



Minnetonka Big Willow Baseball
Association

Rules of Play for
Big Willow Juniors Division

Revised April 1, 2007

Juniors/ Machine Pitch

GENERAL

1. All Machine Pitch Division games will be played within a **1 hour and 45 minute time limit** and will be considered complete regardless of the number of innings played.
2. No inning should start after 1 hour and 30 minutes.
3. All games will be played to the full time limit regardless of the score between the two teams. In addition, games will not be continued if a tie exists.
4. Each team will be limited to five (5) runs per inning. If the home team is down by more than five runs in the bottom of the last inning, they will be allowed to score enough runs to tie the game, as long as the 1 hour and 45 minute time limit is not exceeded.
5. A coach from the fielding team will stand behind the catcher (helmet recommended) to assist with passed balls and close plays at home plate.
6. Prior to the start of each game, a chalk circle must be drawn around the pitching machine, with a radius of five (5) feet from the pitching machine to the perimeter of the circle. In addition, the coach must position his player/pitchers at least five (5) feet to one side of the circle around pitching machine and no closer to home plate than the pitching machine.
7. A batted ball striking the pitching machine or adult/pitcher will be declared a "dead ball." The batter will be awarded first base and each base runner will advance one base.
8. A fly ball dropping within the circle around the pitching machine will be declared a "dead ball" and the batter will be awarded an additional pitch.
9. The infield fly rule is waived in the Juniors/Machine Pitch League. Base runners must advance as forced.

TEAM COMPOSITION

The maximum number of players on a Minnetonka Big Willow Juniors team will be 12. Actual team composition will be determined each season by the total number of applicants and number of available coaches.

EQUIPMENT

1. Protective helmets shall be worn at bat and while a base runner during all practices and games. Any base runner that intentionally removes the protective helmet while running the bases shall be called out upon completion of the play.
2. All players are encouraged to wear a protective supporter cup to practices and games. The catcher during all practices and games shall wear a protective supporter cup and protective headgear, as well as chest and shin protection.
3. The bat shall be no more that 33 inches in length, with a barrel no greater than 2 ¼ inches in diameter. Metal and wood bats are acceptable.

4. Metal cleats or spikes are not permitted by any player or coach.
5. Jewelry is prohibited. Players shall not wear jewelry. Medical alert and religious bracelets or necklaces are not considered jewelry.

PITCHING

1. A coach or designated adult of the batting team will operate the pitching machine.
2. The pitching machine will be positioned such that it directly in front of the pitcher's plate. Once set, the pitching machine shall not be physically repositioned during the course of the game.
3. The speed of the pitching machine shall be set at **35 MPH** for the first half of the season, gradually increasing to **40 MPH** by the end of the season. The intent is to ensure that the majority of the children are comfortably hitting the ball from the machine before increasing the speed.
4. The adult/pitcher should "present" the ball to the batter by holding the ball above shoulder height and then extending the ball toward the batter just prior to placing it into the pitching machine.
5. The "strike zone" is defined as any pitch whose height is between the bottom of the batter's knees and his shoulders, and whose width extends one ball width on either side of the plate.
6. The pitching coach may call "no pitch" and award a batter an additional pitch if the pitching machine (or adult/pitcher) delivers an erratic pitch that is outside the batter's strike zone. However, if the batter swings at the ball, it is a pitch.
7. The coach pitcher may take a position closer than the pitcher's plate/pitching machine and deliver the ball directly to the batter. This can be done at the batting coach's request for a batter he/she feels will be unable to successfully bat using the pitching machine.
8. In the event that the pitching machine is not working properly, both coaches can agree to "coach pitch" to their own team.

BATTING

1. Balls and strikes, as such, are not called at the Juniors level. Therefore, no walks will be awarded to the batter and first base is not awarded if a pitch hits a batter.
2. Each batter will be given four (4) "hittable" pitches.
3. The pitching coach will call a pitch that is outside the batter's strike zone and is not swung on by the batter "**no pitch**". That pitch will not count as a hittable pitch. An additional pitch will also be awarded if the batter fouls off the fourth hittable pitch.
4. Bunting will NOT be allowed.
5. The batter and all base runners will be awarded one extra base if a fielding coach interferes with a hit ball.
6. Coaches shall take immediate and appropriate action when a batter throws a bat.
 - a. **Unintentional.** The home plate coach should explain the rule violation to the batter and his/her teammates.

- b. **Intentional.** The home plate coach shall call the batter "out" and declare a "dead ball" situation and the runners may NOT advance. The batter shall be removed from the game if the coach considers the incident to have created an unsafe condition.

BASE RUNNING

1. Base stealing and leading off will **NOT** be allowed at any time.
2. Play will be considered stopped ("dead ball") once the ball is under control and within 10 feet of the pitcher's plate. (NOTE: This does not mean that a player may run to within 10 feet of the pitcher's plate in order to stop play. Players are expected to make a play, i.e., throwing to a base, rather than throwing to the pitcher to intentionally end play. In addition, it does not mean that play is automatically stopped if the player/pitcher fields the ball within this radius. He/she, too, is expected to make a play.)
3. Play will be considered stopped ("dead ball") when a second overthrow is made.
4. The first overthrow of first, third, or home bases shall not be considered dead unless the ball travels beyond the sideline fence.
5. A base runner advancing to the next base when play is stopped will be awarded that base.
6. Obstruction shall be called on the catcher or any other player who blocks any base, particularly home plate, except when they are in possession of the ball or fielding a batted ball. In the case of obstruction, the runner shall be awarded the base to which he/she was advancing.
7. A base runner advancing to any base, particularly home plate, must attempt to avoid a collision. A base runner involved in a collision, who has not attempted to avoid the collision (in the coaches judgment) by sliding or other action will be called out for interference, even though the opponent may have been obstructing the base.
8. When a player who will be catcher in the next inning is a base runner and there are two outs, a pinch runner may be used to allow the catcher additional time to put on the equipment. This does not apply during bottom half of the last inning.

SUBSTITUTION

1. All players may play in the field when a team is on defense. The infield shall be limited to the normal positions. All other players must be in the outfield and be situated no closer than the edge of the outfield grass.
2. Every player will be included in the batting order. A player arriving after the start of a game will be placed at the end of the batting order.
3. Coaches are allowed free substitution throughout the game. Furthermore, coaches are **REQUIRED** to move players around to different positions during the course of a game. **No player should play the same position for more than two innings in a game.**
4. During the course of a season, each player should be given the opportunity to play the widest range of infield and outfield positions possible. At least 1/3 of each player's playing time should be spent in the

- infield and 1/3 spent in the outfield. The coach will determine the balance. However, player safety and confidence must be given consideration in making position assignments (i.e., catching, first base).
5. A clear disregard of player rotation guidelines will constitute grounds for coach suspension or removal, and impact future coaching considerations.

OFFICIATING

1. The coach working the pitching machine will make all "safe/out" calls in the field with input from 1st, 3rd, and home plate coaches for close plays at their respective bases. The coach at the pitching machine has the final ruling on all plays.
2. There are **NO PROTESTS** at the Juniors level. Coaches are expected to reach a quiet mutual resolution to rule interpretation questions at the game. If coaches think that additional action is appropriate, they should refer the question to the League Commissioner or Minnetonka Big Willow President. Remember that there are no Juniors League "standings." There are no official winners or losers in any game. Each game is essentially a scrimmage.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

1. Minnetonka Big Willow will make the decisions on postponements of games by 4:30 pm or 2 hours before game time due to inclement weather. Dial 952.935.3950 for MBW to check on the game status due to weather conditions. It will be the coaches' responsibility to contact their players to notify them of the change. It is suggested that opposing coaches keep in touch with each other so there is no misunderstanding.
2. A game may be called due to weather before the game starts upon mutual agreement of both coaches. If the coaches do not agree, the game will be started.
3. The coaches must call the game if there is visible lightning or if the field is in a dangerous condition.
4. Every attempt will be made to reschedule called or cancelled games