

# HARFORD COUNTY 15-20 REC BASEBALL LEAGUE 2026 LEAGUE RULES

## 1. ORGANIZATION

- A. This league will be comprised of all recreation council teams who desire to participate.
- B. This league is governed by a committee comprised of one (1) representative from each participating baseball organization.

Age Group Commissioner: Marty Strunkstein

Treasurer: HFG Recreation Council Treasurer

- C. The purpose of this league is to provide wholesome recreation for the participating youth.
- D. Team Entry Fees:  
A team entry fee will be collected to cover the cost of tournament awards (Team Championship trophy and individual trophies) and the umpire assignor's fees. All fees are to be submitted to the Forest Hill/Hickory Activities Center, 2213 Commerce Road, Forest Hill, MD 21050. **The entry fee per team is \$100.00 and should be made payable to the Hickory/Fountain Green Recreation Council**

## 2. LEAGUE RULES

- A. Unless otherwise stated in these league rules, playing rules will be the current Official Major League Rules.
- B. Official team rosters must be distributed to each team prior to the first game of the season. The roster must include player's full name, date of birth and jersey number. **Final team rosters are due June 3rd of the current year.** No roster additions will be allowed after that date. Teams not submitting complete rosters will forfeit any subsequent games until an official roster is distributed to each team. Rosters **must** be emailed to the age group commissioner.
1. No players shall be permitted to be on multiple rosters or in multiple leagues.
  2. Teams will consist of 15 to 20 year old players
    - Younger players (15 years old) may 'play up' with the mutual agreement of the player, the player's parents and the team manager.
    - Players younger than 15 years old may NOT play in the 16/20 baseball division under any circumstances.
    - Each team can carry a maximum of five 20 year olds.
    - Before the start of each game the head coach from each team must announce their 20 year old players to the opposing coach.

- a. Use of an ineligible player will result in the forfeiture of any and all games in which that player participated.
- b. It shall be the responsibility of the winning team to call or email the score of the game to the age group commissioner within 24 hours.
- c. Game time is 6:00 pm, forfeit time is 6:15 pm, unless otherwise noted on schedule. Home games for Aberdeen will begin at 7:00pm if field lights are available. For make-up games, forfeit time shall be 15 minutes after the scheduled start time. If a team forfeits a game, they shall be responsible for paying both officials. If a game is forfeited, each umpire shall be paid one half of their normal fee.
- d. Eight (8) players are required to start a game. At no time will a team play with less than eight (8) players. Between 6:00pm and 6:15pm the game must begin as soon as the 8<sup>th</sup> player arrives.
- e. The only acceptable reasons to reschedule a game are inclement weather and unsafe playing conditions. Conflicts during senior week may be rescheduled if agreed upon by both team managers and coordinated by the commissioner.
- f. The age determination date is **April 30 (of the current year)**. Verifying the age of a player on an opposing team is done by:
  1. The head coach requesting verification must do so through his program chairperson, providing the name, team, and recreation council of the player in question.
  2. Verification will be done between council chairpersons by providing a copy of a birth certificate or other positive means.
  3. Positive proof of age will be communicated within seven (7) days of the request.
  4. Failure to comply within the seven (7) days will result in the loss of that game.
- g. No tobacco products of any kind will be allowed. Players will be subject to immediate ejection from the game.
- h. No tryouts, cuts or recruiting is allowed; Teams are built on a first come first serve open registration process.

### 3. EQUIPMENT AND PLAYING RULES

- a. Metal bats may be used. All metal bats must be taped.

NOTE: High School Federation rule regarding bat size/weight will apply. No 2 3/4" bats will be allowed. 2 5/8" bat must conform to the minus 3 weight restriction. BBCOR bats are required.

- b. Metal or rubber cleats may be worn in this age group.
- c. Each team is required to provide its own equipment. A minimum of five (5) batting helmets are required. All catchers must wear a cup.
- d. Both teams are responsible for providing two (2) new game balls at the start of each game. Used balls may be thrown in during the game as needed but must be the league regulation balls- **High School Federation approved balls.**
- e. **Umpires will be provided by contract with the Harford County Umpires Association. Each team will provide the payment required in cash to the umpires at each game (\$80.00 per team or the current rate). Teams not paying in cash will be billed.**
- f. Regulation baseballs will be used; **Wilson A1010HS1 or equal.**
- g. Pitching
  - i. A player shall not pitch;
    - 1. In more than four (4) innings per game or per day.
    - 2. Without at least one (1) calendar day's rest between games.
    - 3. In more than ten (10) innings per calendar week, (Calendar week is defined as Sunday through Saturday).
  - ii. **An individual 20 year old can pitch a maximum of 2 innings per week. On a given team, 20 year olds can only pitch 2 total innings per game, with a maximum of 4 innings per week.**
  - iii. Innings pitched will be measured by the number of outs recorded by an individual pitcher. One (1) out counts as 1/3 inning pitched. i.e., if a pitcher records four (4) outs they have pitched 1 & 1/3 innings (1.1)
  - iv. A player removed as pitcher shall not be eligible to pitch again in the same game although he may play another position.
  - v. There will be no limitation to the number of pitchers used per game.
  - vi. Violation of any section of the pitching rules shall result in the forfeiture of the game in which it occurs.
  - vii. Any pitcher who hits three (3) batters in one (1) game will be immediately removed as pitcher for the remainder of that game.

- viii. Number of innings pitched by each pitcher will be emailed to the league commissioner following a playoff game.

#### h. General Rules

1. The infield fly rule will apply.
2. The balk rule will apply without a first occurrence warning.
3. Courtesy Runner

Once there are two (2) outs, and the catcher is a base runner, the player who made the last out may run for the **catcher only**. This rule is intended to speed the game up and applies only to the catcher of record. The courtesy runner does not change the official line-up.

4. Run Limit/Modified Slaughter Rule

There will be a six (6) run per inning limit, except for the last inning, when each team will be entitled to three (3) outs. If the trailing team has had at least five (5) at bats, and there is a run differential of ten (10) or more, the game is over. In that event, the game will be registered as a complete game.

5. Batting Order

All players will appear at bat in a fixed order. Players arriving to the game after the line-ups have been exchanged will bat at the end of the order. Players arriving to the game after their team has batted through the line up completely; will be added at the end of the order. However, the coach/score keeper must communicate this to the other team's coach/score keeper or the player will have batted out of order.

6. Player Injury

A coach may choose one of the following:

- a. Should a player be injured and/or unable to continue play for any reason, except ejection, their spot in the batting order shall be removed from the lineup without penalty. If an injury occurs while the player is at bat, the next player in the lineup shall assume the injured batters' count as play is resumed. Once removed from the batting order, that player may not re-enter the game.

7. Open Substitution

**Teams will bat entire roster** and field 9, you have free substitution for all players, except the pitcher.

8. Playing Time

- A. **Every player must play a minimum of three innings in the field for a seven (7) inning game. By the end of the fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) inning, every player must have played a minimum of two (2) innings in the field.** Any violation of this rule will result in a forfeiture of the game by the negligent team.
- B. Game roster will be mailed to the league commissioner following each game.

#### 9. Throwing the Bat

Throwing the bat after a batted ball will result in a "Dead Ball" violation. The first violation results in a team warning. The second and all subsequent occurrences by that team result in an automatic "Out".

#### 10. Third Strike Rule

- A. The catcher must catch the third strike when there are less than two (2) outs and first base is not occupied or the batter may attempt to reach first base as if he had hit the ball.
- B. The catcher must catch the third strike, which would result in third (3<sup>rd</sup>) out, whether first base is occupied or not, or the batter may attempt to reach first base as if he had hit the ball.
- C. Other base runners may advance at their own risk.

#### 11. League Schedule

- A. Divisional play will be offered when possible. Teams will play anywhere from a 10+ game regular season and an "end of season tournament" at the end of the regular season
- B. League games will be played on Tuesday's, Thursday's and Sunday's. Overall teams and field availability on a year-to-year basis will determine scheduling/number of games played on Sunday's.

#### 12. Complete/Suspended Games

Five (5) innings constitute a full game; 4 ½ innings if the home team is ahead.

Games that are stopped due to weather or darkness prior to 7 full innings will fall under one of the two suspended games rules stated below.

- A. Games that are stopped prior to 5 full innings, or 4 ½ with the home team ahead, will be considered incomplete. An incomplete game will be resumed at the same point in the game as where it was halted, including base runners, batter, count, etc. both teams need to agree to a scheduled continuation date as soon as possible. Pitchers who pitched in the initial game and had been removed from the game may not pitch in the continuation game. Additionally, the original batting order will remain intact for the continuation game with the following exceptions. If a player who played in the first game cannot attend

the second game, their place in the batting order will be eliminated at no penalty to the team. Also, if a player is available who could not play in the first game they will be allowed to participate and are to be added to the bottom of the batting order.

- B. Games that are stopped, at any time, after the completion of 5 full innings will be considered complete. However, the following guidelines apply to determining the final score. If a game is stopped at any time during an inning of play, the score will revert back to the score at the end of the previous full inning of play. EXAMPLE: The visiting team is losing 4-2 after 5 full innings of play and scores 5 runs in the top of the 6<sup>th</sup> to go ahead 7-4. At any point

during the bottom of the 6<sup>th</sup> if the game is called by the umpire prior to the third out, then the score would revert back to the score at the end of 5 innings and would be considered a complete game victory for the home team with the final score of 4-2.

### **13. Rescheduling of Games**

**Games rained out will be rescheduled by mutual agreement by both managers.**

**If additional dates are necessary, the league commissioner will then schedule the game. Saturday and/or Sunday will be considered suitable days for makeups. If a game is rained out, the age group commissioner must be advised of the makeup date within 48 hours of the date missed.**

### **14. League Standings**

Every regular season game will count and be tracked though league standings which the commissioner will publish weekly. Any game not played will be considered a tie and recorded as such. Forfeits will be recorded as a 1-0 victory for the non-forfeiting team.

### **15. Playoffs**

**Playoffs will be a double elimination tournament and seeding will be based on the season standings. Every team in the league is eligible to participate in the playoffs. In order to play in the playoffs, a player must have played in at least 50% of games scheduled in the regular season.**

**A. Playoff games will be played on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday's.**

**B. Championship trophies will be ordered 2 weeks prior to the start of playoffs. Prices for individual and team trophies will be agreed upon by the league committee on a year-to-year basis.**

**C. Playoff Games: Unless the slaughter rule applies all games will be played a full 7 innings to completion.**

D. If a playoff game has to be continued due to darkness or weather, it will be played on the next scheduled day for playoff games. Players that did not appear on the original line up card from the start of the game may be added to the line up but they are not eligible to pitch.

#### 16. Ejections

- A. Any rostered participant involved in unnecessary/aggressive physical contact will be immediately ejected from the game and suspended from further play until a hearing is completed. A hearing must be held within one (1) week or the player is reinstated. Managers and coaches are considered rostered participants.
- B. Any rostered participant who is ejected by the umpire will be suspended for the next game their team plays. This penalty may carry over from one (1) season to another.
- C. In addition, the ejected participants place in the batting order will become an automatic out for the balance of the game. If a participant is ejected while at bat, it shall be deemed an out.
- D. Parents/Fans may be ejected and subject to an additional game suspension.

#### 17. Protest Procedure

- A. The protesting manager shall, before any succeeding play begins, notify the umpire and opposing manager that he is playing under protest. Following this notice the umpire will consult with both managers in an effort to resolve the protest. If this cannot be done, he shall note the game score, names and positions of base runners, the count, the number of outs, inning, etc. in the official score book and announce that the game is being played under protest (notation must be made in ink and signed by both coaches and the umpire).
- B. Any protest must be submitted by the protesting manager in writing to the league commissioner within two (2) working days. The league commissioner shall appoint a committee or person to hear the protest and reach a decision.  
Protest Fees: \$75.00
- C. All protests must be resolved within two (2) weeks.

#### 18. Catch and Carry Rule

If a ball is legally caught and the fielder falls into dead ball territory, the ball is dead and any runners are awarded one base. If ball is legally caught and player stays on his feet, the ball remains alive.

#### 19. Temporary Roster Additions

- A. Teams with less than 9 players during the regular season may borrow defensive players from the opposing team but will only bat their players in the opposite side of the inning. Loaned players should be the last outs from the previous inning.
- B. Games must be played on assigned dates weather permitting.

- C. A replacement player meeting the age requirements may be used as a substitute player for a team having less than 9 players but must be announced to the other team at the beginning of the game and they will not be allowed to pitch.

## 20. Curfew

There is no mandatory 8 pm stop time for games. Stop time due to darkness is the umpire's judgment call.

- i. Parental Concerns

Parental concerns should be addressed with the coach and/or chairperson of his recreation council. ONLY chairpersons and head coaches may contact commissioners for clarification of league rules or game procedures.

- j. Malicious contact is prohibited

- k. The rules committee is concerned that some coaches have not explained to their players that malicious contact is illegal. Players risk serious injury anytime a runner purposely tries to run over another player. A majority of intentional collisions occur at home plate where the catcher is blocking the plate. Runners should be instructed to slide or attempt to avoid making contact with any defensive player. A player who maliciously runs into another player is automatically ejected, and is declared out, unless he scored prior to committing the infraction.

- l. Unsportsmanlike conduct including foul language will not be tolerated and will result in an immediate ejection from the game and a league suspension to be determined by the AGD.