BIG LEAGUE DREAMS

2026

SOFTBALL RULE BOOK

www.bigleaguedreams.com

WELCOME TO THE BIG LEAGUES

Any rule not in the Big League Dreams rule book shall be governed by the 2026 USSSA rule book.

THE PLAYING FIELD

1. On fields where the fence does not run completely across the outfield or down the sides of the field, an imaginary line exists which will be used as the out of play line and all appropriate bases will be awarded.

2. Only one on-deck batter is allowed outside the dugout at all times. All other players are to remain in the dugout or behind the out-of-play fence.

3. Only players on the roster may be in the dugout during the game. Children are prohibited from entering the dugout at any time during the game.

4. No smoking, vaping or alcohol is allowed in the dugouts or on the field of play. (No smoking or vaping is allowed in the park). The umpire or league coordinator will issue one warning to the offending team. If continued, the game will be declared a forfeit and the team and/or the offending player will be subject to suspension. Any guest caught consuming alcohol not purchased at BLD or smoking/vaping marijuana will be escorted from the park and suspended for one week. Any guest caught a second time will be escorted from the park and suspended for a minimum of 6 months. BLD will not hear appeals for this type of suspension.

5. Big League Dreams uses a “Safety First Base”. Any batted ball hitting the white portion should be fair and any ball hitting the orange portion should be foul. On the initial throw to first base from the infield or outfield, the batter-runner must touch the orange portion of the base but not the white. If legally appealed by the defense, the runner will be called out. The defensive player must always touch the white portion. This rule is in effect only on the initial play at first base. This does not include:

a) Returning to the base after over-running,
b) Running on a ball hit to the outfield (unless there is an initial play at first base) or
c) Re-tagging to advance on a fly ball.

EQUIPMENT

1. The use of any bat that exceeds 1.20 BPF or includes titanium will be prohibited in league play. All bats must have the official USSSA stamp pictured below:

Senior bats are not allowed in standard BLD softball leagues. For BLD Senior League rules please visit your local BLD Pro Shop to inquire.

2. Big League Dreams will furnish one new 12" softball for all men's games and one new 11" softball for all women's league games. In coed games, one new 12" and 11" softball will be provided. At the start of the game, the home team must furnish a usable backup ball. When a ball goes out of play the responsible teams shall provide a backup ball until the game ball is brought back into play. All balls used must have the BLD stamped Logo.

3. Uniforms are optional. ALL players must wear shoes. A SHOE shall be considered legal if it is made with either leather or canvas uppers or similar materials. The soles may have soft or hard rubber cleats. METAL CLEATS ARE PROHIBITED. Shoe sole or heel projections other than the standard shoe plate are prohibited. The all-purpose molded cleat softball shoe is legal.

4. PROTECTIVE GEAR: As a rule, BLD permits players to determine the use of protective equipment when they deem appropriate. Game conditions (temperature, equipment, rain, wind, visibility, field conditions, humidity, etc.) vary from game to game and from field to field. In addition, the relative and absolute experience and skill levels of teams and players will vary from player to player and from team to team. Thus, BLD encourages players to utilize any protective equipment that they deem appropriate. Such protective gear will be allowed, unless by rule or by League Coordinator/Umpire ruling that such protective gear is disallowed as unsafe or as providing an unfair competitive advantage.

DEFINITIONS

The **LEAGUE COORDINATOR** is an individual that organizes and maintains league play for softball.

The **UMPIRE IN CHIEF (UIC)** is an individual who trains, evaluates and supervises the umpires and resolves protests pertaining to the playing rules. In most cases, the league coordinator serves as the umpire in chief.

A **PROTEST** is an action that involves a dispute over a play between teams or some action made by the umpire against a team. A protest must be made verbally to the umpire on the field at the time of the incident before the next pitch. The coach must inform the umpire of his/her intention to protest. A league coordinator or UIC must be called to the field to make a ruling before play continues. The ruling made by the League Coordinator or UIC is final with no exceptions. Protest of a judgment call will not be considered. Any protest after a game is complete will not be allowed

An **EJECTION** is an action taken by an umpire, when an individual flagrantly violates rules, vigorously argues judgment calls, or shows unsportsmanlike conduct. An ejection results in an individual being suspended from all further

league and/or tournament play for a minimum of one week. Longer suspensions may result depending on the severity of the infraction. League coordinators will listen to appeals/explanations on suspension only. An ejection or removal from a game is the umpire's decision

A **REMOVAL** is an action taken by an umpire when his/her judgment, a player is creating a hazard to his/herself or other players. This action is taken to avoid injury to any individual, or if the action did not warrant an ejection. Removal from a game is only for the remainder of the game.

THE GAME

1. The home team will be designated on the schedule. The home team will be the official scorekeeper and should have an official score sheet properly kept for both teams. If the home team does not have a scorekeeper, the visiting team will be allowed to be the official scorekeeper. If neither team has a scorekeeper, the umpire will be the official scorekeeper and no protest or appeals involving the official score sheet will be allowed. The umpire's decision will be final. Exception: during the playoffs the higher seed will be the home team throughout all games.

2. A regulation game shall consist of 7 innings or **55** minutes plus bonus time. This includes all playoffs and championship games. No new inning may start after the time limit has expired. The time will be set at 60 minutes as soon as the prior game finishes (or at the next scheduled game time if a game ends early)**.** In the first game of the night on that individual field, when the clock reaches 44:59, the umpire will declare a forfeit if a team has not submitted a lineup card. In all subsequent games, if the clock reaches 54:59, the umpire will declare a forfeit if a team has not submitted a lineup card. Games may start early if both teams are ready and agree to start. Game times might differ from this based on the number of teams in the league and any scheduling restrictions that might occur.

3. If time is left on the clock, a game that is tied after 7 innings shall be continued by playing the next inning with the visiting team placing the last official batter (not the last out) during the previous inning on second base. The same shall happen with the home team. Play will continue until the tie is broken. If the last official batter was out due to a vacant spot in the lineup, then no runner will be put on second base for that team. ***Courtesy runners are permitted*** but at least one batter must have completed an at bat before this is allowed. The first out of the inning can become the courtesy runner. In coed leagues this will be the first same sex out of the inning. No new inning may start after time expires. The game will then be declared a tie. Games called due to rain, inclement weather, or circumstances beyond Big League Dream's control, will be a regulation game if 5 or more complete inning have been played or if the home team is ahead after 4 ½ innings have been played.

4. A 20-run mercy rule will be in effect after the 4th inning. A 15-run mercy rule will be in effect after the 5th inning.

5. The following HOMERUN RULES will be used for designated divisions:

Men's & Coed Major and AAA Divisions:	5 homeruns, then one-up
Men's & Coed AA Division:	3 homeruns, then one-up
Men's & Coed A Division:	1 homerun, then one-up
Men's Rookie Division:	1 homerun one only
Coed Rookie Division	0 homeruns

6. EXPLANATION: Once team "A" has hit their total of homeruns in a game, they cannot hit their next homerun until team "B" has hit their allowed homeruns. At that point, both teams may continue hitting homeruns, but neither team can be more than 1 homerun ahead of the other. PENALTY: **OUT**.

7. Ineligible player protests must be made before the 3rd out of the bottom of the 3rd inning. Players can be protested after this point only if they enter the game as a substitute. Only one ineligible player protest per game is allowed and up to two players may be questioned. After the start of the 4th inning, players must be protested upon them taking an offensive or defensive position. If a team admits to having an illegal player before the coordinator checks the eligibility, a forfeit will be awarded to the protesting team and no penalties will be imposed. The team penalty for an illegal player is forfeiture of that game and their next scheduled game. The coach and illegal player penalty is suspension from all league and tournament play for a period of 30 days. All suspensions deny entry into all BLD facilities for all events. In the case of a forfeit the winning team has the option of taking a 7-0 score or the actual score of the game at the time of the forfeit. Rosters are frozen at the end of the night on Week 4. Ineligible player protests will not be allowed until after the roster freeze date.

8. The following situations can make you an ineligible player:
- **a)** A player who has not paid their player registration fee.
- **b)** A player not on the team roster after the roster freeze date.
- **c)** Playing on two teams in the same division on the same night after the roster freeze date. (Playoffs Only)
- **d)** A player who has been suspended from that game.

THE PLAYERS AND SUBSTITUTES

Players must be at least 15 years old to participate in league play. Players under the age of 18 must have a parent or legal guardian signature on the player's waiver card before participation. All players must be able to produce valid picture I.D. upon request by a league coordinator.

1. Any player can take a defensive position at any point of the game, even if they are not in the batting order. ***You may not bat fewer players than are on defense.***

2. The minimum number of players required to start is 7. Any number less than 7 at any point during the game shall be a forfeit. If for any reason a player in the batting order must leave the game, including injury, that position in the batting order becomes an out unless replaced by a substitute. USSSA substitution and Re-entry rules will apply for legal substitute.

3. Teams may bat as many rostered players as desired that are present at game time. Late players may be added to the bottom of the lineup as they arrive.

4. The following actions may warrant a player ejection/removal:
   a) Fake tags, rough tactics or similar unsportsmanlike conduct.
   b) Flagrant rule violations such as fighting etc.
   c) Obscene or objectionable demonstrations toward an official, opponent, or fan (this includes the use of trash talk in an attempt to incite unsportsmanlike conduct).
   d) Intentional or unintentional bat throwing.
   e) Being under the influence of alcohol or any other substance that could cause the player to be at risk to themselves and others.
   f) Any action deemed by Big League Dreams that is not conducive to the park's atmosphere.

Big League Dreams is a family-oriented park. Any obscene language that is loud enough for the umpire to hear is loud enough for spectators to hear. Umpires need not give advance warning.

1. If a player/coach physically abuses any BIG LEAGUE DREAMS official or staff member, he/she is subject to a minimum 1-year suspension. Abuse of another player or spectator shall result in a minimum 30-day suspension

2. If a player/coach is ejected from a game, that player will not be allowed to play for the remainder of that day and for a minimum of one week of league and/or tournament play. If a player/coach is ejected a second time during the same season, that player/coach shall be suspended from all league and tournament play for a minimum of 30 days. Removal from the park after an ejection will be at the discretion of the League Coordinator or Manager on Duty.

   All suspensions listed above are minimums and any added length will occur after BLD performs our internal investigation. All suspension include suspension from ALL BLD facilities for ALL events.

3. BIG LEAGUE DREAMS SPORTS PARK IS PRIVATELY OWNED AND OPERATED; WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO REFUSE PARK ACCESS TO ANYONE AT ANY TIME.

ROSTER

Team rosters will be frozen after the fourth week of play. Teams must have at least **12** paid spots on their roster at this time. Once the fourth week has past, no players or temp spots will be able to be added to the roster. One exception to this would be any time in which a player is dropped from the teams' roster, that player must be replaced in order to maintain a minimum of **12** players. By dropping a player, the added player is then responsible to register and pay his or her player fee. Hardship cases will be heard by the league coordinators and evaluated on a case-by-case basis. **Under no circumstances will players be allowed to be added during playoffs.** It is the responsibility of the coach to make sure all temp spots are assigned names by the end of the night on week 5. The coach will need to sign off on his or her roster before the game on week 6. This will be the team's playoff roster.

TIE BREAKER

If two teams are tied at the season's completion the following tie breaking rules will be in effect: Head-to-head records will be the first determining factor followed by lowest runs allowed head-to-head. In the event that the tie is not broken, then the run differential for the season will be the determining factor. In the event of a tie between 3 or more teams, head-to-head records will be the first determining factor. The team with the best record head-to-head will be the higher seed. In the event that the number of head to head games between the tied teams is not equal, it will be assumed that the team(s) with the lowest amount of games head to head will have a win for those less games (example: if Team A is 2-1, Team B is 2-1 and Team C is 0-2, Team C's record in the tie-breaker would be 1-2). If no team has a better record than the other tied teams, run differential between the tied teams will be the next determining factor. If the tie is not broken, then the fewest number of runs allowed for the season will be the determining factor. In a 3 or more-team tie break the rules above are used to determine the best team. If teams are still tied after these tie breakers are used there will be a coin flip to determine the best team.

PITCHING RULE

1. A pitcher's box is used that extends 8 feet behind the rubber, 2 feet on each on side of the rubber and 3 feet (imaginary) above the pitcher's head. Any ball hit inside the box and beyond the rubber will result in an automatic out and will be declared a dead ball. All runners go back to the base at which they started. If the ball hits the ground before the rubber the ball is live and in play.

2. A legal delivery shall be a ball which is delivered to the batter with a definite underhand motion. Pitchers can pitch from anywhere in the box but must have both feet inside the lines at the time of release. The penalty for not having both feet in the box will be an automatic "ball" declared by the umpire.
   a) The pitch shall be released at a moderate speed. The speed is left entirely up to the umpire.
   b) The ball must arc higher than the batter's head.
   c) The ball must not exceed a height of more than 12 feet above the ground.

d) When the pitcher has started the delivery, the pitch must be released in one complete, underhand forward motion. No over exaggerated movement with either arm or the body is allowed such as pumping, windmill, fake starts or any other movement to confuse the batter.

e) In a-d if the umpire deems a pitch "illegal" the batter has the choice to swing or take the automatic ball. The umpire is not required to verbally call an illegal pitch.

f) One warm-up pitch is allowed after the first inning unless a new pitcher is entering.

STRIKE ZONE

The strike zone is 19" from the rear of the plate making a 21" x 36" rectangle with the plate extension (mat). A legally pitched ball not struck that lands on any part of the plate or mat will be a strike. Any pitch landing short of the plate is a dead ball.

BATTING

All batters start their bat with a count of one ball and one strike. The batter is out after his/her second foul ball with two strikes.

BASE RUNNING

One courtesy runner per teams per inning may be used. In Coed, only one male or female may be a courtesy runner per inning (not both). The courtesy runner must be of the same gender. The last out will be the courtesy runner. If there are no outs, the last out of the previous inning will be used. If using a courtesy runner for the first batter of the game, the last official same sex batter in the batting order will be the courtesy runner.

LEADOFF RULE

Base runners will be allowed to leave the base upon the release of the ball from the pitcher's hand. Base runners may not "steal" a base, however the lead off will allow "hit & run" strategies to be implemented into the game. By leading off, base runners will be subject to being "picked off". "Pick off" attempts will be governed by the "force play" rule. The ball must beat the runner to the base; no tags are allowed. If the "pick off" throw gets by the fielder, the base runner must re-tag the base and then may proceed to advance to as many bases as he/she may get. On any pitch called a ball (not on a pitch that is short and dead by rule) or a strike the ball shall remain alive and runners who were attempting to advance on a hit and run play or otherwise leave their base early are in jeopardy of being put out under the aforementioned "force play" rule. When a batter receives a walk or a strike out, the ball is alive and in play, unless the 4th ball is short and dead by rule. Base runners may not advance on an overthrow from the catcher to the pitcher.

PLAYOFFS – Any team that forfeits 3 or more games during a season will not qualify for the playoffs.

The following is the breakdown of the playoff participation:

- **a)** In each division with 5 or less teams 3 teams to playoffs
- **b)** In a division with 6-8 teams 4 teams to playoffs
- **c)** In a division with 9 or more teams 6 teams to playoffs

To promote parity in our leagues and an enjoyable experience for all of our teams, the Sports Department can alter this playoff breakdown. Examples of this would be split division playoffs or allowing all teams in the division to participate in playoffs.

The higher seed team will be home team throughout the playoffs. Playoffs will use the same format as regular season games including time limit and run rule.

NOTE: ***Picture I.D.'s will be required for all players to participate in the playoffs***

COED RULES

1. A minimum of 4 females must be present to start the game. You may not play with a 6/4 ratio of males to females. Any ratio of females to males is legal. Any player may take a position anywhere on defense.

2. Batting order must alternate male/female, female/male, or female/female. **Males may not bat back-to-back in the lineup.** Teams may bat all players provided they are on the roster***.*** If a team bats an odd number of males, they must take an out in the first position of the batting order and start with a male at the beginning of the batting order***.*** If the even number player arrives, she will enter that spot. If a team bats an odd number of girls no out will be taken. EXAMPLE: The visitors have 4 females and 5 males at game time; the game will start with a male batter. An out is recorded every time that first position in the batting order comes up until the 5th female arrives.

3. Coed "A" and Coed "Rookie" Divisions: For the first **4 innings**, no team can score more than 7 runs in an inning. Once 7 runs have been scored in one at-bat, the halfinning is over. Exception: **IF** a team is behind by more than 7 runs, they can score as many runs as takes to **TIE** the score. Beginning in the 5th inning, teams may score an unlimited number of runs.

4. When a male receives a base on balls without a strike being thrown or an intentional walk, he will be awarded first and second base. The next female batter has the option of going to first base or taking her "at bat".

5. A minimum of 3 outfielders must be behind the outfield restriction line (160-foot arc from home plate) when the batter hits the pitch. The rover can only be a female. PENALTY: The batter and all base runners will be awarded one base unless each has advanced one base safely, in which case the play proceeds without reference to the violation. The ball does not have to be fielded by the outfielder committing the infraction to be deemed a penalty.

6. There will be no restrictions on a player (male or female) as to which defensive position he or she may play except for the rover position.

SPECIALTY LEAGUES AT BLD

If your team is participating in one of our specialty leagues the coach will receive an addendum rules sheet that pertains to your specific specialty league at the time of registration.

It is the responsibility of the Coach to inform players of all rules and regulations of the league. Good sportsmanship is expected from all players at all times. Coaches will be held responsible for the conduct of their players and spectators.

THANK YOU FOR CHOOSING BIG LEAGUE DREAMS FOR YOUR SOFTBALL LEAGUE PLAY. OUR GOAL IS TO STRIVE TO ENSURE YOU HAVE A GREAT EXPERIENCE!! IF YOU HAVE ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS ABOUT LEAGUE RULES OR ANYTHING ELSE, PLEASE INQUIRE IN THE SPORTS OFFICE.