

WIFFLEBALL FELLOWSHIP LEAGUE — OFFICIAL RULES AND STARTUP DETAILS

2014

updated May 15, 2014

NEW THIS SEASON

- The base stealing rule has been updated. Runners may not steal during a pitch, after a pitch not put in play, or while the pitcher is both standing in the pitcher's circle (or outside the circle and preparing to pitch to a younger batter) and holding the ball. See Section 3-e for the full rule.
- Racquets may no longer be used for batting. See section 3-b.

SECTION 1 — SEASON SCHEDULE

a) SCHEDULE: The exact schedule format will be determined by the league commissioners according to the number of teams and the length of the season. Generally, teams will play a “regular season” of round-robin games followed by a postseason elimination tournament (the “playoffs”) in which all teams participate.

b) DAYS & LENGTH: Games will be played on Friday nights and Sunday afternoons and will last 6 innings (if time allows), plus any necessary extra innings. Games may be rescheduled (because of weather, captains’ schedule conflicts, etc.) by team captains as needed.

c) TIME LIMIT AND SUSPENDED GAMES: Games that go too long may be stopped by agreement of the team captains at the next end of an inning; tied games will be suspended and untied games will be awarded to the team that is ahead. The team captains can schedule a time to complete suspended games at their discretion; if they don’t complete them, the games must be completed before the postseason tournament begins if their outcome might help to determine the seeding arrangement for the tournament.

d) ALL-STAR GAMES: The league commissioners and/or the executive committee (commissioners plus team captains) will determine the arrangements for any All-Star games. Possibilities include a merit-based All-Star Game (perhaps including a vote-based selection process, in part), a home run derby (entry based on having hit at least one home run during the season and/or postseason), and an All-Kids Game (in which all participants under age 18 are invited to play).

e) POSTSEASON TOURNAMENT: A postseason tournament will follow the season. The tournament will be seeded according to teams’ season records. Any ties will be broken by (in this order):

- 1) head-to-head record
- 2) run differential (runs scored minus runs scored against) in head-to-head games
- 3) run differential (runs scored minus runs scored against) in all games
- 4) most home runs hit in all games
- 5) a coin flip

SECTION 2 — TEAM CAPTAINS, TEAMS, AND PLAYERS

a) GOALS: At all times, all participants are expected to demonstrate good sportsmanship and respect for all other participants. If umpires are present, all participants are expected to accept the umpires' decisions. *Family Baseball League is a ministry of the Summit View Church of Christ for building intergenerational community and reaching out to our neighbors in the Yakima area. Our goal is to honor God through the kind of community envisioned by God for his people in the Bible's book of Zechariah: "This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each of them with cane in hand because of their age. The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there.'"* (Zechariah 8:4-5, TNIV)

b) TEAM CAPTAINS' RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Provide equipment for your home games, including at least a dozen good balls and one or more bat. (Some equipment may be provided by the league).
- Make decisions for your team.
- Be at all games if at all possible. Appoint a representative for yourself if you must miss a game.
- Coordinate your team and make sure you have enough players at every game. Find substitutes if necessary. Keep good communication with your players about game times, schedule changes, and expectations.
- Carry out official duties, including drafting your team, rescheduling games if necessary, and making decisions about the league together with the other captains.
- Encourage all players to respect one another and to play with good sportsmanship that will reflect well on the church and on the Lord.

c) TEAMS:

- We aim for approximately 12 players per team, including 1 adult serving as team captain (team size may increase as new players join the league).
- All players play the whole game on both offense and defense, according to their ability to participate.
- A team must field at least 3 players or else forfeit the game. A team playing with only 3 players will be charged one out each time its 4th spot in the batting order comes up (in other words, the empty 4th spot is an automatic out) and if the bases are loaded, the team loses its runner at first base (so that the next batter can go to bat).
- Team captains may make arrangements for substitute players to play on their teams as needed, but (a) these substitutes must not give a team an obvious advantage over its opponent (such substitutes must be evenly distributed between opponents upon the opposing captain's request) and (b) a player belonging to one team may not substitute for another team (even in a game in which his/her own team is not playing; this rule includes tournament games played after that player's own team has been eliminated).
- Substitute players who are able to participate consistently may be assigned to a team by agreement of the team captains.
- Before the season begins, team captains will hold a draft to determine the teams (special arrangements will be made so that family members may play on the same team together, if they desire, and to meet any specific needs of players).
- Returning players have the option each season to reenter the draft or to remain with their previous team.

d) PLAYERS:

- All players on teams should be able to come to at least half of their team's games.
- Players who expect to be able to play in no more than half of the games should sign up as substitute players. A list of substitute players will be given to team captains, and walk-ons are welcome to play.

SECTION 3 — FIELDS AND SPECIAL RULES

Basically, our version of baseball follows standard baseball rules, except for the following changes:

a) **FLEXIBILITY**: In an effort to make it possible for players of all ages to participate in an atmosphere that is both fun and pleasantly competitive, team captains are given the authority to exercise flexibility with the rules when doing so enhances the enjoyment of the game for the participants—always with the approval of both of the game’s two captains. (For example, if a young player swings and misses at a bad pitch for a fourth strike and would normally be out, the opposing captain may allow him/her another pitch, at the captain’s discretion.)

b) **EQUIPMENT**: We play our own version of baseball using equipment similar to that used in Wiffleball, but with some unique variations:

- We use plastic training balls (baseball-sized, made of hard plastic, with round holes spaced evenly across the entire surface of the ball). Team captains may provide other plastic balls as they desire (for example, actual Wiffleballs), provided that all types of balls used in a game are equally available to the pitchers of both teams.
- We use plastic bats of all sizes. All bats provided to the two teams should be equally available to both teams.
- No gloves are necessary, but players may use them if they desire.

c) **FIELD DIMENSIONS**:

- The pitcher’s rubber should be exactly 40 feet from home plate.
- First and third bases should be 40 feet from home plate and 40 feet from second base.
- The distance from home plate to the home run line/wall/fence is to be set at the discretion of the home team captain, unless a standard-sized field has already been set up by the league’s field coordinator. Just for a reference point, 80 feet down the foul lines and 100 or 120 feet to center field works well.
- A “bunt line” must be marked halfway between home plate and the pitcher’s rubber, stretching from one foul line to the other in either a straight line or a curve.

d) **PITCHING AND BATTING**:

- Team captains are discouraged from using players under age 10 as pitchers for safety reasons and for a healthy pace of game. Exceptions may be made at each captain’s discretion for players who are strong enough to pitch from a safe distance and accurate enough to throw strikes sufficiently well. (This decision came about because of concern over very young pitchers used in the 2011 All-Star Game being too close to the batter to dodge hard-hit balls.)
- The strike zone is determined by the use of a strike zone net, chair, or other object of appropriate size provided by the league’s field coordinator or else chosen by the home team’s captain and placed behind home plate where a catcher would normally squat. Any pitch that hits the object above the legs (or hits the other selected object within the predefined strike zone) without first hitting the ground or being hit foul is a strike. The same object (or one of equivalent size) must be used throughout the game, and it must be aligned to represent the strike zone used in normal baseball, more or less.
- Pitchers not strong enough to throw from 40 feet away may move closer to home plate with the agreement of the opposing team captain (but see the reservation for players under age 10, above). Likewise, any pitcher may move closer to home plate to pitch to a younger batter in order to make it easier for that batter to hit the ball.
- Batters under the age of 10 get 4 strikes (foul balls can be strike 3, but not strike 4, except when bunting).
- A batter is awarded first base on a base-on-balls if the pitcher throws 8 balls. If the batter is hit by a pitch, it counts as 3 balls.
- Bunting is allowed. However, any ball (on a full swing or a bunt) that does not cross the bunt line will be a foul ball. With 2 strikes (3 for batters under age 10), any bunted ball that rolls foul (including stopping short of crossing the bunt line) will be strike 3 (strike 4 for batters under age 10), and the batter will be out, as in normal baseball. *NOTE: The Bunt Line does not apply to batters under age 10.*
- There are no balks. Pitchers may use whatever moves they like to fool and pick off base runners.
- Batters who are physically unable or unfit to run may have pinch-runners run for them. The pinch-runner shall be the last player put out who is not also the batter on deck or in the hole (that is, second or third in line to bat next). (Before a player is put out at the start of the game, the pinch-runner shall be the last player in the lineup.)

e) **BASE RUNNING AND STEALING**

- Runners can be tagged out by a fielder throwing the ball and hitting them with it while they are off of a base. However, fielders are discouraged from throwing at a runner’s head, neck, and other sensitive areas.
- Runners may lead off and steal bases at their own risk, except that runners may not steal during the pitch, after a pitch and before the pitcher picks up a new ball, or when the pitcher is both holding the ball and is standing within the pitcher’s circle. (When the pitcher must move forward beyond the pitcher’s circle to pitch [for example, to a younger batter], the pitcher’s circle is assumed to be centered at the spot from which the pitcher pitches.)

CLARIFICATIONS:

- If a pitched ball is put in play, it is a hit-and-run and a runner who began to run on the pitch may continue to advance as usual.

- If a pitched ball is fouled, a runner who began to run on the pitch must return to their base safely before the next pitch and cannot be put out before returning to their base of origin.
- A runner may not steal between when a pitch (not fouled or put into play) leaves the pitcher's hand and when the pitcher picks up the next ball. During this time, a runner not on their original base is at risk to be tagged out with the next ball the pitcher picks up, regardless of whether they have advanced to the next base. (In other words, they cannot advance to another base safely, because the pitcher still controls the ball.)
- Runners are permitted to advance to another base at their own risk when the pitcher releases control of the ball (except during a pitch), whether by fumbling the ball, throwing it at a runner, throwing it to another player, or throwing it to themselves.

PITCHER'S FORCE PLAY:

- A runner leading off will be called out when the pitcher, holding the ball, tags the runner's base of origin before the runner returns to it safely; it will be considered a force out. No other defensive player but the pitcher can tag the runner's base of origin for a force out. Of course, the pitcher can also tag a runner out or throw the ball to another defender to have them tag the runner out.

f) **STATISTICS:** Statistics will be kept of all games. Most stats will be kept in accordance with normal baseball customs, but the following stats may be defined differently:

- *Pitchers' Wins and Losses:* The pitcher who pitches best for the winning team (in the opinion of the scorekeeper[s]) will be given the win, especially if (but not necessarily because) his/her team gained the last lead while he/she was the pitcher of record. If two or more pitchers throw equally well, and one of them was the pitcher of record when his team gained the last lead, he/she will be the winner. The loss will be given to the pitcher of the losing team who was pitching when the winning team took its last lead of the game.
- *Saves:* A save will be given to a pitcher of the winning team if (a) he/she is not the winning pitcher and (b) he/she enters the game with his/her team in the lead (regardless of the size of the lead) and pitches at least the last out of the game without giving up a tying run.
- *Errors:* Errors will not be counted.
- *Hits, Doubles, Triples, and Home Runs:* Singles, doubles, triples, and home runs will be counted based on how far the batter advances on his/her own hit, regardless of whether the other team made any errors (which are not counted) or throws that allowed the batter to advance extra bases. A hit will not be awarded, however, when the ball is put into play and a runner is thrown or tagged out on a force play. Such a play will be considered a fielder's choice, as in standard baseball.
- *Base-on-Balls:* 8 balls thrown in one at-bat constitutes a base-on-balls (and a pitch that hits the batter counts as 3 balls).