

“Machine-Pitch” Baseball Rules

A. PLAYING FIELD

1. The diamond shall have 50 foot base lines.
2. The pitching machine will be positioned 40 feet from the back point of home plate.

B. EQUIPMENT

1. In the Machine-Pitch program, any glove is permitted at any position.
2. Metal cleats of any type shall not be worn by any player participating in the baseball program.
3. In the interest of safety, the following equipment rules shall be enforced:
 - A protective NOCSAE-approved batting helmet covering the ears must be worn by any player who is on deck, at bat, or on the bases.
 - Exposed jewelry such as earrings of any kind, wrist watches, bracelets, neck chains, rings, and nose jewelry cannot be worn during the game.
4. Shirts must be worn inside trousers, if possible, and baseball caps worn whenever possible.

C. THE GAME

1. In all Machine-Pitch games, a half-inning will end when one of the following occurs:
 - the batting team scores five runs
 - the defensive team records three outs
 - the batting team has batted ten batters
2. A complete game in the Machine-Pitch League shall consist of four innings, unless any of the following occur:
 - TIME LIMIT: The time shall be one hour (60 minutes). Once this time limit has expired, no new innings will be started.
 - The Home Team coach will be the official timekeeper for all games.
 - The Home Team coach will announce the starting time when the first regulation pitch is delivered.
 - The Home Team coach will announce when there is 5 minutes remaining and 1 minute remaining in the time limit, and when the time limit expires.
3. Number of players in the line-up:
 - A team will be allowed up to 10 fielders on the defense.
 - A team is limited to a maximum of 6 infield players, including the pitcher.
 - The fielding pitcher must be positioned directly to the right (3rd base side) of the pitching machine at the time of the pitch. The Fielding Team’s coach is to assure that the pitcher is in the proper position.
 - The catcher will assume the position to the side of the backstop (for protection). Once a ball is hit, the catcher will be allowed to come into the field of play to play the position. At the completion of each batters turn, the catcher will retrieve any passed balls and throw them back to the fielding pitcher or fielding coach.
 - If a team begins play with less than ten players, late arriving team members must be added to the end of the batting order. A late-arriving player (or players) shall assume their defensive positions during the first dead ball occurrence following his/their arrival.
 - Between half innings, the defensive team will be allowed to utilize a warm-up ball.
4. TIE GAMES: If a regulation or complete game ends with the score tied, it will remain a tie.

D. BATTING

1. All team members who are eligible and able to participate will be included in the batting order. This batting order will stay the same for the entire game.
2. If a player is unable to take or to complete his turn at bat due to injury,, etc. his spot in the order will be skipped. The next player in the line-up will bat. No penalty will be assessed to his team if he is unable to bat or to complete his turn at bat. Any bases run or outs made during an incomplete turn at bat are legal.
3. If a player who previously was unable to bat due to illness or injury is able to take his next or subsequent turn at bat, he will be reinstated in the batting order.

4. If an eligible player or players arrives late to the game, then he or they must be added to the end of the batting order. Such players will bat as their turns come up.
5. Each batter will have 5 pitches to put the ball into fair play.
 - There are no walks or strikeouts. If a player cannot put the ball into fair play on any of the 5 pitches, the batter is considered retired. If the 5th pitch is batted foul, the batter is considered retired.
 - A retired batter is not counted as an out.
 - A batter hit by a pitched ball will not be awarded first base.
 - Bunting is not allowed.
 - At the discretion of the Home Team Coach, errant pitches (i.e. in the dirt or far out of the strike zone) will not be counted as one of the batter's 5 pitches.

NOTE: A foul ball that is legally caught by a fielder will be counted as an out. The batter is out.
6. The pitching machine, and the coaches, are considered part of the field of play. Any live ball (including a batted ball) that hits the machine or Fielding Coach will be considered a fair ball, and is alive and in play.
7. All team members of the team at bat must remain behind the dugout screen or fence.
8. After hitting the ball or in attempting to do so, the batter will not be allowed to throw or toss the bat, intentionally or unintentionally, in any manner. A player who throws his bat will be out. The ball will be dead. All baserunners will return to the base last touched at the time of the pitch. The decision as to whether the bat is thrown or not will be made by the Hitting Team's coach as a judgment call.

E. BASE RUNNING

1. Leading off and stealing are not allowed in the Machine-Pitch league. Base runners must remain on the base until the ball is batted into play by the batter. Violation of this rule results in the base runner being called out.
2. OVERTHROWS
 - If a defensive overthrow remains alive and in play, the base runners may advance at their own risk.
 - If a defensive overthrow goes out of play, the "one plus one" rule applies. Each base runner is entitled to advance one base beyond the base they were going to at the time of the release of the throw.
3. When a dead ball has been called by the Fielding Coach, base runners less than half the distance between two bases must return to the base last touched. Base runners more than half the distance between two bases must advance to the next base beyond the one last touched at the time of the dead ball. Umpires judgment will determine which base a base runner must go to.
4. The following rules shall govern the "crash rule," i.e.: the situation involving contact between fielders and base runners at any base including home.
 - A base runner is not required to slide at any time. However, if a fielder clearly has possession of the ball and is waiting for the base runner, then it is the responsibility of the base runner to avoid contact with the fielder. If contact is made, it must be in an attempt to slide.
 - A fielder cannot block the base or baseline without clear possession of the ball. When waiting for a thrown ball, the fielder (including the catcher) must be positioned out of the baseline. Straddling the base is not out of the baseline. A fielder can move toward the base runner only when in clear possession of the ball.
 - PENALTIES:
 - 1) If a base runner makes contact with a fielder in clear possession of the ball other than in an attempt to slide, an immediate dead ball will be called. The base runner will be called out. If the base runner deliberately contacts the fielder with great force, the base runner is subject to ejection in addition to being called out. All other base runners are returned to the last base touched at the time of the dead ball.
 - 2) If a fielder is blocking the baseline and does not have clear possession of the ball, any contact (other than deliberate contact by either player) shall be ruled obstruction; and bases shall be granted accordingly.
 - When the fielder, base runner, and ball arrive simultaneously at a base, the Fielding Coach will rule on any illegal or unnecessary contact that may occur. In any case, no player may initiate deliberate contact without being subject to penalties.

F. DEFENSIVE PLAY

1. A Fielding coach, or designated adult, is responsible for “pitching” to his/her own batters by feeding the baseball into the pitching machine. This person is referred to as the “pitching pitcher”.
2. The defensive player who assumes the role of the fielding pitcher must be directly to the right (third base side) of the pitching machine.
3. The pitching pitcher must not make any deliberate attempt to field or interfere with a batted ball.
PENALTY: the batter will be called out. Intentional interference is a judgment call by the Fielding Coach.
4. A batted ball that strikes the pitching machine, or coaches that are in play will be considered live and in play, and should be played as any other batted ball.
5. After a batted ball is fair and in play, the Fielding Coach will call time when the ball is in possession of an infielder and, in the Fielding Coaches judgment, all play has ceased. The Fielding Coach will determine whether base runners must advance or return to a base when time is called..
6. When the defensive team is playing the ball, the “pitching pitcher” must not intentionally interfere with any live ball. PENALTY: The furthestmost base runner will be called out. Intentional interference is a judgment call by the Fielding Coach.

G. DEFENSIVE SUBSTITUTES

1. Every defensive half inning, all players who did not participate defensively in the previous half inning MUST enter the game defensively for this half inning.
2. COURTESY SUBSTITUTES
 - A courtesy substitute may replace an ill, injured, or otherwise incapacitated player or an ejected player on defense or as a base runner only.
 - A courtesy substitute base runner must be the last batter that batted who is not on base.