



2026 YOUTH SOFTBALL COACHES HANDBOOK & BYLAWS



SPRING 2026 YOUTH SOFTBALL

ARTICLE 1 – ELIGIBILITY

SECTION A – AGE DIVISIONS

1. There are five age divisions for Youth Softball. Participants must be 4 years old by the age control date: **on or before June 30, current year**. (Unless approved by Sports Division)
2. The divisions are as follows:
 - a. 8 & Under (ages 6 – 8)
 - b. 10 & Under Combo (ages 8 – 10)
 - c. 12 & Under Live Arm (ages 11-12)
3. Any player or coach ejected from a game for unsportsmanlike conduct will be suspend for a **minimum of one game**, in addition to the game from which ejected.

ARTICLE II – REGULATIONS

SECTION A – GOVERNING RULES

1. Official USA Softball Slow Pitch Softball Rules (for use in all championship games of USA Softball) printed in the current edition of the Official Guide for National USA Softball is accepted guide for GRPA games, with the exceptions found in this manual.
2. Courtesy Runners
 - a. At any time, the team at-bat may use courtesy runners for the pitcher and / or catcher.
 - b. The last batted out is to be utilized as the courtesy runner.
 - c. In coach pitch (8U) no courtesy runners are allowed.
3. Rotary lineup – In all age divisions all players in attendance must bat in the same order throughout the game. (Penalty: out, if discovered prior to next pitch.)
4. A maximum of 5 runs are allowed to be scored an inning (In all divisions).
5. Per the “Return to Play Act of 2013”, effective January 1, 2014, all agencies are required to provide concussion education material to all youth participants and their parents.
6. All head, assistant coaches (and other team volunteers) that are coaching youth teams participating in all sports at Rome-Floyd Parks and Recreation must have undergone a criminal background check through RFPRA. By receiving a coach’s badge this provides a background check has been approved.
7. Use of audio or visual recording devices, including a cell phone, is not permitted in changing areas, rest rooms, or locker rooms.

SECTION B – LENGTH OF GAMES

Division	Inning	Time
8U	5	1 hour, 5 minutes
10U Combo	6	1 hour, 20 minutes
12U Live Arm		

Official game clock will begin at the conclusion of the coaches meeting at home plate.

1. In all levels of softball, no new inning will start once the scoreboard clock hits 5:00.
2. A game that is tied after regulation (5 innings or clock has reached 5:00 remaining) play shall continue for **ONE** inning, utilizing the International Tiebreaker. **THE LAST SCHEDULED BATTER WILL BE PLACED ON 2ND BASE**. At the conclusion of the one inning, if the game is tied the official result will be a tie.

** Exception: In a tournament game upon time limit expiration, the first “extra” inning a runner will be placed on 2nd base. If the game remains tied, for the second “extra” inning runners will be placed on 2nd and 3rd bases. If the game remains tied beginning with the 3rd (and all remaining) “extra” innings, the innings will begin with the bases loaded until a winner is determined.*

* Extra inning is defined as a full inning after all innings have been played **OR** the clock has reached **5:00** remaining.

3. Forfeited games will be entered on TeamSideline as win / lose.
4. A game shall be considered compete under the following inning to lead scenarios*:

**Entering the inning or at any point in the game after inning listed has started.*

MATHEMATICALLY ELIMINATED

8U COACH PITCH		
Inning	Visiting Team	Home Team
Top 3rd		
Bottom 3rd		Winning by 11
Top 4th	Winning by 11	
Bottom 4th		Winning by 6
Top 5th	Winning by 6	
Bottom 5th		Winning by 1

10U COMBO / 12U LIVE PITCH		
Inning	Visiting Team	Home Team
Top 4th	Winning by 16	
Bottom 4th		Winning by 11
Top 5th	Winning by 11	
Bottom 5th		Winning by 6
Top 6th	Winning by 6	
Bottom 6th		Winning by 1

5. In all softball leagues upon game completion (from above chart) the game will be declared final and the score will be no longer be kept and removed from the scoreboard. Teams will remain on the field and play until the clock reaches 0:00. .

SECTION C – SPECIAL PROVISIONS

Mandatory participation - all players in attendance must bat at least ONCE during the game and play a minimum of ONE uninterrupted inning on defense.

1. A game that is Short Handed Rule – Clarifications
 - a. **To start a game:**
 - i. A game may begin or finish with 8 players.
 - b. **To continue a game** once started with a full team listed on the line-up card:
 - i. If a team begins play with the required number of players as listed, the team may continue a game with one less player than is currently in the batting order whenever a player leaves the game for any reason other than ejection.
 - ii. If player shows up after the game has started (prior to teams first at-bat), they are to be inserted at the bottom on the batting lineup.

- iii. When the player who has left the game is scheduled to bat, an out shall be declared for each turn at bat. An inning or game can end with an automatic out due to an ejection. A game shall skip an automatic out (**ONLY** due to injury) if it is the final out of the game.

** Exception If a player leaves the game prior to batting for the first time in the game, they are to be skipped and no out will be recorded.*

iv. A player that has been ejected cannot reenter the game; if removed by the umpire due to an injury, the player cannot return to the game.

2. In all age divisions, a team can start or continue with eight players, unless the ninth player was ejected for unsportsmanlike conduct; then it is a forfeit.
3. With the rotary line up, defensive position, changes do not have to be reported to the umpire or scorekeeper.
4. A player is not required to sit out the next game for failure to report as a substitute, removal of a helmet after a warning, or carelessly slinging a bat after a warning. A slung bat will result in a team warning for the offending team on the first offense. Each additional slung bat for that team will result in the batter being called out. If the same player continues to violate the rule, they **CAN** be removed from the game.

** Exception unsportsmanlike conduct. A forfeited game (not played) does **NOT** count as a sit out game.*

5. Doubleheaders are permitted; however, these will only be used in extreme, unusual, or possibly convenient circumstances (makeup games or reschedules).

ARTICLE III – EQUIPMENT

SECTION A – APPROVED EQUIPMENT

1. Rubber-molded, cleated shoes are approved for use. Steel spikes are not allowed. All other shoes must meet USA Softball Rule Book Standards. Smooth and soft-soled athletic shoes including tennis or basketball shoes are acceptable.
2. Helmets must be worn by batters, base-runners, and on-deck participants in youth softball. Chin straps are recommended.
3. For all 8U, 10U and 12U leagues it is mandatory that the pitcher wear a face mask, it is optional for all other infield players.
4. Check www.usasoftball.com for updated list of legal bats.
5. If a team is found using an **ILLEGAL / ALTERTED / NON APPROVED** bat prior to player entering batter's box the equipment shall be removed and play continued. **After player enters batter's box the player will declared out.**

** Exception unsportsmanlike conduct. A forfeited game (not played) does **NOT** count as a sit out game.*

6. The official ball shall be a sphere formed by yarn wound around a small core of cork, rubber, or similar material and covered with two strips of white horsehide or other authorized material tightly stitched together.
7. Rome-Floyd Parks and Recreation will provide all game balls.
 - a. For 8U and 10U Combo an 11” ball will be used, 12U a 12” ball will be used.

8. Catchers in 10U Combo division must wear full protective equipment, including mask with throat protector, protective helmet (protective cap in all divisions must cover ears (hockey style helmet), body protector, shin guards, and protective cup in an athletic supporter.
9. Catchers in 8U Coach Pitch are NOT required to be in the full protective equipment but must wear a helmet with mask (this CAN BE a batting helmet with a mask).
10. All players shall wear protective helmets while batting, running bases and when on deck. The helmet is designed as to give protection to the temples and the base of the skull as well as to the top of the head.

SECTION B – UNIFORMS

1. Team uniforms for softball will consist of matching or like-colored jerseys with a factory-type nonduplicating number on the back at least six inches in height. It is strongly recommended that all team personnel be attired alike. The basic body color determines matching jerseys. The logos, numbers, trim, etc., do not have to match if the basic color is the same. No other youth sports organization patches will be allowed on uniforms in GRPA tournaments. Penalty – Illegal Equipment.
 - a. Approved uniform: (1) plain shirts with numbers, (2) agency name or agency abbreviation, or (3) agency logo with department/school mascot name. (EFFECTIVE January 2025)
2. Team caps are not mandatory. If caps or visors are worn, they must be baseball/softball style caps with no vulgar or obscene words or graphics will be allowed. Tournament Director will make final decision. Caps do not have to match.
3. Shorts are acceptable. It is recommended, but not required, that all players on a team wear the same color shorts. GRPA does not adhere to USA Softball pants/sliding pants rule.
4. Illegal uniforms will be treated as illegal equipment.
5. Coaches and non-player personnel must be attired in a manner that puts GRPA and its member agencies in a positive light. Tournament Directors, Officials, and GRPA State Athletic Committee members reserve the right to remove those from the contest who do not adhere to the standards set forth by the GRPA State Athletic Committee.
 - a. Managers, coaches, or team scorers who coach must be attired in staff shirts or jerseys that are identical in style and color with each other.
6. The bat boy/girl shall wear a uniform as required in this rule except that it is not mandatory that his/her uniform be identical in style or color with the team. Bat boy/girl must be in that age group or younger. They must wear batting helmets.

SECTION C – PLAYING FIELD REQUIREMENTS

1. The following field specifications are required for all games.

Distance between bases shall be:		Pitching Distance shall be:	Batter's Box
8U Coach Pitch	60'	20' - 30' (No Closer than 20')	4' x 6'
10U Combo		35'	
12U Live		40'	

NOTE: Pitching distances shall be measured from the back point of home plate where the baseline intersects to the nearest edge of the pitcher's plate.

ARTICLE IV – GAMES AND AWARDS

SECTION A – REGULAR SEASON CHAMPIONS / RUNNERS UP

1. All softball divisions will have champions and runners up based on final team records at the conclusion of the season. Tie breakers will be applicable to the teams involved in the tie(s) only, the following tiebreaker order will be used.

1) Head to head matchup	3) Runs allowed
2) Run differential	4) Runs scored

SECTION B – TOURNAMENT

1. A non-regular season tournament consisting of 2 games will be played.
2. Pools will be created by RFPRA and will be kept to a minimal size.
3. Awards will be given to champions and runners up for each pod played.
4. For 4 team pods, 2 semifinal games will be played with the winners playing each other for 1st and 2nd place, the losers of semifinal games will play each other for their second game in the tournament.
5. For 3 team pods, a full round robin will be played with the following tie breaker order being used.

1) Head to head matchup	3) Runs allowed
2) Run differential	4) Runs scored

ARTICLE VI – PROTESTS AND APPEALS

1. 1. Protests in any division are **NOT ALLOWED**.

ARTICLE VII – LEAGUE SPECIFIC RULES

SECTION A – 8U COACH PITCH SPECIAL RULES

Pitching Rules

1. An offensive coach will pitch to his / her own team.
2. Pitcher (adult) may pitch anywhere from outside of the 20' foul arc and the pitching circle.
3. Pitcher (adult) may not cross the foul arc or enter the pitching circle (while pitching).
4. Pitcher (adult) must keep on foot on or straddle the pitching line.
5. Pitcher (adult) must pitch under-handed (any batted ball that hits the pitching coach will be a dead ball and called no pitch).
6. If the pitcher (adult) intentionally allows the ball to hit them (Penalty: batter is out – Umpire's judgement) No runner(s) advances.
7. Pitcher (adult) must attempt to avoid interference and try to pick-up the batter's bat provided he / she does not interfere with the play.
8. If the pitcher (adult) does not attempt to get off the field and / or interferes with the defensive player to keep them from making a play, the play will result in the batter being called out and runner(s) will advance.
9. The pitcher (player) is required to wear a face mask. It is optional for all other infield players. (This CAN BE a batting helmet with a mask).

Offense

1. A slung bat will result in a team warning for the offending team on the first offense. Each additional slung bat for that team will result in the batter being called out. If the same player continues to violate the rule, they **CAN** be removed from the game.
2. Batter will receive five pitches before being declared out.
3. If fifth pitch is fouled, a sixth pitch is thrown, if sixth pitch is fouled, the batter is out.
4. If pitch is fouled (and the ball goes above the shoulders) and caught, the batter is out.

5. No bunting allowed. IF batter squares to bunt and then swings, they will be called out, this will be umpire's judgement.
6. Any base runner leaving the base before the ball reaches plate is out. (Penalty: the ball is dead and all other runners return to base occupied prior to pitch – Umpire's judgement.) The pitch will not count.
7. One of the offensive coaches is allowed at the backstop during RFPRA games (not allowed in GRPA All-stars).

Defense

1. If any player is injured by being hit with a batted or thrown ball, time out will be called immediately, bases will be awarded/outs will be called at the umpire's discretion based on each individual situation.
2. No rolling the ball intentionally will be allowed.
3. The infield fly rule will not be in effect.
4. In all softball divisions, positions should be filled as pitcher (player), 4 infielders, 4 outfielders, catcher.
5. Pitcher (player) will stay in the ten-foot circle until the ball is hit. The player may have one foot outside the circle. (Penalty: Offense gets choice of play or no pitch.)
6. In the field, a team should be positioned in a traditional alignment and not a wall on one side of the infield.
7. Play shall not be stopped by the defensive team heading off or stopping the front runner. Trailing runners may advance at their own risk. For time to be called the ball must be on the infield (inside the base paths) **AND** all runners have **STOPPED** advancing. If any of these have not occurred the play is still live and time shall **NOT** be called.
8. Defensive coaches are allowed in the outfield and shall not interfere with the play or maliciously interact with the other team.

SECTION C – 10U COMBO PITCH DIVISION

1. A runner cannot run on a drop 3rd strike.
2. No stealing is allowed when the pitching machine is in use, however once live arm pitching begins runners may steal (or advance on past balls), penalty is out if leave too soon.
3. Infield fly rule is in effect for 10U ONLY
4. Bunting is allowed in 10U. Fake bunts are not allowed. A fake bunt is when you pretend to bunt the ball and you get in bunting position, once the ball is released you pull the bat back and attempt to hit the ball.
5. Headfirst slides are **not allowed** by players wearing a facemask. The penalty for a headfirst slide in all divisions of baseball shall be an out if a facemask is worn, C-Flaps can be worn without penalty, a dive back to a base on a pick off or base overrun is not considered a head first slide. Runners in rundown situation may not slide headfirst if wearing a facemask. Any runner is out when they do not slide or attempt to avoid the fielder who has the ball in the proximity of the base and is waiting to make a tag or if they maliciously run into a fielder (**give up, get down, go around**).
6. For the first 2 innings pitching will be done by an electrically powered pitching machine using an underhanded delivery 35' to 40' over the top. The pitching machine wheel delivery point should be placed at the pitching distance set for each age group.
7. The arch of the pitch shall be adjusted by the umpire in charge to be no lower than six feet and no higher than ten feet. The judgment of these heights shall be left to the discretion of the umpires with the final authority being the Tournament Director. If a Jugs Jr. machine is used, the ball should be placed in the machine from the top.
8. Qualified officials will be stationed behind home plate and behind the pitching machine. Officials behind the machine will feed the machine and act as base umpire. Machine umpires will be responsible for any adjustments and for presenting the ball to each batter prior to feeding the machine.
9. When a batted ball hits a pitching machine, the umpire feeding the machine, or the extension cord off the ground, it is considered a "DEAD BALL SINGLE" and batter/runner will be awarded first base with all runners moving forward if forced. If a batted ball hits a defensive player then hits the machine, the batter is awarded first base and all other runners move up one base, if forced. Ball is dead when ball hits

machine. When a thrown ball hits the pitching machine or the extension cord off the ground, it is considered a “DEAD BALL” and played as if thrown out of bounds.

10. When machine is in play no base on balls allowed. Count remains 3 and 2 until ball is hit or a strikeout occurs.
11. **NO LIMIT** on foul balls when the pitching machine is being used.
12. When all play has ceased, the umpire will call “time” and all play will be stopped.

SECTION D – 12U LIVE ARM DIVISION

1. Official USA Softball Fast Pitch Softball Rules (for use in all championship games of USA Softball) printed in the current edition of the Official Guide for National USA Softball is accepted guide for GRPA games with the exceptions found in this manual.
 - a. The use of National Federation and current GHSA rules and regulations for pitching requirements pertaining to only having to have the pivot foot (one foot) in contact with the pitching plate is allowed.
2. Courtesy Runners
 - a. At any time, the team at-bat may use courtesy runners for the pitcher and/or the catcher. The same runner may not be used for both positions. Neither the pitcher nor the catcher will be required to leave the game under such circumstances.
 - b. The courtesy runner must be anyone not currently in the batting order. It cannot be the same 12U of 211 Revised 02/27/2026 GRPA Athletic Manual person for both. If no subs are available then the last batted out is to be utilized as the courtesy runner.
 - c. A player may not run as a courtesy runner for the pitcher or the catcher and then be used as a substitute for another player in the half inning.
3. The batter becomes a runner if the catcher misses/drops the third strike, provided first base is not occupied with less than two outs, or at any time with two outs.
4. **DROPPED THIRD STRIKE INTERPRETATION:** Become batter/runner, when the catcher fails to catch the third strike before the ball touches the ground and there are fewer than two outs and first base is not occupied at the time of the pitch, or any time there are two outs. USA/ASA Rule 8; Section 18.
5. **Pitcher must come set with hands touching for 1-10 seconds prior to going into the pitch.**

Early Bird Registration	January 1, 2026 – January 25, 2026
Regular Registration	January 26, 2026 – February 22, 2026
Late Registration	February 23, 2026 – March 1, 2026
Coaches Meetings / Team Formation	March 3, 2026 – March 5, 2026
Practices Begin	March 9, 2026
Team Name / Numerical Roster Due/Conflicts Due	March 16, 2026
Schedule Release	March 20, 2026
Season Begins	March 30, 2026
Season (Projected) Ending	May 7, 2026

PLEASE REMEMBER:

These are **KIDS**.

This just a **GAME**.

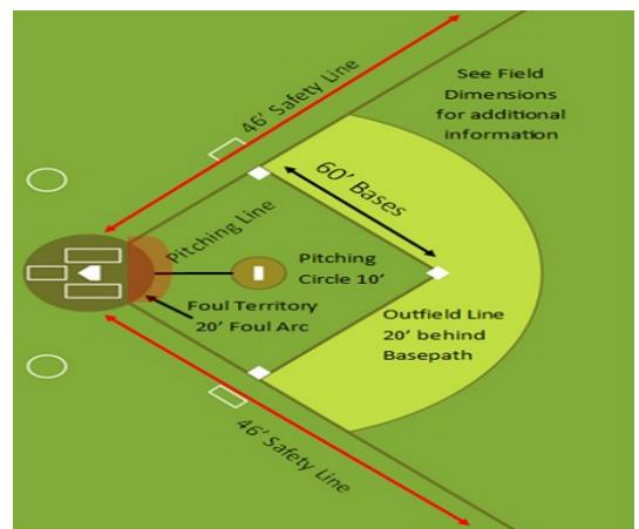
Coaches are **VOLUNTEERS**.

Umpires are **HUMAN**.

Your child is **NOT** being scouted today.

Parents and Coaches,

Thank you for volunteering your time and making a positive impact on kid's lives.



Rome-Floyd Parks & Recreation Staff