

**MIDDLESEX COUNTY
OVER 50 SOFTBALL LEAGUE, INC.**

LEAGUE RULES

2023

March 18, 2023

PREAMBLE

The name of the organization shall be Middlesex County Over 50 Softball League Inc. The League shall be a corporation pursuant to Title 15A: 2-8 of the New Jersey Domestic Corporation Act (The Act), whose purpose is to organize scheduled softball games for member teams. Each team in the League shall be considered a member pursuant to the Act and shall have equal rights and limitations. If any assets are at any time to be distributed, such distribution shall be equally among active members. All officers and only officers of the League shall be deemed Trustees under the Act. The League hereby indemnifies Trustees/Officers to the maximum extent permitted under Title 15A: 3-4 of the Act against expenses and liabilities in connection with any proceeding. Any provisions of these By-Laws (sometimes referred to as a "Constitution") which are not in accordance with the Act are to be considered null and void. The intention of the League is to operate as a corporation under the Act to limit any personal liabilities of Trustees/ Officers.

ARTICLE I BY-LAWS

MEMBERSHIP/TEAMS

- A. Each player must be at least fifty (50) years old in the calendar year that he joins the League. If a player is found to be ineligible due to age, his team forfeits all games for which he was on the roster (current season only) and the player is ineligible for future play in the League unless reinstated by the Board. Only under extraordinary circumstances may he be reinstated. The decision to reinstate will be sole the decision of the League Board.
- B. Prior to 1 April of the scheduled season, any new team can be awarded membership into the league. Membership will be based on the majority vote of the league managers. Any new team(s) accepted into the league will be required to comply with all league by-laws and rules.
- C. Initial team rosters must be submitted to the League Board no later than 1 April of the scheduled season. Rosters must be comprised of a minimum of sixteen (16) and a maximum of twenty-five (25) players. It is the responsibility of each team manager to ensure players meet the age requirement identified in section A above. Failure to submit initial team rosters will result in the forfeiture of all games played until the roster is by the League Board. Team rosters can be adjusted up until the completion of the third scheduled week of league play, at which time, they will be frozen for the remainder of the season. Any player removed from a roster after the completion of the third week of league play is ineligible to play for any team for the remainder of the season, including the team who's roster he was on.

Any player found to be on two team rosters by the completion of the third regular scheduled game, will be required to commit to one team and communicate that commitment to the League Board before the start of the fourth scheduled league game.

In the event any roster player has been diagnosed with a serious medical condition after the third schedule week of league play that will prevent him from any further league participation (i.e., cancer, stroke, life threatening disease, death, etc.), the team manager will be given the option of replacing that player on the roster with a non-roster player that meets the requirements in Section A above. The replacement player must be identified and approved by the Board before officially added to the team roster. Once replaced, the stricken player is automatically ineligible for play for the remainder of season, including playoffs.

- D. Any non-roster player participating in any league game will be considered an illegal player. All games in which that player participated in will result in a forfeiture of those games by a 7-0 score. The team manager will be suspended for the same number of games the illegal player participated in. The League Board reserves the right to impose a harsher penalty to the Team Manager if other violations to the league rules are discovered or further incidents of using non-roster players occur.

ARTICLE II

YEARLY OBLIGATIONS

All teams must pay league fees as determined by the League Board Treasurer. Due to pre-season financial obligations, 50% of the fees must be collected no later than 1 March of the scheduled season with the remaining 50% due no later than 15 April. Early collection of fees is required for the purchase of equipment and insurance. Fees are also required for field usage. Umpires will be paid in cash. Teams in arrears of all fees due will result in forfeiture of all games played until paid in full.

ARTICLE III

OFFICERS OF THE BOARD

The League Board will be comprised of a minimum of three (3) members and a maximum of six (6). The League Board positions will be identified as Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer (currently a non-voting member of the League Board) and Board Member(s). The Chairman will determine the duties and responsibilities of the Board Members.

The League Board will be charged with managing all league administrative responsibilities. In addition to administering the League, the League Board will be responsible for:

- Scheduling and running all League Board Meetings
- Enforcing league rules
- Implementing rule changes as voted upon by the team managers
- Administer and document all appeals, grievances and protests lodged during the season.
- All other issues, disputes, etc., that may occur throughout the calendar year.

ARTICLE IV

NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

All nominations, elections and proposed rule changes must occur at any one of the League Board meetings. A League Board meeting can be called at any time by the League Board or by a simple majority of Team Managers. Nominations, elections, and proposed rule change will be governed as follows.

A. Nominations

1. Any team manager or representative can make a nomination for consideration for membership to the League Board.
2. A team manager or representative may only make one nomination per meeting.
3. All nominations must be seconded

B. Elections

1. Each team has one vote regardless of representatives in attendance
2. Votes can only be cast by those in attendance. No absentee votes will be considered.
3. A majority vote of all votes cast must be achieved to yield a positive outcome. For example, if eleven (11) votes are cast, six (6) votes must be in favor to achieve a positive outcome.
4. In the event of a tie, the League Chairman will cast the tie-breaking vote.
5. All voting outcomes will go into effect immediately

C. Proposed Rule Changes

1. Any team manager, representative or League Board Member can propose a rule change.
2. The individual proposing a rule change must cite the specific section of the rules that he desires to change, and the specific change being recommended. If the proposed rule is new, the individual proposing must identify it as a new rule proposal.
3. Once the change has been identified, the League Board will hold a five-minute maximum discussion on the proposal and then proceed to a vote.
4. A majority vote of all votes cast must be achieved to pass.
5. In the event of a tie, the League Chairman will cast the tie-breaking vote.

ARTICLE V

RULES OF PLAY

The League shall adhere to the current senior SSUSA rules and regulations for all playing matters, except as provided in these League Rules of Play. League rules take precedence over SSUSA rules

Before the start of each softball season, the League Managers will review and decide on all playing rules. Any rule changes must be made in the best interest of the League and follow the change process identified in Article IV Section C.

The League Board shall create a schedule for the regular season. Subsequent recommended changes to the regular season schedule may be made with the approval of the League Board.

The current League rules of play are as follows:

1. Team field strength will be a maximum of eleven (11) and a minimum of eight (8) roster players
2. A game will be forfeited if a team cannot field a minimum of eight (8) roster players, fifteen (15) minutes after the scheduled start time or during play. If both teams are incapable of fielding an eight (8) man team of roster players, both teams forfeit the game.

- a. A team can avoid a forfeit if the manager of the opposing team agrees to transfer a player to the shorthanded team. Under no circumstances is a manager obligated to transfer a roster player to play the game.
- b. A team that is two roster players short of the minimum of eight (8) players will automatically forfeit.
3. If a team manager knows that he will not have enough roster players to play a regular season game, he must contact the opposing team manager and League Board Chairman no later than 6pm on the Thursday prior to the scheduled games and the games will be recorded as two losses for the team forfeiting by identical scores of 7-0. The requirement to contact the opposing team manager and League Board Chairman by the Thursday deadline is a courtesy communication to prevent the unnecessary arrival of the opposing team and umpire.
4. The umpire will be paid \$50.00/game (\$25/team). In the event of a known forfeit prior to the Thursday 6:00 pm deadline, the umpire will be paid \$50 (\$25.00 per team). In the event of a forfeit 15 minutes after the start of the scheduled game, the umpire will still be paid in full.
5. A team may bat all roster players. However, a minimum of twelve (12) players, when available, MUST bat. Any roster player playing the field must bat. Team managers have the option of having two roster players occupy the same slot in the batting order, alternating them when that slot in the batting order is due to bat. It is optional for Team Managers to alternate these two same roster players to play in the field. While alternating in the batting order, these players may not move to any other slot in the batting order for that game.
6. Base runners may not leave the base they occupy until a pitched ball is hit. If a runner leaves early, regardless of the batter swinging and missing or not swinging, all runners leaving the base they occupy will be ruled out.

a. Rabbit Rule. B division teams may elect to use the Rabbit Rule for their players. Before the start of the game, both team managers or their representatives must designate and inform the umpire and the opposing manager or his designated representative of those players that will require a substitute runner exiting the batting box. The designated rabbit runner must be the player who made the last previous out. If the rabbit runner gets on base, he cannot be replaced by a designated runner. A start line will be drawn in line with the safety home plate that will designate the start spot for the rabbit runners. The rabbit runner cannot commence running until contact between the ball and bat is made. If the rabbit runner starts to run BEFORE contact is made and the ball is hit into play, the rabbit runner will be called out and the play ruled dead.

In the event a player who has not been identified to receive a rabbit runner gets injured during the course of the game that prevents him from running, a rabbit runner may be used if both managers (or their representatives) agree to it. In this scenario, the designated rabbit runner must be the last out made.

Regardless of where the batter hits the ball in the field of play, the rabbit runner cannot advance beyond first base. The rabbit runner, however, can advance beyond first base if there is a continuance of the play beyond the initial throw from any fielder or in the event of an errant throw.

7. If a roster player is removed from a game, for something other than an injury, an automatic out will be recorded for his next scheduled at bat. That position must be replaced in the line-up and the field when another roster player is available to take his place. An injured player can be replaced by another roster player and placed in his position in the line-up without penalty. If there is no other roster player available to replace the injured player, an automatic out will be recorded in his next scheduled at bat. For clarity, no out will be assessed in the next scheduled at bat if there is a substitute player available to replace an injured player removed from the game.
 - a. Before the start of a game, if any roster player is planning to depart a game before its conclusion, his manager must inform the umpire and opposing team manager of the intended departure. No at bat penalty will be assessed if prior notification is provided. However, section two (2) of the Rules of Play applies regarding the minimum of eight (8) players required for continued play. If a game must be forfeited due to a loss of a player(s), no monetary forfeit penalty will be assessed.
8. Roster players arriving at any time after the start of a game can be inserted into any spot in the batting lineup if that spot in the lineup has not had its initial at bat at the plate. For example, if a roster player arrives after the first four batters in the line-up have batted, he cannot be inserted into any of the first four positions in the batting order but can be inserted into any of the remaining positions in the batting order. If a team has batted one time through the lineup, the late arriving roster player must be inserted into the bottom of the batting order.
9. There will be a minimum of six (6) feet and a maximum of twelve (12) feet arc above the ground for all pitched balls. Any pitch made outside these dimensions shall be called an illegal pitch. The batter has the option swinging. All pitchers must pitch behind the screen. Batted balls hitting the screen will be declared a strike. A batter hitting the ball into the screen with two (2) strikes will be declared a dead ball third strike (3rd) out. All other balls that hit the screen remain in play and are considered live balls. In the event a thrown ball becomes lodged into the screen, it will be declared a 'dead ball' and the overthrow rule
10. The pitcher's box shall be three (3) feet deep to match the width of the pitching screen and five (5) feet deep, starting from the pitching rubber. The pitcher can pitch from any position in the pitching box provided his pivot foot always remains in the box during the delivery. A pitcher must pause at least one second between the time he receives the ball to the time he delivers his next pitch. Any violation will result in a dead ball called a ball and a warning given by the umpire to refrain from any further quick pitches or be subject to ejection from the game of play.
11. The pitching screen shall be placed forty-eight feet (48') from home plate and centered in front of the pitching rubber. The pitching screen once properly placed will

not be moved. The home team will provide the pitching screen, but it is strongly encouraged that both teams bring pitching screens in the event one becomes damaged or unsafe to use. Once properly set in place, only the umpire has the authority to move the screen. A warning will be given by the umpire to any player attempting to move the pitching screen. Any further attempts will result in an immediate ejection by the offending player.

12. A league approved wooden or rubber strike-zone mat will be used for all league games. The dimension of the mat will be twenty-two inches by thirty-six inches (22" x 36"). The mat will constitute the strike-zone. If a team supplies their own league approved mat, they will be reimbursed by submitting a receipt to the League Board.
13. A third strike foul (i.e., A foul ball hit when the batter already has two strikes against him) is an automatic dead ball out. If a third strike foul out is caught by an opposing fielder, the ball remains in play and the runner may advance at their own risk
14. All base paths shall be sixty-five feet (65') between bases and the pitching rubber shall be fifty feet (50") from home plate. If field limitations prevent these dimensions, agree upon dimensions shall be established by both team managers and the umpire.
15. A commitment line will be established halfway (thirty-two and half feet (32.5")) between third base and the home plate. This line can be placed on the field by either team manager and confirmed by the umpire. During play, any player running between third base and home plate who touches or crosses this line must continue his advance toward home plate or immediately be called out. Play will continue until the umpire calls for time
16. All games will be seven (7) innings in length. Five (5) innings must be completed (four and a half innings if the home team is ahead) for a game to be considered official.
17. The home team will be assigned to the first base side of the field and the visitor team will be assigned to the third base side of the field as indicated by the schedule. Home and visitor teams will be assigned by the league schedule of play. The home team is responsible for the pitching screen, bases and Homeplate mat. It is strongly encouraged that both team managers bring these items to prevent delays in start time.
18. Teams may score a maximum of 5 runs per inning or catch-up. For example, a team is leading by the score of 10-0. The opposing team can score 10 runs in an inning to tie the game but cannot exceed the tied score unless it is the last inning or in extra innings. There are no restrictions in run volume in the last inning or in extra innings.
19. There is a limit of three (3) 'over the fence home runs', plus one (1) up in a game per team. All home runs hit exceeding the maximum number of team home runs will be recorded as an out. In the event of an A division team playing an A division team, the limit is increased to 5, plus one (1) up in a game per team. A ball that touches an outfielder and goes over the fence will not be counted against the home run limit.

20. There is no mercy rule in this league. However, a team may elect to terminate the game if they are behind by fifteen (15) runs after completing their fifth inning of batting.
21. All bats must be slow-pitch officially approved ASA/USA bats. Bats with altered (original manufacturer) markings are prohibited. All bats must be equal to the 1.20 BPF standards. A player using an altered or bat prohibited by these rules will be declared out and ejected from the game.
22. The safety base at first base will be placed eighteen inches (18") from the regular first base. If there is a close play at first base, the runner must touch the safety base or will be ruled out by the umpire. A runner can touch either base if there is no close play at first base. At all times the fielder must use the inside base, regardless of the play occurring on the field.
23. Sliding is permitted into all bases. At any base, a runner who does not slide must veer out of the way of an infielder to avoid a collision or get hit with a thrown ball. A player cannot break up a force out, double play or tag play by running into or interfering with a fielder. The umpire will declare the runner out as appropriate if this rule is violated.
 - a. If a runner runs into a fielder and, in the judgement of the umpire, creates a dangerous situation, the runner will be ruled out and ejected from the game. Willful contact may result in suspension. The offending player's action will be reviewed by the League Board to determine the necessity for any further disciplinary action.
24. On a play at the home base, the catcher records an out by touching any portion of the mat while in control of the ball before a runner crosses the scoring plate. No tag is required. The catcher cannot block the runner from touching the scoring plate, even if an incoming throw draws him toward the runner or scoring plate. Conversely, a runner who touches the mat or interferes/obstructs the catcher from the incoming throw shall be ruled out at home plate.
25. The scoring plate will be placed eight (8') feet from the mat in line with the first base foul line. Where a playing field makes the positioning of the scoring plate listed above potentially dangerous, the team managers and umpire will agree upon its positioning.
26. Both teams shall provide one (1) new ball for each game.
27. During a game, only team managers or team representative in the manager's absence can discuss, or question calls, or any other issues pertaining to the nature of play with the umpire. Any other player or players violating this rule will result in the entire team receiving a final warning. Any further comments by any player, after this final warning is given, will result in ejection from the game and possible disciplinary action.
28. After the umpire calls "Play Ball", (or something similar), a team has two (2) minutes to commence play. Failure to commence play within the two-minute timeframe can result in a (non-monetary) forfeit.

29. An umpire may eject a player from the game for verbal or physical abuse directed toward him. No warning is required to be given to a player in the case of abuse. In the event a player is ejected for abuse, the League Board will automatically review the case for disciplinary action. The League Board reserves the right to define 'abuse'.
30. A player disciplined by the League Board due to umpire abuse (verbal or physical) will be subject to a second review by the League Board to determine future reinstatement into the league.
31. A player ejected from play by an umpire must leave the vicinity of the field before play can be resumed. Failure to depart the vicinity of the field in an expeditious manner will result in his team's forfeiture of the game.
 - a. Any player ejected from a game for any reason will serve a one game suspension. The suspension will be served consistent with the very next scheduled game played. For example, a game 1 ejection results in game 2 suspension. A game 2 ejection results in game 1 suspension the following week. If the very next scheduled game is canceled for any reason, the suspension will carry over to the next scheduled game that is played.
32. End of season ties in the standings will first be decided by the following criteria:
 - a. First tiebreaker – Head-to-head record between the teams that are tied
 - b. Second tiebreaker – The least number of runs allowed in games between the teams that are tied.
 - c. Third tiebreaker – Won-Lost record among all teams in the division.
 - d. Fourth tiebreaker – Coin toss in the presence of representatives of all teams tied. The coin toss will be conducted by a member of the League Board

If there is more than one tie within a division at the end the season, ties shall be decided in descending order (ties for 3rd and 4th place must be decided before ties for 1st and 2nd are decided).

33. Playoff tournament groupings will be determined by final season standings. All playoff rounds will be a best of three (3) format. When there is an even number of teams in the division, the playoff schedule will be #1 vs #4 and #2 vs #3. In the event there is an odd number of teams in the playoff tournament, the top seed will receive a bye. In every playoff round, the highest remaining seed will be designated the home team (home/away/home).
34. If an umpire fails to show for a scheduled game, or leaves during the game, both team managers must decide on a substitute(s) to complete the scheduled games. The substitute umpires can be from either team or a spectator with sufficient knowledge of the game. Once a decision is made on umpire selection and play resumes, the game cannot be terminated over dissatisfaction over the quality of the umpiring. The substitute umpire will be paid in full.
35. The order of rainouts or cancellations, make-up games will be rescheduled in the order in which the rainouts/cancellations occurred.

36. League play will not be scheduled during the Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends. **The league retains the option of scheduling play during the July 4th holiday week, depending on the day of the week July 4th occurs.**
37. If any team manager decides to lodge a protest during a game, the umpire and opposing team manager must be informed immediately prior to the next pitch of that game via a brief meeting between both team managers (team representative in the absence of the team manager) and the umpire. The nature of the protest must be clearly stated. No protests will be considered if lodged after the next pitch is made in the game. Protests will be heard by the League Board and a decision rendered, after all facts surrounding the protest have been presented. Judgement calls cannot be protested.
38. The 'Flip-Flop Rule' will be an optional decision that must be agreed upon by both team managers or their representatives to expedite the game if the lead is 10 or more runs. The rule can only be applied after the sixth (6th) inning of a play.
39. If any one game is canceled due to an unplayable field, all games at other fields will also be cancelled for that Saturday. Makeups will be made up in the order they occurred on the schedule.
40. International Tie Breaker Rules will be utilized after 7 innings of play until a winner is determined. Each half inning will start with the last batter making out from the previous inning occupying second base. No designated runner can replace this runner until he reaches third base. There is no run limit per inning while in extra innings.
41. If severe weather is anticipated (heat index at 105 or above, hurricane, lightning, etc.) all games will be canceled by the League Board. Any cancellations will be rescheduled as per Section 35 above.

ARTICLE VI

DIVISIONS

Prior to the start of the scheduled season, the League Board and Team Managers or their designated representatives will review and decide Divisional and Cross Divisional team alignment. The purpose of the alignment is to ensure the competitiveness of the league, to the greatest extent possible. A majority vote is required to approve the Divisional and Cross Divisional Team alignments.

ARTICLE VII

RATIFICATION

New By-Laws are proposed and adopted for the League based on the recommendation by the League Board and Team Managers. When necessary, a league meeting may be called at any time by either the League Board or League Managers to consider any By-Law changes, revisions, deletions, or additions.

When such a meeting is held, ratification will require a minimum of 2/3rds (66.75%) voting members in attendance. Ratification is achieved when a simple majority vote is in approval of the proposed change, revision, deletion, or addition. A quorum of voting members (seven) must be present to initiate a vote.

To ensure all necessary proposals are expeditiously voted upon, each proposal will be presented by the League Board Chairman. When presented, there will be a 5-minute discussion period and then voting will commence. When voting is complete, the next proposal (if any) will be presented by the League Board Chairman followed by another 5-minute discussion period followed by a vote. This process will continue until all proposals are addressed.

The League Board Chairman will designate a League Board Member to record all voting outcomes. All proposals approved will be result in an update of the League Rules document and posted on the League website