

Metro west Adult Baseball League

RULE BOOK - Updated for the 2016 Season

NAME & PURPOSE

- Name: The MWABL is a non-profit amateur baseball organization. The purpose of the league is to protect, promote and stimulate competition among amateur baseball teams in the Central Massachusetts area.

Agreement

- All team members agree to abide by the rules, regulations, bylaws and guidelines of the Metro west Adult Baseball League.

MEMBERSHIP / TEAMS

Members:

- The membership of the MWABL shall consist of accepted baseball teams from towns located in Central Massachusetts

League Meetings

- A team representative is required to attend all MWABL meetings.

TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

Dues & Fees

- Teams are responsible to commit to participation each season and to pay all established league dues and fees to be eligible to participate in league games. The board will help establish fees annually. We will be extremely transparent.
- Each team is required to send their franchise holder or representative to all scheduled league meetings.

Home Fields

- Each team is required to obtain the use of a home field for its regular season and postseason games.

Home Field Maintenance

- Home teams are asked to perform routine maintenance on fields so as to have them ready for play. (Exceptions for fields where the town prohibits them from doing so.) It is recommended that home teams have equipment (shovels and rakes) to assist in providing maintenance before and during a game.

The 400 Hitter Web-site - Roster

- Team management is required to update the 400Hitter Web-site with a complete active roster with guidelines set up each season. No team can have more than 25 players at any given time.

Game Scores/Stats

- Team management is required to update the 400 Hitter Web Site with scores and stats within 48 hours of the completion of an official game.

MEETINGS & VOTING PROCEDURES

- The league President will schedule and run all meetings. The President, by e-mail communications may make notification of meetings with information as to date, time, purpose and location of a scheduled meeting. All teams are to be represented. Failure to attend a meeting could result in votes being taken without your input.

Majority Vote

- Matters brought to a vote at a league meeting will be decided by a simple majority of members present. (Note: when there is an instance a team cannot be in attendance, they may communicate their vote to the league President and board of directors prior to a the vote)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- League managers vote on league rules and amendments. One vote per team.
- The League President serves a 3-year term, and can be reappointed by majority league vote. There are no term limits. A five member Board of Directors is appointed by the President at his discretion, and is subject to change at any time.

Duties of the President

- Serve as the executive head of the MWABL and preside over its meetings.
- Call membership and special meetings in accordance with the bylaws.
- Appoint committees as deemed necessary.
- Ensure that league officers discharge their duties impartially, accurately, faithfully, and promptly.
- Enforce adherence to the rules, guidelines, directives and code of ethics of the league.
- Handle correspondence and communications with local and national media sources if necessary.
- Supply reports as may be requested or required from the Board of Directors.
- Perform any other duties and powers assigned by the league.

SCHEDULE

Schedule Deadline

- The regular season schedule of games shall be completed between January 31st and March 1st of each season. All teams must submit to the league their home field locations, dates available, and any dates they will be unable to play, in advance so as to assure that the schedule deadline is met. The board of directors may adjust the deadline date should it become necessary or required.

Changes to Schedule

- Once the schedule has been declared official no changes may be made without the express approval of the President and Board of Directors.

Starting Times

- The starting time of Sunday games may not be earlier than 9:00am.

Length of Schedule

- The MWABL regular season schedule will be determined each season based on factors that affect the organization for that season (ex: amount of teams). As a guide, we have had 12 teams and have played 16 games. Our goal is to maintain a standard that will keep us around this amount that matches teams/permits/costs.

League Format

- The league format will be two divisions, American League and National League. Ideally each team will play every divisional opponent twice, either a doubleheader or one home game and one away game. And one game against the opposing league. We will alternate the home fields each year.

Format & Schedule Changes

- The President and Board of Directors may adjust the number of games or teams in the league should circumstances require adjustments to either or both situations before or during the season of play.

Rainouts and Make-Up Games

- All regular season games must be played. President and Board of Directors will directly supervise the re-scheduling of postponed or cancelled games.(note: neutral sites can and will be used to best complete the season when needed) Failure to complete your make up schedule will result in forfeits for any make up games that are scheduled and not played.

Rainout Policy

- The home team manager must contact the umpires and opposing manager at least 1.5 hours before game time to postpone a game due to weather. If the home team manager does not cancel the game, but the game is called off by the umpires, due to weather, before the game

starts, then the home team is responsible for paying the umps. If the game starts, and is then called due to weather by the umpires then both managers must split the cost of the umps.

Rainout Makeups

- If the home team fails to propose makeup dates within the 4-week period, the visiting team is awarded a win for the game and the home team is given a loss for the game. If the visiting team refuses to play on any of the dates provided by the home team, then the visiting team is awarded a loss for the game and the home team is awarded a win for the game.
- If the home team is unable to find a field to play the makeup game after 3 weeks, the home team should ask the league to help find a field and date to play the game. If the league can't come up with a field to play the game in the one remaining week, then the game is not played and is effectively removed from the schedule.
- Once the league sets a date and a field, the game must be played. Any team that can't field a team for the league chosen field and date is given a loss for the game be that one team or both teams.

Rain Delays/Restart of the Game

- Once a game is started the umpires are the sole judge on weather a game is to be stopped for unsafe weather conditions. When a delay is called, team's players/coaches are to stay at the park in a safe area in uniform during any and all delays during any game. When the umpires determine it is safe to resume the game and the ball is put back into play each teams is expected to have their teams ready for play. If a team cannot field 9 players when the game is restarted, the umpires will rule a forfeit of the game.

Forfeits

- Games must be played as scheduled. Failure to show for a scheduled game inconveniences others and damages the reputation of the league. In the event of a forfeited game the forfeiting team's players receive no credit for any player in attendance. The non-forfeiting team will get credit for all active players on its roster on the day of that game per 400hitter.

ROSTERS /PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

Player Eligibility

- The Metro west Adult Baseball League is a baseball league for players 28 years of age and over. A player must turn 28 within the calendar year to be eligible for that season.
- Former professional baseball players must be retired for 3 MWABL seasons before being eligible to play in the league.
- Managers are responsible for verifying the age of a player.
- If a manager has a concern about the age of an opposing player, the issue must be raised on the day of the game between the teams (same rule applies for playoff games), whether before, during, or after the game. The league President must be notified, and the manager of the player in question has a week to provide verification of the players' age. If the player is proved to be ineligible, all games in which that player has played in that season will be forfeited. The player is not allowed to play again that season until a valid age check can be made.
- A player must have game credit for playing in 50% of a season. The standard season length is 16 games, so a player must play in at least 8 games to be eligible to play in the playoffs.

- If a team plays an odd number of games because of a cancelled game that is not made up (*and not counted as a win or loss though forfeit*) the eligibility requirement is still rounded up. For example, if a team plays 15 games, a player must still play in 8 games to be eligible to play in the playoffs (50% rounded up is the requirement).
- The only exception to the rule above is that each team may use **2 exemption players**. These players must have game credit for at least 4 games during the regular season, and are ineligible to pitch throughout the playoffs.

Game Credit

- If a player starts and finishes a game, then the player is credited with a game played toward playoff eligibility.
- If a player arrives late or leaves early (not due to an ejection), then the player must have 1 plate appearance in order to be credited with a game played for playoff eligibility. These are plate appearances and not official at bats, so if the player walks or is hit by a pitch, this still counts towards the required 1 appearance.
- Please see the section on game forfeits, which talks about potential penalties, including losing playoff eligibility for the games that are forfeited.

Preliminary Roster

- Rosters must also be posted on the 400Hitter website prior to May 1st.

Additions/Changes to Active Roster

- Additions or changes to a team's preliminary or subsequent active roster must be made by entry into 400Hitter website. Adjustments will also need to be made to deactivate anyone as well to maintain a 25 man active roster.

Player Movement

- No team may accept more than 2 players from any opponents' prior season. Each team manager involved must have a discussion regarding the player movement to curb any concerns. This is a pay to play league, if someone wants to play for another team, they can do so. We really have not had issue with this in the past but managers need to communicate with each other on this. There should not be a need for a person to sit out a year to be a free agent. Once the first game is played, the roster movement between teams is locked. You can add players during the season but not from another roster.

Adding Players

- You may add players to your roster up until the completion of the 8th game of the season. A player added after the 8th game of the season may only be done upon the approval of the President and Board of Directors for cause.

Conflict

- The President and Board of Directors shall adjudicate any conflict or dispute that might arise regarding player movement and the adding of players after the 8th game of the season. The decision of the board will be final and no appeal is allowed.

POST SEASON FORMAT

Championship Tournament

- The MWABL plays a 3-round championship tournament upon completion of the regular season.
- Each round consists of a best of 3 series. Doubleheader games are 7 innings, and single games are 9 innings.
- The teams with the 4 best records in each division (AL/NL) at the end of the regular season are eligible for the playoffs.
- In the opening round in both divisions (AL/NL), the 1st place team plays the 4th place team and the 2nd place team plays the 3rd place team. The 1st and 2nd place teams hold home field advantage in their respective series.
- The winners of the 1st round series, then face off for the division title, and the right to play for the Championship in the League Finals. Home field is given to the highest remaining seed.
- The winners of the 2nd round then face off in the League Finals, and the victor is crowned MWABL League Champion. Again, the highest seed of the remaining teams earns home field.

Tiebreakers

- Home fields and seeding for teams tied: head records; by record versus tied opponents; then by record versus playoff teams in the order of finish. If not resolved by these methods the President and Board of Directors will determine the method needed to resolve the tie including a coin toss.
- If there are two teams tied for the final playoff spot a single elimination game will decide which team advances. If more than two teams are tied for the final playoff spot a "round robin" single game elimination will be played. Match-ups will be determined by coin flip. The game is a considered a regular season game for the purposes of stats for the season, but the roster will be limited to your active playoff roster.

BASEBALL PLAYING RULES

Game Rules

- The length of a game shall be 9 innings. Double headers will be two 7 inning games.
- Games tied after 7 or 9 innings will continue as time allows.

Mercy Rule

- For a 9-inning game, a team wins by mercy rule if they lead by 12 or more runs after the end of the 7th inning.
- For a 7-inning game, a team wins by mercy rule if they lead by 10 or more runs after the end of the 5th inning.

All Players Bat

- All players at a game will bat during regular season and post-season games. There is no possibility for pinch hitters due to this rule.

Players Leaving a Game Early

- If a player leaves a game for any reason other than injury, an out is recorded every time his spot comes up in the batting order. If a manager informs the opposing manager before the game starts that one of his players has to leave the game early, the preceding sentence will not apply and no out will be recorded when the departing player's spot comes up in the batting order.

Players Arriving Late

- Any player arriving after the first pitch is thrown or after the starting lineups have been exchanged whichever is first, is added to the end of the batting order as soon as the player reports to the bench. A player may not enter a game once it has started unless the manager informs the opposing manager that the player will be coming late to the game.

Fielding

- The "hidden ball" play is prohibited in the MWABL.

Substitutions

- Since all players bat, teams are allowed free defensive substitutions for all positions but pitcher. A pitcher may re-enter a game once after being removed. If a pitcher is removed and stays in the field, the relieving pitcher must finish facing one batter before the original pitcher can return to the mound to pitch.

Pitching and Visitation Rules

- Pitch-outs will be allowed in the MWABL.
- Intentional walks will be allowed in the MWABL.
- A pitcher who hits 3 batters in one inning or 4 batters during a game will be removed from the game and is not eligible to pitch for the remainder of that game.
- As with Major League Baseball, a manager is allowed 2 visits to the mound per inning. On the second visit, the pitcher must be removed.

Base Running

- While it is the intent of this league to promote rigorous competition, safety is also paramount. Intentionally making contact with another player, during the course of play, is not allowed. Base runners must make a reasonable effort to avoid contact with the fielder (slide, run around the fielder, or give themselves up). This includes plays at home plate.
- Fielders in the act of making a play have the right to make the play without danger of intentional contact by the base runner.
- Fielders, not in the act of making a play, must yield to the base runner. This rule applies to all players, all base runners and plays at all bases.
- Any act perceived as intentional contact by a fielder or base runner will be considered in violation of this rule, and the guilty player will be subject to possible ejection. Enforcement of this rule will be left to the discretion of the umpires.
- Base runners in violation of this rule are automatically out. If this occurs in a double play situation, the second base runner may also be called out (if the umpires decide that the violation interfered with a possible double play). The base runner found in violation may be ejected from the game.
- If a fielder is found in violation of this rule, then the base runner is automatically safe. The fielder may be ejected from the game.

Courtesy and Pinch Runners

- There are two categories of runners that managers may use during a game, **courtesy** and **pinch**.

Courtesy Runners

- Each team is allowed to declare 2 courtesy runners. These must be declared to the other manager before the game starts.
- The courtesy runner is the last batted out except for pitchers and catchers. If the last batted out is a pitcher or catcher, the manager can decide to allow the pitcher or catcher to run or skip to the previous batted out. If this occurs in the first inning and there are no batted outs, the last player in the batting order becomes the courtesy runner.
- Courtesy runners cannot be changed during a game even in the case of injury.
- Players who are awarded courtesy runners still must bat and run out the play. Once the batter reaches base the last batted out becomes the runner. When the play has stopped, timeout is called and the last batted out can take the base.
- If a player has been granted a courtesy runner before the game but reaches base and decides to run, the courtesy runner privilege is removed for the rest of the game. The courtesy runner cannot be switched to another player at that time.
- It is the responsibility of the Manager to ensure that the correct player is acting as the courtesy runner. The opposing can appeal, but only prior to the resumption of play. Once play has been resumed, there can be no appeal. If the appeal is upheld (after review of the scorebooks by the managers and umpires), then the correct courtesy runner is put into the game and the manager responsible is issued a warning. Any subsequent, upheld appeal will result in the runner being called out. No replacement runner will be allowed to enter the game. If this out is the 3rd out of the inning, then the inning is over.

Pinch Runners

- As with Major League Baseball, a manager may decide to replace a base runner with a player on the bench.
- Each team is allowed to use 3 pinch runners per game.
- A player can only be used to pinch run once.
- Pinch runners do not need to be declared before a game starts.
- A pinch runner can be used after calling timeout and notifying the umpire and opposing manager.
- If the player who is pinch running is on base when their turn at bat comes up, the manager must use another pinch runner so the player can bat. If the manager has already used 3 pinch runners, then an out is recorded, the runner stays on base and the next batter comes up (if the third out is recorded then the inning would end).
- If a player is hurt during a base running play and cannot continue playing the game, a team may use a "temporary" courtesy runner. This temporary courtesy runner would finish the turn at base until the inning ends or the runner gets out or scores. The manager has the option to replace the hurt base runner with this "temporary" courtesy runner (last batted out rules apply) or use 1 of 3 allowed pinch runners.

In-Game Player Injuries

- Players who are injured during the game are not afforded courtesy runners. If an injured player has a courtesy runner and the player sustains further injury causing him to leave the game the assignment of a courtesy runner cannot be switched to another player so the team loses the courtesy runner.

- Players who are injured and miss their turn at bat cannot re-enter the game. If a player is injured during a game, and is unable to complete a plate appearance during the game, then the game is not considered an official game played, and does not count toward playoff eligibility. (See – Game Playoff Eligibility)

Pre-Game Warm-ups

- All teams shall make the field available to the opposing team for 15 minutes prior to the game for fielding practice if the opposing team requests it.

Postponed Announcements

- Team managers will notify umpires of cancelations 1.5 hours prior to 9am.

Called Game is Official

- Games that are stopped as a result of inclement weather or for a scheduled light shutdown will be considered official if the losing team has completed five (innings) at bat.

Grace Period

- The MWABL allows a 15-minute grace period beyond the start time of a scheduled game. Should a team fail to field a team by the end of the grace period then the game may be declared a forfeit. A forfeited game will be reported as a 7 -0 in the 400Hitter web site.

CODE OF ETHICS / PLAYER CONDUCT

Player Ejections

- Any player or manager who is ejected from a game for any reason is fined \$25.00 payable to the league. The player is suspended for one game.
- A second ejection results in a \$50.00 fine payable to the league and a 2 game suspension.
- A third ejection result is a \$100.00 fine and the player is suspended for the remainder of the season.
- A player cannot return to play until the league receives the fine.
- Any verbal abuse directed at an opponent or umpire is cause for immediate ejection.
- If a player is ejected from a game an out is recorded every time his spot comes up in the batting order. The player also loses playoff eligibility for the game even if 1 official at bat has been achieved.

Abuse of Officials

- Striking or jostling an umpire, engaging in or directing unsportsmanlike contact toward an official, will not be tolerated. Players or team personnel involved in such behavior will face disciplinary action up to and including permanent removal from the league.

Fighting

- Any player or coach that participates in a fight will be ejected and suspended for the team's next three consecutive games. Additional sanctions may be assessed.

Appeals

- Suspension for one game and/or fines of \$50.00 may not be appealed and will not be heard. Penalties that are greater than a one game suspension and/or \$50.00 fine may be appealed.

Suspensions

- Suspension(s) will begin with the next game played following the MWABL ruling that a suspension is assessed.

Payment of Fines

- A fined player may not participate in any league games until the MWABL has received the fine in hand. Any player in violation of this rule will be considered an ineligible player and subject their teams to a game forfeit.

EQUIPMENT

Baseballs

- The home team is required to provide a supply of officially approved baseballs necessary to complete a game. The league will approve the brand of baseballs to be used annually. In the event a team's stock of MWABL balls is depleted a team may substitute using the same brand of approved ball.

Helmets

- All batters, base runners, and catchers must wear protective helmets that are in good working order and free of defects.
- Batters must have at least one earflap on the side facing the pitcher. Base runners may not switch the batting helmet to a catcher's helmet.
- Catchers must wear a helmet when on the field(or a "goalie" style mask may be used),

Wood Bats

- Wood bats that meet the specifications of MLB bats will be used. The use of composite bats is allowed. Any illegal bats will be removed and the player will be ejected. The league will review each case and may impose additional fines/suspensions.

Bases

- The home team must supply MLB sizes bases for play (15"x15"x3").

PROTESTS & PROCEDURES

What can be protested?

- Protests for a misapplication of the rules or for player eligibility are the only protests given consideration.

What cannot be protested?

- No protest of an umpire's judgment will be allowed.

Protests at Game

- Managers or coaches should ask the umpire for instructions on how to properly lodge a protest immediately following a questionable play. Requests and protest to the umpire must be made in a courteous manner.

Protest Procedure

- A description of the protest must be made in writing (e-mail) to the league President within 24 hours of the incident.

Consultation

- Team managers may contact any member(s) of the board of directors by phone or e-mail to request an informal opinion as to the likelihood of the validity of the protest.

Investigation of Protest

- If the appeal is made in compliance with the rules regarding protests the league President will investigate the matter by consulting with the umpires, umpire in chief, and members of both teams in order to gather information to assist in making a ruling. All parties are required to cooperate fully in any investigation.

Protest Decision

After the President has ascertained the needed information he may decide the following:

- The protest is invalid or that no misinterpretation of the rules occurred.
- The protest is valid and a misinterpretation of the rules was made.
- If in the President's opinion however, the misapplication of the rule did not affect the outcome of the game, the game will not be replayed or continued but the results will stand.
- The protest is valid and a misinterpretation of the rules was made. In the opinion of the President if the misinterpretation affected the protesting team's chances of winning the game, he may order the game be continued from the point of the protest.

Protest Ruling

- The President's and Board of Directors' ruling on any protest is final and no further appeal is allowed.

NEW TEAM APPLICATION PROCESS

Process

- The President and Board of Directors shall annually appraise new teams wishing to gain entry into the MWABL.

Compliance

- Teams wishing entry into the MWABL must comply fully with any and all requests for information from the membership officer on a timely basis. Failure to do so may jeopardize the team's chances for entry into the league.

Umpires

Umpires

- The MWABL will hire an Umpire Director to assign, track, supervise and account for umpires who will work our games. The league will negotiate umpire and commissioners fees with the appropriate parties on a regular basis.

Regular Season Games

- Two umpires will be assigned to work each game during the regular season. A game may start and proceed with one umpire should it become necessary to do so.

Post Season / All Star Games

- A minimum of two umpires will be assigned to work each post-season game. The league may request additional umpires to be assigned to work post-season games or all-star games as needed. The maximum for any post-season or all-star game will be 4.

BYLAWS AND AMENDMENTS

Approval

These by-laws will be effective upon the approval of the Board of Directors and by the membership at a duly called league meeting for that purpose. A majority of members present will constitute approval.

Amendments

- Amendments to these by-laws may be made if approved by a two-thirds majority vote of league members present at a duly called meeting of members. The membership must be notified, in writing (e-mail), of any proposed amendments as a part of the agenda for the meeting.

Editorial Changes

- The board of directors without notice may make editorial, spelling or grammatical changes to these by- laws that serve to clarify, illuminate or explain a rule more thoroughly from time to time.