

Mustang Division game play is conducted according to the rules of Major League Baseball, National PONY Baseball, and supplemental rules specific to the Seattle PONY Baseball League (SPBL).

In order of precedence, the rules shall be applied as follows:

1. SPBL Mustang Division Supplemental Rules
2. National PONY Baseball Rules
3. Major League Baseball Rules.

Inquiries regarding any of these rules may be directed to rules@spbpony.org.

Seattle PONY Baseball Mustang Division Supplemental Rules

1. Sportsmanship

Players, coaches, parents and spectators shall practice good sportsmanship at all times. Respect shall be shown towards umpires, coaches, parents, spectators, and players. Coaches are responsible for the behavior of their players and their supporters. Complaints shall be referred to the Commissioner of the Mustang Division for resolution.

2. Safety

A. Uniforms and Equipment

Players shall wear league-issued jerseys, socks, and caps. Each player provides his or her own baseball pants. No player shall take the field without a complete uniform.

Metal cleats are not allowed.

B. Bats

Bat diameter is limited to a maximum of 2.5 inches. "Big Barrel" bats are not allowed.

C. Dugouts

i. The third-base dugout is assigned to the home team. The home team is determined by the schedule during the regular season. During the season-ending tournament the coaches of the two teams will flip a coin to determine home and away teams.

ii. Players shall remain in their respective dugouts when they are not batting or playing in the field. Equipment shall remain in the dugout when not in use. Players in the dugout shall not hold bats in their hands. Climbing of chain link fences is strictly prohibited.

iii. Players may take positions outside the dugout when they are not batting or playing in the field under the following conditions:

- On-deck batters may take practice swings near the fence and away from other players and coaches. On-deck batters must wear league-approved batting helmets. On-deck batters shall be positioned on the third-base side when the current batter is right-handed and on the first-base side when the current batter is left-handed.
- Relief pitchers may warm up with a catcher in outfield foul territory, with pitches thrown parallel to the foul line. A coach shall be positioned to protect the pitcher and catcher from foul balls.
- When a dugout is not habitable because of residual water, players may sit or stand as a group, at the option of the head coach, on the grandstands or tightly against the fence behind the dugout.
- Players may use training devices (e.g., batting tee with catch net or "SwingAway") in an area out of the field of play, provided there is appropriate adult supervision, and that the safety of all other players, coaches, umpires, and spectators is not compromised in any way.

iv. Other than players and officially designated coaches, no person may be in the dugout or on the field of play during a game except in case of a medical emergency.

D. Thrown Equipment

i. Upon the first occurrence of a thrown bat during the game, the umpire shall issue a warning to the batter and indicate to the keeper of the official scorebook that the player has been warned. On the second occurrence, the player is immediately called out, whether or not the action was intentional. On the third thrown-bat infraction, intentional or not, the player is immediately called out and ejected from the game. Each thrown-bat infraction is a judgment call by the umpire.

ii. Any player throwing in anger or frustration a helmet, bat, or any other league equipment, may be ejected from the game. The head coach of the offending player may, with umpire approval, remove the player from the game (such removal shall be considered reasonable discipline for purposes of Rule 5.B), or the umpire may determine that ejection is required. In addition, if replacement of equipment is required as a result of such an incident, a \$35 replacement fee will be levied against the head coach of the offending player.

E. Batters and Baserunners on Field of Play

All players on the batting team who are out of the dugout at any time must wear league-approved batting helmets. This includes the current batter, all baserunners, players waiting their turn at bat, and players used as base coaches.

F. Illegal Players on Field of Play

Other than the current batter, the on-deck batter, any baserunners, or players coaching bases, no player on the batting team may enter the playing field while the ball is live. If the on-deck batter or other player interferes with a play, the runner closest to home plate will be called out.

G. Injuries/First Aid

Coaches are responsible for maintaining their league-issued first-aid kit and making sure it is present at all practices and games. At least one coach from each team must attend the league-sponsored preseason first-aid clinic. In the case of head and neck injuries, do not move the victim without permission of trained medical personnel. Use the league-established system to report all injuries to the Mustang Commissioner on the day of the injury.

H. Head-First Slides

Head-first slides are not allowed when the runner is attempting to gain a base. An infraction results in the runner being called out. Runners may return to a base already gained with a head-first dive or slide.

I. Slide Or Avoid

In any play at a base, except first base, the runner must slide, veer, or otherwise make reasonable effort to avoid contact with the fielder(s) attempting to make the play. A runner who does not make a reasonable effort to avoid contact will be called out. This is a judgment call by the umpire. If a player, or players on a team break this rule repeatedly, the umpire may issue warnings and/or ejections to players and/or coaches.

J. Base Coaches

At the commencement of each game, the head coach of each team will designate up to two additional persons to act as official coaches for the game. No other persons will be allowed in the dugout or to coach the base paths, except that players may coach the base paths if they are wearing a league-approved batting helmet.

3. Umpiring

A. Umpires

The league shall assign one paid, trained umpire to officiate each Mustang Division game. These umpires are generally teenaged current or former players from our league. Rule 3.D (Non-Professional Umpires) describes the proper procedure in the event that a league-designated umpire is not available.

B. Pre-Game Conference

Before the game, the umpire and head coaches shall meet to review rules, time limits as applicable, and the extent of the strike zone. Umpires are encouraged to call the strike zone liberally to increase the number of batted balls in play and decrease the number of bases on balls.

C. Judgment Calls Final

Judgment calls by umpires shall be final and may not be contested. This includes but is not restricted to ball/strike calls and safe/out decisions. If a question arises in relation to the rules, the head coach of a team may respectfully request a clarification. Argumentative behavior is not allowed. The head coach is allowed on the field with the umpire's permission. No other coach, parent, player or spectator may approach the umpire to discuss a decision in any way. Spectators, coaches, and players shall not stand behind the backstop or position themselves in any other way with the purpose of reviewing and/or challenging umpires' decisions. Spectators must move to a different position upon request of the umpire.

D. Non-Professional Umpires

In the event that the league-designated umpire does not appear at a scheduled game, or is otherwise unavailable, the game shall be officiated by umpires designated by the coaches of the teams playing. These umpires may be assistant coaches, parents, or other spectators. The game shall be officiated by two umpires. The home team shall provide the chief umpire to call balls and strikes, and generally preside over the game. The chief umpire may be positioned behind the pitcher's mound if suitable protective equipment is not available or if the umpire is otherwise uncomfortable in the customary position behind the plate. The visiting team shall provide a field umpire to assist in calling plays on the base paths. No other individuals shall make umpiring decisions in relation to the game. If an umpire must leave the game, both head coaches shall be notified and a new umpire designated.

4. Game Duration

A. Field Time

Fields are available for 2.5 hours for each game. This time is divided into 2 segments: 30 minutes for warm-up and 2 hours for the game. Beginning one half-hour before the published game time, the visiting team shall be allowed 10 minutes on the field for pre-game fielding practice. The home team shall follow with 10 minutes of pre-game practice.

B. Regular Season Game Time and Length

i. Regulation game--A regulation game consists of 6 complete innings.

ii. Official Game Time-- The official time of a game shall be measured as the time from (a) the published game starting time or (b) the time of the first pitch if no league-designated umpire was available and prepared to begin the game at the published game starting time. Official game time is kept by the scorekeeper for the home team.

ii. Time limit-- No new inning shall commence after the game time has reached 100 minutes.

iii. "Final Inning" Rules-- As the game time approaches the 100-minute limit, head coaches and umpires must agree in advance if an inning other than the 6th inning is to be played as the final inning according to the provisions of Rule 7.A (Five-Run Limit). Two consecutive innings may be played as the "final inning" if the first so designated is actually completed before game time reaches 100 minutes. If the final inning ends with the score tied, extra innings should be played if possible, but no new inning may begin after game time has reached 100 minutes. If the game is tied and there is no time for extra innings, the game officially ends in a tie.

Instruction and experience are the highest priorities in the Mustang Division. Accordingly, if the time limit results in fewer than 6 innings played, the complete bottom half of the final inning shall be played (home team shall bat) even when the home team leads after the top half of the final inning. If the home team enters their half of the final inning tied or trailing and takes the lead during the inning, the game shall end immediately at the point at which they take the lead.

iv. No negotiating--All provisions of Rule 4.B shall be followed for all regular season games, without exception. No umpire or coach discretion is allowed.

C. Expediting the Flow of the Game

Games should be played through 6-inning completion as often as possible. Coaches shall endeavor to expedite the flow of the game in general so that 6 innings may be completed in the available time.

Recommended measures to expedite the game include:

- A coach or player should warm up the pitcher while the catcher is preparing for the inning. If a player warms up a pitcher, he or she must wear protective gear as required in Rule 5.F.
- Coaches should inform their players of the upcoming inning's rotation and field assignments prior to the end of their batting half of the inning.
- When there are 2 outs, the player who is to play catcher in the next half-inning should wear leg guards, including when he or she is the on-deck batter. If the player is on base with 2 outs, he or she may be replaced with a pinch-runner in order to begin putting on catching gear. In this case, the pinch-runner shall be the player who was most recently retired as a batter or baserunner.

5. Positions and Rotation

A. Number and Positioning of Defensive Players on the Field

A maximum of 10 players are allowed on the field. A team may play an official game with 8 or 9 players. No more than 6 players, including pitcher and catcher, may be positioned in the infield. All others must be positioned in the outfield, at least 20 feet beyond the basepaths at the time of the pitch is released.

B. Field Rotation

All players on a team shall play an equal amount of time in the field in the course of every game, except in the case of injury or reasonable disciplinary action (in cases where it is impossible for every player to play exactly the same number of innings, the difference between any two players in number of innings played shall not exceed 1). Coaches shall report to the Commissioner immediately following a game whenever a player is disciplined in this way.

C. Position Rotation

i. Players are limited to 3 innings of play in the infield in each game and 3 innings of play at any one position in any one game. Pitcher is considered an infield position for purposes of this rule, but catcher is not.

APPROVED RULING: In some cases, a team may have too few players present to field a regulation infield every inning, while limiting each individual player to 3 innings or fewer in the infield. In such cases, some players may play more than 3 innings in the infield. The "extra" infield innings must be spread around: the number of infield innings for any one player may not exceed the number of infield innings of any other player by more than 1.

ii. In 4 completed defensive innings, each player shall have played at least 1 in the infield; in 5 completed defensive innings, each player shall have played 2 in the infield.

iii. Players shall not be rotated mid-inning unless necessary because of injury, relief pitching changes, or disciplinary action.

D. Honor System

It is the responsibility of the head coach to insure that the team's positional assignments adhere to Rules 5.B and 5.C. Each team shall keep track of its own rotation assignments. Coaches shall honor each other coach's commitment to this rule without question.

E. Pitching

i. Players are limited to pitching in 2 innings in a single game and in 6 innings in any 7-day period. For the purposes of this rule, throwing a single pitch in an inning counts as pitching in one inning.

ii. Pitchers must rest a minimum of 40 hours after throwing in 2 innings in a single game. For the purposes of this rule, time is counted between the official game starting times.

iii. Pitchers may pitch only one stint in any single game. That is, a pitcher may not pitch in one inning, then play at another position, and then return to pitch in a second inning.

iv. Pitchers may not intentionally throw curve balls.

v. If an umpire deems that a pitcher cannot control his or her pitches, the umpire may require the pitcher's removal from the game.

F. Catching

Catchers are required to wear league-approved protective gear in games: mask and helmet, leg guards, and chest protector. Any player receiving warm-up pitches shall wear, at a minimum, a mask and helmet. Male catchers must wear a rigid protective cup at all times that they are playing or warming up pitchers.

G. Batting Order

All players present and able at a game shall be included in the batting order and shall bat when their turn comes, whether or not they are currently assigned a fielding position. At the beginning of the season the head coach will set a batting order that includes all players on the team roster. That batting order will be maintained continuously throughout the season so that the on-deck batter at the end of one game will become the leadoff hitter for the next game. At a time designated by the Commissioner near the mid-point of the season, the head coach may exercise a one-time option to reorganize the batting order.

6. Introduction of Advanced Rules

A typical nine-year-old player in our Mustang Division is experiencing “kid-pitch” baseball for the first time. There is a lot to learn and a lot to think about. By introducing rules during the season, the game grows as the players’ experience grows.

A. Rules In Effect Entire Season

i. Players do all pitching. Balls and strikes are called as in typical baseball games, with a liberal strike zone to minimize walks, to encourage putting the ball in play, and to expedite the flow of the game.

ii. Baserunners are not allowed to lead off bases. Baserunners must maintain contact with their base until the ball is hit or crosses the plate. The umpire is solely responsible for making this call. If a runner leaves the base early, the head coach of the defensive team can accept any part of the play, all of the play, or none of the play, including the pitch. **Examples:** (1) After an illegal leadoff, the baserunner reaches the next base safely and the pitch is a called strike. The coach may opt to send the baserunner back to the original base, but keep the strike on the batter. (2) After an illegal leadoff, the baserunner attempts to steal second base. The pitch is called a ball. The catcher attempts to throw out the baserunner. The ball is overthrown into the outfield and the runner is then thrown out attempting to reach third base. The coach may keep the out but remove the called ball from the count.

iii. The Dropped Third Strike Rule is not in effect. That is, the batter is always out on strike three, whether or not the catcher handles the pitch.

iv. The Infield Fly Rule is in effect. For purposes of application of the rule in Mustang Division games, umpires are instructed to apply a definition of “can be caught with ordinary effort” appropriate for the skill level.

v. “Slug” or “slap” bunting is not allowed (that is, for safety, a player may not square to bunt and then pull the bat back and take a regular swing).

B. First Four Games of Season

Bunting is not allowed. Base stealing is not allowed.

APPROVED RULING: “Swinging bunts” are ok (i.e., when a player takes a full swing, makes only partial contact, and the ball travels into fair territory as it would when intentionally bunted; there is no minimum distance a ball must travel to be considered in play).

C. Regular Season Game Five through end of post-season tournament

Bunting is allowed.

Base stealing is allowed. Lead-offs are not allowed (see Rule 6.A.ii).

7. Additional Rules

A. Five-Run Limit

Except for the final inning (see 4.B.iii), a team is limited to scoring 5 runs per inning. In the final inning, if the score is tied or if the visiting team leads at the beginning of their turn at bat, the visiting team is limited to scoring 5 runs. If the visiting team trails at the beginning of their turn in the final inning, they may score enough runs to take a 5-run lead. If the home team trails by 5 runs or more at the beginning of their turn at bat in the final inning, they may score enough runs to tie the game, but not to win.

B. Baserunning

The ball is live once it is hit and put into play and runners may advance at their own risk. The umpire shall call the ball dead when it is returned to any player on the pitcher's mound, providing that no runners are in motion toward their next base at that point in time. Balls returned to the umpire are not dead unless called so by the umpire.

C. Field of Play

By definition, the field of play includes all fair territory plus foul territory between the foul line and the infield fence and the continuation of the infield fence line (imagined if necessary) to the outfield fence, or to infinity if there is no outfield fence. See Rule 7.1 for ground rules at Miller and Judkins Playfields. The boundaries of the field of play should be reviewed at the Pre-Game Conference before each game.

A batter will not be called out if a fielder catches a fly ball outside the field of play. When a batted ball that was originally fair bounces or rolls out of play, or if a fielder carries the ball out of play, the ball is declared dead at the time it goes out of play and the runners are awarded the next base beyond the one to which they were advancing at time the ball was declared dead. The umpire's judgment is final in the award of bases.

D. Overthrows

When a thrown ball leaves the field of play, each base runner shall be awarded one base in addition to the base to which he or she was advancing at the time the ball was thrown, unless that is impossible because of the status of the runner(s) ahead of him or her. If the ball is thrown out of play on a pick off attempt, the base runner shall be awarded the additional base, even if he or she was returning to the base already gained when the ball was thrown. When the ball is overthrown but remains in the field of play, the ball is live and the runners may advance any number of bases at their own risk (see Rule 7.1.ii.b for ground-rule exception at Miller Playfield).

E. Field Coaching

Coaches for the batting team may coach and/or instruct their players only from the dugout or from the first- and third-base coaching boxes. Exception: a coach may instruct a relief pitcher warming up in outfield foul territory or out of play (See Rule 1.C). Coaches for the defensive team may coach and/or instruct players only from inside the dugout, or in foul territory with their backs against the fence of their own dugout. This differs from Seattle PONY Baseball Pinto Division rules, which permit coaches to stand with their players in fair territory during the course of the game.

F. Balls

The home team is responsible for providing two new regulation baseballs (Injury Factor 10) for each game. Balls shall be given to the chief umpire at or before the Pre-Game Conference.

G. 10-Run "Mercy" Rule

i. During the regular season, if one team leads the other by 10 or more runs at the completion of the 4th or 5th inning, or if the home team leads by 10 or more runs after the completion of the top half of the 4th inning, the head coach of the trailing team shall decide whether the game is to continue.

ii. During the season-ending tournament, if one team leads the other by 10 or more runs at the completion of the 4th or 5th inning, or if the home team leads by 10 or more runs after the completion of the top half of the 4th inning, the game shall end immediately.

H. Scorekeeping and Timekeeping

While standings are not compiled by the league during the regular season, score is kept during each game. The home team is responsible for appointing a keeper of the official scorebook. The official scorekeeper is an official of the game, expected to assist the umpire(s), including by serving as a back-up

when ball-strike counts are questioned, by noting thrown-bat warnings, and by serving as the official time keeper (noting official game starting time according to Rule 4.B.ii).

I. Ground Rules for Judkins Playfield and Miller Playfield

i. At Judkins Field, the boundary of the field of play in the outfield is defined by the imaginary extension of the infield fence line until that line reaches the edge of a paved walking path. Beyond that point, the boundary is the edge of the walking path.

ii. Miller Field has a very fast outfield playing surface (packed dirt, no grass) and usually does not have outfield fences. Balls that would be slowed or stopped on other fields keep going. In response, ground rules have been established for Miller Playfield when there are no outfield fences:

a. When a batted ball first touches the ground in the infield (i.e., within the diamond described by the base paths), but then travels beyond the normal distance for outfield fences (about 160 feet from home base for Mustang), the umpire shall call the play dead and award the batter second base. A baserunner at first base when the play commenced shall be awarded third base. Baserunners at second or third base when the play commenced shall score.

b. When a batted ball clears the base path on the fly before touching the ground, the ball remains live regardless of how far it rolls in the outfield, and the batter may attempt to gain third base or the home run at his or her own risk. Both diamonds at Miller Playfield have areas in fair territory in the deep outfield that are considered out of play (e.g. up under the trees against the building; the outdoor basketball court). When a batted ball clears the base path on the fly before touching the ground and then rolls or bounds into these out-of-play areas, Rule 7.C applies.

c. In the case of overthrows where the ball remains in the field of play but travels beyond 160 feet from home base in the outfield, the umpire shall call the play dead and award each base runner one base in addition to the base to which he or she was advancing at the time the ball was thrown, unless that is impossible because of the status of the runner(s) ahead of him or her.

iii. Rule 7.I.ii. shall not be in effect if temporary outfield fences are present at Miller Playfield. The game shall be played under normal baseball rules, with appropriate ground rules in the event that a ball becomes lodged in or rolls under the outfield fence:

If a batted ball rolls under the outfield fence, bounces between gaps in the outfield fence, or bounces over the outfield fence, the batter shall be awarded an automatic double. Base runners shall be awarded two bases from the base they stood at the beginning of the play.

Batted balls that bounce off the fences and then out of the field of play shall be called per Rule 7.C. Thrown balls that bounce off the fences and then out of the field of play shall be called per Rule 7.D.