



2026 COACH PITCH SOFTBALL SPRING LEAGUE RULES (Updated March 24, 2026)

GOVERNING AUTHORITY

The Burke County Recreation Department's Coach Pitch League will be governed by the current rules and regulations of the Georgia Recreation and Parks Association and Diamond Youth Softball and National Federation/ Georgia High School Association, with the exceptions found in this manual.

AGE REQUIREMENTS

- A. The Age Determination Date for a DYS Softball Player is the actual age of a player on December 31st of the previous year.
- B. The age division for Coach Pitch is six (6) years old to eight (8) years old.
- C. A participant is allowed to compete in one age division only. All participants are required to play in their correct age division.

FIELD SPECIFICATIONS

- A. Distance between bases shall be **sixty feet (60')**.
- B. Pitching Rubber is thirty-five (35') from home plate with a twelve-foot (12') diameter circle around the rubber.
- C. There will be a ten-foot (10') arch from home plate that the ball will need to cross, or it will be a foul ball.

COACH'S APPLICATION, BACKGROUND CHECK AND CERTIFICATION

- A. All coaches must complete a coach's application form and submit it to the Recreation Department for approval.
- B. In order to ensure the safety of our participants, all coaches are subjected to a background check. Each coach must complete a consent to background check form. The Burke County Sheriff's Department will conduct a background check on each coach. If the background check is approved (see Background Check policy of the BCRD for further details), a coach will then be considered in the coach's application process.
- C. **No one is allowed on the field or in the dugout with the children until they have been approved through the above-mentioned process.**

- D. Coaches and any approved personnel must be attired in the Recreation Department issued uniform for all games.

PLAYER EQUIPMENT AND UNIFORMS

- A. Shoes are mandatory for play in youth softball games. Rubber-molded, cleated shoes are approved for use. Smooth and soft-soled athletic shoes, including tennis or basketball shoes are acceptable. Steel spikes are prohibited.
- B. Team uniforms will be issued by the Recreation Department. Players must be in uniform to play (uniform consists of jersey, pants, socks, belt, and hat/visor).
- Managers, coaches, team moms and/or team scorers who are in the dugout or on the field, must be attired in the designated Recreation Department coach's shirts (provided these uniforms have arrived) and must pass a background check and be approved.
 - Team caps/visors will be issued by the Recreation Department and are the only hats that may be worn by the players; however, it is not mandatory that the hats be worn.
 - Illegal uniforms and shoes will be treated as illegal equipment.
- C. **Helmets with facemask must be worn by batters, baserunners and on deck participants.** The helmet shall be so designed as to give protection to the temples and the base of the skull as well as to the top of the head.
- D. The child playing in the pitching position is required to wear a protective facemask. Facemasks for the infield players are **highly recommended.**
- E. The official bat shall be round, and made of wood, metal, or other material acceptable for batting as approved by rules governing play in the Diamond Youth League. Regulation aluminum bats which meet NFHS (National Federation of High Schools) standards are permitted in all divisions. Look for the markings: "OFFICIAL SOFTBALL," "YOUTH SOFTBALL," or "FASTPITCH SOFTBALL" on the barrel or taper of a bat to know if it is approved. Approved youth bats are no more than 34" in length. Bats may not exceed 2 1/4" in diameter.
- F. Gloves and mitts are governed by the DYS rule. Pitcher's gloves must be of one color.
- G. Catchers must wear full protective equipment including a mask with throat protector, protective cap (must cover ears), body protector, and shin guards. The umpire shall inspect each catcher's full protective equipment prior to the game to determine its safety. The helmet must be approved by NOCSAE.
- H. The official ball shall be that as permitted for play in Diamond Youth Softball. Teams will use 11" softballs core .47 Optic Yellow ball.

LENGTH OF GAMES

- A. A game is complete when the following conditions have been met.
1. Time Limit expires or Five (5) full innings.
 2. Four (4) complete innings due to rain or bad weather.
 3. Twelve (12) runs after three (3) innings (all players have to bat on both sides).
Ten (10) runs after four (4) innings.
- B. The score of a forfeited game shall be recorded as 7 – 0.
- C. There is a one hour and fifteen minutes (1:15) time limit per game. No new inning after an hour and fifteen minutes (1:15) The next inning starts as soon as the third out is made in the bottom of the last inning. If there is a batter batting when the time limit expires, The teams will finish the inning (unless the home team is batting and is winning). The scorekeeper will announce the starting game time so that all parties know the time of expiration. The time is left on the scoreboard, but if the scoreboard malfunctions, the scorekeeper will periodically announce the time left in the game.
- D. **With ten (10) minutes or less remaining in the game:** When the visiting team is 10 runs ahead after three (3) complete innings, or if the home team would be mathematically unable to tie or win the game in the fourth (4th) inning due to the run limit, the game may be called at the end of the third inning. This same rule can apply in later innings, but only comes into effect at the end of the third inning.
- Ex) At the end of the third (3rd) inning, the visitors are up 11–4 and there are eight (8) minutes left on the clock. The home team would not be able to win the game by the end of the next inning (because of the five run per inning rule), so the game may be called at the end of the third (3rd) inning.

GAME RULES AND REGULATIONS

- A. A minimum of seven (7) players must be fielded in order for the game to be official. If a team does not field enough players, the game will be declared a forfeit. A team may pick up extra players to let their team play (those players must be enrolled in our program); however, the game will still remain a forfeit. When a team is playing with less than nine (9) players, the position(s) that is vacant will be declared out each time they come to bat. The coach may place the automatic out(s) any place in his lineup. A team may continue a game with one less player than they started with, in the event a player must leave the game; however, an out will be declared each time that player's position comes to bat.

- B. Game time is forfeit time.
- C. The choice of first or last at bat (home-visitors designation) shall be determined game schedule unless during tournament play then it will be the higher seed (1 being the highest seed) will be home team.
- D. All players present at the game will bat in a continuous batting order as listed in the book. This means that every child on the team will be in the lineup.
 1. If a player is late, they will be added to the bottom of the batting order.
 2. Injured player – If it is an injured player's time at bat, the coach may take the out (allowing the player to reenter). If the coach determines that the injured player is not able to play, there will be no out in the batting order (and the player may not reenter the game).
 3. Ejected player – out in batting order.
- E. There will be three outs or five runs per inning, whichever comes first. **In the fifth (5th) inning only, a team may bat through their entire lineup so long as they do not reach three outs before this. In this inning only, the team may exceed the single-inning run limit. Once all players on the team have batted in the inning, the inning will end if the team has scored five (5) or more runs. If you bat through the entire lineup and score less than five runs, the most you can score in that inning reverts back to five runs.**
- F. Every child is required to play in two innings (six (6) outs) per game in the field. If a coach fails to obey this rule, the game will be forfeited. With the free substitution rule in effect, because of the continuous batting order, this should not be a problem. A coach may bring a child in and out of the game as many times as he/she would like. (Please let scorekeeper know when bringing in a sub for the first time)(Exception is if a game ends in forfeit each child must play at least 1 inning).
- G. Games will be allowed to end in a tie. If the score is tied at the end of an inning and the time has run out, the game will be called.

BATTING

1. Each batter gets 5 pitches or 3 strikes. If the last pitch/swing is fouled, additional pitches will be granted. There is no limit on fouled balls. (Teach your batters to always swing at the last pitch!)
2. The umpire will advise both teams of the last pitch. The umpire will not call any balls or strikes. There will be no walks or free bases.
3. The batter will be called out if there is no contact with the ball on the 5th or last pitch.

4. Bunting is not permitted. No fake bunts allowed. A player (showing bunt) may not fake bunt and swing in an effort to hit the ball. PENALTY: The ball will be dead and the team will be warned on the first occurrence, the ball will be dead, the batter will be out, and the team will be warned one more time on the second occurrence, and the ball will be dead, the batter will be out, and the head coach will be removed from the game if it happens a third time.
5. If a batter slings her bat, **she receives one** warning. After the one warning she will be considered out if she continues to sling her bat.
6. If the ball does not go past the ten-foot (10') arch from home plate, the ball will be declared a foul ball.

BASERUNNING:

1. **A batted ball, unless called a foul by the umpire, is live and in play until the defense stops the progress of the lead runner and the umpire calls time. This will be at the umpire's judgment and cannot be appealed.** All runners must commit to the direction they are running once the ball has made it inside the pitcher's circle. They cannot fake going one way and then go back in the other direction. Note: There are no "half way" marks on the field. A player cannot call time. (We do not want the kids to hold the ball in the air and call time.) We want the kids to learn how to **use the softball to stop the runners.** Once time has been called by the official, the ball remains dead until the next batter.
2. **If a ball is thrown away at any base, runners may advance at their own risk.**
3. All runners must be in contact with their bases and must not leave their bases until the batter has made contact with the ball. If a runner leaves the base early, the umpire shall address the violation at the time it occurs. The team will receive one team warning. At the second and each additional violation, the runner will leave the field but no out will be assessed. The ball becomes dead immediately. There is no appeal from the coach.
4. The base runner is allowed to "tag up" if a fly ball is caught.
5. Runners must slide feet first at home plate if the catcher is making a tag on the runner. Coaches are encouraged to have their catcher move off the plate if there is not a play to be made at home plate. **No headfirst sliding is allowed at any base. PENALTY: Runner is out.** A dive back is not considered a headfirst slide.

6. Runners must avoid "hard" contact with any defensive player making a tag on that runner. If this occurs, the runner will be called out. This is at the umpire's judgment.
7. If a runner has passed a base prior to the player-pitcher gaining control of the ball in the designated pitching circle and does not stop, she may advance to the next base at her own risk, but she must commit to the direction she is traveling in. (Otherwise she could be called out)

H. There is NO infield fly rule in Coach Pitch Softball League.

FIELDING:

1. In order to develop good fielding habits, if the ball is hit to a player covering a base that a runner is advancing to, they can tag the base or the runner. Other than that, the player needs to throw the ball to the person covering the base. The only time the pitcher can make a tag is if the ball is picked up next to the foul line and the runner has not passed them. If the runner has passed them, they must throw the ball to the person covering the base for the out to count. PENALTY: Runners will be called safe.
 - a. Reasoning for the above rule: To prevent teams and coaches from putting their faster players at the "pitching" position and let them run down kids that are advancing to a base – usually first and home. While this strategy can help coaches win games, it will do little to prepare kids for older leagues. The kids need to learn the correct defensive play.
 - b. As a result of this rule, the kids are going to learn the right play (which is what we want them to do). Having to teach them (when they advance to older leagues) to throw the ball instead of running them down is much harder.
2. Outfielders must start the play at least 20 feet behind the base path, and the pitcher must remain with one foot in the Pitching Circle. The penalty for crossing the line too early will result in a "dead ball option". The offensive team will be given the option to replay the last at bat or to leave the play as it stands.

PITCHING:

1. There will be a pitching rubber 35 feet from home plate and will have a 12ft diameter circle around it.
2. The pitcher may pitch anywhere from outside of the 10' foul arc and within the pitching circle.
3. Pitcher may not cross the foul arc (while pitching).

4. Pitcher must have one foot on or straddling the pitching circle line at the end of their motion.
5. Pitcher must pitch under-handed and may be without arch, but with moderate speed. (Any batted ball that hits the pitching coach will be a dead ball and called no pitch).
6. If the pitching coach intentionally allows the ball to hit him/her. (Penalty: batter is out and runners must return to the bases they occupied at the time of the pitch- Umpire's Judgment). No runner may advance.
7. The offensive coach (pitcher) must attempt to avoid interference and try to pick-up the batter's bat provided he/she does not interfere with the play.
8. If the offensive coach (pitcher) does not attempt to get off the field and/or interferes with the defensive player to keep him/her from making a play will result in the batter being called out. No runner will advance.
9. The player-pitcher must remain in the Pitching Circle until the ball is hit. Defensive player must have at least one foot inside the circle at the time of the pitch for safety reasons. PENALTY: Result is a "dead ball option". The offensive team will be given the option to replay the last at bat or to leave the play as it stands.
10. The player-pitcher must wear a protective face mask.
11. A total of 5 pitches can be thrown (more if the 5th call is fouled; less if 3 strikes occur before the 5th pitch). If a batter swings and misses 3 times, the batter is out. The fifth pitch may be fouled or tipped indefinitely. There are no bases on balls or hit by pitcher advancements to first base.
 - a. The coach-pitcher is not allowed to instruct base runners. The coach may only coach the batter until she reaches first base or after she leaves third base. We want the base runners to learn to listen to the base coaches. PENALTY: Each team will get two warnings. On the 3rd offense, the coach-pitcher will be changed out for the remainder of the game.

COACHES POSITIONS

1. Offensively, only base coaches and the coach pitcher will take positions on the playing field during a game. The base coaches only may instruct the base runners. The base coaches can not touch the runners when the ball is in play. PENALTY: The base runner will be called out. Once the umpire has called time, the runners may be congratulated.
2. Defensively, two coaches may be in the outfield to help instruct their team. They must stay 10 feet behind the base line during play. One additional

defensive coach should be with the catcher to keep him/her safe and help get the catcher into position once the ball is in play. To speed up play, this coach may also toss the ball back to the adult pitcher.

- I. At any time, the team at bat may use a courtesy runner for the catcher. The courtesy runner will be the last recorded out.
- J. The umpires will make appeal calls (missing bases, etc.) after all action has ceased (as per DYS rules).

PRACTICES

- A. Coaches may not hold their first practice until after the specific date assigned by the Recreation Department. Any team found in violation of this policy will be subject to game forfeiture(s) determined by the number of practices held before the said date.
- B. It is preferred that practices be limited to one (1) hour and fifteen (15) minutes. All practices **must be completed by 9:00 pm**. Remember that the children have homework and other school requirements.
- C. It is the policy of the Burke County Recreation Department to avoid hosting youth activities on Wednesday nights whenever possible, due to church activities. Coaches may conduct practices on Wednesday nights; however, the practice cannot be considered mandatory, and a child cannot be penalized for not attending. This same policy applies to weekend and spring break practices.
- D. If you are the last one to use the field, please make sure that you clean up any trash left on the field or in the dugouts.
- E. Before leaving the Recreation Department Complex, please make sure that all of the children on your team are with a **Responsible Adult** or that a **Recreation Department Staff Member has been notified**.
- F. Anytime that our office cancels practice or games, coaches are not allowed to practice their teams on our complex. We usually do this because of the conditions of the fields or weather and **ONLY** as a last resort. If you choose to disregard our notice, you will be suspended from coaching the next scheduled game. The only exception is if games are canceled due to a conflicting activity.

INCLEMENT WEATHER CONDITIONS

- A. The fields and facilities at Jonathan Broxton Park are monitored by the Thor Guard Lightning Prediction and Warning System. This system is designed to predict a lightning strike within a defined geographical region.
- B. When the conditions for a lightning strike exist, the Thor Guard system will give a 15-second blast on the horn cluster that can be heard approximately 700 yards

away. At the same time, a yellow strobe visible from most areas of the park will activate and stay on until the danger has passed or at least 10 minutes after the last detection of lightning. Once the potential for a lightning strike has passed, the system will activate the horns giving the all-clear signal – three, five second blasts -- and the strobe light will go off.

- C. Anytime that the strobe light is on, participants should take cover inside a building or their vehicle and are not allowed on the playing fields, playground, basketball court or outdoor areas.
- D. Anyone not following these guidelines when the Thor Guard warning is activated and remains outdoors or in an inappropriate area or shelter will do so at their own risk.
- E. If the alarm is activated during a game, officials will clear the area and ask all participants and spectators to go to their vehicles. If the system has not given an all clear within 30 minutes, the games will be called for the evening. (Refer to policies regarding completed games to determine if the game in session will be complete, rescheduled, etc.) Prior to leaving, check our Facebook Page (Burke County Recreation Department) or look for an email from our department confirming that all activities are suspended for the evening.
- F. Check the Burke County Recreation Department's Inclement Weather Policy for more detailed information.

COACH'S RULES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. After team selection, it is your responsibility to inform the players of your team that you are their coach and when you will be scheduling practices.
- B. Conduct a parent's meeting. Get the parents involved. Let them set up refreshment schedules. Make sure they know that good sportsmanship is **MANDATORY**.
- C. Make sure that you fill out a coach's application as well as a consent form for a background check. The Recreation Commission has implemented policy of requiring a background check on all volunteers as a means of protecting the children who participate in our programs.
- D. No tobacco is allowed on the playing field (smoking, vaping, or chewing).
- E. To help cut down on confusion, it is requested that all coaches stay in the dugout area while your team is on defense, unless a defensive time-out is called.
- F. Coaches, only, should turn their line-up in to the scorekeeper. Once a line-up is recorded in the book, it is official. Coaches are expected to turn in first and last names and the number of each player.

- G. Only the head coach may confer with the umpire, then only for one (1) minute during a charged conference granted by the umpire.
- H. Coaches must notify the Recreation Department in case of injury to any player, whether the accident occurred at a game or at practice. An injured player must be cleared by the Recreation Department before he/she can play or practice. (Accident/Injury forms are supplied in your coach's manual.)
- I. A coach must stay in the coach's box while his/her team is on offense. They may not interfere with a defensive play.
- J. There will be no stopping the game to get a Recreation Department Official. If there is a problem, the game may be played under protest.
- K. A coach is the only person that may file a protest. A protest may not be filed on a judgment call. It may be filed **only** if there is a rule violation. In the event of a protest, the coach must present the protest **in writing** within twenty-four (24) hours and the protest must be accompanied by a \$25.00 filing fee. If the protest is **upheld**, the \$25.00 will be refunded.
- L. Anytime that our office notifies you of a change in schedule, it is your responsibility to contact all your players on your team.
- M. In the event of rain, the Recreation Department will inform **you** if the games or practices have been canceled. **You must then get in touch with your team.** Please make sure that we have all telephone/cell numbers and current contact information so that we can locate you. Check internet site (www.burkerec.com) or our Facebook page (Burke County Recreation Department) for up to the minute notices regarding inclement weather and cancelled games.
- N. Any coach that is unable to consistently reach a child (for practices, etc.) should notify the Recreation Department immediately so that we can see if we can reach them.
- O. If you have a problem with your team equipment, need additional equipment, etc., **please contact our office before 3:30 p.m.** so staff can have your equipment ready for you by time of practice. Do not wait until practice time to let us know. If you do, it may be the next day before your request can be filled.
- P. If you are the last one to leave the field for the evening, please make sure that you clean up all trash on the field and in the dugouts.
- Q. Before leaving the Recreation Department complex, please make sure that all of the children on your team are with a responsible adult or that a Recreation Department official has been notified.
- R. Remember, you set the mood for the team. **Your attitude is the most important one on the field.** If you are pleasant and have a positive attitude and show good sportsmanship, so will your parents and players.

- S. Sign an inventory sheet of equipment issued to you at the beginning of the season. Make sure that all equipment is in the bag when returned at the end of the season. Equipment is to be returned immediately following your last scheduled game.
- T. See practice section about field schedule for practices. If you would like to add a practice, please call the Recreation Department for additional practice times.

SPORTSMANSHIP

- A. Good sportsmanship is expected and demanded of all participants, coaches and team followers.
- B. Players, coaches, and spectators are to refrain from making derogatory comments or using inflammatory actions to opposing players, coaches or teams calculated to make a misplay.
- C. Anyone who touches or threatens an official or employee affiliated with the operation of an organized activity will be suspended for at least a year from all organized recreation activities and will be required to pay a \$100 reinstatement fee before they will be eligible to compete again or attend any recreation department activities. They could also face criminal charges!
- D. Any individual directly involved in an activity that is ejected from a game for any reason other than violence, must pay a \$25 reinstatement fee for the first offense. If a second ejection occurs, the individual is suspended from any organized recreation activity for at least one year and must pay a \$100 reinstatement fee before they will be eligible to participate in any organized recreation activity.

PLAYERS AND SPECTATORS CONDUCT

- A. Any player, coach, or spectator acting in an unsportsmanlike manner or in any way that could prove detrimental to the league, will be subject to disciplinary action by the Recreation Department. If the coach cannot control the situation, the game will be awarded to the opposing team. The person or persons violating this rule shall be suspended for the following game. (Judgment shall be made by either the umpires or the Recreation staff.)
- B. Any player, coach, or spectator disqualified for unsportsmanlike conduct, including abusive language, is ineligible for further participation in the game in progress, plus the next game played and may be dismissed from the league.
- C. It is the parent's responsibility to make sure their child attends all practices and games. Any child who misses two (2) consecutive practices or games can be benched by the coach for one game, with the approval of the Recreation Department. Any child who continuously misses practices or games will be

dismissed from the team. It is the coach's responsibility to notify the Recreation Department of any child's missed games or practices.

- D. No alcoholic products should be consumed before or during activities involving your team.
- E. No Smoking, vaping, or tobacco use allowed in our parks.
- F. No Animals allowed on the playing fields and must have a leash on while at the park.