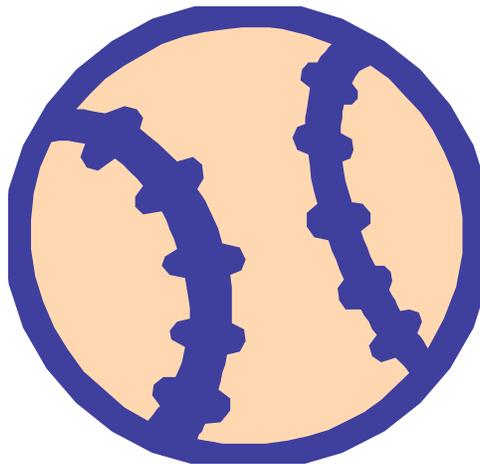


# Lexington Softball

Softball Major League

2014 Season



Manual for Managers & Coaches

## Lexington Little League

Little League President:

Shane Arnold

V.P. Softball

Mary Gobes

[willegobes1@verizon.net](mailto:willegobes1@verizon.net)

781-752-5777

Major League Commissioner:

Neil Tassel

[nstassel@gmail.com](mailto:nstassel@gmail.com)

617-905-4181

## **I. Events for the 2014 season**

### **A. Major League Draft**

Major League draft is typically held in early March. You will be contacted by the League with the exact time and location.

### **B. Game Schedule**

The Minor and Major League schedules start the week after April school vacation. We hope to have schedules for you on the night of the Managers banquet, but, if not, they will be available before April vacation starts.

### **C. Opening Day**

Lexington Little League's Opening Day always kicks off with a parade down Massachusetts Avenue, through the downtown area to the Center 4 ball field, where there are first balls to be thrown and speeches to be made.

The Opening Day parade is typically on a Saturday morning at the end of April or first week of May. More details will be sent out soon. You will need to make a sign with your team's name on it so your players (and their parents) can find you. You all know how crowded it gets on the field.

We must keep the parents and cars out of the Muzzey Condominium parking lot. Please tell them to park on Mass. Ave. or across the street. We are not even allowed to enter their driveway to drop kids off at the adjoining field! Also, kids are not allowed on the Muzzey Condo property.

All players should wear their uniforms and many teams carry a banner in front of their team. Gloves are OK, but no balls. The parade is a lot of fun - don't miss it!

### **D. Team Picture Nights**

Lexington Little League has again retained the services of professional photographers to do team and individual pictures in mid-April. Stay tuned for the exact date and time for your league and team.

### **E. Softball Playoffs**

Lexington Little League runs an exciting double-elimination playoff after the regular season has been completed. It generally takes about two weeks and culminates with the Minor and Major League Championship Games being played at Center 2. We invite all of the girls who have played this season to attend and cheer for their friends. It's a great way to end the season - and we ask the Minor and Major League managers whose teams are not playing in the Championship Games to help out!

We schedule the playoffs so that we play our Championships before school lets out for the summer. However, rainouts usually wreak havoc with our planning and we often run right up to the last day of school. Beginning in 2013, Majors includes at least one team from Bedford. While regular season schedules include both Bedford and Lexington teams, the two towns play separate playoffs with the winner of each town's title game meeting in a cross-town "championship" game as well.

## **F. Seniors Game**

Every spring we have a Seniors Game in which our sixth graders play one final Little League game in their Major League uniforms. Traditionally, baseball and softball have played separate Seniors Games but for several years now we have had all the kids play together at Center 2. Pizza, soft drinks and ice cream will be served during the games. How did the girls do against the boys? We'll just say that the boys quickly developed a newfound respect for our windmill pitchers!

The Seniors Game is a large undertaking and once again we will ask all of our Major League managers to help out. We'll be contacting you with dates and duties.

## **G. Mary Dailey Award**

The Mary Dailey Award is given each year to the most improved eighth grade player in the Seniors and the most improved sixth grade player in the Majors who also exemplify the spirit of Lexington Little League Softball. It is an award for the player who played well, tried hard, improved herself with hard work, and came ready to play ball each game. Nominations for the Mary Dailey Award are solicited from every manager at the end of the season and the Award itself is presented at the Lexington High School Fall Sports banquet.

## **H. Summer Softball**

As you probably know, Lexington Little League sponsors a number of programs for girls who want to play summer softball. We have an in-town program of pick-up softball that plays on weekends and which is targeted toward the younger girls.

We sponsor Gaels teams in the 10 & Under, 12 & Under, 14 & Under and 18 & Under divisions of the Middle-Essex Summer Softball League. The Gaels are select teams that practice two or three times per week and play two to three games per week throughout eastern Massachusetts. You will receive a notice for Gaels try-outs later this spring and we hope you will encourage your players to attend.

## **I. Next Year**

We assume that managers who have been assigned to teams in the Minor League and Major League will stay with that team for the two years their daughter is in the League. We also hope that as your daughters move up through the program you will consider taking a team in the next League.

Finally, we suggest that you impart to your newly drafted players – and their parents – our hope that they make a two-year commitment to the program. A great deal of work goes into rating players and each year we strive to distribute the talent through the draft so that every team has an equal chance of having a successful season. It is very important that each team's players return for their second year so that we can maintain that balance. A player who does not return to play her second year can leave a large gap on her team which can only be filled the next season by drafting younger, less experienced girls.

## **II. Goals, Rules, Guidelines, and Rainouts**

## A. Goals of Lexington Little League

Your kids have been rated and drafted and now they are ready to play some ball – real softball with live pitching, ASA umpires, base coaches and full uniforms. We hope that each of you is also ready to teach these young people sportsmanship and the rules and skills of softball.

- Give continuing guidance to players who require it.
- Do not criticize poor play. Explain proper technique without dwelling on errors.
- Have your teams cheer its opponent at the end of each game and shake hands with the opposing players.
- Strongly discourage “trash talk” aimed at opponents or teammates.
- Encourage the concept of “team play.”
- Pursue specific goals for each player. Understand that every player will achieve a different level of skill in striving for success.

Take the time to plan your practices so that they consist of more than two hours of hitting fly balls to the outfield. There are many specific skills in softball that should be the subject of a small talk and/or demonstration at the start of practice, followed by the players practicing that skill with your assistance: bunting, pitching, stealing, base running, sliding, getting the jump on a steal, tagging a sliding runner. If you don't teach them, who will?

Think about running several stations during the practice: infield work, outfield catching and throwing, base running, batting. Ask your parents to help out by running those stations, while you move around the field observing all the players. Have kids who have never pitched “try out” from the mound after practice. Encourage them to work out at home during the week. Pay attention to all the kids, not just the most talented. Scrimmage at the end of each practice.

We hope that you will strive to teach your players the skills they need to move up to the next level of softball. At the same time, don't lose sight of the fact that Lexington Little League is a program run by volunteers for children. Each manager and every coach is expected to conduct himself at all times as a representative of the town and Lexington Little League.

## B. Rules

The Official ASA Rules have been adopted by Lexington Little League Softball but there are a number of exceptions to those Rules. The Lexington Little League Softball Exceptions are included in this Manual. We advise you to read it all and to not depend on what somebody else told you or a just a quick thumbing through of the rules. In particular, please review the important rules highlighted below:

**\* Pitching distance and ball size – Pitching mound is set at 40 feet. Ball size is 12-inch.**

These changes were made starting in the 2013 season and now align us with Middle School and Summer League programs.

1. No on-deck circle. There will be NO exceptions to this rule. Nobody except the batter at the plate may have a bat in her hands. Don't try to get around this one. If there is an accident involving a bat which is being swung by somebody other than the batter, the offending manager is going to have heaps of trouble.

2. Bench area. No one is allowed around or on the bench except players, coaches and managers. This is a Lexington Little League rule and is not an attempt to make your teams “look like a real softball team”: it is a safety issue. Each of you has enough to think about without having to worry about a non-player getting in the way or picking up a bat. No parents, no siblings, no friends. A good rule of thumb is to ask families to watch the game from along the foul line, beyond first or third base, rather than from behind the plate or behind the bench. This is a new rule and parents who are used to watching the game from behind the plate or from the bench may object.

*Each field has its own set of issues. At Franklin, there are swings directly behind the third base bench and that entire area gets crowded with parents and kids. Bridge School is particularly dangerous. There are no fences separating the benches from spectators and there is constant foot traffic from the school driveway past both benches over to the playground behind the field. Plus, parents and kids love to set up chairs right behind the backstop. You must keep your benches clear and keep parents from congregating behind home plate.*

3. No coaches are allowed in the outfield or out of the normal bench area during play.

4. “Must Play in the Infield” Rule. There are “Must Play” rules concerning playing in the infield. There are many managers who track their opponent’s substitution scheme and will bring it to your attention if you have failed to play all of your players in the infield for the necessary number of innings – perhaps not what you want to hear in the bottom of the sixth inning of a tight game. So that everyone is on the same page: there are only six (6) traditional infield positions and every player must play one of those positions in accordance with the “Lexington Little League Exceptions to Official ASA Rules and Regulations for 2014.”

5. No player sits twice before all players have sat once. This rule also applies to extra innings.

6. Players may NOT play more than three (3) innings per position per game, including the pitcher (except in the case of extra innings). Keep in mind that all players must also play two innings in the infield per game.

7. Players are limited to three (3) innings pitched per game and nine innings per week. One pitch equals one inning for this rule only.

8. 5<sup>th</sup> Grade pitchers. Major League managers must pitch **at least two 5<sup>th</sup> Grade players a total of twelve (12) complete innings** over the course of the season. The purpose of this rule is to develop pitching for the following year. Each manager is now being asked to log and enter pitchers’ ages and inning counts after each game, so you will have to keep track of this information.

9. The batting order will remain as a continuous order, picking up at the next game where the last out in previous game was made. Managers may change this order one time during the regular season on the third weekend of the season. Managers may re-set the batting order for each playoff game.

10. Bunting is allowed in the Major Leagues

11. Players may steal third base only in the Majors; no stealing of second or home.
12. Players “must slide or avoid”; this is an ASA rule that will be enforced by ASA umpires.
13. No head-first slides while advancing to a base. The player can *return* to a base head first, but cannot *advance* to a base head-first. The player advancing into a base head-first should be called out by the umpire.
14. The Six Run Mercy Rule applies to all innings except the last inning when an unlimited number of runs can be scored by either team.
15. A full game is 6 innings, but no inning may start more than one and three quarters (1.75) hours after the ACTUAL start of the game. Regular season games may end in a tie.
16. An umpire’s judgment call may not be appealed. If you have a question or need for clarification please address this in an email to the Commissioner of Umpires and copy the President of the Major League. Do not go to the umpire.
17. Protests should be announced when the situation prompting the protest occurs and, in all circumstances, before the conclusion of the game. A written protest must be filed with the president of your league within 24 hours of the conclusion of the game (e-mail will suffice). The protest will be decided by the Minor or Major League president(s) in conjunction with the Lexington Little League Board of Directors. *By accepting a manager’s position in the Lexington Little League program, you agree to abide by the decisions of the Lexington Little League Board of Directors and its officers.*

### **C. Some guidelines**

1. Official Scorekeeper. The home team is the official scorekeeper but the scorekeepers for both teams are expected to work together to prevent problems from arising. They should consult at the end of each inning to confirm the score, batting order, etc.
2. Rules Violations. If you or your scorekeeper become aware of a situation which would give rise to a protest, disqualification or forfeit, it is *your duty* to bring it to the attention of the opposing manager as soon as possible. For instance, if you are aware that a pitcher has only three innings left for the current week, and those innings have been used up during your game, you should warn the other manager of an impending problem as soon as that pitcher takes the mound for what would be his seventh inning. If the manager fails to heed your warning, then a protest should be lodged and appropriate action will be taken by the League. At the same time, every manager is held responsible for her own actions and should not expect an opponent to save her from mistakes.
3. Player Discipline. Lexington Little League managers are granted wide discretion regarding safety, discipline and sportsmanship on their teams. In the case of a particularly difficult child, ask the parents for advice and even insist that they attend practices and games to help with their child. You are not a babysitter. Call your league president for assistance if you are having an especially hard time.
4. Bats. Each game the manager will assign a parent/coach to watch the bats and prevent players from picking up or swinging bats during the game.

5. Catcher's gear. In order to keep the game moving, you should have your catcher gear up *before* the end of an inning. If she is on base when there are two outs you may pinch run for her with the player who made the last out.

6. Field dimensions for the Major League are: 60 feet for the base paths and 40 feet for the pitching mound from home (distances measured from the back of home plate). Ball size = 12 inch.

7. Umpire does not show up for the game. Don't cancel the game. Instead, choose a parent from each team: one to call balls and strikes from the mound and the other to call the bases. The home team manager will have the final say on which parent umpires where.

**If an umpire does not show up, please call Julie Fenn as soon as possible at 781-608-7574 to let her know the teams involved, the field and time of the scheduled game.**

8. Umpires. We have High School and College Students, and occasionally ASA-certified umpires working our Major League games. Lexington Little League will not tolerate managers or coaches harassing or intimidating any umpires. In addition, managers are responsible for the behavior of their parents - it is your duty to speak to any parents that are out of line. *All reports of inappropriate behavior by managers, coaches or parents will be investigated by the Board of Directors and could be cause for a manager or coach being suspended or removed from the team.* If you have a question or need for clarification please address this in an email to the Commissioner of Umpires and copy the President of the Major League. Do not go to the umpire.

#### **D. Rainy Days, Rainouts & Make-up Games**

Sometimes it is just pouring out and even if it stops raining the fields are too wet to play. If this happens, we can occasionally let managers know in advance that the fields are unplayable and the game can be called early in the afternoon. Check our web site at [www.lexingtonlittleleague.org](http://www.lexingtonlittleleague.org).

However, it is the rare situation that calls for a game to be postponed before 3:00 PM. Usually the managers will have to be in contact with each other over the course of the day and a decision is only reached much later in the day, or even at the field. The home team manager is responsible for the final call *before* the game starts. If at all possible, play the game. A little water on the field shouldn't keep the game from starting. Bring your own equipment and try to get the field in shape...keep safety in mind, but don't make the call too early. We would rather pay an umpire and have a last minute rainout than call a game too soon and then have the sun come out! Re-scheduling these games is very difficult, as many of you know.

If the game is called early in the day, then the home team manager should call Julie Fenn as soon as possible so she can cancel the umpire. Call her on her cell and leave a message: (781) 608-7574.

Once the game has started, the umpire – and only the umpire – has authority to call or postpone the game, whether for rain or darkness. Generally, she will do this with input from the managers, but the umpire's first concern is the players' safety, not necessarily how important the game is to the final standings – please respect her decision.

To re-schedule a rain out, the home team manager should e-mail (no phone calls!) **Bob McConnell** at [rbcconnell@peoplepc.com](mailto:rbcconnell@peoplepc.com) with a proposed make-up date and time. Bob will review the field

schedule, confirm that your proposed date is OK, then assign a field, schedule an umpire and e-mail back a confirmation. It is then the home team manager's responsibility to contact his opponent with the information.

Occasionally – very occasionally – two games are inadvertently scheduled for the same field at the same time. Usually, one of the two games is a rescheduled rainout and the other is a regularly scheduled game. The latter of these two games should take precedence and be played on the scheduled field. The bumped teams should try to relocate their game or reschedule through Bob McConnell, if necessary.

*All regular season games will be played by all team before the playoffs begin. It is in your best interests to play rain outs as soon as possible and not wait until the last week of the season.*

### **E. Game Reports**

The winning manager is responsible for logging into the web site and entering the game score information. You will be given a password so you can get into the site. Both managers must log into the web site and enter pitching information: pitchers, ages, innings pitched.

### **F. Publicity**

The winning manager is also responsible for turning in a write-up of the game to the publicity person for the league. Typically, the write-up is limited to 60 words and mentions three players from the winning team and two or three from the losing team. You will be given the name of the publicity contact.

It is helpful to combine comments about the winners and losers instead of always listing the losing team last. That way, at least one name from the losing team will be included in the story even if it is edited by the newspaper. Obviously, try to mention the name of every player on your team at least once over the course of the season. You may find it helpful to appoint one of the team parents to act as publicity person for you.

Please e-mail your game reports to **Claire Sheth** at [clairebsheth@yahoo.com](mailto:clairebsheth@yahoo.com) Kindly do NOT send the report as an attachment but include it in the body of the e-mail itself.

### **G. Scorebooks**

Each manager receives a scorebook and it should be used to keep score of every game. You are encouraged to have your lineup set before you get to the field. Also, fill out the lineup cards, with uniform numbers, for the opposing manager prior to the game.

### III. First Aid Guidelines

A. Bring the following to **every** game and practice:

- First Aid kit
- Ice--pack a small cooler with ice cubes and some small towels or wash cloths
- Emergency telephone numbers for all players
- Water
- Cell phone

B. Talk to all the parents before the season starts. Encourage them to tell you about any medical problems so you will know what to do if there is an emergency. If there are any particular medical issues that are serious, (e.g., allergies to be stings or peanuts) ask the parent to stay at the game or practice with you.

C. If it looks serious:

- Assist the parents as they seek medical attention.
- Draft a written explanation of the incident and forward it to the League president.

D. R.I.C.E.

**Rest (and Removal) Ice Compression Elevation**

# Lexington Little League Softball Exceptions to Rules - Major Leagues

## (Revised – March 2014)

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### **Official ASA Rules will apply to all games, with the following exceptions:**

#### **I. Players/Playing Time**

1. A team will consist of 10 players. The 10<sup>th</sup> player must play in the outfield and as such must be stationed at least three feet beyond the edge of the grass behind the base-path. Teams must have 8 players to start a game. If a team is reduced to 7 players, it must forfeit the game, unless both teams agree to continue.

2. a.) No player shall sit out for 2 consecutive innings.

b.) No player shall sit more than 2 innings during any game

c.) No player may sit out a second inning unless all other players have sat out once. Partial inning sit outs must be for a total of 3 defensive outs to count as one inning and must also satisfy the above restrictions. Innings missed due to a player's late arrival or leaving early may or may not be counted at the discretion of the manager. Exceptions for disciplinary action can be taken but the division league president must be notified at time of game report. This Rule shall apply to extra inning games, in which case no player shall sit a third inning until all have sat two innings.

3. Players may NOT play the same position for more than 3 innings of a game, including the pitcher (unless the game goes into extra innings).

4. Each game, each player must be assigned to play two (2) innings of infield within the first 4 innings. For the purposes of this Rule, “infield” is defined as one of the six (6) traditional infield positions: pitcher, catcher, first base, second base, third base and shortstop. Players designated with safety issues by the Player Agent, at or before the beginning of the season are exempt from this rule. Player Agent may review a player’s designation during the season. If you have 13 players on your roster and all attend a game, note that it will take until the 5<sup>th</sup> inning for your final player to get her second inning in the infield. This is the only situation in which you may wait until the 5<sup>th</sup> inning to fulfill this rule. Since games do not always get to the 5<sup>th</sup> inning, please rotate which girl is your last player to get a second inning in the infield if you end up with 13 players on multiple occasions.

#### **II. Start/Forfeit/Official Length of Game**

1. A team that is not ready to play within 15 minutes of the scheduled start of the game will forfeit the game. Maximum game time from the scheduled start is 2 hours (the umpires are paid for up to 2 hours of work). The last inning for a game must start no later than 1 hour and 45 minutes after the ACTUAL start of the game.

2. The official length of a complete game is 6 innings. A minimum of 3 innings must be played for a game to be official (or 2½ innings if the home team is ahead). Regular season games may end in a tie.

### **III. Coaches**

Adult coaches are allowed at first and third bases only and are not permitted in the outfield.

### **IV. Pitching**

1. The pitching mound will be Forty (40) feet from home plate. And ball size is now 12 inch to align with Middle School and Gaels programs.

2. A pitcher or relief pitcher entering a game is allowed a maximum of five warm-up pitches or one minute of warm-up. Anyone less than eighteen (18) years old warming up a pitcher, on or off the diamond, must wear a catcher's mask and a helmet.

3. If a pitcher hits three (3) batters in a single inning, the pitcher must be removed for the remainder of that inning.

4. No pitcher may pitch more than three innings per game or more than nine innings per week. For the purposes of this Rule, one pitch shall equal one inning. However, for 5<sup>th</sup> graders, 3 outs equal one inning pitched. More than one 5<sup>th</sup> grader may be utilized to get 3 outs, which will still only be counted as one inning pitched. Each week shall reset on Sunday at 6:00 PM. During extra innings, players are permitted to surpass the three-inning limit.

5. During regular season play, at least 2 players for each grade (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>) on each team must contribute a combined total of twelve (12) innings pitched. Failure to do so will result in administrative forfeit of one game for each inning that the team is not in compliance with this rule.

6. Pitching will reset for the Championship game.

### **V. Catchers**

Catchers must be ready when there are 2 outs, unless they are a base runner, the on-deck batter, or at bat. If the umpire allows it, a courtesy runner (player who made last out) may be substituted for an "on-base" catcher to speed the flow of the game.

### **VI. Batting**

1. A player throwing the bat will receive one warning and if she throws the bat again in that game, she will be called out. The ball will be dead and base runners will not advance.

2. On deck batters will not be allowed to swing a bat due to the lack of a safe "on-deck circle."

3. A continuous batting order shall be used during the regular season. The player on-deck when a game ends becomes the leadoff batter of the next game. Managers may change this order one time during the regular season on the third weekend of the season. Managers may re-set the batting order for each playoff game.

4. Bunting is allowed. If a batter squares up, showing the bunt, she must offer at the pitch or take the pitch by pulling her bat back. If a batter swings away after squaring as if to bunt she will immediately

be called out and the ball will be declared dead.

5. The “dropped third strike rule” will NOT apply in Major League.

6. A six run mercy rule shall apply to every inning of the game except the final inning when the mercy rule comes off, unless if due to time limit (no new inning can start after 1 hour & 45 mins) both managers agree before the inning starts that the mercy rule is off. The umpire must also be aware the discussion so they are informed of the change.

## **VII. Fielding**

1. Middle infielders may start play no shallower than the infield grass or three feet in from the base line.

2. First and third basemen may start play no more than 10 feet in front of the base.

3. Outfielders must start play three feet behind the back edge of the infield.

4. The infield fly rule is not to be enforced in the Major League.

## **VIII. Base Runners**

1. All batters and base runners must use batting helmets with cage.

2. Base runners may leave the base after the pitch crosses the plate. Runners may be called out for leaving the base early. Runners at 3<sup>rd</sup> base may take no more than a 3-step lead after the ball crosses the plate. Dancing off the baseline or trying to draw or disrupt the catcher’s throw is not allowed and will lead to a warning from the umpire.

3. Stealing third base is allowed. No stealing second or home.

4. Base runners may advance home from third on an overthrow back to the pitcher.

5. Base runners must slide or avoid collision at any base, including home plate, or they will be called out.

6. The ball is considered “live” – and runners may advance – until a fielder throws the ball to the pitcher and the pitcher actually controls the ball within the 16’ circle around the center of the pitcher’s rubber. Any player less than half way to a base must return to the prior base at the time the pitcher controls the ball within the circle. The home coach is urged to mark the 16-foot diameter circle with chalk (or flour) before each game.

## **IX. Equipment**

1. Players may wear cleats, but metal spikes/cleats are not permitted.

2. Mouth guards are highly recommended.

## **X. International tie-breaker rule**

If a game ends in a tie and must continue into extra innings, the International tie-breaker rule goes into effect for all extra innings needed until a team is victorious. The team at-bat places a runner on 2<sup>nd</sup> base to start each inning.

## **XI. Call-Ups**

1. If a manager knows that her team will be short-handed for a game, call-up player(s) from the Minors are an option. Early in the season, the Minors Commissioner will give to the Majors Commissioner a list of potential Minors players eligible and interested in serving as call-ups, along with player contact information. Managers are responsible for contacting potential call-ups directly.
2. Call-ups may not skip their own Minors game to play in the Majors.
3. Call-ups may only play in the outfield and must be added to the end of that game's batting order.
4. If late arrivals allow a manager to field a full team without the call-up(s), the call-up(s) remain in their spot in the batting order for the rest of the game but may be moved to the bench defensively to allow the actual roster members to play the field.