

BFA Nationals Rules 2024

TOURNAMENT RULES

Unless otherwise stated in this handbook, the rules shall be those of Major League Baseball.

Baseball For All reserves the right to determine, restrict or decline a player, in its sole discretion, participation in BFA events for reasons of safety, skill level and/or unsportsmanlike conduct on or off the field. The determination is to be made by Tournament Director or his/her/their Designee.

As needed, Baseball For All will consider rule modifications, age-waivers, and other requests on a case-by-case basis.

Age Cut-off

April 30, 2024 is the age cut-off date.

Coach Requirements

Teams may have up to FOUR (4) coaches. Teams must have at least ONE (1) woman coach in the dugout and/or on the field; this includes Opening Ceremonies, game play, and on-site practices. All coaches must submit necessary paperwork and be approved by BFA.

BFA Nationals Division Qualifications

The identification process as to which division (minors/majors) team should be playing in is listed here: <https://baseballforall.com/bfa-nationals-division-qualifications/>

Teams found violating the parameters of these qualifications will be given a chance to correct their error and move to the appropriate division if found before BFA Nationals. If the error is found during BFA Nationals, the team will be allowed to continue to compete, but may receive a two-year suspension from Baseball For All Nationals as determined by the Tournament Director or his/her/their Designee.

Bat Restrictions

All divisions must use USA Baseball-certified bats— which bear the USA Baseball mark on the bat — or official BBCOR bats. No weight/length ratio limit is required for any division.

If an illegal bat is discovered during the game, a warning will be issued to the team and the bat will be removed from the game. The warning will cover all bats for the team during the game. If an illegal bat returns in the field of play, an out will be recorded, and the manager will be removed from the game.

Additionally, if an illegal bat was used and the opposing team catches the infraction before the first pitch is thrown to the following batter, the batter will be called out and the bat will be removed. The out will be recorded, and all runners will return to their bases. Pitches thrown will count towards the pitcher's overall pitch count.

Pitching Restrictions

Pitch counts will not be enforced, but pitch counts will be recorded for every pitcher during every game by staff members of The Ripken Experience Elizabethtown. Pitch counts will be publicly displayed daily in the Main Pavilion.

Baseball For All is a Pitch Smart Educational Partner. All coaches at Nationals have completed the USA Baseball online course, Introduction to Pitch Smart.

Pitching Distances

10U: 60 ft. base paths, 46 ft. pitching distance
12U MAJORS: 70 ft. base paths, 50 ft. pitching distance
MINORS: 60 ft. base paths, 46 ft. pitching distance
14U: 80 ft. base paths, 54 ft. pitching distance
16U: 90 ft. base paths, 60'6'' ft. pitching distance
18U: 90 ft. base paths, 60'6'' ft. pitching distance

Pitcher of Record

Once a pitcher throws a warm-up pitch, they must face at least one batter. If the pitcher is hurt during their warm-up pitches, another player may come into pitch. The previous pitcher of record will not be allowed to re-enter back onto the mound after a pitcher has thrown a warm-up pitch.

Removing the Pitcher

A pitcher who has withdrawn from the mound will not be permitted to return to the mound as a pitcher in the same game.

Catching & Pitching

For arm safety, it is strongly suggested players not pitch and catch in the same game. However, there is no rule players can't play both positions in the same game.

Coach Visits to the Mound

The pitcher must be removed when the manager or coach makes a second trip to the mound for the same pitcher in the same inning. The same rule applies if the manager or coach makes three visits to the mound for the same pitcher in one game. Umpire discretion on trips for injury.

Player Contact/Sliding

All runners must attempt to avoid contact with a fielder on ALL plays. Failure to do so will result in the player being called out and could result in an ejection from the game. The umpire has final say as to whether the runner made sufficient effort to avoid a collision. When in doubt players should SLIDE.

Headfirst slides into all bases/home are allowed ONLY in 12U Majors, 14U, 16U, and 18U. However, players may dive back to a base headfirst. Penalty for a headfirst slide into a base for 10U and 12U Minors: the runner will be called out.

Substitutions/Extra Hitter

Teams can bat 9, 10(EH) or bat entire lineup. If teams bat the entire lineup, there is free substitution. The Extra Hitter can play anywhere on the field. You may remove your EH(s) for the duration of the game at any time prior to their at-bat, without penalty. You must notify the plate umpire prior to removal. Extra Hitters must be announced prior to the start of the game; no mid-game entry is permitted.

Players re-entering the game must go back in the same spot in the batting order that they left. Subs cannot re-enter game.

If batting entire line up there is no penalty if the player leaves the lineup due to injury or illness. The order will be moved up into the open spot. If the player is ejected, then an out is recorded for the first at-bat only in the ejected player's spot.

If not batting entire lineup, a substitute can enter for an injured or ill player. If due to an ejection, an out will be recorded for the first at-bat only in the ejected players spot and the substitute will bat for ejected player.

Scorekeeping

Staff members of The Ripken Experience Elizabethtown will record the final score. The final score must be verified by the umpire prior to reporting score to the Tournament Official after the game.

Protests

No game will be played under protest. The umpires on the field will decide all questions of rule interpretations, with final judgment made by Tournament Official.

Pregame

No infield practice before the game is permitted. Teams should be ready, if possible, to play 15 minutes after completion of previous game. Games are subject to start early by umpires to make up time.

UNIFORMS & EQUIPMENT

Players Uniform

Hats

Official BFA Nationals hats should be worn on-field during all games and during any off-field activities that require players to be in uniform.

Shoes

Metal cleats are NOT allowed at The Ripken Experience Elizabethtown. All players must wear rubber cleats, turf shoes, or sneakers when playing at the complex.

Coach Uniform

Coaches may be in full uniform or in matching athletic gear (i.e. collared shirts with logo, dri-fit team shirts, etc.). No jeans or open-toed shoes. Coaches must wear the current BFA Nationals hat provided when on the field.

Penalty: Coach may not be eligible to compete until in compliance. Whether a coach's attire is deemed appropriate is solely determined by Tournament Official and may not be appealed.

Catcher's Helmet

All players must wear a helmet that meets NOCSAE standard. Helmet/mask must cover both ears and include a throat protector.

Penalty: Failure by a player to wear proper equipment after being so ordered by the umpire shall result in an ejection of the team Manager.

HOME TEAM, GAME TIME, SEEDING, PACE OF PLAY, AND MERCY RULES

Home Team

Home team is pre-determined in pool play and is listed first on the schedule. In bracket games the higher seeded team will be given a choice of home/visitor.

Complete Game

10U-12U: Six innings (5 ½ if home team is ahead)

14U-18U: Seven Innings (6 ½ if home team is ahead)

Regulation Game

10U-12U, four full innings have been played or the home team has scored an equal or greater number of runs in three, or three and a fraction, turns at bat than the visiting team has scored in four turns at bat.

14U-18U, five full innings have been played or the home team has scored an equal or greater number of runs in four, or four and a fraction, turns at bat than the visiting team has scored in five turns at bat.

Time Limits

Pool Play

10U-12U: No new inning shall begin after 2 hours. Immediate drop dead at 2:15. If the inning is not finished, the score reverts back to the last completed inning. Games can end in a tie. A new inning begins at the time the third out is recorded.

14U-18U: No new inning shall begin after 2 hours. Immediate drop dead at 2:15. If the inning is not finished, the score reverts back to the last completed inning. Games can end in a tie. A new inning begins at the time the third out is recorded.

Playoff Games

10U-12U: No new inning shall begin after 2 hours. Immediate drop dead at 2:15. If the inning is not

finished, the score reverts back to the last completed inning. A new inning begins at the time the third out is recorded.

14U-18U: No new inning shall begin after 2 hours. Immediate drop dead at 2:15. If the inning is not finished, the score reverts back to the last completed inning. A new inning begins at the time the third out is recorded.

If the score is tied at the end of regulation or reaches its time limit, extra innings will be played using the international tie breaker. See below.

International Tie-Breaker: Extra-Inning Rule

If the game remains tied after the completion of six (10U-12U) or seven innings (14U-18U), the following procedures will be implemented during extra innings:

1. Each team will begin their extra inning (and any subsequent necessary extra innings) with a player on first and second, no outs.
2. The lineup will continue as in any other inning. For example, if the 7th inning ends with the #8 hitter having the last plate appearance (PA), the 8th inning begins with the #9 hitter at bat and 2B runner is the #7 hitter, and 1B runner is the #8 hitter in the lineup.
3. With the exception of beginning the inning with runners on 1B and 2B with no one out, all other Baseball For All rules and regulations will remain in effect during the extra innings required to determine a winner.
4. The traditional system of the visiting team hitting in the top of the inning and the home team hitting in the bottom of the inning (if needed) will remain in effect until a winner is determined.

Playoff & Medal Game

If the score is tied at the end of regulation or reaches its time limit, extra innings will be played using the international tie breaker.

Pace of Play

Batter's Box Rule

Hitters must keep one foot in the box during their time at bat.

Pitches Between Innings

10U-12U: 5 pitches for the 1st time pitching and 3 pitches for every consecutive warm-up.

14U-18U: 8 pitches for the 1st time pitching and 5 pitches for every consecutive warm-up.

Courtesy Runner: Catchers & Pitchers

When on the base paths, catchers, coming in to start the next half inning, may have a courtesy runner when there are TWO (2) outs. Catchers may choose to have a courtesy runner with no outs or one out. Pitchers may have a courtesy runner with TWO (2) outs. Courtesy runner is the last out.

Mercy Rules

Inning Mercy Rule: Pool Play & Playoffs

10U-12U: 5 runs per half inning, plus the runs that finish the play. No run limit in the declared last inning.

14U-18U: 8 runs per half inning, plus the runs that finish the play. No run limit in the declared last inning.

Inning Mercy Rule: Medal Games

No inning-based mercy rule applies for any division during medal games.

All Divisions: All Games

10-run rule shall apply after 5 innings (4 ½ innings if the home team is winning)

15-run rule shall apply after 4 innings (3 ½ if the home team is ahead.

Game-based mercy rules apply in all games.

Seeding

Seeding will be based on the following:

1. Winning percentage

Highest of: (Total Number of Wins plus (Total Number of Ties times 0.5)) divided by Total Number of Games played. This could also be written as: "(wins + (ties * 0.5)) / games"

2. Head- to-Head Winning percentage

Highest of all teams tied after computing #1 of: (Total Number of Wins against tied teams in #1 plus (Total Number of Ties against tied teams in #1 times 0.5)) divided by Total Number of Games played against tied teams in #1

3. Head-to-Head run differential

Highest of: Total number of runs scored when playing all tied teams in #2 - total number of runs allowed when playing tied teams in #2

4. Runs against overall

Lowest of: Total number of runs allowed for all games played in the division

5. Runs for overall

Highest of: Total number of runs scored for all games played in the division

6. Number of forfeits

Lowest of: total number of forfeits in the season

7. Coin flip

The two managers meet with the division rep and the division rep will toss a coin. The manager with the team name that would come first sorted alphabetically is the one that calls "heads" or "tails" while coin is in the air. If more than two teams are still tied after #6, coin flips occur between all managers once and the manager with the highest number of "wins" will get the better seed. Coin flips continue until all ties are broken.

Forfeits

10u teams may forfeit a game if they are out of pitchers. The game may continue as a coach-pitch game, with a coach pitching to their own team. The final score will be 6-0

On a forfeit for teams in the 12U-18U division, there will be no opportunity for a coach-pitch scrimmage. The final score will be 6-0 (12U) and 7-0 (14U-18U).

If the game is forfeited after the number of innings required for a regulation game is played and the forfeiting team is behind, then the score remains as recorded.

RAIN/LIGHTNING POLICY

If rain and/or lightning occurs during a game, the game will be suspended at the discretion of the Umpire and/or Tournament Director and picked up from that point if the game has not reached official status.

If game has reached official status, see Official Status (Regulation Game) and note below:

1. Official Status (Regulation Game)

For 10U-12U, four full innings have been played or the home team has scored an equal or greater number of runs in three, or three and a fraction, turns at bat than the visiting team has scored in four turns at bat.

For 14U-18U, five full innings have been played or the home team has scored an equal or greater number of runs in four, or four and a fraction, turns at bat than the visiting team has scored in five turns at bat.

If the game is suspended when the teams have not had an equal number of completed times at bat, the score shall be the same as it was at the end of the last completed inning; except that if the home team in its half of the incomplete inning, scores a run (or runs) which equals or exceeds the opponent's score, the final score shall be as recorded when the game is called.

For all divisions, the umpire may suspend a game, but not declare the game complete, to hold discussions with BFA tournament officials.

2. In the Event of Extended Inclement Weather

The Tournament Official may deem it necessary to alter the tournament format by shortening either the time limit for games and/or reducing the number of innings that will constitute an official game, or any means necessary to complete the tournament within the published dates.

No refund will be given on account of rain or other inclement weather.

In the event that bracket play cannot continue due to inclement weather (as determined solely by the Tournament Director), final tournament standings will be determined by taking the remaining non-eliminated teams and choosing final standings based on the seeds prior to the beginning of bracket play.

CONDUCT & RESPONSIBILITIES

Coach Responsibilities

Managers are responsible for the conduct of their team and parents.

All coaches must agree to the Baseball For All Coach Pledge (see addendum), submit a background check, and complete USA Baseball's online course, Abuse Awareness for Adults.

Participant and Spectator Conduct

Baseball For All does not tolerate unsportsmanlike conduct—on or off the field. Any Player, Coach, Manager, or spectator who acts in an unsportsmanlike manner on or off the field may be removed from participation in any current or future Baseball For All events.

On-Field Conduct

Any Player, Coach, Manager, or spectator who acts in an unsportsmanlike manner will be warned once by the umpire or a Tournament Official. The second time, that person will be ejected. If in the judgment of the umpire or Tournament Official, the offense is of a more serious nature, that person may be ejected from the game without being issued a warning and may be suspended from all further tournament play or participation, subject to the Tournament Official's discretion. In the event of illegal activity, law enforcement will be called.

Off-Field Conduct

"Unsportsmanlike conduct" off the field pertains to any hate speech, bullying, harassment, discrimination, threats of violence, and the like on platforms that include, but are not limited to: digital communications, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, LinkedIn, and emails.

Player & Coach Ejections

The first occurrence of unsportsmanlike conduct will result in suspension for the remainder of the game (removal from game site) during which the ejection occurred, as well as for the next scheduled game.

The second occurrence will result in suspension for the remainder of the tournament as well as possible further sanctions subject to the review of Baseball For All.

If all coaches listed on the team's tournament roster are ejected during a game, then the team may continue if the players decide to take charge of their team.

Spectator Ejections

The first occurrence of unsportsmanlike conduct will result in suspension for the remainder of the game (removal from game site) during which the ejection occurred, as well as for the next scheduled game.

The second occurrence will result in suspension for the remainder of the tournament as well as possible further sanctions subject to the review of Baseball For All.

Any spectator who participates in a fight, brawl, or altercation shall be immediately ejected from the facility. At the discretion of a BFA staff member, the spectator may also be refused future entry into the complex for the remainder of the tournament and future Baseball For All events.

Alcohol & Tobacco Policy

Alcohol is not allowed at BFA Nationals tournament events. Violators will be asked to leave the park. A coach, player, participant, or spectator may not use tobacco or tobacco-like products or e-cigarettes within the confines of the field.

Noise Policy

Only event personnel can play music during games and practices on Baseball For All sites.

No intentionally disruptive noises may be made during a pitch by coaches, players, or spectators.

Team Insurance

All teams must show proof of Certificate Liability of Insurance, listing Baseball For All as a certificate holder

DIVISION SPECIFIC RULES

10U Division

1. Players may step off the base when the ball crosses home plate.
2. Stealing of any base is allowed only after the ball crosses the plate or on a passed ball. If a player leaves the base early, it will be a delayed dead ball and the infracting runner will return to their base unless the infracted runner is out on the play and all other runners return to their original base.
3. Runner cannot advance beyond third base on a past ball, wild pitch, or throwback to the pitcher. If the catcher throws down to any base to pick off a runner, all runners can advance at their own risk.
4. A runner can advance if the catcher makes a play on any base runner.
5. If 9 players are not available, teams may play with as few as 7 players.
6. If teams run out of pitching, BFA staff can be consulted about using coach-pitch.
7. Dropped third strike is not in effect.
8. Infield fly rule is not in effect.
9. No head-first sliding into any base, including home plate.
10. Offensive contact: umpires will call interference for an out. Players must slide or avoid contact at any base.

12U Minors Division: 46/60

1. Players may step off the base when the ball crosses home plate.
2. Stealing of any base is allowed only after the ball crosses the plate or on a passed ball. If a player leaves the base early, it will be a delayed dead ball and the infracting runner will return to their base unless the infracted runner is out on the play and all other runners return to their original base.
3. Runner cannot advance beyond third base on a past ball, wild pitch, or throwback to the pitcher. If the catcher throws down to any base to pick off a runner, all runners can advance at their own risk.
4. A runner can advance if the catcher makes a play on any base runner.
5. If 9 players are not available, teams may play with as few as 7 players.
6. If teams run out of pitching, BFA staff can be consulted about using coach-pitch.
7. Dropped third strike is not in effect.

8. Infield fly rule is not in effect.
9. No head-first sliding into any base, including home plate.
10. Offensive contact: umpires will call interference for an out. Players must slide or avoid contact at any base.

12U Majors Division: 50/70

1. Baserunners can leadoff and steal a base any time the umpire has placed the ball in play.
2. Dropped third strike is in effect.
3. Infield Fly Rule is in effect.
4. To intentionally walk a batter, a coach simply needs to inform the umpire and point to first base. No pitches are to be thrown.
5. Balk rules will be enforced, there will be one warning given to each pitcher.
6. Players may slide head-first into all bases, including home plate.
7. Offensive contact: umpires will call interference for an out. Players must slide or avoid contact at any base.

14U Division

1. Baserunners can leadoff and steal a base any time the umpire has placed the ball in play.
2. Dropped third strike is in effect.
3. Infield Fly Rule is in effect.
4. To intentionally walk a batter, a coach simply needs to inform the umpire and point to first base. No pitches are to be thrown.
5. Balk rules will be enforced, there will be one warning given to each pitcher.
6. Players may slide head-first into all bases, including home plate.
7. Offensive contact: umpires will call interference for an out. Players must slide or avoid contact at any base.

16U -18U Division

1. To intentionally walk a batter, a coach simply needs to inform the umpire and point to first base. No pitches are to be thrown.
2. Balk rules will be enforced.