



The Niagara Girls Minor Softball Association is committed to:

Participation: Everyone who chooses to participate in our association has the right to equal playing time and a positive experience (e.g. playing time exception: an injury to a player).

Potential: Everyone is important. All players are afforded opportunities to explore their own interest and develop their abilities that meet their own needs and goals.

Performance: Success is measured by how we execute, if we have fun and what we have learned-- not the scoreboard.

NGMSA League Executive niagarafallsthundercats@live.com **905-374-8493**
(voice mail)

PARK CLOSURE:

City of Niagara Falls Parks Hotline

A decision to close any parks will be made on or by 4pm and a message will be put on the city hotline. **905-356-7521 Ext 3399**

2026 NGMSA Executive

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Niagara Girls Minor Softball Association
 2026 Coaches Handbook - Junior Division

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NGMSA	League Executive	niagarafallsthundercats@live.com	905-374-8493
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Niagara Girls Minor Softball Association

Welcome Letter to Coaches

To Our Valuable Coaches

On behalf of the Niagara Girls Minor Softball Association's Executive, we would like to thank you for coaching this coming season.

Your time and willingness to support our League by coaching is greatly appreciated and we are committed to providing you with any support that you may need to ensure that you have a successful and rewarding season.

In order to assist you, we have created this handbook containing information which we hope you find informative and useful. We have also created a "Coach's Corner" link on our website. We encourage you to use the information in this handbook and on our website to familiarize yourself with the League's rules and regulations and also the coaching skills that will help you enhance or refresh your teaching techniques.

Lastly, if you have questions or ideas, please reach out to your Convenor first, then any member of the Executive.

We are looking forward to an exciting and successful softball season and we appreciate your time and effort which will help us fulfill our motto of "building better people through playing softball."

Sincerely

Niagara Girls Minor Softball Association Executive

Park Availability

Please Note: Diamonds will NOT be available for games or practices on the following days:

Patrick Cummings Sports Park

- June 5th & 6th & 7th (House League Tournament)
- July 4th (Falls Classic U13 & U15 Select Tournament)

Coach's Reference

SET UP:

Game Night

On game night, the Home Team Coach is responsible for setting up the diamond, i.e. bases, pitching machine. The Visiting Team Coach is responsible for returning the bases etc to the equipment storage area at the end of the game.

Pitching machines, bases, tape measures and hammer will be stored in the storage building between the two diamonds at Palmer Park (formerly concession building).

On game night, **the winning Coach** is responsible for ensuring the **Score Sheet is complete**.

The **Plate Umpire and both Coaches** must sign to confirm the score and to authorize payment to the Umpires. The signed Score Sheet is to be given to your Convenor or placed in the designated area in the utility building.

Umpire Development

The NGMSA is committed to developing and training players from within the league to become umpires. The League utilizes Junior Umpires to officiate all games in our Mite Division and we are developing a plan to phase in our own umpires into higher divisions.

The League provides on-going training for the junior umpires and we are encouraging interested umpires to obtain their umpiring certification. We are determined to continue our attempts to develop umpires and we would ask for your help to encourage the development of our in-house umpires.

1. Know the Rules. Often Coaches argue a call when they're not sure of the rule. If you need to question a decision or a rule, ask for time and speak to the Umpire in a calm and courteous manner. Please note that "safe" and "out" calls are final decisions and should not be challenged. If you experience on-going concerns with an umpire's calls, please contact the Junior Umpire Convenor or any member of the Executive.

2. Explain the House League Rules to the Parents. Parents will be encouraged to familiarize themselves with the rules which will be posted on our website, however your efforts to help

parents to better understand the rules would likely result in them not challenging the umpires and avoiding confrontations.

3. Consider volunteering to umpire or assist umpiring. Please contact your convenor or a member of the Executive if you are interested in assisting.

4. We ask that coaches do their part to treat umpires with courtesy and to support and encourage their efforts. As League representatives, please support umpires if you see a parent confronting them in a negative manner.

Accidents and Reporting

You will be provided with a team roster which will include your player's names. Please have these lists with you at every game and practice. We ask that you familiarize yourself with the location of First Aid Kits as well.

If a player is hurt, please follow the following procedure:

- Ensure that the injured person receives first aid treatment or medical attention immediately.
- **Notify the parents.**
- **Complete an Accident Report** and follow the instructions on the form. This form is only a mandatory requirement if the player requires professional medical attention (hospital or doctor's visiton) Forms can be found in the Utility Room at Palmer Park. If you require additional forms, please notify Tina Marchese @ ftmarchese@bell.net
- **If a form is filled out please advise Tina Marchese of the accident and injury via email at ftmarchese@bell.net and leave the filled out form in the hanging file where the score sheets go (within 24 hours of the accident) or immediately following the game.**
- Follow up with the parents after the game to ensure the player is okay and to follow up on the nature of the injury and treatment received. Update the accident report with any new injury details.
- Any player or coach who is bleeding or has blood on their uniform may not participate in the game until the bleeding is controlled and the soiled uniform changed.

Equipment

Please check your equipment bag and make sure everything you signed for is present. You are expected to look after your equipment and return it clean and in good condition.

NGMSA 2026 RULES AND REGULATIONS

P.W.S.A. playing rules apply in all House League games except where stated in the NGMSA Rules and Regulations.

Sportsmanship

- The coaches are to maintain control and respect of their team at all times.
- Coaches and players displaying unsportsmanlike conduct will be subject to disciplinary action including suspension by League Executives.
- If a softball rule is in question, the coach should approach the umpire in a calm manner, accepting the call. Judgment calls such as fair, foul, safe or out and called Balls or Strikes cannot be challenged.

Zero Tolerance

- Any foul or obscene language or gestures, use of alcohol or illegal drugs by coaches or players on any of the teams before, during or after a game will result in suspension.
- Any coach or player who violates the Harassment Policy or Constitution will be subject to suspension.
- Umpires shall be instructed to enforce a “NO SMOKING” rule for coaches and players on the field and on the bench.

Coaches

- Only registered coaches, assistant coaches and players are allowed on the player’s benches or coaching lines in all games. A parent may be obtained from the stands on the approval of the umpire
- All coaches, volunteers must have proper footwear if they are on the playing field. No flip flops, sandals or open toed shoes will be permitted.
- House League teams will consist of one head coach and one assistant coach only per team. The NGMSA will recognize only two (2) coaches per team.
- The winning coach will submit a game score sheet provided by the League directly after completion of the game. The Score Sheet must be signed by the opposing coach and the umpire.
- All coaches are responsible for helping to keep the park clean and for the pick-up and removal of litter around their bench after each game. If there is an excess amount of garbage on the ground prior to a team’s use, the coach should contact the Convenor of their division.

Rule of 2

Coaches are reminded of the “Rule of 2” which dictates that all interactions and communications with minor athletes are in open, observable, and in justifiable settings.

- Two screened and safety-trained adults are to be with a participant, especially a minor athlete, when in a potentially vulnerable situation. Vulnerable situations include but are not limited to: Closed doors meetings. Medical treatments, waiting for an athlete to be picked up.

Injuries

- Follow up all accidents that may occur or that are brought to your attention. A P.W.S.A. accident reporting form must be completed on the same day that an accident occurs. The League Convenor will report to the President after checking on the player's progress. Accident forms will be placed on the bulletin board in the league room.
- If a player is injured, it is up to the Umpire's discretion whether or not the play should be completed. Time should be called whenever an injury is suspected and the coach should use their good judgment as to whether the player should continue or be removed from play (e.g. see concussion protocol).

Team Rosters

- All players must be registered before participating in practices or games.
- Coaches must notify their Convenor immediately if one of their players advises they will be dropping out of the Team.

Call Up System

A **Call-Up** is a registered player from a younger division who temporarily fills in for a team in an older division.

Eligibility:

- Call-ups may only be used when a team does not have enough rostered players to field a full team.
- The player must be from a lower House League division.
- Call-ups may not participate if their own team has a scheduled game at the same time.
- Written parental or guardian permission is required for a player to be on the call-up list.

Pitching:

- Call-up players must follow the pitching rules of the division they are playing *up* in.
- A call-up may only pitch if no rostered pitcher is present.
- Rostered pitchers take priority.

Playing Time & Positioning:

- Call-ups should not displace rostered players from key positions or limit their playing time.
- Call-ups should bat at the bottom of the lineup.
- Call-up players may not play infield positions, including pitcher, unless no other option is available.

2. Crossover Players

A **Crossover** is a player from the same division, whose own team is not playing, temporarily helping another team that is short players.

- **Eligibility:**
 - Crossover players may only be used when a team does not have enough rostered players for a game. The use of crossover players must be communicated to the **opposing coach before the start of the game.**
- **Pitching:**
 - When two or more crossover players are being used, only one may be used as a pitcher.
 - Rostered pitchers must be given priority.
- **Fair Play:**
 - Crossover players should support the team, not displace regular players from their roles or reduce their playing time.

Note:

Coaches are expected to follow both the letter and the spirit of this policy. Misuse of call-up or crossover players may be subject to review by league officials.

Every coach should share the League's goal of doing everything possible to avoid forfeitures due to a team not being able to field a team.

Junior GAME RULES

- Games will be 5 innings in length or capped at 1 hour and 45 minutes (whichever comes first).
- The 5th inning will be an open inning
- **If the umpire calls the game due to the time limit curfew and a pitch has been delivered to the batter, the batter shall be allowed to finish their at bat.**
- If the inning is not complete at 1 hour and 45 minutes, the score reverts back to the score at the end of the last completed inning.
- 3 innings constitutes an official game (2 ½ if the home team is ahead).
- **Runs Ahead Rule:** The inning will be deemed over when one team scores five runs in the inning (this does not apply to the last inning).
- Free substitutions of all players will be in effect
- A game may be played with **a minimum of 7 players** and a maximum of 10 players on the field. In the case of 10 players, the extra player must play an outfield position.
- Courtesy runners may be used for injuries and/or when the Catcher is on base, with 2 outs or 4 runs have been scored
- No more than three courtesy runners can be used in the game, except in the case of courtesy runners for the catcher who is on base with 2 outs.
- The courtesy runner **MUST** be the last available batter.
- Umpires keeps official time and will provide start time to each team after the first pitch
- Bat throwing will be strictly enforced. If a player throws their bat, each team will be given one warning. The next bat that is thrown, the batter will be called out (regardless of the team).
- The use of the infield shift is not allowed.
- All call ups must be identified to the opposing coaches prior to the game.

Pitchers

- No pitcher shall pitch more than two consecutive innings. Pitchers will pitch a max. of 3 innings in any game.
- A coach is allowed two visits to the mound in one inning. At the second visit, the pitcher must be removed from that position for the remainder of the game.
- When the same pitcher hits a third batter in a game, that pitcher will be removed from the pitching position--if there is a safety issue, for the rest of the game (this will be a coaches and umpire decision).

Leadoffs

- Base runners cannot lead off until the ball crosses the plate.
- Runners are not allowed to steal home on a passed ball, wild pitch or throw back to the pitcher, however if the catcher tries to make a play at 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, the ball is live and the runners can advance at their own risk.

Diamonds

When measuring the distance of bases, remember to start at the back point of home plate, to the outfield side of first and third, and to the middle of second base.

<u>Distance</u>	<u>Junior</u>
Pitcher's Mound	33 feet
Between Bases	55 feet

If the bases are already laid out prior to the beginning of the game it is the responsibility of the HOME TEAM to return the bases to the storage area.

If the bases have NOT been set out prior to the beginning of the game it is the responsibility of the HOME Team to place and return the bases to the storage area.

Determination of League Champions

League Champions will be determined in the following manner:

- Most points accumulated during the season
- If tied-record against each other
- If tied-plus /minus record against each other
- If still tied-plus/minus record for the entire season
- If still tied -coin toss

Equipment and Clothing

- All batters must wear a helmet with a cage face protector
- Catcher's must wear a helmet with mask, throat protector, chest protector and shin pads in practices and all games.
- All players and coaches must wear appropriate shoes (no open toe or back) and have their hair tied back and properly secured.
- Players are recommended to wear long pants or baseball pants. They may wear athletic shorts at their own risk.
- All players must wear the team shirt issued by NGMSA.
- All pitchers 18 and under must wear a face mask when pitching.

Note: Rules designed to improve league play may be introduced or revised with proper notice



Dear Coaches,

The season is coming to an end, and we are looking forward to our 5th annual "Grand Slam Summer Bash" held at Fireman's park on **Tuesday, August 11th**). We will be having a variety of food truck vendors, giving out player awards and finishing off with a dance party, hosted by a DJ.

NGMSA/Thundercats do little fundraising throughout the year, so we count on our year end barbeque to assist in generating revenue through our RAFFLE BASKETS fundraiser. This revenue is used to pay for park fees, equipment costs, uniforms and other items that support our league.

We are asking each team to donate money that will go toward a "Themed basket."
Coaches: Please sign up for your themed basket in the equipment room at Palmer Park (we will email when this raffle basket becomes sign up becomes available).

Possible Basket ideas: candy, movie night, relaxation, gift cards, camping, chocolate, games, baking, beer, wine, coffee/tea, beach, craft/art supplies, school supplies, Lotto scratch tickets etc. Feel free to have your team come up with their own theme for a basket.

We ask that each player donate \$10 toward the team basket. Coaches can designate a parent volunteer to collect the money for the basket and assist in creating it.

NGMSA will send out an email to our members informing them of the Raffle Basket fundraiser. Feel free to cut and paste items from this letter to send to your roster via Sports Engine to help remind them.

We would like baskets by **FRIDAY, AUGUST 7th**, to organize the Raffle. We appreciate your cooperation in this.

NGMSA Executive