

NORTH COUNTY MABL/MSBL RULES



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The North County Men's Senior Baseball League (NC/MSBL) provides adults in different age groups the opportunity to play organized, amateur baseball. NC/MSBL is sanctioned under a licensing agreement with the Men's Senior Baseball League, Inc (national MSBL). The rules set forth herein are generally consistent with the rules recommended by the national MSBL organization.

Rules for the Eighteen, Twenty-Five, Thirty-Five, Forty-Five, and Fifty-Five Over Classifications of the North County Men's Senior Baseball League (MSBL) and Men's Adult Baseball League (MABL).

The special NC/MSBL rules presented below shall be used in conjunction with and shall modify the existing Official Baseball rules of Major League Baseball, and shall be effective after January 1, 1999.

1. **Age Requirement.** A player must be at least eighteen (18) years of age to play in an official game in the MABL age classification. A player must be twenty-five (25) years of age or older to play in an official game in the lower age classification of the MSBL, must be at least thirty-five (35) years of age by the end of the calendar year to play in an official game of the higher (35+) age classification of the MSBL, must be at least forty-five(45) years of age by the end of the calendar year to play in an official game of the higher (45+) age classification of the MSBL, and must be at least fifty-five (55) years of age by the end of the calendar year to play in an official game of the higher (55+) age classification of the MSBL. Any manager may challenge any player to provide proof of age. If at any time it is determined that a player of insufficient age has appeared in an official game, his team shall be required to forfeit that game. In addition, the player shall be subject to being fined, suspended or expelled from participating in the activities of the League. Any cases in which this rule is waived must be approved in advance by the League president and disclosed to the managers of the other MSBL or MABL teams in the same age classification.

2. **Contracts, Waiver of Liability, and League Fees.** No player may play in a game unless the League office has received a properly completed player contract. In addition, NC/MABL-MSBL shall have the right to demand signed waivers of liability, proof of age, and other required documentation, along with payments covering applicable League fees.

3. **Uniforms.** The members of a team must have full baseball uniforms in order to play in an official League game. No player may play in a game without wearing a uniform consisting of baseball pants, a baseball jersey bearing a number, a baseball cap, socks, and baseball cleats. A player or players not wearing his or their team's designated uniform shall not be permitted to play without the consent of either a League officer or the manager of the opposing team. Not more than three players on the same team may appear in a game without wearing that team's proper uniform, unless the team has been granted a waiver of this rule by an officer of the League.

4. **Pitcher's Adornments.** A pitcher may not wear white or gray pitching sleeves, nor may he use a white or gray fielding glove, nor may he wear batting gloves, wrist bands, watches, metal chains, or any other objects that may distract the batter. **Exception:** A pitcher may wear a black batting glove under his fielding glove, provided the visible portion of such a batting glove is entirely black.

5. **Pitcher Substitution.** A pitcher may be removed from the mound during any inning of the game then return in a subsequent inning to the mound to pitch again. If a pitcher is removed after completing an inning, he may not return to the mound at any time during the following inning. (For example, the starting pitcher completed five innings, and a new pitcher takes the mound to begin the sixth inning. The starting pitcher may not return until the seventh.) Further, a pitcher may only be allowed to do this once during the course of a game. A pitcher so removed may play another position or sit on the bench, may bat or not bat, and still be eligible to return to the mound as described in this rule.

6. **Automatic Intentional Walk.** An automatic intentional walk is permitted without the need to throw four balls to the batter. In such case, at any time during the at bat, the catcher must inform the home plate umpire that the batter is being given an automatic intentional walk, and the umpire must direct the batter to immediately take first base without requiring the pitcher to continue pitching to the batter.

7. **Unsafe Hurler.** If a pitcher hits three batters during the course of the same game, the umpire shall decide, at his sole discretion, if the pitcher is pitching in such a manner as to endanger the safety of the opposing batters. If so, the pitcher should be removed from the mound immediately. For all other purposes, the removed pitcher may remain in the game.

8. **Bats.** Wood, Metal, Baum, Metal Woods and Composite bats are permitted.

9. **Shoes.** Rubber, plastic or metal baseball cleats are permitted.

10. **Helmets.** Full ear flap helmets are required for batters and runners. The use of single ear flap helmets by batters shall be permitted provided the single flap covers the left ear of a right-handed hitter or the right ear of a left-handed hitter. A catcher is required to wear a helmet (normally without flaps) under his mask to protect the top of his head. [All base coaches are also required to wear protective head gear while on the field of play.](#)

11. **Baseballs.** The only baseballs permitted for use in official League games shall be (a) those baseballs bearing an official label of the Men's Senior Baseball League, (b) official Major League Baseballs, (c) the Rawlings R-100, or (d) the Diamond D1 Professional League ball. During the season, no team may be barred from using the baseballs listed above. However, the League may expand this list to include other types of baseballs found by it to be of the same quality, and such baseballs may be used if authorized by the League's president.

12. **Location and Scheduling Starts of Games.** Teams shall be required to be present and ready to play at the location and on the day and time designated on the latest schedule published by the League, or, in the event of a change, at the alternate location or on the alternate date and starting time designated by the League officer responsible for scheduling. The managers and players of both the home and away teams shall be responsible for preparing the field so that it is in safe and reasonable playing condition. Even with the consent of the opposing team's manager, no manager or team representative may change the location or scheduled date and starting time of a game without receiving approval for such change, at least 48 hours in advance, from the League president.

13. **Starting Time.** The scheduled starting time shall be the official starting time of the game, providing the umpires are present at least fifteen minutes before the scheduled start and also provided that the umpires agree that the condition of the field is safe to begin play. Otherwise, the official starting time shall occur at the moment the first pitch is thrown.

14. **Length of Game.** A game normally shall consist of nine (9) innings, with extra innings to be played in order to break a tie. However, the president shall establish time limits that may apply to the lengths of games during the regular season, tournaments, and/or post season play-offs.

a) **Rain Stoppage:** In the event that a game is stopped on account of rain, the Official Rules of Baseball shall apply in determining how the game is counted. If a game stopped by rain is determined to be a tie, the rules concerning tie games (see below) shall apply.

b) **Time Limit - Umpire's Discretion.** Once the time limit has been reached, the inning in progress must be completed and no new inning shall commence, unless the home plate umpire can reasonably determine that the game can be extended an additional inning without causing undue delay to any other game that may be scheduled to follow. In general, umpires should do their best to play an extra inning to break a tie game or to provide the trailing team a final opportunity to bat in a close game. The umpires must determine, however, if the weather and availability of light conditions are such that at least 3 hours and 15 minutes of play can be completed in any game scheduled to follow.

d) **Tie Games.** In the event the game is tied when play is stopped, the League shall do its best to arrange for the game to be continued at a later date for the purpose of breaking the tie. If two teams fail to break a tie game, the tie shall count in the League standings as follows: WIN=2 points, TIE=1 point, LOSS=0 points.

e) **Darkness.** In the event of darkness, a game shall be suspended, and the completion or subsequent resolution of that game shall be determined by the League's president.

f) **Doubleheaders:** If a team is playing two games in one day, even if it is playing different opponents in each game, the applicable time limit shall be 2 hours and 35 minutes for each of the games. Under no circumstances, however, shall a game end after 2 hours and 35 minutes has elapsed from the official start of the game, unless the trailing team has completed at least five (5) full innings of offense.

g) **Night Games:** Games starting at 7:00 pm shall have a 2 hour and 35 minute time limit. No new inning shall start after 9:35 pm. **ALL PLAY MUST STOP AT 9:45 PM REGARDLESS, AND IF THE INNING IS NOT COMPLETE, THE GAME MUST REVERT BACK TO PREVIOUSLY COMPLETED INNING.**

15. **Two-Minute Speed-up Rule.** Once the home team has completed its turn at bat at the end of the first inning, the two-minute rule shall apply. Under this rule, the team that had been on offense shall have two minutes to position its players on the field and to be ready to begin play. Similarly, the team that had been on defense shall have two minutes to have a proper batter standing in the batter's box ready to hit. Once the two minute period has elapsed, the umpire shall instruct the teams to begin play. In the event play does not begin promptly, the umpire shall call balls and strikes as designated below:

(a) **Pitcher Not Ready.** In the event the batter is in the batter's box ready to hit, the umpire shall give the pitcher twenty seconds in which to deliver a pitch. If the pitcher fails to do so, the umpire shall call a ball. The umpire shall repeat this

procedure until the pitcher complies with the instruction to deliver a pitch.

(b) **Batter Not Ready.** If the batter is not in the batter's box ready to hit, the umpire shall count ten seconds. If the batter is still not ready, the umpire shall call a strike. The umpire shall repeat this procedure until the batter complies with the instruction to be in the box ready to hit.

16. **Mercy Rule.** If there is a difference of ten (10) or more runs in the score of a game at the end of seven (7) innings, and the game is not subject to being ended because an applicable time limit has been exceeded, continuation of the game shall be at the option of the manager of the trailing team.

17. **Forfeits.** A team shall forfeit a game for having an insufficient number of players, or for having used an ineligible player, as described below:

a) If a team has fewer than eight (8) eligible players at the scheduled start of a game and after a fifteen-minute grace period has expired, it shall forfeit that game.

b) After the start of a game, if a team is reduced to having fewer than eight (8) eligible players available to play on defense, then it shall be required to forfeit.

c) If the ejection of a player results in a team having fewer than eight (8) eligible players available to play on defense, then the manager of the team may appeal to an umpire to reinstate the player for defensive purposes only. If an umpire so agrees, the game shall continue. Otherwise, the game shall be declared a forfeit.

d) If, at any time during or after a game, it is determined that a team used an ineligible player in a game, the team shall be declared to have forfeited the game.

e) The official score of a forfeited game shall be 9 to 0, and the team that forfeits shall be assigned a loss in the standings. Individual statistics shall be recorded only for games which are forfeited after five (5) innings of play. In the event of a double forfeit, both teams shall be assigned losses in the standings.

f) The forfeiting team shall be required to pay (as a forfeit fee) its umpire fee on the field, and the non-offending team shall not be required to pay a fee. In the event of a double forfeit, the teams shall bear the cost of the forfeit fees equally, and each team shall pay its share of the forfeit fees to the umpire on the field.

g) If a team forfeits two or more games during a season, it shall be subject to being fined, and/or suspended or expelled from participating in League activities.

18. ***Eight Player Rule and Use of Courtesy Fielder.*** If a team has eight (8) or more eligible players available at the scheduled start of a game, that game shall commence immediately. If at any time during a game, a team has exactly eight players available to play on defense, the opposing team **MUST** provide a ninth player, known as a "courtesy fielder," for defensive purposes.

a) Players on the opposing team may take turns filling the ninth defensive position.

b) No courtesy fielder shall be required to fill the positions of pitcher or catcher.

c) The team with eight players shall take an automatic out in the ninth position in its batting order until a ninth player on its roster or a borrowed player (as described below) arrives to bat in that position.

d) If the umpire judges that a courtesy fielder supplied by the opposing team has failed to make a reasonable effort to obtain an out on a batted ball or on a play involving a runner, the umpire shall declare the batter or runner out, and, unless the play forces any other runner or runners to advance, the umpire shall return the other runner or runners to the base or bases from which they started.

e) If, in the opinion of the umpire, a courtesy fielder supplied by the opposing team has failed to make a reasonable effort to prevent a runner or runners from advancing on a play, the umpire shall return the runner or runners to the base or bases to which, in the umpire's judgment, the runner or runners are entitled.

f) ***Borrowed Player.*** As an alternative to borrowing a courtesy fielder from the opposing team, a team with eight players may use a borrowed player. Such a player must be a member of the League and have paid his fees in full for the current season, and meets the division age requirements. In such a case, the borrowed player may not be used as a pitcher or catcher. However, unlike a courtesy fielder, a borrowed player may take a turn at bat and/or serve as a base runner during the game.

19. **Designated Non-Runner/Courtesy Runners.** A team shall have the option of designating up to two players in its batting order as *designated non-runners (DNR)* to receive courtesy runners anytime the player so designated reaches base. Players that will need courtesy runners must have their manager notify the opposing manager at the start of the game. In the event a manager fails to declare a player as a designated non-runner before the start of the game, he may do so the first time that player reaches base. Each team will be allowed the maximum of two designated non-runners (DNR) per game. The player to make the last batted out must be used as the courtesy runner. If the full complement of two courtesy runners has not been used, then, in the event of an obvious injury, an additional batter may be classified as a DNR and be entitled to have a courtesy runner. In the event a player becomes injured during the game and the maximum number (2) of courtesy runners have already been designated, a pinch runner must be used and no courtesy runner will be allowed. If a batter who has been classified as a DNR opts to run, or forgets to get a courtesy runner and subsequently runs, he will lose his DNR status, and will not receive a courtesy runner for the remainder of the game.

a) In the event no batter has been put out, the courtesy runner shall be the last available player determined by proceeding in reverse order of the batting order, beginning with the last batter to complete a turn at bat. A player currently on base shall be unavailable to be selected as a courtesy runner.

b) If a player is serving as a courtesy runner, and if that player's turn to be in the on deck circle occurs while he is still on the bases, then a new courtesy runner shall be assigned by finding the last batter who did not reach base safely, is not currently on base, and is not at bat.

c) The failure to announce a courtesy runner, or the failure to insert the proper courtesy runner, or the use of an improper courtesy runner, shall cause the courtesy runner to be classified as an improper runner. The use of an improper runner shall entitle the defensive team to have the next play in which the runner advances safely to be declared null and void. In such event, a member of the defensive team must appeal the play to an umpire before the next pitch is thrown. Upon such appeal, if the umpire determines that an improper runner has been used, he shall declare the previous play to be null and void, and shall direct the offensive team to either use the original runner or a proper runner. If the play declared null and void shall have been one in which a pitch was made to the batter, then the pitch shall be counted as "no pitch," the batter shall remain in the batter's box, and the count shall revert to the count that existed before the pitch.

d) If a pinch runner enters the game to take the place of a courtesy runner, the manager of the offensive team must designate whether the pinch runner is being substituted in the batting order for the original runner or for the courtesy runner. Otherwise, it shall be assumed that the pinch runner has replaced the courtesy runner in the batting order.

20. **Optional Runner.** With two outs, the catcher, if he is on base, has the option of receiving a courtesy runner. This substitution has the purpose of permitting the catcher to put on his gear without delay. A player who has been catching may remain on base, however, he shall not be permitted to have a courtesy runner during the remainder of the game, unless of injury and the team has a designated courtesy spot remaining. Further, if it is announced that a player who is on base is going to become the catcher when his team again takes the field on defense, that player has the option as noted above for a courtesy runner, and that player must assume the catching position when his team returns to the field.

21. **Batters and Batting Order.** Once a team has eleven (11) or more players available to hit, it must designate a batting order of at least ten (10) players.

a) If a team has nine (9) or ten (10) players available, it may designate a batting order of nine (9) players without penalty. Once a team has eleven (11) or more players available to hit, it must designate at least ten (10) batters by immediately adding a tenth player to the bottom of the order.

b) The manager of a team may add one or more players to the bottom of the batting order at anytime. Any players so added shall be known as an "additional hitters." Once such a position has been added, it may not be deleted or skipped, except as permitted by the Compression Rule (Rule 22).

c) At anytime, a manager may pinch hit or pinch run for any player in the batting order. In such case, the player for whom the pinch hitter or pinch runner has been substituted may remain in the game for defensive purposes, but may not appear again as a hitter or runner.

d) Prior to the appearance of a substitute or additional hitter in the batting order, a manager must announce to the opposing team the addition or substitution of that player. The requirement to announce the appearance of substitute player in the batting order shall exist even if that player has appeared in the game defensively. An announcement is valid if the entry of the substitute player is announced to either the umpire or the manager of the opposing team. In the event of a failure to announce, the rules governing Batting out of Turn shall apply.

22. **Compression Rule.** If a player who is in the batting order leaves the game or becomes unavailable as a batter for his team by reason of ejection, illness, injury, or emergency, a reserve player who has not yet entered the batting order must be assigned to the position vacated by the departing player. If no reserve is present, the vacated position shall be skipped without penalty, provided at least nine (9) players who are still eligible to hit remain in the batting order. If fewer than nine (9) eligible players remain in the batting order, then, for each batter fewer than nine (9), a vacated position in the batting order shall be charged with an automatic out, and no vacated position shall be skipped without penalty until the appropriate number of such outs has been charged.

23. **Defensive Substitution.** Free substitution, including exiting and reentering, shall apply to all positions except that of pitcher. In the event a pitcher is removed from the mound, and another player enters the game as a pitcher, the removed pitcher may not return to the mound again during that game in a subsequent inning except under the conditions that are defined elsewhere in these rules (See Rule 5.).

24. **Decoyed Throws.** If an infielder decoys a throw, either as a thrower or as a receiver, and thereby causes a runner to slide unnecessarily, then each runner shall be entitled to advance one base. A second decoy by the same player shall result in the immediate ejection of that player from the game.

25. **Collision Avoidance.** A runner who fails to make a reasonable effort to avoid a forceful collision with a fielder shall be declared out, and any other runner advancing on the play shall be required to return to the base from which he started. Contact with a fielder by a runner sliding into a base on a close play shall be permitted unless the contact is flagrant. In the event of a close play at the plate, the catcher (or other fielder) must give the runner some access to home plate; **otherwise, the runner shall be safe automatically.** A collision between the catcher (or another fielder) and the runner is permitted on such a play, but excessive force by the runner shall result in the runner being called out. In the event that an umpire determines that a runner has caused a flagrant collision with a fielder, the offending player shall be ejected from the game and shall be subject to disciplinary action by the League.

26. **Minimum Participation.** Other than a player who is strictly or primarily a pitcher, a player who is uninjured and available to play prior to the start of a game shall be entitled to participate in the game by (a) taking at least two turns at bat, or (b) taking one turn at bat and playing defense for at least two innings, or (c) playing at least four innings in the field. A player who is strictly or primarily a pitcher must be given reasonable opportunities to pitch during the course of the season, but shall not be entitled to pitch in any particular game. The manager of a team shall be responsible for providing this level of minimum participation to the players on his team. The League president shall be entitled to warn, fine, or suspend for up to three games any manager found to be in violation of this rule.

27. **Protests.** A protest must be made to the umpires during the course of the game immediately after the play in question occurs and before the next pitch is thrown. The manager must say he is protesting the game, and state the play or ruling that is the subject of his protest. Notice to the League that a game has been protested must be lodged with the League president within 24 hours after the completion of a game. A protest shall be decided by a Protest Committee appointed by the League president,

28. **Rosters.** A team shall provide the League with a Full Roster consisting of the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of all players under contract to the team. The Full Roster shall be divided into those players on the Active Roster, and those on Injured Reserve. Any players added to the Active Roster must be approved by the League president before those players can participate in games. Failure to do so shall result in a forfeit.

a) A team must declare a minimum of fourteen (14) and maximum of eighteen (18) players on its Active Roster, and, subject to these limits, may add or remove players from its roster, but may not add a player without the permission of the League. In addition, in the event of injury, a team may designate up to two players as being on Injured Reserve.

b) Any player who is removed from a team's Active Roster and is not placed on Injured Reserve may not be reinstated to the roster of the team from which he has been released until after the start of the next new season. Such a player shall be eligible to be assigned by the League to any other team.

c) A team must submit its Active Roster for the upcoming season at least one week prior to the date of the first game of the regular season.

d) A team may not include on its Active Roster a former major league player without the prior approval of the League president.

e) In the event a team's active roster declines to fewer than fourteen (14) players,

the League's president shall have the power to assign players to that team.

29. **Switching Teams.** No player shall switch teams during a calendar year without first being released from the roster of his current team. If a player's team refuses to grant him his unconditional release, the League shall supervise the player's reassignment. Further, the manager of either team that is a party to the switch shall be entitled to demand that the League form an Arbitration Committee to determine the fairest resolution of any disputes arising from the switch. From time to time, the League shall issue written policies governing the conditions under which players may switch teams, and under which new teams may be formed by recruiting players who are under contract with existing teams. As a general policy, the League shall take any steps it deems appropriate to prevent the recruiting of players from existing teams for the purposes of creating teams that are stacked with talented players.

30. **Play-Off Roster.** Subject to the conditions and exceptions listed below, a team's Play-off Roster shall consist of a minimum of twelve (12) maximum of eighteen (18) players drawn from its Full Roster.

a) In order to be eligible to appear in play-off games, a player must be listed on his team's roster (including active and injured reserve) at least four (4) weeks prior to the date of the last scheduled game of the regular season. Further, if a player has appeared in fewer than 50 % of his team's games, the League shall have the power to declare the player ineligible to appear in the play-offs for that team.

b) In the event a team's roster has been depleted by injuries or resignations, or in the event a team has lost players at specific defensive positions, that team may appeal to the League to include on its Play-off Roster players who would not otherwise be eligible under this rule. Players on the League's Unassigned List shall be considered candidates for this purpose, and shall be given priority over players who were members of the League for less than four (4) weeks. The League's president, after consultation with members of the Discipline and Rules Committee, shall determine which players may be added.

31. **Access to Dugout by Non-Players.** Non-playing coaches and managers, as well as non-playing scorekeeper and bat boys (or bat girls) shall be permitted to sit in the dugout while a game is in progress, provided such persons are at least eighteen (18) years of age.

32. *Unsportsmanlike or Unruly Behavior.* The League shall establish committees, policies, and procedures for the purpose of reviewing and punishing unsportsmanlike or unruly behavior. Such policies, including those specified below, shall be presented to team managers and the team managers shall be responsible for the enforcement of such policies and punishments.

a) There will be no beer or alcoholic beverages, and Tobacco products permitted at the field before, during or after the game. The field refers to the general playing area and parking lot.

b) The League has the right to direct a team manager to suspend or expel any member or his team who abuses League rules or who does not exhibit a sense of sportsmanship or who plays without regard for the safety of the umpires or other players.

c) An umpire may expel any player, non-playing coach or manager from a game.

d) Fighting among players or aggressive physical contact with an umpire will not be tolerated and players expelled from the game for either violation will be subject to suspension or expulsion from games by order of the League to the team's manager.

33. *Responsibilities of the Manager.* A team may have a single manager, or may have an administrative manager and a field manager. The manager(s) of a team shall be responsible to encourage good sportsmanship and to uphold the standard of ethics, major policies, and rules of the League. A manager who substantially fails to discharge his responsibilities shall be subject to being fined, suspended, and/or removed as manager. The manager(s) shall be responsible to:

a) Provide the League with a timely and accurate accounting of all monies gathered from players;

b) Post any performance bond required by the League;

c) Pay, on a timely basis, all Team Fees required by the League;

d) Pay any umpire fees the League requires his team to pay prior to the start of the game;

- e) Provide the League with a complete and accurate current list of the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of players on the team's roster, and advise the League of changes to the information on that list in a timely fashion. Managers should also advise players that failure to supply and/or update their current address will result their not receiving their copy of *Hardball* Magazine, since the magazine mailing list is compiled from the roster information submitted by the managers;
- f) Maintain a complete and accurate scorebook, and supply the League with batting and pitching statistics as required and enter stats to League's online stats program.
- g) Report the results of games to the League office on the days those games are completed, and provide sufficient details as required by the League;
- h) Participate on committees of the League for the purpose of supporting the activities of the League or its administration;
- i) Keep players informed about the activities of the League and encourage players to participate in those activities.

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