

**EMERALD NECKLACE GIRLS FASTPITCH
SOFTBALL ASSOCIATION**

**GENERAL RULES
and
PLAYING RULES**

TEAM ELIGIBILITY

1. All players must 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. A player may be rostered on only one team in the Emerald Necklace Girls Fastpitch Softball Association.
4. Teams may not play unless their roster has been submitted and USA Softball insurance information has been submitted to, approved and validated by Emerald Necklace Softball Association officials. Failure to meet these requirements prior to team's first game will result in forfeit of this game and any subsequent games played without these requirements met.

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.
3. 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, but may play in the 18U Varsity division without restrictions. In addition, an 18 year old player that has participated in intercollegiate softball is not eligible to play on any Emerald Necklace Softball team.
4. 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.)

5. For the purposes of this Association, the following definitions will be used:
 - a) Community 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.
 - b) 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.
 - c) Declared Player: a player who lives within the geographic boundaries of a "Member Community" team as defined by this organization's bylaws and is also enrolled with an "Organizational Member" as defined by this organization's bylaws *or a player who lives within a "Member Community" which is part of the same school system as another "Member Community". A player who lives in a "Member Community" and is assigned to a school in the school district of a different "Member Community" meets this stipulation.* This player may choose to play for either team by declaring her intent when her name is placed on a team's roster. A release is not required for this player.
 - d) Free Player: a player from a community which has no team at the age level for which she is eligible to play.
 - 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 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 consecutive seasons but no longer resides in that original community. This player is eligible to be rostered on a team in that "Member Community" and will not require a release from that "Member Community" in which she currently resides. This player will not be included in the 50% residency requirement.
6. A Community Player who elects Released Player status must obtain a release from from the "Member Community" in which she resides. Coaches are responsible for implementing the required release form (ENGFSR RF-95).
7. 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.
8. Each team must roster 50% of its' players from its' Association-approved boundaries.
9. A team may roster no more than four (4) Released Players.
10. 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.

11. 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.
12. 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. This player will be designated as an “Extended Resident” with RL2+X on the roster and will no longer be recognized as a Released Player. In addition, she will not be included in the 50% residency requirement. If she elects to play for a new and/or different team, a release will then be needed from her community.
13. 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. The player can be called up from within her own age group (i.e. 14U A can call up a 14U B player) or from one age group below. A player may not be called “down” (14U B team calling down a 14U A player, etc.) The coach / manager utilizing a call-up player must inform the opposing coach about this (called-up) player.
3. The call-up player is required to be rostered from the same “member community” or “member organization” as the team needing the player. *Exception: A Released Player may be called up to play on a team in her resident community.*
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 2 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, and therefore, should legally roster enough players to avoid forfeits.
7. A team may call up a pitcher or a catcher (as per Rule # 2 in Call-up Rules) to pitch or catch, regardless of roster numbers, with the intent to maintain the quality of the game.
8. Lateral call-ups are not permitted.

UMPIRES

1. All umpires for all classes behind the plate must be assigned by a recognized fastpitch umpire's association. At least one (1) umpire must hold a current card in fastpitch softball from the Ohio High School Athletic Association and will be designated as Umpire-in-Chief for that game.
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 ENGFSFA 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 / she may not umpire a game that involves his / her 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 / her own game.
4. In 18U V, 18U JV and 14U divisions, two umpires will be used for each regular season game. Home team will be responsible for paying umpire fees. If teams play only one (1) game or a third (or any other odd-numbered) regular-season game, both teams will split umpire fees for that game. Teams that neglect to pay the half-fee for an odd-numbered game will be assessed that amount from their forfeit fee account and must be paid prior to that team's next game. In end-of-season tournament games, two umpires will be used in all divisions without exception.
5. One umpire will be used for 10U and 12U division games. Home team will be responsible for paying umpire fees. If teams play only one (1) game or a third (or any other odd-numbered) game, both teams will split the umpire fees for that game. Teams that neglect to pay the half-fee for an odd-numbered game will be assessed that amount from their forfeit fee account and must be paid prior to that team's next game.
6. If there are two umpires scheduled for a game and only one is present at game time, the game may still be played.

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. Games cannot be cancelled less than seven (7) days prior to scheduled game date for any reason other than weather or unplayable field conditions. Any and all attempts to do so will result in a forfeit. The association vice-president will be notified of such cases to ascertain that appropriate action is taken.

3. The specific date of a make-up game will be determined, agreed upon by both home and visiting coaches and posted within two (2) weeks of the cancelled game. (Note: The actual date that the make-up game is to be played may or may not occur within the two weeks after the cancelled game, but must be posted on the game schedules of both teams on the Emerald Necklace website with a specific make-up date that is prior to July 24th of the playing season, as mutually agreed upon by both home and visiting coaches.) Failure to do so will result in forfeit.
4. Games, once begun, that are stopped for any valid reason (i.e. weather, etc.) will be played from the point of suspension. (aka Suspended Game)

FORFEIT TIME

1. Starting time is a time mutually agreed upon at scheduling by home and visiting teams' coaches. 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 must 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 the 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. Home team will furnish two (2) game balls for each regular-season game. If an odd number of games are played against the same team, each team shall provide a game ball for that game. All teams and communities will purchase and provide game balls as approved by this association. (See Equipment Rules for specific game ball regulations.)
3. Prior to the start of the game, a line-up card or form must be exchanged by each head coach with opposing head coach. (Not required to be given to umpire) The card or form **must** include first and last name, jersey number and batting order of all players participating in the game. (If using nine-player order, starters AND substitutes must be listed.) Call-up players must also be designated as such, including specific roster information on which call-up player is listed.)

Failure to provide this required documentation before the start of the game may be considered grounds for protest. All cards and forms should be retained by coaches through the conclusion of the season.

4. Prior to the start of the game, the manager will declare which one of the following is the structure of his / her 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 #6 regarding 8 players.

5. 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 at any level.
6. 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 nine (9) players may end with eight (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.

7. Coaches on the playing field must be in uniform (i.e. team shirt) or a shirt in team colors.
8. 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 re-enter that player in that position in a subsequent inning.
9. Mercy Rule: 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. Only in the 10U division, ten players may be permitted to play defense on the field.
11. In the 10U and 12U divisions, a 6-run limit per team per inning will be in effect. This rule will cease to be in effect for the seventh (7th) inning or any new inning(s) that start after one hour and forty minutes of play as declared by the umpire. In the case of a suspended game, the remaining time must be recorded in the scorebook of the home team for the purpose of determining the amount of time remaining.)
12. 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. *Exception: This rule does not apply to the 10U A division, specifically 10U A versus 10U A competition.*
13. In the 10U division, 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. *Exception: This rule does not apply to the 10U A division, specifically 10U A versus 10U A competition.*
14. In the 10U division, 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.
15. Per high school rules (National Federation rule book), a Courtesy Runner may be used for the pitcher and the catcher. However, teams that use the CONTINUOUS BATTING ORDER (as described in Rule #5 of Playing Rules of the Emerald Necklace rule book) the Courtesy Runner must be the last available player in the line-up – not necessarily the previous out and NOT the pitcher for the catcher or vice-versa. A Courtesy Runner may be used at any time during the game for either the pitcher or catcher.

PLAYING FIELD

1. All divisions will play with bases at 60 feet.
2. A 16-foot circle around the pitcher's plate must be used.

PITCHING RULES

(See OHSAA rule book - National Federation)

Pitching distance for 10U will be 35 feet.

Pitching distance for 12U, at all levels, will be 40 feet.

Pitching distance for 14U, at all levels, and 18U, at all levels, will be at 43 feet.

EQUIPMENT

(See OHSAA rule book - National Federation)

10U will use an 11-inch ASA approved optic yellow game ball.

12U, 14U and 18U teams will use the ball as specified by OHSAA

(Ohio High School Athletic Association) - 12-inch, .47 core, 375lbs max, optic yellow

Exception to NFHS rulebook: Metal spikes (aka cleats) may be used **ONLY** by players in the 18U division.

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 ENGFSAA 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. Protests must be filed online via email to association president by noon of the day following the game in protest. A protest fee in the amount of \$25 (twenty-five dollars) will be debited from the protesting team's forfeit fee account. If protest is approved, the fee will be returned to protesting team's forfeit account. If protest is denied, the \$25 fee must be paid by the protesting team to the association treasurer within seven (7) days of notification of protest determination.
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. The president is responsible for contacting the Protest Committee and all managers and umpires that are involved in said protest.
6. All managers, umpires, and coaches in attendance at a protested game may provide information to the Protest Committee.

STANDINGS

1. League Standings will be determined by a point system awarding 3 points per win, 1 point per loss, and 2 points per tie as posted on the www.emeraldfastpitch.com website.
2. Games not played will receive / remain at zero (0) points.
3. Tie games may be posted by coaches onto website ONLY for games actually played that end in a tie (i.e. due to time limit, etc.)
4. Teams must post games results within 48 hours of completion of game.
5. Forfeited games may be posted by coaches onto website ONLY if forfeit has been approved by a member of the executive board.
6. Coaches who cannot agree on make-up games (cancelled due to weather, field conditions, etc.) must consult with association vice-president. The vice-president will make a determination (i.e. forfeit, tie, other) and will post result of determination onto standings.
5. Tournament seedings will be determined by the standings on the www.emeraldfastpitch.com site at 11:00 PM of the Sunday prior to the first day of tournament play.
6. Teams must actually play at least 80% of all games on their schedule to qualify for season championship / runner-up awards.
7. Awards will be presented to Season Champions and Runners-up in each division. Final standings for these awards will be determined as posted on the www.emeraldfastpitch.com website on July 24th at 11:59 P.M. of that playing season.
8. In case of league ties for first place, the tie must be resolved by the following *Tie Breakers* formula:
 - 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. All tournaments will use a double elimination format, guaranteeing all teams a minimum of two (2) games. Tournament Director will use bracket format as provided by this association in tournament packet materials for tournament directors.
The Tournament Director / Coordinator shall have the authority and ability to modify tournament structure, subject to approval by a league official. (i.e. Executive Committee member or officer).
3. All tournament games at all levels will use two umpires.
4. Home teams in the first round of all tournament games in all divisions will be determined by the higher seed as posted on top line of each bracket. When a higher seed team has one tournament game loss and is designated to play a lower seed team without a loss, the lower seed team will be designated as the home team as posted on the top line of the tournament bracket. If both teams have one loss, then the home team will be determined by a coin toss.
5. Time limit for all 10U and 12U tournament games will be 60 minutes plus one inning for unlimited runs. Thus, at sixty (60) minutes, the current inning is finished and one additional inning is played with unlimited runs. Time limit for all 14U and 18U tournament games will be 90 minutes.
(No new inning shall begin after 90 minutes of play.)
6. If either team is winning by 10 or more runs after 5 innings, the leading team is the winner and the game is over.
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 PM.
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 scheduled at-bat.
10. Forfeits will count as a 6-0 win for the non-forfeiting team.
11. Any team that forfeits a tournament game will be responsible for the full umpire fees for the forfeited game.
12. 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.

13. Seedings 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.
14. Any team that does not play in the tournament and has not given the appropriate notification as designated in Tournament Rule #13 to the tournament coordinator will be assessed a late cancellation fee equal to the Emerald Necklace Girls Fastpitch Softball Association's forfeit fee of (\$90) ninety dollars.
15. Approved rosters must be provided by each coach at the start of the tournament.
16. Point of Emphasis: The tie-breaker procedure to be used is as follows: The player who batted the final out in a previous inning will become a base-runner on second base in any subsequent innings needed to break a tie game.

RULE CHANGES

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

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