be permitted to play defense on the field.
14. No 10U batter will be permitted to run on a dropped third strike. Base runners may move with the jeopardy of being put out. Otherwise, 10U players are permitted to steal bases.
15. In the 10U division (all levels), a runner can only steal home if a play is being made specifically on that runner while she is stealing or on a pick-off attempt. A runner is not permitted to steal home when a play is attempted on a different runner, even if an overthrow occurs (i.e. runners are on 1st and 3rd bases, the catcher can attempt to throw out the runner stealing 2nd base without concern about the runner on 3rd base scoring even if that throw goes into centerfield. Additionally, if a pickoff attempt is made on a runner at 1st or 2nd base, the runner on 3rd base cannot steal home.) Runners also may not steal on an errant overthrow from the catcher back to the pitcher.

PLAYING FIELD

1. All divisions will play with bases at 60 feet.
2. Pitching distance for 10U will be 35 feet. Pitching distances for 12U will be 35 feet or 40 feet, depending on level of play. (i.e. A & B Division – 40 feet; C Division – 35 feet). Pitching distance for 14U and 18U will be at 40 feet.
3. A 16-foot circle around the pitcher's plate must be used.

PITCHING RULES

(See OHSAA rule book - National Federation)

EQUIPMENT

(See OHSAA rule book - National Federation)

COACHING

(See OHSAA rule book - National Federation)

FILING OF PROTESTS

1. No protest shall be considered on umpires' judgment decisions.
2. Protests that relate to official softball playing rules and ENGFSA rules and regulations must be made to the umpire at the time of the incident. Both scorekeepers shall be notified at the time of the protest by the umpire. (Protests shall be denied if they are made after the next pitch which follows the incident.)
3. The manager must call the president of ENGFSA before 11:00 P.M. on the night of the incident. A written account of the protest must be sent to the president within 48 hours after the game is played and must be accompanied by a fee of \$10.00.
4. Protests must be in detail and must quote the rule number, page number, the umpire's name, and the umpire's phone number. All protests must be made by the coach or the manager.
5. All managers, umpires, and coaches in attendance at a protest may be heard at the Protest Committee meeting.
6. The president is responsible for contacting the Protest Committee and all managers and umpires that are involved in said protest.

STANDINGS

1. League Standings will be determined by a point system awarding 3 points per win, 1 point per loss, 2 points per tie, and 0 points per forfeit, as posted on the www.emeraldfastpitch.com website. Teams must post game results by 11:00 PM Sunday of each week. Tournament seedings will be determined by the standings on this site on 11:00 PM Sunday prior to the first day of tournament play.
2. Awards will be presented to Season Champions and Runners-up in each division. Final standings for these awards will be determined prior to the start of the end-of-season tournament for the division. Make-up games played after the end-of-season tournament will not be considered in the final season standings.
3. In case of league ties for first place, the tie must be resolved by the following formula:
Tie Breakers
 - a.) Head-to-head play in regular season
 - b.) Fewest runs allowed per game head-to-head
 - c.) Most runs scored per game head-to-head
 - d.) Coin flip

TOURNAMENT RULES

1. Tournaments will follow Emerald Necklace Rules except as noted within this section.
2. Tournaments for divisions with greater than seven teams will use a Pool Play format. Tournaments for divisions with fewer than eight teams will play a double elimination bracketed format. Pools shall be constructed to ensure a three game minimum and then a single elimination playoff. Wildcard selections may be required to complete the single elimination playoff.
3. Home teams will be determined prior to each game by a coin flip.
4. The host city will determine the time limit that no new inning may start after based on what the facility can accommodate (minimum 80 minutes, maximum 120 minutes).
5. If either team is winning by 12 or more runs after 5 innings, the leading team is the winner and the game is over.
6. In pool play format, games may end in a tie.
7. There are no protests. All umpires' decisions at the field are final.
8. Game start times will not be delayed for late arriving players, except for a 10 minute grace period for any weekday games that start before 6:30 p.m.
9. A team may start a game with seven players. Games will be declared a forfeit if the eighth player has not shown by the time of her first schedule at-bat.
10. Forfeits will count as a 6-0 win for the non-forfeiting team.
11. Stoppages for rain or darkness will be suspended and made up from the point of stoppage only if the game has not progressed for three complete innings. Otherwise, the score at the end of the last complete inning will be the final score.
12. Rained out games will be made up only if necessary to determine the pool winners and wildcards, if any. Any game that would impact the standings that cannot be made up by the time of the semi-final or final game will be declared a 6-6 tie. In the event of substantial rainouts, the tournament may be reorganized for a later date.
13. Pool winners will be determined as follows:
 - a. Most points earned in all pool play with two points for a win, one point for a tie and zero points for a loss.
 - b. Head to head pool play between tied teams
 - c. Fewest runs allowed in pool games up to 12 runs per game
 - d. Most runs scored in all pool games up to 12 per game
 - e. Coin flip.

14. Wildcards, if required, will be determined as follows:
 - a. Most points earned by non-pool winners in all pool play with two points for a win, one point for a tie and zero points for a loss.
 - b. Head to head pool play between tied teams, if teams played each other
 - c. Fewest runs allowed in pool games up to 12 runs per game
 - d. Most runs scored in all pool games up to 12 per game
 - e. Coin flip.
15. Any team that forfeits a tournament game will be responsible for the full umpire fees for the forfeited game.
16. Seedings and pool organization will be determined based on the standings as reflected on the Emerald Necklace website (www.emeraldfastpitch.com) as of 11:00 PM Sunday prior to the first day of tournament play
17. All teams are considered to be playing in the appropriate tournament unless the team has notified the tournament coordinator at least a week in advance of the tournament start date. Any team that does not play in the tournament and has not given the appropriate notification to the tournament coordinator will be assessed a late cancellation fee equal to the full umpire fees for a single tournament game.
18. Approved rosters (as of June 10 of the current playing season) must be provided by each coach at the start of the tournament.
19. Point of Emphasis: The following regular season playing rules are not in effect for end-of-season tournament play: #2 One-inning Rule; #11 Mercy Rule

RULE CHANGES

Refer to Article XII, Section 1 in the Constitution and By-laws regarding the procedure for rule changes.

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