

2025 Mel Harder Rec League Rules

Revised 3/16/25



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Revised 3/13/25

Table of Contents

1. Official Game(s)	3	d.
Suspended Games.....	3	
e. Mercy Rule.....	3	f.
Run Limit	4	g. Time
Limits.....	4	h. Batting &
Pitching Time.....	4	
2. Playing Requirements	4	3.
Batting Requirements	4	
4. Pitching	5	
a. Pitching Distance:	5	b. Pitch
Count & Days Rest.....	5	g.
Balks.....	5	h.
Mound Visits.....	5	
i. Hit Batters.....	5	
j. Intentional Walks.....	5	
5. Baserunner(s):	6	
a. Sliding.....	6	
b. Leadoffs/Steals/Advancements.....	6	
c. Courtesy Runner.....	6	6.
Equipment	6	
a. Bats.....	6	
b. Game Ball(s).....	6	7.
Field(s)	7	
a. Field Preparation.....	7	
b. Base Path Distances.....	7	
c. Infield Practice.....	7	
8. Umpires	7	
9. General Rules	7	
a. Rule Changes.....	7	
b. Strike Zone.....	7	
c. Ejection Rule.....	7	
d. Dropped Third Strike.....	8	
e. Infield Fly Rule.....	8	
f. Lighting/Thunder.....	8	10.
Reschedule(s)	8	
c. Reschedule Policy.....	8	11.
Player/Team Eligibility	8	
a. Roster.....	8	
b. Call Ups.....	9	
c. Age Cutoff.....	9	
d. Age Verification.....	9	
e. Residency/School Rule.....	9	
f. Double Rostered Players.....	9	
g. TRAVEL/SELECT PLAYERS & TEAMS	9	12.
Illegal/Ineligible Player Penalty	9	13.
Managers/Coaches	9	14.
Regular Season	10	15.
End-of-season Tournaments	10	16.
Sportsmanship/Behavior	10	17.
Appeals/Protests	11	18.
Insurance	11	19.
Waiver	11	

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1. Official Game(s)

a. Any items not addressed within these rules will revert to current OHSAA Rules

b. Please review the respective Supplemental Rules for the Tee-Ball and 8U Coach Pitch classifications

c. Required Innings:

- i. Games are six innings for 12U/Major and younger divisions, seven innings for 15U/Pony division
- ii. If both managers agree, additional full inning(s) can be played if the 6th inning ends in a tie (7th for 15U/Pony), provided there is time left on the official game clock. Once the time limit is reached, games may end in a tie.
- iii. A game can end at any point beyond 3 completed innings and still be official if both acting team managers agree
- iv. Do NOT revert to a previous inning's score once a new inning has started (can't undo game play)

d. Suspended Games:

i. If a game is suspended due to darkness, rain/inclement weather, field conditions, etc. and can't resume within 1 hour of the delay then the game can be ruled official if four or more innings have been completed with same number of at bats (minimum of five complete innings for 15U/Pony), or a minimum of 3 ½ innings if the home team is ahead (4 ½ if home team is ahead in 15U/Pony)

1. DO NOT revert to a previous inning's score if an inning is partially completed
2. ALL divisions: End-of-Season Tournament games must play a complete game (mercy rule still applies)
- ii. All other games (even if due to inclement weather) will be considered suspended/incomplete
- iii. Suspended games should resume at the exact point the game left off
 1. Due to roster batter requirements, any additional rostered players should be inserted in the bottom of the batting order if available when the game resumes, even if they weren't present initially. If a player is not available for the rescheduled game, an out will NOT be recorded.
 2. The maximum number of pitches per player per game and required days rest are still recognized (the # of days rest required is based on the most recent game)
 3. If managers agree (and ump declared) prior to the start of an inning that it would be the final inning due to darkness/inclement weather/etc., AND the game is suspended prior to the end of the declared final inning, then only that inning needs to finish when the game resumes for it to be official (not applicable at tournaments)

e. Mercy Rule:

- i. 12U/Major and younger, an official game shall be declared if at the end of four (or more) full innings, the visiting team is ahead by 10 or more runs, or if at the end of 3 ½ innings (or more) the home team is ahead by 10 or more runs, the game shall be official and can end
- ii. 15U/Pony mercy rule is 15 runs or more after four complete innings (3 ½ innings if home team is ahead) or 10 or more runs after five innings (4 ½ innings if home team is ahead)
- iii. Teams can continue to play past the mercy rule, but the game is officially complete once mercy limit is met (no further scores will be recorded if game continues to play and umpire may leave)

f. Run Limit:

- i. There shall be a maximum of 5 runs per inning per team for 10U/Minor and younger through the 5th inning. NOTE: There will be unlimited runs in the 6th inning & additional ONLY (An umpire cannot declare an inning as unlimited prior to the 6th).
- ii. There shall be a maximum of 7 runs per inning per team for 12U/Major through the 5th inning. NOTE: There will be unlimited runs in the 6th inning & additional ONLY (An umpire cannot declare an inning as unlimited prior to the 6th).
- iii. There shall be a maximum of 10 runs per inning per team for 15U/Pony through the 5th inning. NOTE: There will be unlimited runs in the 6th inning, 7th inning, & additional innings (An umpire cannot declare an inning as unlimited prior to the 6th).

g. Time Limits:

- i. **ALL AGE GROUPS:** No new inning shall start after 2 hours of gameplay (official start time shall be when umpire declares “play ball” prior to first pitch, an inning ends when the 3rd out is recorded)
- ii. The time limit rule supersedes the required # of innings rule (but there should be at least 3 completed innings)
- iii. Championship games ONLY will not have a time limit (time limit will remain for all other games)

h. Batting & Pitching Time:

- i. The batter has 8 seconds to enter the batter’s box, once warned by umpire, or an automatic strike can be called.
- ii. Once the batter is set, the pitcher should deliver a pitch within 10 seconds with the bases empty (or 20 seconds with runner/s on), or pitcher may be charged with an automatic ball.
- iii. This is an internal count by umpire only (no formal clock is required) and the umpire may allow for additional time if necessary, depending on the situation.
- iv. Automatic balls/strikes do not count towards the pitch count for required days rest.

2. Playing Requirements

- a. All attending players must play a minimum of two innings in the field (6 defensive outs) by the 4th inning (free substitutions)
 - i. 10U/Minor players must play 2 defensive positions per game; pitcher may be exempt as long as they stay within allowed pitch count
 - ii. 12U/Major and 15U/Pony players have no restrictions regarding positions, so long as they are on defense for the required minimum of 2 innings
 - 1. Exception for all divisions: Player does not have to play required 2 innings if they are ill, injured, or are being disciplined (if taken out of the game for these reasons, player may not be re-entered)
- b. 10U/Minor division may field 4 outfielders; outfielders must be positioned in the grass, 2 on the right side and 2 on the left side (behind 2nd base is NOT a position) and NO shifting
- c. Teams are permitted to play a game if only 8 players are available; if a team drops to or has 7 or less players at any point, the game will result in a forfeit

3. Batting Requirements

- a. All players present for a game must be inserted into the batting order (continuous/roster batting), even though they may not be in the defensive rotation during certain innings
- b. If players are removed from the game due to injury/illness/discipline, they may be skipped and no out will be recorded at their position in the batting order; however, they may not re-enter the same game
- c. A player that arrives late can be added to the bottom of the batting order without an out being recorded in their batting position, as long as they arrive by the 3rd inning (late players cannot be added to the order after the 3rd inning)
- d. All batters are to wear a batting helmet whenever they are on the field of play
- e. On-deck batters are subject to home field rules or umpire’s discretion
- f. Thrown bats - One warning given to BOTH benches (regardless of which team threw bat), batter will be out on each occurring offense thereafter

4. Pitching

- a. Pitching Distance:
 - i. Shall be 40’ for the 8U /Coach Pitch
 - ii. Shall be 45’ for 10U/Minor
 - iii. Shall be 50’ for 12U/Major
 - iv. Shall be 60’ 6” for 15U/Pony
- b. Pitch Count Limits and Days Rest:
 - i. **10U/Minor: 1-20 pitches = 0 days rest, 21-35 pitches = 1 day rest, 36-50 pitches = 2 day rest, 51-65 pitches = 3 day rest, 66+ = 4 day rest, 75 PITCH MAX (pitcher may finish batter if at-bat started**

before max pitch count met)

ii. 12U/Major: 1-25 pitches = 0 days rest, 26-40 pitches = 1 day rest, 41-55 = 2 days rest, 56-70 = 3 days rest, 71+ pitches = 4 day rest, 85 PITCH MAX (pitcher may finish batter if at-bat started before max pitch count met)

iii. 15U/Pony: 1-30 pitches = 0 days rest, 31-50 = 1 day rest, 51-70 = 2 day rest, 71-90 = 3 day rest, 91+ = 4 day rest, 110 PITCH MAX (pitcher may finish batter if at-bat started before max pitch count met)

iv. Pitchers can only exceed the daily pitch limit if they are finishing a batter, but the total day(s) rest shall be based on the total number of actual pitches thrown (regardless if finishing a batter or not) and begin on the next calendar day after game (ex. 4 day rest for game on Monday starts on Tuesday, pitcher eligible to throw again on Saturday)

c. Permitted Pitches:

i. 10U/Minor and 12U/Major: fastball and change-up

ii. 15U/Pony: fastball, change-up and curveball

d. Pitchers may be warmed up by a coach while catcher is gearing up

e. No Re-entry Rule: Once a player-pitcher is removed from the mound, they can't re-enter as a pitcher at later innings of the same game

f. EACH PLAYER'S PITCH COUNT MUST BE ENTERED ONLINE WITHIN 24 HRS OF COMPLETED GAME, failure to do so may result in a forfeit (6-0), if protested before start of next game

g. Balks:

i. Balks should be discussed at pregame ground rules with managers & umpire

ii. Balks will be called at umpire discretion for 12U and 15U divisions

1. 10U/Minor - NO balks

2. 12U/Major - Balks can be called after ONE WARNING per pitcher

3. 15U/Pony - Balks can be called on first violation, NO WARNING

h. The pitcher must be removed from the mound on the 2nd charged coach's trip to the mound in the same inning

i. If a pitcher hits 3 batters in an inning, they must be removed from the mound (the umpire still has the discretion to remove a pitcher at any point if they believe there is a safety concern)

j. 15U/PONY ONLY - Intentional walks will only be permitted by announcement from pitcher, catcher, or team manager (no pitching required)

k. NO intentional walks in 12U/Major and under

5. Baserunner(s)

a. Sliding

i. Feet-first sliding is permitted in divisions 10U/Minor and up

ii. NO head-first sliding at any age; however, dive-backs are permitted

iii. Malicious Contact Rule is in effect (umpire's discretion)

1. Penalty for malicious contact - the runner is out; if contact is deemed flagrant, player in question may be removed from the game and ejection protocol will apply

2. Defensive players must position themselves to receive the ball so as not to impede the runner's progress, otherwise fielder obstruction may be called

3. Malicious contact and fielder obstruction are umpire judgment calls and cannot be protested

b. Lead Offs / Steals / Advancements:

i. 15U/Pony: Lead offs are permitted, steals & advancements are unlimited, may advance on walk

ii. 12U/Major: Lead offs are permitted, steals & advancements as follows -

1. Steals (on the pitch) are LIMITED to 5 per inning; cease if opposing team is down 10 runs

2. Advancements (passed balls, overthrows, errors, walks) are UNLIMITED; cease if opposing team is down 10 runs

iii. 10U/Minor: NO lead offs

1. Stealing is only permitted after the ball reaches home plate when thrown by the pitcher; one warning given to team if runner leaves early, out charged for any runner thereafter
2. Steals are unlimited to 2nd and 3rd base; however, only ONE steal or advancement HOME is permitted per inning and ONLY advance one base on a walk (ball is dead on walk)
3. Overthrow of pitcher and/or throw to a base from catcher is still played as a live ball so runners can advance at their own risk
4. Runners must return to base once the pitcher has control of ball at or near the mound (since there are no lead offs in 10U/Minor, runners should be on base if the pitcher is getting ready to deliver another pitch)

c. Courtesy Runner:

- i. Can be used at any time for the pitcher or catcher ONLY entering the game defensively next inning
- ii. Should be the player that was the last out recorded or run last scored if out not recorded
- iii. No pinch runners are to be entered due to mandatory continuous batting order

6. Equipment

a. Bats:

- i. 12U/Major and younger divisions: Bats shall be a maximum of 2 ¾" diameter and -11 drop size limit
- ii. 15U/Pony : Bats shall be a maximum of 2 ¾" diameter and -5 drop limit
- iii. Authorized USSSA 1.15BPF, USA, BBCOR, or other official certification is required for composite or alloy baseball bats
- iv. Only solid, one-piece wood baseball bats are permitted without the above certification
- v. No softball or tee-ball bats 8U/Coach Pitch and older
- vi. Bats must be free from defects, damage, and/or excessive wear

b. Game Ball(s):

- i. Diamond (DOL-1, DOL-A) or Rawlings (RLLB1, ROLB1, or similar are acceptable (NOT OLB3)
- ii. Home Team supplies 2 new game balls for regular season games
- iii. For tournaments, each team shall provide at least 1 new game ball and 1 good used ball (additional used game balls in good condition must be provided by teams equally as needed)

c. All offensive (batting) players must have a helmet on while in the field of play

d. Teams must wear full matching uniforms with the player's number clearly visible on the shirt

e. No metal spikes for 12U/Major and younger divisions; metal spikes are permitted for 15U/Pony

f. Catchers must be properly equipped with catcher's mitt, cup, chest protector, shin guards and helmet

g. Coaches must wear proper attire (similar coach shirt) and have closed-toe shoes if within the field of play

h. No jewelry is permitted to be worn by players in the game or dugout.

i. Any pertinent medical equipment/devices should be discussed in ground rules

j. Pitchers cannot have white sleeves, white mitts, sunglasses (unless prescription), batting glove under mitt

7. Field(s)

a. Field Preparation:

- i. Home team is responsible for field preparation/lining prior to game (1/2 hour or more prior is preferable)
- ii. Tournament game fields will be prepped/lined by the hosting community

b. Base Path Distances:

- i. 10U/Minor and younger shall be 60' bases
- ii. 12U/Major shall be 70' bases

- iii. 15U/Pony shall be 90' bases
- c. NO INFIELD PRACTICE prior to game; teams may warm up in foul territory or the outfield (remembering to allow for ground rules at least 5 minutes prior to the scheduled game time)

8. Umpires

- a. Home team is responsible to schedule and pay for an experienced umpire for regular season games (for tournaments, each team shall pay half the total umpire fee prior to game)
- b. Home plate umpires should be a minimum age of 15 for 10U/Minor, 16 for 12U/Major, and 17 for 15U/Pony divisions; however, certified umpires for 10U division and up are preferred
- c. Umpires should have proper umpire attire, protective gear, etc.
- d. Umpire judgment should not be argued and cannot be protested (see "16. Protests/Appeals")

9. General Rules

- a. Rule Changes:
 - i. Changes/modifications to rules can be proposed and voted on by participating community representatives at the regularly scheduled representative meeting/s after season
 - ii. One vote per local association/community in attendance (majority is required to implement proposed changes)
 - iii. Rules may be clarified (expanded) by community reps during season as needed
- b. Strike Zone:
 - i. Shall be the umpire's discretion (younger divisions should have a larger strike zone than the older divisions)
 - ii. Can't be appealed or protested.
- c. Ejection Rule for Players, Coaches, Parents, Spectators, etc.:
 - i. First-time ejection will result in suspension for remainder of game, plus next game
 - ii. 2nd ejection in one season will result in a minimum of a 2-game suspension
 - iii. 3rd ejection, or severe offense, will result in removal for remainder of season or longer
- d. Dropped Third Strike:
 - i. Drop Third Strike will apply to the 12U/Major & 15U/Pony divisions only
 - ii. No dropped third strike rule at 10U/Minor and younger (Batter is out 3rd strike whether the catcher drops the ball or not)
- e. Infield Fly Rule:
 - i. Infield Fly Rule is in effect for 10U/Minor, 12U/Major and 15U/Pony, which will be called at the umpire's discretion
 - ii. No infield fly rule for 8U/Coach Pitch and younger divisions
- f. Lighting/Thunder:
 - i. In cases of lightning and/or thunder, game play should be stopped, players should be removed from field of play and seek shelter
 - ii. Game can resume 30 minutes after last occurrence

10. Reschedule(s)

- a. Only rained out games or games lacking players due to school-related functions can be rescheduled
- b. Postponed/Suspended games must be rescheduled within 72 hours and are to be played before June 30th and/or end-of-season tournament seeding
- c. Reschedule Policy:
 - i. Communication will take place between community directors on behalf of teams
 - ii. Home community shall provide three dates (when at all possible) that the rescheduled game can be

- played, and the visiting community shall choose one of the dates provided
- iii. If the home team does not have a suitable field available, the game shall be rescheduled to be played at the visiting team's field or a neutral facility (Note: The home and away teams shall remain as originally scheduled)
- iv. Failure to play the game as scheduled may result in a forfeit
- d. Teams must complete at least 78% of scheduled games to be considered for end-of-season tournament
- e. Teams who refuse to, or habitually don't, make sincere effort to reschedule games may be subject to removal from the end-of-season tournament and/or league

11. Player/Team Eligibility

a. Roster:

- i. Team rosters are to be constructed of players registered in their respective community's recreational league, **NO TRAVEL TEAMS**
- ii. Only rostered players may participate in games, **no outside players**
- iii. Reasonable effort should be made to have no less than 10 and no more than 16 players per roster, understanding that the number of registered players in a community may otherwise dictate roster size
- iv. All rostered players should be included and participate in all scheduled games, regardless of roster size; no cherry-picking players from a large roster to gain an advantage against an opponent
- v. Recreational teams are NOT to be handpicked or have tryouts to eliminate the potentially lower caliber players
- vi. Communities with more than one team in an age group should attempt to create fair and balanced teams (draft when possible); stacked/handpicked teams are against the intent of the recreational community-based league structure

b. Call Ups

- i. In the event a team is short-handed for a regular season game, they may call up a player from the same age division or one level down in their respective community league (ex. 10U/Minor may call up from either a 10U/Minor or 8U/Coach Pitch team)
- ii. In the event a team is short-handed for a playoff game, they may **ONLY** call up a player from on level down (ex. 10U/Minor may only call up from 8U/Coach Pitch)
- iii. Called up players may NOT play infield in either regular season or playoff games
- iv. Call ups are permitted to make 9 players **ONLY**; do not make multiple call ups to have players sit on the bench

c. Age Cutoff:

- i. 12U/Major and below age cutoff is April 30th; player's age on April 30th of the current year is their roster age for the corresponding season (ex. a child who is 10 years old on or before 4/30 should be placed on a 10U/Minor team)
- ii. 15U/Pony age cutoff is July 31st; player cannot be older than 15 as of July 31st of the current year
- iii. Player may be placed one level higher than their corresponding age group as determined by the community director

d. Age Verification:

- i. If player eligibility verification is requested, the community representative must produce a legible copy of the player's birth certificate within 1 week of request

e. Residency/School Rule:

- i. Recreational teams shall consist of players from within the community and/or school system

f. Double-Rostered Players

- i. Players can be rostered in two different, immediately adjacent, age divisions within the league only, but they can only pitch in ONE of the divisions.
- ii. Double Rostered Players **CANNOT** be rostered on two teams in the same age division.
- iii. There can be no more than three (3) double rostered players listed per team. If more than (3) are listed on roster and participate in a game during season, then they will be treated as Illegal/Ineligible players.

g. Travel/Select Players & Teams

i. Travel and/or Select players and/or teams are NOT permitted to participate in recreational league regular season or tournament games

1. Recreational players can participate in similar type recreational leagues and/or local All-Star type tournaments, but not compete in “travel” level competition

2. Regular season teams can participate in games versus travel teams if it’s at community-based tournaments, but not compete in tournaments advertised specifically towards travel teams (open roster)

12. Illegal/Ineligible Player Penalty

a. 1st offense - Team will forfeit all games the illegal/ineligible player(s) participated in

b. 2nd offense - Team will be removed from remaining game schedule and there may be manager/coach and/or local representative suspensions/bans depending on severity and circumstances

13. Managers/Coaches

a. All managers/coaches must have approved national background screenings/checks (NCSI), concussion awareness training certificates (NFHSLearn and/or CDC), and complete Lindsay’s Law: Sudden Cardiac Arrest requirements

b. Shall be required to adhere to current Ohio Health Department mandates for baseball regarding COVID-19

c. No more than 1 team manager and 4 assistant coaches (5 total) are permitted in the dugout and/or on the field during game

d. Winning team should enter the game score online within 24 hours of completion (player pitch count should be entered by both teams)

i. Pitch counts may be verified by both teams at the field and sign scorebooks; however, information must still be entered online

ii. If roster, game results, and/or pitch count are not entered in the proposed time frame, then the following game may result in forfeit if protested

14. Regular Season Games

a. Regular (spring) season shall consist of approximately 14 games

b. Shall run from mid-May to end of June

c. Teams must complete at least 78% of the scheduled games to be considered for end-of-season tournament

15. End-of-Season Tournaments

a. Single elimination tourney shall take place in July (likely starting after 7/4 and finishing by 7/20)

b. Tournament schedule will consist of an approximately two-week time period with games played on same days as regular season games per division (ex. 10U tournament games would remain on Tuesdays and Thursdays)

c. In the event of inclement weather or umpire shortage, games may be pushed to the following day

d. Community directors will determine tournament structure BEFORE the start of each season (one bracket for all teams, gold/silver brackets, or set number of regular season top-finishers)

e. Teams shall be seeded based on winning percentage

f. If tie-breaker(s) needed:

i. Run differential for head-to-head competition

ii. Least runs allowed if head-to-head is not available or if there is a tie in record

iii. Highest run differential (max -10 or +10 per game)

iv. If tie still exists, coin flip will decide order

v. Final seeding will be declared in agreement by community league directors and cannot be protested

g. Higher seed is considered home team and will bat 2nd

- h. Games shall be hosted by areas/communities within the league, preferably the home team; if home team does not have an available field, game may be held at away team's field or a neutral site (home team will remain as is)
- i. Each community will contribute equally to the cost of tournament awards for all divisions they participate in

16. Sportsmanship/Behavior

- a. All coaches and players are to follow the league rules as written/provided; NO changes may be made on-field, between coaches or otherwise
- B. Should there be a question, concern or difference of interpretation regarding rules, contact respective community director
- b. Coaches, players, parents, spectators, etc. shall be removed and/or shall be banned from future events for inappropriate activities (ie. Use of drugs/alcohol at games, use of profanity, unsportsmanlike conduct, any type of harassment, etc.)
- c. Noisemakers and/or excessive noise (particularly intended to distract pitcher/s or any other player) are not permitted

17. Appeals / Protests

- a. An **“appeal”** can be made to an umpire during a game only by the Team Manager requesting time and then making the appeal directly to the umpire prior to next play. Only rulings or rules interpretations (and not judgment calls) can be appealed. If there is a two-umpire system, an appeal on judgment items (like out/safe) may be made assuming the umpire that made the call allows it (a judgment appeal can be denied).
- b. Games may be played **“under protest”** and completed if declared to the umpire immediately upon the disputed rule infraction. Notify the respective community director immediately (or within 2 hours of the game's completion if it's a game-ending ruling)
- c. Community directors will assist in addressing regular season rules, questions, protests, and appeals
- d. Umpire Judgment (ex. strike zone) cannot be protested (only incorrect umpire rulings or team/player eligibility may be protested)
- e. Appeals and/or Protests must be specific (the specific rule violation must be specified)
- f. Community directors will review all rules, appeals, protests, etc. before the start of the next season to determine if any changes are warranted

18. Insurance

- a. All teams/participants must have liability insurance (minimum of \$1 million per occurrence) in place with secondary medical coverage (minimum of \$100,00 participant accidental medical limit)
- b. Participation in league-related events is consent for any necessary medical treatment required

19. Waiver

- a. Physical activities & sports include potential risk of physical injury, and most in-person events increase risk of infection/spread of COVID 19 and other illnesses. Parents/guardians, managers/coaches, participants, spectators, etc. agree to assume the risk of injury to their child/participant, or to them, resulting from their attendance and/or the child's participation in this program.
- b. Participation and/or attendance is acknowledgment that all league-related claims shall be waived and released
- c. The waiver and release extend not only to the league, local communities, and any other league/parent organization, but all sponsors, volunteers, officers, owners, occupiers of land upon which the activities may take place