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**FRANKLIN SENIOR SOFTBALL LEAGUE
COMPETITION RULES FOR 2020 SEASON**

The Franklin Senior Softball League is a recreational League founded in 2006 to promote co-ed softball. The goal of the league is to provide its players with a safe and friendly environment to play softball with an emphasis on participation and sportsmanship. Team managers are responsible for promoting a healthy balance between fun and competition and a fair allocation of playing time throughout the season. They are also responsible for following all league rules and for the proper conduct of their team's players and fans.

USA (ASA) rules apply to any situation not covered by league rules.

In these rules, the word "he" is gender neutral.

- 1. Game Days- Games are traditionally played on Friday evenings and Sunday mornings. Games scheduled for Fridays shall be scheduled to start at 6:15 p.m. before May 15 and 6:30 thereafter. Games to be played on Sundays shall be scheduled to start at 9:30 a.m. Make up games may be scheduled as part of a Friday or Sunday doubleheader. Double headers may be two 5 inning games when both teams agree to it. In all cases, forfeit time shall be 15 minutes after the scheduled start time.**
- 2. Players-A maximum of eleven fielders may be positioned in the field. One of the extra fielders must be in the outfield. The minimum number of fielders shall be nine. A team with only nine players at the scheduled start time must start the game on time. Late arriving players can be added at any time provided they either replace someone else in the batting order or are added at the end of the original batting order.**
- 3. Borrowing players-During the regular season, a team with only 9 players can borrow one or two players from the opposing team. The shorthanded team can either (1) borrow them for the duration of the game whereas they can play the field and bat with that team at the bottom of the batting order or (2) borrow any available player or players each inning to fill a position in the field in which case the borrowed player(s) remain in their own team's batting order. A team with only 9 players may also borrow a player from one of the other teams in the league with the permission of the opposing manager.**
- 4. Playing time-There are no league rules for mandatory individual playing time either for innings in the field or times at bat. However, team managers should make every effort to be fair and give sufficient playing time to all team members. Every player attending a game is expected to be given the opportunity to play and get to bat. Complaints about playing time can be directed to the league commissioner.**
- 5. Forfeits-A forfeit can be declared by the umpire in favor of the team not at fault in the case of insufficient players, the minimum is (9) to either start a game or continue a game or in the case of gross violation of league or Township park rules. Teams have a 15 minute "grace period" from game time to have sufficient players to start.**

6. Batting Order- each team may establish its own number of batters in the order up to a maximum of 22, so long as all fielders appear in the batting order.
7. Players leaving a game early: Before the start of a game, a team manager must inform the opposing team of any players planning to leave the game early. No penalty will then be imposed.
8. **Any player removed from a batting order during the game whether from an injury, emergency or other circumstances can result in an automatic out for their next scheduled at bat unless a pinch hitter is available and used. In the case of an injury, when the effected player's turn comes up in the batting order, he must bat in that slot unless a pinch hitter is used as provided for in Rule 28 or an out shall be recorded. However, the opposing Manager can and should agree (unless he feels the injury or emergency is not legitimate) that the player's turn in the batting order can be skipped for the remainder of the game with no out recorded, in which case that player cannot re-enter the game in any capacity (provided that team can still field a minimum of 11 fielders without him). See rule 31 for injured baserunner.**
9. Late arriving players or players left out of the original batting order can be added to the end of the batting order at any time or they can take the place of someone else.
10. **Legal Pitching-Pitches shall be underhand of any speed, bowling style – slow, lob or fast. However, *no wind mill pitching: the backswing of a pitchers arm shall not rise more than 90 degrees to his torso (arm-hip-shoulder)...no slingshot pitching: pitchers arm must follow through in a smooth continuous motion past his hip, no stop motion.....no whip pitching: The ball may be brought behind the back on the backswing but the shoulders and hip must be square to the batter upon release. The ball can be released away from the body but no more than at a 45 degree angle to the hips and as long as the palm is facing forward or towards the body. It cannot be released while outside of the wrist. "Arc ball" pitching is not allowed. A legal pitch will not rise over the batter's head. The pitcher's rubber shall be no closer than 45 feet from home plate. In delivering his pitch the pitcher shall begin the pitching motion with a pivot foot being in contact with the pitching rubber within two feet on either side of an imaginary straight line determined by the umpire that runs between home plate and second base. *Illegal pitches will be called 'balls' by the umpire. Pitchers will be allowed 8 warm up pitches before the start of the game and 4 warm up pitches between innings. New pitchers will be allowed 4 warm up pitches.**
11. Umpires-All umpires will be made available by the League. Teams cannot request a certain umpire or request that a certain umpire be removed from a game. They can however, complain to the Commissioner who can investigate.
12. Umpires/Safety-An umpire can call off any game or end a game at any time if he feels that the actions of participants or weather and field conditions warrant it. In the course of applying any rule or generally managing the conduct of a game, the umpire shall be mindful at all times of safety considerations and act at all times to avoid or minimize the risk of injury to any player.
13. Strike Zone-The strike zone shall extend from the top of the batter's shoulders to the bottom of his knees when he takes his normal batting stance. The initial

count on each batter shall start at 0-0. No “plate extender” shall be used. If a batter is hit by the pitch, it shall be called a ball. A maximum of 3 walks per inning shall be allowed. After the third walk, strikes only shall be called. Intentional walks are allowed, but the pitcher must throw four pitches that are out of the strike zone.

14. **Foul Balls-In all cases:** A foul tip that does not rise higher than the batter’s head and is caught by the catcher with less than two strikes on the batter shall count as a strike only. A foul on any count that rises higher than the batter’s head and is caught by the catcher is an out. If the batter hits a foul ball on the third strike (unless it is a foul tip caught by the catcher, thereby resulting in an out), the batter gets one more strike only (called or foul).
15. **Equipment:** The home team must supply regulation bases, stuffed not plastic, plus two home plates and one stuffed orange colored auxiliary first base. Also, a pitching rubber is optional. If not provided the game is forfeited to the visiting team. Teams should also have a First Aid Kit at every game including cold packs.
16. **Bases-Bases** shall be 65 feet apart and not tied down (unless the field being used has permanent bases in which case the permanent bases shall be used regardless of the distance between bases). For safety reasons, an auxiliary home plate and an orange-colored stuffed auxiliary first base for the runner shall be used.
17. **Commitment Line-** A commitment line shall be established halfway between third base and the regular home plate. If the runner passes that line they must proceed to the auxiliary plate. If the runner advances to the regular home plate, the umpire will call him out.
18. **Force at any base rule-**For safety reasons, a fielder does not need to tag a runner advancing to any base. An out shall be recorded if the ball arrives in possession of the fielder while he is touching any base including the regular first base or home plate before the runner touches the auxiliary first base, auxiliary home plate or regular second and third base. *However, a fielder still has the option to tag a passing runner or in a traditional run down play and any fielder covering a throw to any base except home maintains the option of tagging the runner.* On a ball hit into the outfield, a runner may touch the regular first base when running to second on a continuous play. A runner who is judged to have rounded a base with the intention of possibly advancing rather than having run through the base can be tagged out. Any player caught between bases can be tagged out as in a traditional “run down” play.
19. **Collisions/NO Sliding -**In the interests of safety, a runner is out if he intentionally collides with a fielder. **Also a runner is out if he intentionally slides into a base; this includes the act of diving back to a base.** An obvious trip shall not be considered an intentional slide. A decision by the umpire that a collision was incidental or unintentional shall be final and not appealable. If a collision is deemed flagrant by the umpire or both Managers, the runner shall also be ejected from the game. No tagging of a runner coming from third is allowed if he has crossed the commitment line; to record an out the regular home plate must be tagged. If a runner touches the regular home plate before or without touching the auxiliary home plate, the runner is out automatically.

20. **Interference-Verbal interference by the team at bat or anything that distracts or deters a team or player from making a play will result in a warning and subsequently in an ejection. Umpire may also call a batter out. In the umpire's judgement if an injury results from any interference then an immediate ejection will result. Also, obstruction may be called on the defense based on a fake tag or any verbal interference and base runners awarded bases.**
21. **Over Running Bases Rule-For reasons of safety, "overrunning" of bases (either going toward or returning to a base) is allowed; provided, however, that if a fielder completely blocks the base, the runner must pull up or go around the base even if the fielder is technically at fault, and the umpire shall make sure this rule is strictly enforced. In such situations, the umpire shall have the discretion to call the runner safe or to award the runner an extra base if he feels the runner would have advanced safely had he not been required to avoid a collision. Decisions made by the umpire in accordance with the preceding sentence shall be final and not appealable. *While overrunning a base, the runner can be tagged out if he makes an obvious commitment to attempt an advance to the next base.* If the runner chooses to advance to second base after an overrun of first base, he need not retag first base. A runner who overruns second or third must retag the base he overran before proceeding to the next base. If a runner is advancing to a base that has been moved for any reason, to be safe the runner must tag the spot where the base was originally located, such spot to be determined in the sole judgment of the umpire.**
22. **Baserunners-No bunting or base stealing is allowed. Runners may not take a lead off any base and may only leave a base when the pitched ball arrives at the plate. If the umpire catches a runner leaving early, he shall call "no pitch" and call the runner out; if the batter hits the pitch anyway, it does not count. Runners may not advance on a passed ball, wild pitch or errant return throw from the catcher that is dropped or missed by the pitcher. A batter is automatically out if a third strike is dropped by the catcher; no throw to first base is required. Overthrows to first, third or home that go out of play: runners can proceed to the base to which they are advancing, plus one more. The infield fly rule shall be applicable. If in the discretion of the umpire, a fielder intentionally drops a fair fly ball that can be caught with normal effort when a base is occupied by a runner, he may call the batter "out" automatically and the runner(s) shall be allowed to safely return to the base occupied before the play began.**
23. **Regulation Game-A regulation game will last 7 innings unless cancelled sooner by the umpire or both Managers due to weather, darkness or other unsafe playing condition. An official game in the regular season shall be any game where the losing team has had at least 5 at bats; a game that has not become official that is called for any reason shall be replayed in its entirety from the beginning. *During the regular season managers may agree to end a game in a tie after 7 innings or play extra innings. They may also agree to resume a game that is tied in extra innings at a later date.* Rule for playoffs: A game that must be called before it is complete **and regardless of whether it is yet an official game** shall be resumed at the point at which it was stopped as soon as conveniently possible**

thereafter and played to completion. In the event of a tie game after regulation play, play shall continue into extra innings until one team is ahead at the completion of an inning. A game that has become official that remains tied but then is called for any reason, and any incomplete playoff game that is resumed as provided above, shall resume at a later date from the exact point where the game was called, using the same players, position in the batting order then at bat, base runners, etc. as closely as possible as they were in effect when the game was called, any disagreement about which is to be determined by the Managers in a good faith, cooperative manner upon consultation with the umpire if necessary.

24. Mercy Rule-There will be a mandatory 15 run “mercy rule,” that is, if one team leads the other by 15 runs or more at any time after five complete innings have been played, the game is over. **The mercy rule is in effect for playoff games.**
25. Five Run Rule-In any inning, except the last inning or extra innings: A team tied or in the lead can score no more than 5 runs in that inning; a team that is losing can score as many runs as possible but cannot take the lead by more than 5 runs. In the last inning or extra innings, there is no limitation on the number of runs that can be scored.
26. Scorekeeper-Each team shall designate a scorekeeper. The scorekeepers shall compare scores after each half inning. Any discrepancy in the score between scorekeepers shall be resolved by the Managers before the next half inning begins. Scorekeepers/managers are responsible for reporting game results to the League Secretary/Commissioner within 24 hours.
27. Free substitution of fielders-Changes in the field shall be made by the managers on the honor system. There is no need to advise the other team's scorekeeper when a change is made. This is permitted so long as the batting order is maintained. Players removed from the field to 'sit out' may return so long as they keep their same place in the batting order and may do so any number of times.
28. Pinch Hitter-At any point a Manager may, with notice to the other Manager and the umpire, insert a player who has not yet entered the game into the batting order as a designated pinch hitter for another batter, such player to be permanently removed from the game after he bats and runs the bases.
29. Courtesy Runners-A courtesy base runner is permitted to substitute for any batter (whether or not injured) who has reached base safely, but only may be inserted immediately after the batter safely reaches base. Managers need not designate which batters will have courtesy runners beforehand. As a courtesy base runner, a player may run any number of times per game but can only run once per inning. A player used as a courtesy base runner may also run for himself as a batter in the same inning. However, if a courtesy runner's regular slot in the batting order comes up while he is on base, the manager must choose either to lose the runner and no out recorded or the courtesy base runner can remain on base and an out is recorded. A player may be used once per inning as either a courtesy runner or designated runner but not both in the same inning. Designated runners and courtesy runner must be players who are in the batting

order. As a courtesy base runner, a player may run any number of times per game but can only run once per inning.

- 30. Runners from Home-One batter from each team below age 75 so designated before the start of the game in the discretion of the manager and (b) any other designated batter who has reached or will reach age 75 in 2019, may have a courtesy base runner from home plate, such runner to start from a point behind the regular home plate chosen by the umpire. A courtesy runner for each such “designated batter” must be used each time that batter is up. To avoid confusion on the part of the fielders, if a batter who has a courtesy runner from home plate nevertheless begins to run to first base after a pitch is struck, the umpire shall call the batter “out.” A player used as courtesy runner from home if he reaches base cannot then have another courtesy runner replace him. He must complete his turn on the bases.**
- 31. Injured Baserunner-If a courtesy base runner, or a batter who is no longer eligible for a courtesy base runner becomes injured while on base or advancing to a base, he either must remain there or he may be removed from the base with no out recorded (in which case he may not re-enter the game in any capacity provided his team can still field a minimum of eleven fielders without him). In this situation no courtesy base runner for the injured runner is permitted.**
- 32. Weather-Cancellation of a game before it begins due to poor weather or playing field conditions will be made by 4:00 PM on weekdays and 8 AM on weekends. If due to unforeseen circumstances or poor field conditions, the umpire can also make the decision to cancel the game and inform the Commissioner within 24 hours. The Franklin Township Recreation Dept. shall have the final say in the use of township fields. The League Commissioner shall schedule a makeup game for a game cancelled either pre-game or before it becomes an official game, or continuation of a tie game that has gone at least 5 innings, as soon as possible thereafter.**
- 33. Legal bats- Only bats approved for play in Franklin Township Softball Leagues are acceptable. Only bats stamped as ASA approved or stickered by the league can be used. Bats manufactured after 2013 will be clearly and permanently marked “Approved for ASA Use”. No bats marked as 'Seniors' may be used.**
Inspection of bats- Before every game each team must line up all bats so the umpire can inspect them for legality. Additional bats brought to a game after the grounds rule meeting between managers and umpires will not be allowed in that game. The decision of the umpire as to the allowance of a bat for use in a game shall be final and not appealable. A player who uses or attempts to use a bat not approved by the umpire shall be called out. No altered bat will be allowed on or near the field of play for any reason. Any violation of this rule against altered bats by any player shall result in the player’s immediate suspension for the rest of the season, including playoffs. League will provide stickers to be applied to inspected bats in order to make it easier to inspect bats.
- 34. Softballs-Each team shall supply one new ball for use at the start of each game. Game balls are restricted to those provided by the league.**
- 35. Uniforms-Uniforms and softball spikes, while not required, are encouraged. Spikes shall not be metal. Any type of glove may be used at any position.**

36. Catcher's gear-protective gear is in the discretion of the catcher except that the catcher shall always wear a protective mask.
37. Waiver Form- No person shall be permitted to participate as a team member unless and until he signs a waiver legally releasing all parties from liability in the event of an injury. Team Managers shall be responsible for enforcing this rule and should have all signed waivers available at all team activities for inspection by other parties if asked.
38. Game results-All scores shall be promptly reported by the home team Manager to the League Commissioner and/or to his designee, who shall keep the official record of league standings updated and distributed weekly.
39. Playoffs for the League Championship shall be held after the conclusion of the regular season. **A 5th place team shall play a one game elimination round against the fourth place team. The 4th place team shall be the home team.** Then to follow will be two semifinal rounds, the first place team will play the fourth place team and the second place team will play the third place team, with the two winners advancing to the final round. *In a three team league the playoffs shall follow a round robin format.*
40. **Player eligibility for playoffs shall be a minimum of 6 games played during the regular season. The League Council can waive this requirement in cases of injury, illness or other extenuating circumstances by a unanimous vote.**
41. Regular season standings will be decided by a point system awarding three points for a win, two points for a tie and one point for a loss. **(no point is awarded for a loss by forfeit).** At the end of the regular season in the case of a seeding tie, the first tie breaker shall be the number of wins in head-to-head competition between the two teams. The second tie-breaker shall be the number of runs scored against the other teams that are tied. In case of a continued tie, the managers of the teams involved shall decide the matter via one coin flip.
42. Each playoff round shall be decided in a best two-out-of-three format in games played on separate days (no doubleheaders). In each playoff round, the higher seeded team shall be the home team in games one and three (if necessary); in game two, the lower seeded team shall be the home team. Winner of the final round shall be declared League Champions. All playoff games must be played until a winner is decided, extra innings if necessary. All playoff games must be played to completion. If called a game must be resumed at the point it was stopped.
43. The throwing of a bat or losing a bat during a swing that hits the catcher and/or umpire is an immediate ejection from the game. If there is no replacement available that player may remain in the game to play the field but will be skipped in the batting order with no automatic out recorded. Intentional throwing of the bat will result in an immediate ejection from the game (no option to remain in the field if there is no replacement player available). Second ejection from an intentionally thrown bat at any time will result in an immediate ejection from the game and from league play for the remainder of the season.
44. No Gentleman Agreements-Managers cannot make a separate agreement between them to use rules different or altered from league rules for their games.

45. NO Home Run Limits-There will not be a home run limit for balls hit over the fence at Middlebush Field. However, teams hitting home runs or foul balls are responsible for retrieving the balls.
46. Protesting a call-The only call made by an umpire that can be protested is a misinterpretation of a rule. Judgement calls cannot be protested. All such protests must be made to the umpire and opposing scorekeeper before the next pitch after the incident.
47. Protesting player eligibility-All player eligibility protests must be made to the league commissioner.
48. All game protests must be made to the league commissioner by the end of the next business day in writing, by text or email.