METRO EAST RECREATIONAL BASEBALL LEAGUE

(MERBL)

2015 MERBL 7th-8th GRADE RULES

The MERBL uses the National Federation of High School Association (NFHS) rules as its base set of rules. These are the same rules that are used by high schools in the state of Illinois. The rules listed here will supersede the NFHS rules, all other rules will come from the NFHS rule book. The pitching and base distances in this division will be 54' and 80' respectively.

CONDUCT: Please do not direct negative comments at players, coaches, or umpires. Inappropriate behavior by players, coaches, or spectators **WILL NOT BE TOLERATED**. **Please understand you will be asked to leave the park as a result of any confrontation with an umpire in this league.** If it occurs more than once, you will be banned from **all** MERBL events for the remainder of the season.

The head coach is responsible for the conduct of everyone associated with his team. This includes assistant coaches, players, and fans. No member of the team (assistant coach or player) other than the head coach may leave the area of the dugout or coaching box to dispute an umpire's call. No team member, coach or player, may leave the area of the dugout or coaches box to argue a call or ridicule an umpire. The penalty for this infraction will result in both the offender **and** the head coach being restricted to the dugout for the remainder of the game. If the offender is a player, this will also result in an out each time his spot in the batting order is due. If the incident is severe enough, the offender may be ejected, with the head coach restricted to the dugout.

A coach, player, substitute, attendant, or other bench personnel shall not do any of the following:

a. Leave the dugout during a live ball for an unauthorized purpose (this includes sitting in the seating area with fans);
b. Fake a tag without the ball;
c. Wear jewelry or bandanas (players participating in the game);

PENALTY: In a-c, at the end of the playing action, the umpire shall issue a warning to the coach of the team involved and the next offender shall be ejected. In b, it is also obstruction, with base runners awarded appropriate advancement to the next base(s).

d. Commit any unsportsmanlike act to include, but not limited to;
   1. Use words or actions to incite or attempt to incite players or spectators;
   2. Use profanity, intimidations tactics, remarks reflecting unfavorably upon any other person, or taunting or baiting;
   3. Use language intended to intimidate;
   4. Behave in any manner not in accordance with the spirit of fair play or good sportsmanship;
e. Enter the area behind the catcher while the opposing pitcher and catcher are in their positions;
f. Charge an umpire;
g. Deliberately throw a bat, helmet, glove, etc.;
h. Initiate malicious contact on offense or defense;
i. Use tobacco or tobacco-like products within the confines of the field;
j. Leave their positions or the bench during a fight or physical confrontation;
k. Clap hands or use words to attempt to distract pitcher while running the bases;

PENALTY: In d-j, the offender shall be ejected from the game. In k, the player will be called out.

After an ejection has occurred, the ejected person (other than the player) must leave the vicinity of the playing area immediately, and is prohibited from further contact either direct or indirect with the team (distance must be out of sight and out of sound). Failure to comply will result in a forfeit.
NOTE: The player (in the 7th & 8th grade division) will be restricted to the dugout under supervision of the coach.

If for any reason a player or coach is ejected from a game, he will receive the following disciplinary action:
1. 1st offense will result in a one game suspension, served the next played game.
2. 2nd offense will result in a two game suspension, served the next two played games.
3. 3rd offense will result in league dismissal for the remainder of the season, with loss of all registration fees.

All suspensions can be appealed to the league commissioner.

CONFERENCES: Each team, when on defense, may be granted not more than 1 charged conference per inning, or 3 charged conferences per a 7 inning game, without penalty, to confer with defensive personnel. 1 additional charged conference, (not cumulative) without penalty, is allowed for each inning in an extra inning game. Prior to reaching these limits, a conference is not charged if the pitcher is removed from the pitching position.
PENALTY: After 3 charged conferences in a 7 inning game, or for any charged conferences in excess of 1 in any inning, the pitcher shall be removed as pitcher for the duration of the game.

Each team, while on offense, may be granted not more than 1 charged conference per inning to confer with base runners, the batter, or the on deck batter.

ILLEGAL PLAYERS: Any coach caught using an illegal player (someone not registered in our league) will be subject to the following disciplinary action:

1. 1st offense will result in ejections for the coach and the player, forfeiture of the game, and a one game suspension for the coach.

2. 2nd offense will result in player ejection, forfeiture of game, plus a lifetime suspension for the coach.

3. This penalty can be appealed to the league commissioner.

BORROWING PLAYERS: Teams may borrow up to 2 players to get up to eight, the minimum needed to play. These players must come from the roster of another MERBL team within the same age division. The borrowed players cannot come from the opposing team. The borrowed players cannot pitch or catch, and they must bat at the bottom of the batting order. These arrangements must be made before the official start of the game to avoid a forfeit. Teams must use their own players in playoff games.

GAME LENGTH: All games, including playoff games, will have a time limit. The home plate umpire will keep the official time, which will begin with the 1st pitch. No new inning may begin after one hour and forty-five minutes (1:45) has elapsed from the official start time. The next inning begins when the final out is recorded in the current inning. Regular season games can end in a tie.

An official game must contain at least one (1) of the following:
a) four (4) completed innings, or three and one half innings (3 ½) if the home team is leading,
b) expiration of the time limit,
c) game ending due to the mercy rule.
Games not completed will be erased from the records and rescheduled in their entirety.

NOTE: In the case of lightning being sighted the umpire will set a timer for 20 minutes. Play cannot continue until a period of 20 minutes, without lightning, has passed. The clock gets reset with each lightning strike. This time is not added back to the game time. The game time stops during weather delays.

MERCY RULE:
If one of the following occurs during the game, the game will end in favor of the team that...
a) is ahead by twelve (12) or more runs after the team that is behind has batted 4 times, or...
b) is ahead by eight (8) or more runs after the team that is behind has batted 5 times.

DELAY OF GAME: Intentional delay of game by the team with the lead to take unfair advantage of the time limit rule will result in a warning on the first occurrence, and will result in a forfeit on the second occurrence.
Teams have two (2) minutes to be ready for the start of the next half inning after 3 outs have been recorded in any half inning. This includes all warm up throws by the defensive players (including the pitcher). New pitchers are allowed a maximum of 8 warm up pitches, continuing pitchers are allowed a maximum of 5. After 2 minutes has elapsed, the defensive team will be penalized one (1) ball for every 20 seconds a pitch is not delivered. If the offensive team is not ready, they will be penalized one (1) strike for every 20 seconds the batter is not ready. **The batter must keep one (1) foot in the batter's box at all times while he is at bat.**

COURTESY RUNNER: Teams may get a courtesy runner for the catcher at any time. A courtesy runner for the catcher is MANDATORY when there are 2 outs. This runner must be the last player that made an out while batting. A courtesy runner for the pitcher is optional. If used, the runner has to be the last batted out; NOTE: In the high school division of MERBL, no courtesy runners are allowed for the pitcher.

BATTING: The official batting order must list the player's name and number. No players on the same team may have the same number. Round Robin batting is used (all available players are in the batting order). Once a player is in the lineup and leaves for any reason other than injury, illness, or a predetermined reason, that position in the batting order will be an out each time it comes up for the remainder of the game after the player leaves. All predetermined reasons must be communicated to both head coaches and the umpires before the game begins. Players arriving late may be added to the bottom of the batting order at any time before the start of the fourth inning.

LINE-UP CARDS: Line-up cards must be filled out with all players' LAST names and numbers. A first name initial can be used in the case of the same last name. These line-ups must be exchanged with the opposing teams' scorekeeper **before** the game. It is the coach's responsibility to have the line-up ready on time.

PITCHING: Pitching restrictions are as follows:
1. When a player is removed from the pitching position, he cannot re-enter as a pitcher in the game.
2. Pitchers cannot wear white hats, wrist bands, batting gloves, sunglasses, or anything else judged by the umpires to be distracting to the batters.
3. If the pitcher's undershirt sleeves are exposed, they cannot be white.
4. If an intentional base on balls is given, all pitches must be thrown.
5. The first "balk" call will be a warning, with no penalty.
6. After the first pitch of the inning is thrown, this is counts as an inning pitched for the pitcher.

PITCH COUNTS Vs INNINGS COUNT:

INNINGS RESTRICTIONS:

1. Maximum of Four (4) innings per day.
2. Maximum of Eight (8) innings per week (7 days). A week will start on Monday and end on Sunday.
3. If the pitcher throws a pitch in his 4th inning, this will count as his 4th inning pitched for the day. The pitcher will have to wait 44 hours before being allowed to pitch again.
4. If the pitcher throws a pitch in his 3rd inning, this will count as three (3) innings pitched for the day. The pitcher will have to wait 20 hours before pitching again. The pitcher could pitch only one (1) inning after this 20 hour break, but would be allowed to pitch 4 innings after his next 20 hour break.
5. If the pitcher throws a pitch in his 2nd inning on his first day, this is considered 2 innings pitched. The pitcher could pitch 2 innings the following day. This would be considered 4 innings in two days. He would have to wait 44 hours before the cycle could start over again.
6. If the pitcher only pitches one inning on Monday, he could pitch three (3) innings the next day. This would be 4 innings in two days. There would be a 44 hour break required before starting the cycle over again.

EQUIPMENT:

Uniforms. If uniforms are issued, they must be worn. The uniform shirt must have a number, and must be worn **outside** all other clothing. **No uniform alterations are allowed.** Players must wear baseball pants, no shorts. Each player has to have a different number (no duplicates).

Shoes with metal spikes or metal cleats are strictly prohibited. If a player is caught wearing metal spikes, the player will be ejected from the game. No exceptions.

All male players must wear a hard cup supporter in the 7th & 8th Grade Division. Any player not wearing one will be ejected from the game. No exceptions.

Catcher's must wear facemask or hockey style helmet with throat protector, chest protector, protective cup, and shin guards. All players warming up pitchers on or off of the playing field must wear a facemask with throat protector. Skull caps are not legal.

All players will wear helmets while batting and running the bases. Any player who intentionally removes the helmet while running the bases will be called out. All other results from the play will stand. All batting helmets must have double ear guards.
Any player or non-adult must wear a helmet while acting as a base coach or protecting other players warming up in any live ball area.

Any player equipment judged by the umpire to be unreasonably dangerous is illegal.

Jewelry shall not be worn by any player, with the exception of a medical alert which must be taped down and visible.

BAT THROWING: Players must hold onto the bat while swinging through the ball. Accidental throwing of the bat will result in a warning from the umpire. Each team will be given one warning. All subsequent offenses will result in a dead ball with the batter being declared out.

COLLISIONS: Base runners must slide when there is a play at a base, with the exception of first base. If a runner goes into a base standing up or runs into the defensive player, the base runner will be declared out for interference. If such contact is malicious or flagrant, the player will also be ejected from the game. This is for the safety of the players. A base runner may step over a defensive player that is laying in baseline in a defenseless position.

EQUITABLE PLAYING TIME: All players must play a minimum of three full defensive innings (9 outs recorded while playing defense) in a seven inning game, or two defensive innings (6 outs recorded while playing defense) in a five or six inning game. **All players must complete two defensive innings (6 outs recorded while playing defense) by the end of the 4th defensive inning.**

It is the coach's responsibility to make sure that a player that was shorted an inning of playing time, regardless of the reason, be given extra playing time in the next game. The requirement to have played two defensive innings by the end of the 4th inning will help eliminate this problem.

FORFEITS: Failure to have a minimum of eight players available will result in a forfeit. A game can be started, continued, and finished with minimum of eight players. Should either team not be ready to start fifteen (15) minutes after the scheduled start time, the game will be forfeited to the other team. Should both teams violate the rule, it will be ruled a double forfeit. If a team gets enough players before the 15 minute forfeit time has expired, the game will be played, but game clock will still begin at the originally scheduled time.

NOTE: In order to be declared the winner, the team must have eight players on sight, properly equipped, and ready to play. If a game is canceled early enough to avoid players and umpires from showing up, there may be an attempt to reschedule.

PROTESTS: No protests will be allowed when it involves a question of an umpire's judgment. You may protest rule violations and illegal player violations. The following procedure needs to be followed:

a. The notification of the intent to protest must be made immediately before the next pitch, concerning infraction of given rule.
b. The manager of the protesting team must immediately notify the umpire and the opposing manager that the game is being continued under protest.
c. The umpire will notify both scorekeepers that the game is under protest and both scorebooks will be initialed by the umpire indicating the point at which the protest occurred.
d. The protest of any game shall be made in writing and filed with a fee of $25 to the MERBL no less than 24 hours after the game in which the alleged rule violation occurred.
e. The letter of protest must include the date, names of umpires, and all matters pertaining to the alleged infraction, citing which rule(s) were violated. The letter of intent must be generated by the protesting manager and accompanied by the $25 fee.
f. All specifics relating to a protest must be included in scorebook:
    i. Player at bat
    ii. Inning
    iii. Balls
    iv. Strikes
    v. Name of pitcher
    vi. Number of outs
    vii. And the bases on which there were runners.
g. All protests shall be acted upon by a MERBL committee of a minimum of three members. The decision will be final.
h. The $25 fee will be reimbursed to the protesting manager if the protest is won. If the protest is lost, the funds will go into the MERBL operating fund.

MAKE-UP GAMES: All make-up games will be rescheduled by the scheduling director in conjunction with the head umpire.

PLAYERS ON BENCH: All players in league games must remain in their respective dugouts when not on deck, batting, running bases, acting as a base coach, playing defense, or warming up other players. Only players and coaches are allowed in or near the dugouts. Family members and friends are not allowed in this area.

INDIVIDUALS BEHIND BACKSTOP: No managers, coaches, or players are allowed directly behind the backstop during the progress of the game. Fans or spectators located directly behind the backstop are not allowed to give advice or coaching instructions to the players during the game. Persons in this area will be asked to relocate to another location in a non-playing area if this rule is violated.

Bat Regulations: All aluminum and composite bats must have a "USSSA" 1.15 BPF stamp and have no more than a "-5" length to weight ratio. The barrel cannot be more than 2 5/8" in diameter. Wood bats are legal without the "USSSA" stamp as long as the barrel and length to weight ratio requirements are met.

UMPIRES:

MERBL management, in conjunction with the Head Umpire (UIC), is responsible for the training and assignment of umpires.

1. Any umpire(s) assigned by the UIC shall be in complete charge of the game. Profane language, harassment, physical contact, and any other unsportsmanlike conduct, including unnecessary delay, by any manager, coach, player, or spectator, is strictly prohibited, will not be tolerated and can lead to ejection without warning.
2. An umpire has the authority to eject, after proper warning, any manager, coach, player, or spectator at any time, if, in the umpire's judgment, such action is warranted in order to eliminate conduct which the umpire deems offensive, or in any way interferes with the orderly playing of the game. If the game is delayed longer than deemed appropriate by the umpire while waiting for a manager, coach, or spectator to leave the area after being ejected, the game will be forfeited in favor of the opposing team. An ejected player will remain on the bench under the supervision of the manager.
3. In any case, whether or not ejected, a party interfering with any umpire's control of the game, is subject to probation or suspension by a majority vote of the MERBL. Sign up fees, or any portion thereof, will not be refunded to any player who is suspended or banned from league play.
4. Any umpire's decision which involves an interpretation of playing rules may be discussed by the manager or coach (only one). No other person will be permitted, on the playing field to discuss such playing rule decisions. The ultimate decision of the umpire(s) is final, subject only to pursuant to the rules governing protests.
5. Any umpire's decision which involves judgment such as, but not limited to, whether a batted ball is fair or foul, whether a pitch is a strike or ball, or whether a runner is safe or out, is final. No player, manager, coach, or spectator shall object to any such judgment decisions.

The team representative that attends the pregame plate meeting, becomes the person who will represent his team during any disputes that occur during the game. This representative will be the only person that can approach the umpires to dispute calls, once the game starts. As previously stated, the coaches are responsible for the actions of their fans. There could be an occasion that you are unable to control a fan. We may have to call "911" for an escort of an individual from the premises. You can usually have some control of your fan base, simply by the way in which you conduct yourself on the field. Fans and parents, as well as the players, will feed off of your reactions to situations.

The umpires should not be expected to show up to games with baseballs. This should be the responsibility of the home team. At the end of the game you will get the baseballs back from the umpires. Make sure your side of the field chases foul balls. This keeps the game flowing.

NOTE: During the playoffs:

1. No game will end in a tie.
2. Teams cannot borrow players.

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