

**NORTHAMPTON PARKS & RECREATION
COED SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL LEAGUE
SPRING/SUMMER 2026 RULES & REGULATIONS**



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GENERAL LEAGUE INFORMATION

1. The league shall be known as the Northampton Coed Slow Pitch Softball League.
2. The league shall be under the jurisdiction of the Northampton Parks and Recreation Commission and shall be under the direction of the Director of Parks and Recreation or their designee.
3. Players will compete at their own risk. The Parks and Recreation Commission is not responsible for injuries.
4. **Open Wound Rule:** No player will be allowed to continue playing with an open wound until the bleeding has been stopped, cleaned and covered. To avoid problems, all teams should carry a first aid kit as part of their equipment. There will also be first aid kits located in the locked boxes at the fields. It is the managers' responsibility to inform the Recreation Department if they are running low on supplies. An umpire will give reasonable time to stop the bleeding and cover the wound before a substitute is required.
5. At all league meetings, each team will be represented by the team manager, or one person acting in their place. All others will be asked to leave unless specifically invited to a particular meeting.

EQUIPMENT

6. A 12 inch, .44 CORE, 400 Compression softball will be used.
7. Teams/players are responsible for supplying their own equipment (i.e. bats, catcher's masks, gloves, etc.).
8. **Metal Spikes are not permitted.** Any player found wearing metal spikes will be immediately ejected from the game.
9. Umpires have consent to check any bat a team will use during the game prior to the start of the game. All game bats must be checked before used.
10. No 100% composite bats will be allowed. Handles may be composite, however, barrels can only contain metal. Only single wall bats will be allowed and must be 1.2 BPF (must be printed on the bat). View the "Legal Bat List" document for more information on the legality of bats.
 - a. Bat specs for any bats that are not on the "Legal Bat List" must be submitted to and approved, in writing, by the league director before the bat is allowed to be used in play. Please allow for two weeks for bats to be approved by the league director.

CANCELLATIONS/INCLEMENT WEATHER

11. The DPW Parks and Recreation Division determines if fields are in playing condition. In the event of inclement weather, an announcement of any cancellations will be made. For cancellation information, call the Parks and Recreation Department's cancellation hotline at 413-587-1044 or check our website at www.northamptonma.gov/recreation and click on "Cancellations / Changes Information". Decisions to cancel games will be made by 4:00 PM on weekdays and 8:00 AM on weekends.
12. **Northampton Parks and Recreation Commission Lightning Policy:** *Adopted May 7, 2012.* Thunder or lightning necessitates that all outdoor practices and competitions be suspended. Before a practice/game begins, take a look around and have a plan for shelter prior to the start of any contest. When thunder is heard or lightning is seen, the following procedures must be executed:

- a. Suspend play and direct participants to the previously identified shelter, such as a building normally occupied by the public or a vehicle with a solid metal top (e.g. bus, van, car, etc.).
 - b. Do not permit people to stand under or near a tree and have everyone stay away from poles, light towers, antennas, towers and underground watering systems.
 - c. After thunder and/or lightning have left the area, wait 30 minutes after the last boom is heard or strike is seen before resuming play or competition.
- 13.** In the event that games are cancelled because of poor conditions, no team will be allowed on the field. Any team found in violation of this rule will be suspended from further play and no money will be refunded.
- 14.** Once games are underway, the umpire will make all decisions concerning the condition of the playing surface.
- 15.** Games that are postponed because of inclement weather will be played where and when space allows. If your team has any days/dates that they cannot play on, make sure to include this information when registering your team.

ROSTERS

16. Player Eligibility: *Adopted as of April 1, 1997 (revised August, 2002):*

- a. **Residents** - Anybody whose primary residence is in or an individual who owns property in Northampton, Florence or Leeds is considered a resident. Players who are trying to meet this requirement **must** have their residence or property listed on the roster so it can be confirmed. Teams that misrepresent addresses to meet the residency requirement may be dropped from the league.
 - b. **Non-Resident** – Anybody who does not live or own property in Northampton, Florence or Leeds. Non-residents must pay an additional \$10.00 each.
 - There will be a maximum of \$100.00 per team in non-resident fees.
 - c. **Proof of residency for all new residents must be submitted with your roster.** Copies, with all copied on the least amount of pages possible, are required. Proof may consist of, for example, a copy of a pay stub, license or a recent bill. Information must be current.
 - d. Proof of eligibility must be provided to the Parks and Recreation Department. Use of an ineligible player will result in that team's forfeit of all games played with the player in question. Any further penalties will be at the discretion of Northampton Parks and Recreation and could result in the team's suspension from further play with no money refunded.
 - e. **Teams may submit requests regarding player eligibility, which will be reviewed by Parks and Recreation Department Staff.** The Parks and Recreation Department may decide the player is "too talented" for the level of competition in the division and reserves the right to remove the player from the roster. In this case, any non-resident fees involved will be refunded.
- 17.** Players must be at least 16 years old to play.
- 18.** Each team must have a coach or manager who may also be listed as a player. This person will be responsible for submitting team rosters and receiving correspondence from the league coordinator.
- 19.** Each team must have at least 12 players listed on the roster to be eligible to participate in the league.

20. Teams can pick up players not on their roster during the regular season to avoid a forfeit if the opposing team manager agrees with the change. The umpire must be notified of the agreement between both managers to be an official game prior to the start of the game. Teams are only allowed to pick up players until they have 9 players (minimum number of players needed to start a game).
- a. Female players can play on more than one team up until the Player Add/Drop Period closes. They then have to be rostered on the team they will play on in the playoffs. All female players must be rostered on a team to play in the league. Teams can pick up women to have up to 10 players.
21. Players may not be listed on more than one roster in the same league. Players found listed on more than one roster in the same league must play on the team they first played for and/or signed the player conduct form with first. Once known by the Parks & Recreation Department, they will inform or remind players they can only be listed on one team's roster. If, after being notified, players found playing on more than one team continue to play on more than one team, they will be ejected from the league and all games played with that player will be forfeited by the team utilizing that player illegally.
- a. The Parks & Recreation Department will do it's best to avoid game conflicts between a men's and a coed team that share players. We cannot guarantee any conflicts are avoided if a team has multiple players playing on multiple different teams.
 - b. Copies of official team rosters will be available on the scheduling website and finalized after the Player Add/Drop deadline.
22. **Roster Changes:** Roster changes may be made until **Friday, June 13, 2025**. After this date, rosters will be frozen for the remainder of the season.
- a. To add a player to the roster, the manager must present, in writing, the name and address of the new player, as well as proof of residency or a non-resident fee of \$10.00 (*until the \$100.00 maximum non-resident fee is reached*) to the Recreation Department at least 24 hours prior to the team's next game. Each new player must also sign that they have read and understand the player conduct policy before participating in any games. **Non-resident fees cannot be transferred and are non-refundable after the season starts.**
 - b. All roster changes must be made through the league director at the Parks and Recreation Office. Roster changes will not be accepted at the field.
 - c. If an added player is found to be "too powerful" for the division, the Parks and Recreation Department reserves the right to remove them.
23. The spirit of the Coed League is to have equal numbers of male and female participants as aligns with their gender identity.
- a. Non-binary participants may be placed in any position for the purpose of roster requirements and lineup alteration.
 - b. If a team has 5 men and 4 women, they will be able to play when they add a "ghost hitter" to their lineup. The ghost hitter will be put in the lineup as the 10th batter and will take an automatic out. The fifth female player can take the place of the ghost hitter if they arrive to the game after it has started.
 - c. If the male batter before the ghost hitter is walked, he will only be awarded first base.
 - d. If both teams are using ghost hitters, the automatic out rule will still apply to both teams.

- e. If a team has only 4 men, 6 women are allowed to play, with no penalties assessed. A team **must** have 4 men in order to play a game. A team cannot play with 6 men and 4 women.

GAME RULES

24. All games shall be played under the rules of the Independent Umpires Association (IUA), with the exceptions as stipulated in these rules and regulations.

- a. To ensure we get all regular and postseason games in for the season, teams may be playing more than one game in a day.
- b. A team must have nine players to start a game. An eligible player who arrives late must enter the game immediately and be placed tenth in the batting order.
- c. If an injury occurs to a player during the game, the game may continue without players. The lineup will remain unchanged except for the omission of the injured player from the batting order (If the injured player is a woman, the second male batter in succession will be an automatic out).
- d. After 4 ½ or 5 innings, a team with a 12-run lead will be declared the winner with no further action to be taken.
- e. Male and female players must alternate in the batting order.
- f. Five male and five female players must be in the lineup at all times – up to six and six if the EH (Extra Hitter) is used.
- g. The EH's can be used at the discretion of the coach as the 11th and 12th batters placed anywhere in the lineup. The EH's must be decided before the first pitch. The batting order must remain constant. However, any 10 of the 12 players can take a defensive position throughout the game. *Note: If the EH is used, both a male and a female EH must be used. Teams have the option of batting 10 or 12 in the batting order. If you bat 12 you can use a female and male extra hitter, or two female extra hitters, but not two consecutive male batters.*
- h. **Courtesy Runner: There will be no courtesy runners allowed.**
- i. For games played at Maines Field, there is a five (5) home run limit for balls hit over the fence. Any home run hit over the fence after 5 will result in an out. Players are responsible for getting their team's home run balls and bringing them back to the umpire.
- j. When a male batter receives a base on balls or an intentional walk, he will be awarded first and second base. The next female batter will be required to bat, until the 7th inning when they will have the option to walk or bat.
- k. Three strikes constitute an out and four balls a walk. **The count starts at 1-1.**
- l. There will be a distinct mark at each field **approximately 180 feet from home plate**. All outfielders must stay behind this line until the batter (female) makes contact with the ball. Please note this rule will be in effect as soon as the fields are marked. Home teams are required to put out the flat cones on these marks. They are located in the field storage boxes. The line was created so that outfielders can't play too shallow when women are batting. When women are batting, outfielders must stay behind this outfield line and all infielders must play on the dirt of the infield.
 - Penalty: If an outfielder stands in front of the line, the batter will be awarded a walk.

- m. The pitcher is governed by the provisions in the USSSA Official rule book.
 - n. **Re-Entry:** Any of the starting players may withdraw and re-enter once, provided such player occupies the same batting position whenever he/she is in the lineup. A substitute who is withdrawn may not re-enter.
25. All protests dealing with a playing rule of the IUA must be made to the home plate umpire before the next pitch is thrown and must be followed by a written protest to the Parks and Recreation Office within 48 hours.
26. All players must be listed on the team roster by the Player Add/Drop deadline and have played in at least four games to be eligible for the playoffs for their team.
27. Playoffs will be double-elimination and teams may play more than one game in a day for the postseason. Playoff schedule will be released toward the end of the season.

GAME PLAY & REPORTING

28. Games will be played at Ray Ellerbrook Field and Maines Field.
29. Game times are set when schedules are released. There will be no delayed starts for late-arriving players. The final call is at the discretion of the umpire.
30. There will be no infield practice before games.
31. **FORFEITS:**
- a. Teams that forfeit three games during the course of the season may be dropped from the league and no money will be refunded.
 - b. A forfeit caused by an injury to a player (or players) during a game will be recorded only as a loss and will not apply to the three game forfeit rule.
 - c. If a team knows in advance that their game has to be forfeited, and the Parks and Recreation Department is notified by 4:00 PM the day before the impacted game (by Friday at 4:00 PM for a Sunday or Monday game – also a Tuesday game if there is a Monday holiday), the game will be recorded as a loss, rather than a forfeit.
 - A team will only be allowed to call in one (1) loss for the duration of the season. After one loss has been called in by a team, a forfeit will be recorded for any losses called in after one (1) and the team will have to pay the forfeit fee.
32. If there is no umpire at the field, the game will be rescheduled unless BOTH team managers agree that the game was official. The Parks and Recreation Department must hear from both managers that they want to count the game.
33. **Game Time Limit:** There is a 1.25 hour (75 minute) time limit on games. No innings will start AFTER the 1.25 hour time limit, however, teams can finish the inning they are in. There will be no game time limits in the playoff rounds.
34. The winning team manager is responsible for recording the game score (online or by calling or emailing the Parks and Recreation Department) within 24 hours of the completion of their game.
35. One umpire will be scheduled for regular season games. Two umpires will be assigned to the championship game of the playoffs. Teams must pay cash to the umpire(s) at each of their games:

- a. \$25.00 per team for regular and postseason games.
 - b. \$30.00 per team for the championship game in playoffs.
36. The home team will keep the official scorebook. A scorekeeper must be provided by the home team.
37. A supply of new balls will be kept at the fields. One new ball will be used per game that the home team will keep. The home team is responsible for supplying a second ball that is in good condition.
38. Protests dealing with special league rules must be filed in writing within forty-eight hours to the Parks and Recreation Office.
39. In the case of a tie in the standings between two or more teams at the end of the season, these are the order of the tie breakers that will be used
- a. **Head to Head Games:** The team with the most wins against the team they are tied with will be the higher seed.
 - b. **Coin Flip:** If two teams have the same amount of wins and losses against each other, a coin flip will be used to determine the higher seed.
 - c. **Three Way Tie:** If three teams are tied in head to head wins, a random order generator will be used to determine the seeding.
40. The higher seeded team at the end of regular season will be the home team throughout playoff games.

BEHAVIOR POLICIES

41. All players, coaches and fans are expected to conduct themselves in a sportsmanlike manner. Any player, manager or fan who harasses or abuses a game official or another player is subject to the penalties outlined in the Parks and Recreation Department's Policy Statement – Player Conduct document.
- a. Managers are expected to keep team players in control at all times. It is the manager's responsibility to encourage team members to take responsibility for their actions and conduct themselves in an appropriate manner. In an effort to promote team sportsmanship and reduce unsportsmanlike behavior, if a player is ejected from a game, the team manager is automatically ejected as well. Both are subject to the fines and penalties outlined below.
 - In with other league policies, a \$10.00 (\$15.00 for non-residents) fine is assessed to any player that is ejected from a game and the team manager. The fine must be paid in cash at the Parks and Recreation Office before the player and manager are eligible to play again. There is also a **two game suspension for the ejected player** (one game suspension for manager) as outlined in the Policy Statement – Player Conduct document.
 - The Northampton Parks & Recreation Department will review each offense on a case-by-case basis and reserves the right to adjust penalties as seen fit.
42. All teams are responsible for their members' conduct arriving at, during and leaving the game. Any team members found driving in an unsafe manner at any playing field will be suspended from the league.
43. Alcoholic beverages are not permitted at any of the playing areas. Games will be forfeited if alcoholic beverages are found in the playing area.
44. Due to abuses to game officials, any player observed, suspected of or leaving the playing area to consume alcoholic beverages will be warned and/or ejected from the game. Any player who refuses to leave the field or continues to abuse a game official will cause the forfeiture of the game for their team.

45. Any action involving the league that is not covered by these rules and regulations shall be handled by the Director of Parks and Recreation, Parks and Recreation Supervisor and/or the Parks and Recreation Commission.
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SAFETY REGULATIONS

In playing organized sports, the participant must be aware of any and all risks to personal injury. The game of softball carries with it some obstacles that can cause serious injury. Other players, equipment, fences, boundaries, benches, etc. all pose potential areas of injury. The Parks and Recreation Department strongly recommends the use of face masks for catchers. Team managers should ask all potential catchers if they would like to wear a mask. If the answer is yes, it is the responsibility of the team/manager to purchase one. Failure to wear one could cause serious injury and/or death. Remember this is a recreational sport. Keep your body under control to avoid collisions. Be aware of all ground rules. Keep all equipment away from playing areas and be considerate of the safety needs of you and other participants.

Please be aware that DPW's Parks and Recreation Division maintains fields. Report all maintenance problems or any unsafe field conditions to the Recreation Department at 413-587-1040 and we will contact DPW.

GOOD LUCK AND HAVE A GREAT SEASON!

Northampton Parks and Recreation

100A Bridge Road
Florence, MA 01062

Phone: 413-587-1040

Cancellation Line: 413-587-1044

Email: recreation@northamptonma.gov

Office Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM

Website: www.northamptonma.gov/recreation

All league rules can be found in this document. Questions regarding rules should be addressed to Brooke via email at bfairman@northamptonma.gov or phone at 413-587-1040.