

Northern Illinois Ponee League Rules

Updated April 2024

I. Age Requirements

- a. The Northern Illinois Ponee League is for players currently enrolled in 7th or 8th grade regardless of age. Ninth graders will be allowed to play but must be born on or before September 1st of the current season year (i.e., 2023 to 2028). Birth certificates must be provided if a player's age is questioned by another coach or SYB board member. If a player is found to not be within the age requirements, or a birth certificate is not produced, the player will be removed from the league. No freshman will be allowed to play if they are a member of a High School team, regardless of age.

II. General

- a. Sportsmanlike conduct must be observed. No arguing or yelling at umpires, coaches, parents, or players.
- b. Coaches and parents should reflect positive and constructive direction, tempered with patience.
- c. No smoking or alcohol is allowed on the playing field, benches, or dugouts.
- d. Each team is responsible for picking up litter from the dugouts, field and stands.
- e. The use of bat boys and bat girls are not permitted.
- f. All players must wear their team uniforms provided by the league to all games. Team hats are also required to be worn at all practices.
- g. Coaches are responsible for crowd control. If a parent or spectator becomes unruly, they will be asked to leave the park. If they refuse, their team will forfeit the game. In the event that a dangerous or threatening situation develops, please contact the police (911) immediately. Please advise the commissioner of any of these situations at your earliest convenience.
- h. While their team is at bat, coaches may be in the coach's boxes along the baselines.
- i. Regulation games are 7 innings in length. In the case of rain or inclement weather, 4 innings will be considered a complete game, or 3 ½ if the home team is ahead.
- j. The visiting team is listed first on the schedule and will take the field for warmups 30 minutes before game time. The home team is listed second and takes the field 15 minutes before game time. Visiting team occupies the first base dugout and the home team occupies the third base dugout.
- k. The home team will set up the field prior to the game. The visiting team is responsible for putting the equipment in the storage boxes and locking them after the game.
- l. The home and visiting team each must give one new baseball to the umpires prior to the game.
- m. Official scores and standings will be kept.

III. Field Dimensions

- a. The playing field has base paths of 80 feet in length. The pitching rubber is 54 feet from home plate.

IV. Rosters

- a. Rosters are made up of a minimum of 9 players.
- b. A team will be allowed to field 8 players and still be a legal team. Failure to field a legal team constitutes a forfeit.
- c. In the event that there are only 8 players, the 9th players spot will **NOT** be an automatic out.
- d. If a team begins a game with 9 players and loses a player during the game due to injury or ejection. The 9th spot will **NOT** be an automatic out.
- e. If a team starting with 9 players loses 2 players for any reason during the game, that team will forfeit the game.
- f. If a player is injured during an at-bat, the player that made the last out will continue the at bat from its current status.

- g. No player may be added or deleted from any team by a coach. As soon as a team loses a player, the manager must notify the commissioner. New players will be added as available. Any coach playing or practicing with ineligible players will forfeit the next game. Ineligible players are those who have not registered to play in the lower in-house/rec leagues or are on a full-time travel team.
- h. No new players may be added once the season starts, unless approved by all NIPL town representatives.
- i. If it is necessary to bring a player up from a lower league, the following rules apply:
- j. No player will miss a game with their current team to play up a level.
- k. The coach of the player's current team must be notified of a player playing up a level.
- l. If a player is brought up to play and the game is suspended for any reason and enough of the team's players return for the make-up game, the player being brought up, will not be eligible to play in the make-up game.
- m. If a player is needed. The League commissioner must be notified. Both league commissioners will coordinate the player being brought up.
- n. No coach may contact a player to play up. If so, the game will be considered a forfeit.
- o. Call up players will **NOT** be allowed to play in the battery.

V. Game Play

- a. Games start promptly at 6:00 pm and 8:00 pm. Forfeiture time is 10 minutes after the scheduled start of the game.
- b. All games that are not in the last inning after 1-hour and 40-minutes will play the next inning as the last inning in the game. That last inning will be played under California rules as stated below.
 - i. Each team will start their half of the inning with one out; the batter when the last out was made from the previous inning will be placed on 2nd base.
 - ii. Every batter will start with a 1 ball, 1 strike count.
 - iii. If after the inning is complete, and the score is tied, it will be recorded as a tie.
- c. If after the last inning, the game is tied, one additional inning will be played under California rules.
- d. The second game will start as soon as the 1st game ends, with no on field warm up. Time limit is from the actual start time. Forfeiture time is 10 minutes after the scheduled start time or the announced start time if the early game goes late.
- e. A maximum of 9 players are allowed on the field at once.
- f. One head coach and no more than 3 assistant coaches are allowed in the dugout during games. The coaches must not leave the dugout or coaches box to address the umpire unless recognized by the umpire.
- g. Mercy Rule:
 - i. A 12 run mercy rule will be in effect after 4 complete innings, or after 3 ½ innings if the home team is ahead.
 - ii. A 10 run mercy rule will be in effect after 5 complete innings, or after 4 ½ innings if the home team is ahead.
- h. The infield fly rule is in effect.
- i. The dropped 3rd strike rule is in effect.
- j. The batter becomes a runner when ... the third strike called by the umpire is not caught, providing (1) first base is unoccupied, or (2) first base is occupied with two outs. "When a batter becomes a base runner on a third strike not caught by the catcher and starts for the dugout, or his position, and then realizes his situation and attempts to reach first base, he is not out unless he or first base is tagged before he reaches first base. If, however, he actually reaches the dugout or dugout steps, he may not then attempt to go to first base and shall be out."

VI. Batting

- a. All players will bat in a continuous batting order with free substitution. If a batter bats out of order, that batter shall be called out and any runners that have advanced during that at bat shall return to where they were before that at bat.
- b. Bunting is allowed. A batter may not square around to bunt then pull back to indicate an attempt to swing. Once a batter squares to bunt, they must make an attempt to bunt or pull the bat back on the pitch. If a batter bats out of order, that batter shall be called out and any runners that have advanced during that at bat shall return to where they were before that at bat.
- c. A thrown bat will result in one (1) verbal warning given to the team. A second offense will result in a dead ball, the batter will automatically be called out and runners may not advance. A third offense will result in the batter being ejected from the game.

VII. Base Running

- a. NIPL has no special base running rules, if time has not been called by an umpire all runners may advance at their own risk at any time.
- b. Intentionally running into a catcher or any other player constitutes an automatic out. No fielders, including catchers, shall stand in the base path unless they already have the ball. If a runner is unable to reach the base because he/she was obstructed by a fielder, the umpire shall declare the runner safe.
- c. Courtesy runners will be allowed for injured base runners.
- d. Courtesy runners will also be allowed for the catcher or pitcher of the next inning when there are two (2) outs.
- e. Courtesy runners shall be last batted out. If this is not possible defer to last run scored, then to last in the batting order.

VIII. Pitching

- a. Pitchers are only allowed to pitch the maximum number of pitches allowed based on the SYB website.
- b. If a pitcher reaches the pitch count maximum during an at bat, the player will be allowed to finish the at bat before being removed.
- c. There will be no more than 10 warm up pitches when a new pitcher enters the game and 5 warm up pitches in between innings.
- d. Once a pitcher is removed from a game, he/she cannot return as a pitcher in that same game.
- e. Intentional walks are allowed.
- f. The Head Coach shall inform the home plate umpire of the intent to walk a batter. No pitches need to be thrown.
- g. Mound visits will be limited to 1 minute. On the second visit to the defense with the same pitcher on the mound, the pitcher **MUST** be removed. Exceptions shall be for injuries to players other than the pitcher.
- h. Balks will be called. The coach and or the umpire shall explain to the pitcher the reason for balk. The coach will not be charged for a visit to the mound for explanation.
- i. Pitching restrictions and rest requirements are detailed on the last page of this document.

IX. Equipment

- a. Only approved equipment is to be used. Equipment will be checked out to each coach at the start of the season and must be returned within 2 weeks of the end of the season.

- b. Metal cleats are allowed.
- c. Bats must be USA stamped or BBCOR and the barrel cannot exceed 2-5/8" in diameter.
- d. Before each game the opposing coach will inspect all the bats from the other team. Any illegal bats will be removed from the playing field before the game can begin.
- e. If there is suspicion that a player has brought an illegal bat into the game after the game begins, he/she will approach the umpire and ask for a bat check.
- f. If an illegal bat is discovered, the batter will be called out and no runners will advance if a ball was put into play.
- g. If there is a second offense, the player and the head coach will be ejected from the game.
- h. Bats can be spot checked by NIPL Commissioner.
- i. The same disciplinary actions will be enforced if an illegal bat is found by NIPL the commissioner.
- j. Equipment is not to be modified and only equipment approved by one of the National Youth Baseball Organizations is approved. Broken equipment that needs to be replaced must be turned in before new equipment will be issued.
- k. Contact the league commissioner for any replacements.
- l. It is mandatory to wear a protective cup.

X. Weather

- a. Coaches and the umpire will decide whether or not a game should continue in the event of rain or darkness. The Umpire has the final decision.
- b. In the event of lightning, play will be stopped immediately, and all players will be removed from the field. Thirty (30) minutes must elapse with no sign of lightning before a game can continue.
- c. Please move to your cars and not under any of the pavilions. Our fields get flooded quickly and lightning striking the wet ground is extremely dangerous.
- d. In the case of a rain out, coaches will communicate with the commissioner as to when the game will be made up.
- e. If a game is called in the middle of an inning because of rain or darkness after four (4) complete innings (or 3-½ innings if the home team has the lead) it will be considered a complete game. If there hasn't been four (4) complete innings (or 3-½ innings if the home team has the lead), the game is not considered a complete game and must be made up.

XI. Make-up Games

- a. Make up games should be rescheduled through coordination of NIPL commissioner and Town Representatives.

XII. Conduct & Discipline

- a. Coaches are responsible for the conduct of their fellow coaches, players, and fans. If a Coach, player, or fan is ejected, the following suspensions apply:
- b. 1st Offense – 1 game suspension to be served the following game and will not be allowed to be near the fields. You may be in the parking lot.
- c. 2nd Offense – Remainder of the season.
- d. These penalties are a minimum and any dismissal from a game will be reviewed by the board with corrective action to follow.
- e. If a parent or fan becomes unruly, they will be asked to leave the facility. If they refuse to leave; the team will forfeit the game.

XIII. Tournament Play

- a. The NIPL End of Season Tournament will be governed under the same rules listed in this document with the following exceptions and/or additions.
- b. The NIPL End of Season Tournament will be a single elimination tournament, with a 3rd place game being played.

- c. A continuous batter order or a 9-man roster may be used. A 9-man batting order must be declared by the manager to the umpire and the opposing team's manager. If you choose to play 9-man ball all substitution rules apply. Bench players can be substituted for starters. Starters can return to the game in the same batting position they started the game in. They do not need to return to the same position in the field. Any bench player that enters the game cannot reenter the game after being removed. ALL NFHS substitution rules will apply.
- d. In tournament play, there is no time limit. A game can only be called because of inclement weather.
- e. Seeding for the tournament will be based on win percentage.

***All rules are established for the safety, development and betterment of the players and the game. All rules are expected to be strictly followed as established. Any rules intentionally broken by a coach will be given one verbal warning. A second infraction will result in disciplinary action from the league, including, but not limited to, censure, suspension, revocation of league privileges, or ejection from the league. The Executive Committee shall be responsible for investigating and enforcing the League rules, including the Code of Conduct, bylaws, and constitution. Coaches and parents, please let the league commissioners know of any intention violations.*