

# ESSEX COUNTY WOMEN'S SOFTBALL LEAGUE (ECWSL)

## BYLAWS

*Updated 3/24/2025*

### **ECWSL Board of Directors**

ECWSL is a volunteer group of individual towns joined together for the betterment of youth softball and is under the governing body of USA Softball. Each town has a president/director that is considered to be part of ECWSL Board of Directors. It is the Board of Directors that dictates league policy.

The ECWSL Board shall meet regularly and vote as necessary, for the purpose of ensuring a proper league and playing season, and all that it entails. ECWSL Board of Directors need to be present at the meeting to vote. The bylaws and policies of ECWSL may be amended or repealed in whole or in part by a majority vote of those in attendance, and approved by the ECWSL Board of Directors, with each member having an equal vote under the guidance of USA Softball.

The ECWSL Board of Directors will appoint a five person Advisory Board, to review issues throughout the season.

Coaches, parents, players and ECWSL Board Members, have the right to notify the ECWSL Advisory Board of any potential violations of league philosophy. Blatant repeat offenses will be addressed by the ECWSL Advisory board, and with a majority vote of the Advisory Board will determine the appropriate course of action.

### **Code of Conduct**

Each town will be held wholly responsible for the actions of their players, coaches and fans. Excessive unsportsmanlike manner at any game can be brought to the ECWSL Board of Directors for review and may result in forfeiture of the game, possible banishment of player, coach, or parent, or expulsion of the town from the league if deemed appropriate. All game decisions are made by the USA umpires. Any issues with umpires should be brought to the attention of the umpire assignor to be addressed.

Any player using social networking sites to make inappropriate remarks, comments or posting of pictures or even appearance of inappropriate remarks or comments will be suspended for 2 games. If a second offense occurs, that player will be suspended for the remainder of the season including playoffs.

### **League Rules**

ECWSL is an instructional league for grades K-8, and to maintain the instructional nature of the league, towns with multiple team entries within the same division must ensure that a draft process is utilized in selection of players that participate. The utilization of an "A" or "B" team or an uneven loading of talent onto one team or the other is not in accordance with the league philosophy.

If uneven loading of teams is discovered during the season both teams will be banned from the playoffs and subject to probation for the following year. A determination on uneven loading will be made using the following criteria: records, run differential and discussion with coaches/parents of the involved teams more specifically those on the less talented team.

The season runs adjacent to many year-end school and non-school functions. ECWSL allows rescheduling of games *ONLY* if teams do not have enough players to field a team due to a school-wide function, or due to bad weather. If a team has enough players to play a game (8 or more) then that game needs to be played (*example*: Coaches are not allowed to reschedule a game because their best players will not be there. Play the games as scheduled).

Towns and teams will be separated into North and South Conferences. Interconference play will be determined by logistics and number of teams; otherwise teams play games within their respective conferences.

All teams in Juniors and Senior divisions will make the playoffs and we will divide the teams into A/B brackets..

### **Guidelines for Teams/Coaches**

ECWSL is an instructional league, and therefore coaches should strive to have players play multiple positions during a game/season. It is detrimental to your entire softball program to stick a player in one position all season long including pitchers!

- Only one coach per team is designated to interact with the umpire.
- If a game becomes heated, the umpire will give 1 warning to both teams, and the umpire will announce that the next incident will result in an ejection. If after an ejection, turmoil does not stop, the game will be forfeited.
- An umpire can issue an immediate ejection (no warning) if warranted.
- Umpires will notify ECWSL president of all ejections.

## **Equipment & Field Rules** - [www.teamusa.org/USA-Softball/Certified-Equipment](http://www.teamusa.org/USA-Softball/Certified-Equipment)

- All divisions require batters to wear helmets with facemasks (chin straps are optional).
- The ball utilized is defined as: Optic Yellow with Red Seams COR 0.470 / Compression 375 lbs.
- 11 inch for Farm, 12 inch for Juniors & Seniors (11" softie training balls for instructional teams)
- Only ASA/USA approved bats can be used.
- A safety bag (double bag with Hi-Vis Orange) at first base will be required for all divisions.
- All fields must have movable or breakaway bases to ensure the safety of runners.
- The home team must have their field in playable condition or risk a forfeit if deemed unplayable by the umpire.
- All pitchers and infielders buy and wear their own protective face mask. Face masks are **required** by ECWSL.

## **Games Rules for all Divisions**

In general, the league will follow all USA Softball rules except where listed by exception below:

- A player from an ECWSL town cannot play for another town's team without permission of both town's Directors unless they live in or attend school in that town.
- No players are allowed from non-league towns if they have a comparable league unless approved by ECWSL Board.
- 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders are NOT allowed to play in ECWSL if they are playing for a high school team.
- All rosters & coaches must be submitted to the league by the deadline given
- A player must play half the regular season games to be eligible for the playoffs.
- Each player must play at least every 2 innings in the field unless restricted by injury.
- A team will forfeit the game if less than 8 players are available.
- Make up games should be rescheduled within 1 week of cancellation if possible or during the week between the end of the regular season the the beginning of the playoffs.
- Players can "play up" a division
- A player may play down a division if she is determined to be a safety risk at her own age level. This must be brought to the ECWSL review board to be approved.
- A player coming late to the game is added to the bottom of the batting order.
- A player leaving early from the game is skipped in the batting order.
- There are no automatic outs.
- Unlimited free substitutions, including pitchers.
- Home team practices on the field until 5:45 pm.
- Visiting practices on field from 5:45 – 6:00 pm.
- Games start at 6:00 pm.
- No new inning can start after 7:30 pm prior to Memorial weekend, then 7:45 pm will be the cut off time. This should be discussed with the umpire prior to the game start.
- If a game starts later than scheduled due to the umpire being late, or due to a varsity game running late, the game goes 1.5 hours from the **start time** (1.75 hours after Memorial Day).
- Any pitcher that directly hits (ball goes from pitcher's hand, and in flight, hits batter) 4 batters in a game, that pitcher shall be removed from the game by her coach. *Note:* batters need to attempt to get out of the way.
- Batting order is continuous.
- 12 run mercy rule after 4 innings.
- Only 4 infielders, plus 1 pitcher and 1 catcher are allowed in the infield.
- Maximum of 4 outfielders can be on the outfield grass but cannot make a primary play in the infield (e.g. cover second on a force out).
- A win is worth 2 points; a tie is worth 1 point. No points will be given for games that are not played.
- Scores should be entered into Sports Engine by the home team as soon as possible after the game.
- Juniors & Seniors will all play a 12 game regular season. Farm plays a 10 game season.

## **Additional Senior Rules**

- Senior teams may share players when Junior call up players are unavailable. A team should only borrow enough players to bring their roster to 10 players. The shared player(s) are not allowed to pitch.
- Senior teams are allowed to "pull up" Junior players as needed.
- 60 foot base distances.
- 43 foot pitching distance. A pitcher can move 1 step in only if they are struggling to throw strikes AND both coaches agree that the velocity is low enough that batters feel comfortable. Safety first!
- Dropped third strike rule in effect. *Drop third strike rule:* With two outs, the batter can run to first on a dropped third strike even if a teammate is already on first base. In this case, the dropped ball is considered live, and the defensive team can try to force an out at any base.
- Unlimited stealing is allowed. Runner cannot leave the base until the ball is released from the pitcher.

- Continuous walks are allowed. A batter can attempt to run to second base on a walk. If, while the pitcher has the ball in the circle, the batter/runner pauses while rounding to go to second, or reverses direction and goes back to first, the runner will be called out unless the pitcher makes a play on them (or another runner) forcing the pause or reversal. A fake throw is considered a play.
  - Anytime a batter receives a base on balls (ie: a walk on ball four), the batter becomes a batter-runner and the ball remains live until the batter-runner touches first base (**rule 8-1-C-1**). Once the batter-runner touches first base, the only restrictions on her continuing to second base are the ones found under the Look Back Rule (rule 8-7-T). On a walk, the Look Back Rule comes into effect as soon as the batter-runner touches first base. The Look Back Rule applies to all runners at that point. If the pitcher has the ball in the circle, the runner needs to commit to a base. The runners can't just stand there or dance around. Only when a play is made on any of the runners, may all runners stop or reverse their direction. A fake throw is considered a play,
- Maximum 6 runs can be scored per inning. Inning ends when the 6<sup>th</sup> run crosses the plate.
- The six run rule is lifted in the 7<sup>th</sup> inning or the agreed upon last inning due to time/darkness for Seniors. The Umpire must declare the last inning. If the declared last inning ends quickly, the game is over (even if there is still time left on the clock).

### Additional Junior Rules

- Junior teams may share players when Farm call up players are unavailable. A team should only borrow enough players to bring their roster to 10 players. The shared player(s) are not allowed to pitch.
- Junior teams are allowed to "pull up" Farm players as needed.
- 60 foot base distances.
- 40 foot pitching distance. A pitcher can move 1 step in only if they are struggling to throw strikes AND both coaches agree that the velocity is low enough that batters feel comfortable. Safety first!
- 6 inning game with a maximum of 5 runs per each half inning. Inning ends once the 5<sup>th</sup> run crosses the plate.
- Unlimited stealing is allowed. Runner cannot leave the base until the ball reaches the plate.
- Runners cannot advance an additional base on an overthrow or pass ball **on a steal attempt** (catchers/players are encouraged to make the throw). *Definition of a steal*: any advancement on a non-batted ball.
- Runners can advance *one base only* on an overthrow on a pick-off attempt by a pitcher or catcher. Catchers and Pitchers are encouraged to make the throw on a runner standing or dancing between bases, but the runner can only advance one base from the base previously occupied before the overthrow occurred.
- Each team can only *steal home twice* successfully per each half inning. If a team/runner steals home for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time, they will be sent back to 3<sup>rd</sup> base.
- Bunting *is* allowed.
- No continuous walks. A batter cannot attempt to run to second base on a walk.
- No Dropped Third Strike
- Infield fly rule *will* be enforced. *Infield fly rule*: when declared by the umpire, a fair *fly* (not including a line drive or an attempted bunt) that can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort when runners are on first and second or all three bases are occupied and before there are two outs in an inning.
- The ball is dead when the pitcher has the ball or has attempted to catch the ball within the 8-foot radius of the pitcher's rubber. Once the ball is within the circle, runners must return to the previous base unless they are at least halfway to the next base.
- A pitcher cannot attempt to put the ball back into play once she has the ball inside the 8-foot radius.
- The 5 run rule is lifted in the 6<sup>th</sup> inning and the agreed upon last inning due to time/darkness for Juniors. The Umpire must declare the last inning. If the declared last inning ends quickly, the game is over (even if there is still time left on the clock).

### Additional Farm Rules

- Farm teams *can* share players.
- 50 foot base distances.
- 35 foot pitching distance. A pitcher can move 1 step in only if they are struggling to throw strikes and BOTH COACHES AGREE that the velocity is low enough that batters feel comfortable. Safety first!
- If a pitcher walks 3 batters in a half inning, then a coach comes in to pitch to his own team to finish out the inning. Coaches cannot field the ball. Pitchers may pitch again at any point in the game.
- No bunting & no stealing.
- Maximum 4 runs can be scored by one team per inning. Inning ends when the 4<sup>th</sup> run crosses the plate.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> graders may play, but coaches must assess her ability, so the player can field a defensive position safely.
- Farm will play a 10 game season
- When the defensive team is in the field, a coach can be on the field to help instruct the players.
- Junior umpires, who are trained USA umpires, are encouraged at this level.

### Additional Instructional Rules

- Instructional teams are comprised of Kindergarten & 1st graders. 2nd graders may play if they are not ready for the farm level.

- Instructional teams may share players when necessary
- Teams will play 1 game per week on Friday nights or Sunday afternoons. Travel will be limited to close surrounding towns.
- Games will begin around May 15th to give teams a chance to experience the sport before playing a game
- 11" softie training balls should be used at this level
- Girls may hit off a tee or off coach pitching
- No score is kept.
- Each team should have their entire batting order hit before switching out to defense.

### **Additional Playoff Rules for Juniors & Seniors**

- All teams will make the playoffs
- Seeding for teams with equal records will be determined by coin flip.
- Divisions will be split into "A" and "B" playoff brackets when appropriate.
- Home teams secure and maintain fields and arrange and pay for USA umpires.
- Game umpires have final say - no contesting final game results.
- Must play games on scheduled day or forfeit (excluding rain).
- Playoff game schedules will be set by the Advisory Committee and games may take place at neutral field sites when necessary
- If a playoff round gets rained out, higher seeds move on (home team MUST attempt to make the field playable).
- Slaughter rule in effect - 12 run mercy rule after 4 innings., game is over.
- Maximum runs per inning is the same as regular season rules.

## ESSEX COUNTY WOMEN'S SOFTBALL LEAGUE (ECWSL) & USA SOFTBALL FEES

*Updated 3/7/2023*

ECWSL is an organized group of individual towns joined together for the betterment of youth softball and is under the governing body of USA Softball.

### **ECWSL Website** - [www.essexcountywsl.org](http://www.essexcountywsl.org)

- Rosters, Schedules, scores, contact info, standings, field locations etc.
- League fees due for 2025: \$180 per town

### **USA Softball Registration & Umpires**

#### **USA Softball Registration** - Register at [www.registerusasoftball.com](http://www.registerusasoftball.com)

- Individual Registration vs. Team Registration (see below)  
(either way teams need to be registered with USA softball to use their umpires)
- Registering with USA Softball **requires** your board members, coaches and volunteers working directly with the players to complete a national background check for teams using USA Umpires (i.e. may exclude Farm & Instructional teams)
- \$13.00 per background check
- Access to SafeSport for all board members and coaches at no cost and is **required** in all youth sports  
<https://www.usasoftballma.com/page/show/5670873-safesport>

#### **Individual Insurance Registration**

- Cost \$18 per player/coach and covers USA Registration and Insurance (this cost includes a player card)
- Coverage from September 1st to August 31st
- Fill out spreadsheet (see separate attachment) for USA Registration/Insurance (called import data) to have on file for future teams/league within the same coverage year

#### **Team Insurance Registration**

- Cost \$50 per team (see separate attachment)
- Each time the team plays in any USA Softball league they need to pay this fee to and need to provide evidence of separate insurance

#### **ECWSL to send the following information each year to USA Softball**

- Town & director contact information
- Division
- Number of teams

### **USA Softball Competitive Opportunities**

- City/Town State Series Championship (separate attachment)
- High Performance Program (separate attachment)
- 12u All-American Team Tryouts (separate attachment)

### **USA Softball Contact**

Walter Babcock  
babcock275@yahoo.com  
(978) 821-1199

### **USA Softball Umpires**

- Umpire assignment website: Arbiter Sports: [www.arbitersports.com](http://www.arbitersports.com)
- Contact your umpire assignor to be added
- Umpires receive \$60 per game (junior umpire fee at the discretion of the town) via check recommended for tracking
- A umpire assignor fee is \$30 per team, per town, made out to your divisions Umpire Assignor and can be paid at the end of the season:

#### **North Division - Umpire Assignor**

Matt D'Agostino  
359 Howe Street  
Methuen, Massachusetts 01844  
Cell: 978-697-6044  
Email: fastpitchump1@verizon.net

#### **South Division - Umpire Assignor**

John (Jack) Butler  
89 Burley Street  
Danvers, Massachusetts 01923  
Cell: 351-201-9657  
Email: butlrddidit@aol.com

**Playoff Trophy Fees** - Price TBD each year by the ECWSL Board - Average of \$45 per town