

NATIONAL MASTERS CHAMPIONSHIPS

Competition Rules

BASEBALL RULES

1. The normal Rules of Baseball apply in all circumstances other than those mentioned here.

AGE REGULATIONS

1. All players must have turned the minimum age for their respective competition (35, 45 or 55) prior to start of competition
2. No exemptions will be allowed for under-age players
3. Players may play in younger age group competitions (ie. a 46yr old can play in the O35 competition)

SQUAD NUMBERS

1. Team squads minimum of fifteen (15) players and maximum of twenty (20) players, unless special consideration has been given by organisers.
2. Squad names are to be submitted to series organisers prior to a team playing its first game. No interchange or addition is to occur after a team has played its first game.
3. All players, including Designated Runners and Courtesy Runners, are to appear on team sheets at the commencement of each game to be eligible to play in that game.
4. All players must be officially registered prior to commencement of first game

MINIMUM NUMBERS

1. A minimum of seven players is to take the field for a team to start a game.
2. If there are only seven players available and one is injured after play has commenced, the game will continue, with two "blanks" for the batting side. In this event, the opposition is encouraged but not required to offer fielding substitutes.
3. In situations where a club/association has multiple teams competing, if a team is in danger of falling below minimum numbers during the pool stage of competition, they can add players to their squad from another registered team, as long as they meet the age requirements. In this situation, the replacing player cannot play for their original team during this time, unless they would also fall below 10 players
4. If this situation occurs in finals stage, replacing player must come as a "like for like" position from last player ruled out, thus removing the ability of selectively loading a team

REPLACEMENTS

1. Players may be replaced and they may re-enter the game, but ONLY in the batting spot of the replacement player (their original spot).
2. If it wishes, and provided there is no disruption to the batting order, any team may alternate defensive duties between its squad on an innings by innings basis.
3. To avoid delays, any defensive replacement should remain on the field for the entire inning (unless injured of course). Like the Extra Hitters Rule, this provision is there to allow the greatest possible involvement of players in any squad.

NUMBER OF GAMES

1. Providing minimum team numbers are met, each side will play a minimum of five games during the tournament
2. Format is planned to be pool matches, followed by semi finals and finals
3. Where there is an uneven number of teams in an age division, teams may play a different number of games.
4. All sides will have at least one day where they will play two games.

GAME TIMES

1. Depending on final number of teams, all games will be 90 minutes or 7 innings duration,
2. 10 Run "Mercy Rule" will apply after five innings in all games.
3. The 5 Minute Rule will apply in all preliminary games and finals. If at completion of even innings, from the call of "side", there remains more than five minutes before the scheduled completion time, further time of up to ten minutes past the scheduled finish time shall be allowed to complete the new innings. Should this innings not be completed (for example, if the side hitting first bats through for fifteen minutes), then the result reverts back to normal rules (either at even innings or the score at the end of play). If the game is tied at ten minutes past the scheduled finish time but the home side has not yet batted, that innings shall continue until a result is achieved.
4. If a game remains tied at the completion of even innings, then the "Tie Breaker Rule" shall be played (see Rule 7).
5. If five minutes or less remains at the completion of even innings, the game shall end.

SCORING

1. A maximum of seven (7) runs can be scored in any batting innings in any game before the umpire calls an end to that innings. If a team has scored 6 runs in and a batter hits for extras (eg home run) with runners on base, only the first run (the seventh) counts for scoring purposes.

TIE BREAKER

1. If, in any game, the scores are tied at the completion of time and/or equal innings, extra equal innings will be played to achieve a result, as a TIE BREAKER. The last out of the previous batting innings is to be placed on second base as a runner, with no outs. In the equaliser, the same situation is to be effected and the game played out until a winning result is achieved after equal innings have been played.
2. Because of the tightness of the scheduling, it is understood that any Tie-Breaker will make a game run over time. In that case, any ensuing game on that ground - or for those teams - will be put back a brief but appropriate amount of time.

FORFEITS

1. In the event of a forfeit, the team in attendance (provided that it has the minimum of eight players) will be awarded the win and a 7-0 scoreline for percentage. The forfeiting side will be recorded with a 0-7 loss.

POOL POINT SCORES

1. Based on results of individual games, teams will receive:
 - a. 3 points for a win
 - b. 2 points for washout
 - c. 1 point for a loss

FINALS QUALIFICATION - PLAYERS

1. Players must appear in at least one of the preliminary games played by their team to be eligible for finals. This modest requirement recognises that not all players are available at all times. Designated Runners and Courtesy Runners are deemed to have played for these purposes. Designated Hitters and Extra Hitters are deemed to have played after they have made one plate appearance.

FINALS QUALIFICATIONS - TEAMS

1. The final standings will be declared by those at the end of the preliminary rounds.
 - a. First, by most points
 - b. If equal, then by head-to-head record between the teams on even win percentage, but only if head-to-head can be applied (for example, if teams in a particular age group are level but have not played each other, then the other criteria herein will be applied).
 - c. If again equal (or if head-to-head cannot be applied), then by the lesser number of runs scored against over the same number of games played (if an uneven number of games has been played by the teams, the lesser average runs against per game will be the determinant).
 - d. If again equal, then by total percentage (runs FOR divided by the total of runs FOR and AGAINST).
 - e. If still equal, then by total of runners on base in all completed games played, whether those runners scored or not.

FINALS FORMAT.

1. Finals Format will depend upon the number of teams entered in particular age groupings from year to year.
2. After Pool Stages, teams will be split in Premier Division (top 4 teams) and Divisions 1 (and additional divisions depending on teams) for finals
3. If 2 Pools in Pool stages, top 2 teams from each pool would proceed to Premier Division
4. If 3 Pools in Pool stages, top team from each pool, plus best 2nd place team will proceed to Premier Division
5. If 4 teams in Pool stages, top team from each pool would proceed to Premier Division
6. All other teams after pool stages will be ranked to play in Division 1, 2, 3 etc finals
7. Standings will be determined under the procedure outlined in (6). As a general rule, the two top teams in any division will play off in the final. However, if an age division is split into two groups but not graded as Division One and Division Two, the top team in each group will go to the final. When final team numbers are known, the procedure for 2020 will be confirmed.

PITCHERS.

1. Pitchers in any age grouping are to throw a maximum of FOUR innings per game, including finals. Although it is possible, in a double-header situation, to throw eight innings per day, managers are encouraged to provide common sense "rest time".

WALKS.

1. Each team is allowed to intentionally walk any opposition hitter once in a game.
2. The total number of intentional walks each team is allowed in any game is one.
3. If, in the plate umpire's judgment, a team attempts an intentional walk for the second time, he must stop play and have the catcher resume his defensive position behind the plate. A balk will be called and any runners will advance one base. The count on the batter will re-start at 0-0.

RUNNERS.

1. Designated Runners MUST be used for all pitchers and catchers when there are two out.
2. Two additional Courtesy Runners are allowed for any other runners in one innings.
3. Designated and Courtesy Runners can be in the playing line-up, as long as no delay nor disruption is caused to the game. For this purpose, courtesy runners should be the most recent outs or players who are not already in the lineup.

DESIGNATED HITTER

1. The Designated Hitter is optional for all games.

MULTIPLE BATTERS HIT BY PITCHER

1. If a pitcher hits four (4) batters in one game, he must be replaced on the mound.
2. No other penalty applies.

EXTRA HITTERS.

1. The following is for all pool matches and lower division finals. No extra hitters allowed in the Premier Division finals in each age group
2. To involve greater numbers of players, a maximum of seven extra hitters can be added to the batting line-up. A side can thereby have up to sixteen players batting, if it wishes.
3. The extra hitters can bat at any position in the lineup (they do not have to be ten through to sixteen).
4. All extra hitters must be included on the team sheet prior to the game and all batters must allow in the specified order, with normal procedures and penalties for batting out of order to apply.
5. Substitutions for extra hitters can be made according to usual baseball practices. If an extra hitter is injured during a game, he may be replaced by another player from the bench.
6. If the umpire is satisfied that no other players are available from the bench (for example, if all squad members are already batting), then he will instruct that the players to follow are all lifted one spot in the order.
7. The "blank" rule will not apply in this case and there will be no penalty to the batting team.
8. Where a side is playing extra hitters and a starting fielder has to leave the game through injury, the batting side may not have another player available from the bench. If the umpire is satisfied that is the case, then one of the extra hitters will be nominated to go into the field but will remain in his same spot in the order. All players will be moved up a spot to cover the injured player. The "blank" rule will not apply in this case and there will be no penalty to the batting team. See, too, Rule 19, regarding the use of replacement players.
9. Extra hitters may be interchanged with starting fielders if the team wishes, in which event any former fielder will assume "extra hitter" status. All players must retain their same spot in the batting order.

EQUIPMENT

1. All teams are to supply their own equipment.
2. All players while on the field and managing must wear their nominated uniform and colours.
3. Batters and runners are to wear two-eared helmets at all times. Base coaches are required to wear helmets.

MATCH BALLS

1. Teams should supply sufficient match quality balls for each of their games.

BATS.

1. Only wood and composite bats (subject to the Official Rules of Baseball) may be used by players in any age group.
2. Any player found using a non-compliant bat will be removed from the game immediately.
3. If his team offends again in that game, a 7-0 forfeit will be declared.

COLLISION RULE.

1. No deliberate or negligent physical contact between players is acceptable (in particular, on plays at the home plate).
2. In any tag or force situation, runners will be required either to slide or to give up on the play.
3. Any conduct that in the umpires' opinion was either negligent or deliberate in causing physical contact (or attempting any physical contact) will result in a mandatory "out" call and the ejection of the offending player for the rest of that game.

START TIME

1. If a team fails to appear within ten (10) minutes of the scheduled game time, then a forfeit will be claimed, with match points and a 7-0 score awarded to the team in attendance, provided that it has the eight players required for it to otherwise start the match.
2. If neither side has enough players after the fifteen minute grace period, then there will be no points awarded and no score recorded for either team.

TIME WASTING

1. Time wasting tactics will not be tolerated. Umpires will be instructed to enforce this.
2. In situation where time wasting is called by the umpire, the batter can choose to progress to first base, and all base runners would progress as standard if occupying affected bases. Choice will be in batters favour

SPORTSMANSHIP

1. Teams are expected to observe reasonable sporting ethics and to present Masters baseball in its best possible light.
2. Whilst not diminishing the competitiveness of the contest, players are encouraged to recognise the efforts of opposition players and are urged to refrain from strategies or behaviour that might belittle, embarrass or endanger their opposition.

SCORERS & TIMERS

1. Each team is to supply a scorer and regulation scorebook for their own games.

UMPIRES

1. Teams are required to nominate at least one accredited umpire per team to officiate games
2. Teams are required to provide home plate and first base umpires for opposition games. Depending on the draw, this will normally be for the game following theirs
3. Neutral umpires will be appointed for finals from nominated umpires

PROTESTS

1. In the event of a protest, usual baseball procedure will be followed at the time (consulting with the umpire and marking the scorebook).
2. Protests after any scheduled matches will be heard by the series Disputes Committee (a three person panel nominated by Tournament Organisers) immediately before start of next relevant game
3. Team Managers and Umpires are encouraged to resolve the problem "on field" if at all possible.

MEDALS & TROPHIES

1. Winners of the overall age group division will receive a Perpetual Shield for its safekeeping over the ensuing twelve months, a shield/plaque to be kept permanently, as well as medals for team members
2. Winners of the lower ranked finals in each age division will receive a shield/plaque.

WET WEATHER.

1. In the event of wet weather during preliminary games, umpires will be instructed to make every effort to ensure that legal games (65 minutes or 2 complete innings) are completed, without compromising player safety. If any preliminary game(s) cannot be completed at the scheduled time, organisers will attempt to reschedule at another time.
2. Any rescheduled matches must be completed by the second last day. If it is not possible to reschedule such matches, a point and a 0-0 draw will be awarded to each affected team. Results count towards final standings. For pitchers, reschedules are deemed played at their original time.