SOFTBALL RULEBOOK
THUNDERBOLTS DIVISION

I. INTRODUCTION

A. 78 Youth Sports recreational leagues are structured to provide fun, fair, educational, and organized athletic competition for players of similar ages. The primary focus of each program is recreational enjoyment of a sport, coupled with player development (both individually and as part of a team). Competitive spirit, while understandable, is secondary to enjoyment of the game and learning fair play and sportsmanship.

B. Coaches' first responsibility is to help our participants attain these goals safely and joyously. Players are primarily motivated by the desire to have fun and be successful. Coaches should structure their teaching toward those ends and must treat each player with dignity and respect, regardless of athletic ability. To be successful, we expect our coaches to know and study the fundamentals of the sport; know the rules of the game; stress effort; keep their ego out of coaching; foster teamwork and sportsmanship; give all players a chance to become well rounded and to find their place in the sport by allowing them to play as many different positions as possible; and set performance goals that are related to the fundamentals of the game without regard for won/loss records or individual statistics. Moreover, coaches are not alone. Our organization is here to provide advice, help, encouragement and support.

II. CODE OF CONDUCT

A. Sportsmanship. Coaches, players, parents and other spectators are expected to display proper sportsmanship in accordance with the objectives and spirit of the program (as set out above) at all times. No coach, player, parent or other spectator may act in an unsportsmanlike manner at any time. This includes, but is not limited to, excessive screaming; trash-talking; use of obscene language; abusing equipment; being disrespectful toward volunteers, players, coaches and/or spectators; and inappropriate physical contact.

B. Positive Cheering. Players, coaches and spectators may not taunt, negatively criticize nor distract players on opposing teams. Root for your team, not against the opposition. Only positive cheering for one's own team is permitted.

C. Ejections. Improper behavior by coaches and players is grounds for ejection from a game. Excessive bad behavior or multiple ejections are grounds for suspension or removal from the league. Improper behavior from spectators may also result in an ejection. Excessive bad behavior from fans may also result in forfeiture of a game.

Anyone ejected from a game, including fans, will be banned from attending the next scheduled game. Ejections are made if both head coaches agree, or by the Commissioner in the event of a disagreement.

D. Fighting. Fighting between players warrants ejection from a game for all involved parties, under the same process as Section II.C above.

E. Further Discipline. Anyone ejected from more than one game in a single season will be addressed by the Commissioner and potentially subject to further discipline, up to and including a permanent ban from all 78 Youth Sports programming.

F. Physical Contact. Physical contact by any participant (including any spectator) with respect to a 78 Youth Sports coach or volunteer will result in the offender's suspension from attendance for the remainder of the season and the filing of personal assault charges with the New York City Police Department.

G. Handshakes. Players and coaches must shake hands in Stanley Cup style after each game.

H. Field Access. No parent is ever permitted on the field of play or in the dugout area for any reason, unless otherwise specified in our rules.

I. Injuries. Except in the case of injury, touching of players by coaches can only be above the waist (pat on the shoulder, back, or head). In case of injury, the parent or guardian responsible for that player should be contacted and should take control of the situation.

J. Crowd Control. Coaches are responsible for controlling fans who are disruptive, use foul language, or otherwise act in a manner that is contrary to the rules or spirit of the goals of our organization.

K. Suspending a Game. A game may be suspended or cancelled if coaches, parents, or spectators become abusive or hinder the playing of the game. Any such incident must be reported to the Commissioner.

III. COACHES' RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Certifications. Coaches must successfully complete a background check and AED/CPR certification, both of which are valid through the end of the season.

B. Defibrillator. All teams must have their organization-provided defibrillator present, with an AED-certified coach, at all practices and games at New York City Parks Department fields. Practice safety first.

C. Supervision. Coaches must notify each player of practice and game schedules. They must ensure that neither games nor practices are held without the supervision of an adult who specifically assumes such responsibility.

D. Safety. Use best efforts to reinforce safe practices and continuous play by doing things like ensuring the catchers are not resting on their knees, thereby exposing their upper thighs to pitched balls, and asking parents to back up the catcher and speed the game.

E. Officiating. There are no umpires in the Thunderbolts Division. Games are run and officiated by the head coaches of both teams, who shall be treated with respect and courtesy at all times.

F. Ground Rules. Prior to the start of all games, the head coaches shall confer to review the ground rules. The coaches shall:

1. Ask parents to help inspect and clean the field for dangerous objects (glass, etc.) before the start of the game;
2. Upon completion of the game, direct the teams to clean their dugouts and leave quickly so subsequent games can start on time;
3. After a ball is hit into play, clear the bat from the home plate area to eliminate tripping hazards;
4. Require all players to be properly attired (wearing their team hat and jersey, with their jerseys tucked in and their shoelaces tied);
5. Warn all first basemen not to put their foot across the base, but on the corner closest to the field; and
6. Ensure that all areas in-play are clear of spectators.

G. Game Day Equipment. Properly manage and store equipment (e.g., catcher's gear, thin rubber bases, and backstop for Prospect Park Field A) on game days.

IV. GENERAL RULES

A. Official Rules. All games are played under standard softball rules, unless specifically excepted here.

B. Universal Batting. All players must bat each time through the order, whether the player has played a defensive position in that inning or not. Latecomers must be placed at the bottom of the batting order. If a batter bats out of turn, the batter is out.

C. Playing Time. All players must play in every game they attend, provided they have been to at least one practice. Coaches must inform the Commissioner and opposing coach whenever a player might be sitting out a game. Decisions may be appealed to the Commissioner.

D. Defensive Substitution. Unlimited free defensive substitution is allowed; however, every team member must play a defensive position at least one full inning of the first two, and two full innings of the first four. Prior to a game, coaches must inform the opposing coach whenever a player might not fully participate in the game. Decisions may be appealed to the Commissioner.

E. Player Positioning. Coaches are encouraged to allow players to try different positions. However, minimal skill is necessary at certain positions to avoid being hurt, such as catcher, pitcher and first base. Coaches therefore have the discretion to put players at specific positions. However, they must allow players to prove in practice that they are skilled enough to play in a position they desire. The coach shall use objective criteria at practices to determine if players are skilled enough to play different positions. For example, to pitch a player must be able to throw a minimum number of strikes (such as five) out of ten attempts; to catch a player must be able to keep a minimum number of balls from getting behind her and must be able to make long accurate throws (even if on a bounce).

F. Permitted Footwear. No metal cleats are permitted to be used by a player. Rubber soled athletic shoes with or without rubber cleats are permitted.

G. Lineup Cards. Coaches must exchange a written lineup card, including names, jersey numbers and batting order before each game.

H. Throwing the Bat. Throwing the bat is not permitted. It shall be the responsibility of both coaches that each batter gets one warning for a thrown bat, and is called out for a second infraction.

I. Food and Drink. No food or drink (except water or sports drinks) is permitted on the field of play. No food is allowed in the dugout area during game time. No parents or spectators are allowed in the dugout area. No coach, parent or spectator may smoke or consume alcoholic beverages at any practice or game.

J. Uniform Code. All players shall wear a league-issued uniform (hat and jersey). Hats should be worn with the bill facing forward and jerseys shall be tucked in.

K. Protective Gear. All batters and base runners must wear protective helmets. Catchers must wear a mask, a helmet, a chest protector, and shin guards. Pelvic protectors are recommended, but at the discretion of the parents or coach.

L. Sliding. Head first sliding is prohibited except when diving back to a base that had already been acquired. A player violating this rule shall be called out. All calls under this rule are made by the head coaches. The slide or surrender rule shall be in effect when there is a play. A player must either slide or avoid contact when there is a play at any base, except for a play at first base. If a player fails to slide or avoid contact as required by this rule, the player shall be called out. If a base runner initiates a dangerous play, the runner will be called out. In addition, the following will be strictly enforced: "The catcher, without the ball in her possession has no right to block the pathway of a runner attempting to score. The base line belongs to the runner and the catcher should be there only when she is fielding a ball or ... already has the ball in her hands." If contact is made intentionally the player will be called out. The coach-catcher shall at no time block home plate if a runner is attempting to touch home from third base.

M. Official Ball. The official ball is a 10” yellow safety softball provided by the organization. Only that ball can be used.

N. Rescheduled Games. When games are cancelled due to weather, the contest may be rescheduled subject to field availability and the consent of the Commissioner and both coaches.

V. DIVISION RULES

A. Field Dimensions. Bases shall be fifty (50’) feet apart.

B. Team Size; Defensive Positions. Teams may field ten (10) players, the standard eight (8) softball positions (the catcher shall be a coach) and two (2) additional outfielders (stationed at the discretion of the coach). The fielding pitcher shall be positioned next to the coach-pitcher. All outfielders must be at least ten (10’) feet beyond the infield base line.

C. Forfeits. There are no forfeits since we do not keep standings. If the coaches determine that one team will not have enough players, the coaches shall agree on rosters that allow the teams to play.

D. Time Limits. Games last five innings or one hour and forty-five minutes (1:45), whichever comes first. No new inning of play may begin after one hour and thirty minutes (1:30) have been played.

E. Pitching. Pitching is done by a coach from the offensive team from no closer than fifteen (15') feet (measured from the rear point of home plate). The coach must pitch underhand, and has the option to pitch from a kneeling or standing position. The defensive team also fields a "fielding pitcher" whose responsibility is to play any ball hit to her.

F. Balls and Strikes. Balls and strikes are not called. A batter is out after three swinging strikes. Each batter is also entitled to look at eight (8) pitches. If the batter has not struck out nor gotten a hit after her eight (8) pitches have been thrown, the batter sits, but no out is recorded. Foul balls with two strikes and foul balls after the seventh pitch do not count. A pitch that hits a batter shall be a no-pitch which will not count against the eight (8) pitches nor permit the batter to go to first base.

G. 5-Run Limit Rule. No team may score more than five runs in their offensive half of their inning, except in the last inning, when a losing home team may only score enough runs to tie the game.

H. Coach Positioning. No more than four (4) coaches per team will be allowed on or near the field of play to assist players. In addition to a bench coach for each team, the offensive team will have a coach-pitcher along with first and third base coaches. In addition to a bench coach, the defensive team will have a coach-catcher and may position one coach in the outfield. Coaches may direct their players, but may not touch or carry them.

I. Coach as Catcher. To speed the game, a coach from the defensive team shall play the position of catcher. For plays at home plate that coach shall never block the plate and must make a good faith effort to make plays at home plate.

J. Coach-Pitcher Hit by Batted Ball. If the coach-pitcher is unintentionally hit by a batted ball the ball is dead and the hitter is awarded a single. Base runners advance one base.

K. Defensive Coach Hit by Batted Ball. If a batted ball hits the outfield defensive coach, the batter is awarded a double, and the play is dead.

L. Dead Ball; Advancing Bases. A play is over and the ball is dead (i) once a play is made at a base and the infielder has control of the ball or (ii) once a ball thrown from the outfield (not to a base to make a play) crosses the imaginary line that connects the bases. For balls thrown from the outfield and not directly to a base to make a play, base runners are granted the base to which they are headed as long as they are, in the judgment of the head coaches, at least halfway to that base when the ball crosses that imaginary line. Otherwise, they must return to the prior base. The ball is live when, in the judgment of the head coaches, it is thrown from the outfield directly to a base to make a play at that base. Base runners should also know that they are not guaranteed the base, and that they may be put out anytime the ball is live and they are off the base.

M. No Bunting, Leading, Stealing, Dropped Third Strike or Infield Fly Rule. There will be no bunting, leading, stealing, dropped third strikes, or infield fly rule.

N. Displaced Bases. If a base has moved from its proper position, a base runner cannot be tagged out as long as she is touching that base.

O. Boundary Lines. An out of play line shall be drawn for each game that is ten (10') feet from third base and parallel to the left field foul line. An overthrow at first base shall be dead and shall not entitle the runners to an extra base. An overthrow that goes beyond the out of play line off third base entitles all base runners one additional base.

P. Home Team Duties. The home team occupies the first base dugout, and supplies the bases and the game ball (and keeps it at the end of the game).

Q. Maximum Number of Coaches. Only players, coaches, and scorekeepers, no more than four (4) in total, are to occupy the dugout area. Relatives and friends must watch the game from out of bounds and may never enter the field of play or dugout area during the game.

R. No Amendment. These rules may not be amended by coaches at game time. Suggestions for rule changes should be brought to the attention of the Commissioner.

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For Schedules, Fields, Rules, FAQs and to Register for all our sports and other information:
www.78youthsports.org

To reach someone to ask a question, make a comment, or report an incident:
info@78youthsports.org