

2026 RIPKEN NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP | RULES

*The default rule book for The Ripken National Championship will be the Major League Rule Book.

TOURNAMENT RULES

Lineups

Teams may bat anywhere from 9 players to the whole roster and have the option of using 1 DH (designated hitter) for any position player. The number of batters in your lineup must stay the same throughout the game. Example: If you have 14 players on your roster, you can bat anywhere from 9 players – 14 players. If you bat 12 players – you will have 2 substitutes available – and the lineup must stay at 12 players for that game. All players starting in the lineup but not in the field are extra hitters (except the DH) which are considered defensive starters for substitution purposes.

*The DH and the player being hit for are locked together in the same spot in the lineup for substitution purposes.

Batting the entire lineup. When a team chooses to bat the entire lineup, each player is considered a starter and the team has a free defensive substitution for that game. Furthermore, if a player is injured or ejected during the game in which a team is batting the entire lineup, their spot in the lineup is skipped with no penalty. Once the spot in the lineup is skipped due to an injury, that player is not eligible to return to the game in any capacity.

***It is the responsibility of the opposing team to verify the accuracy of the other team's lineup prior to the start of each game.** Managers must bring any issues to the attention of a Ripken Tournament Official before the game. If a lineup issue is discovered during the game, the ruling will be that the lineup is corrected at that point for the rest of the game. If it is brought to our staff's attention after the game, there will be no penalty. There will not be a forfeit in this situation since the opposing team is responsible for verifying the other team's lineup prior to the start of the game.

Injuries / Ejections / Substitutions

If a player is injured and no substitute is available, that spot in the lineup will be skipped with no penalty. If an injury occurs during an at-bat and the player can't continue the at-bat, the next batter in the lineup will take over that at-bat and assume the count. If an injury occurs while on the base paths and no substitute is available, the player that made the last recorded out will take the place of the injured player on the bases. If a player is removed from the game for a head-related injury evaluation, he will be allowed to return to the game if cleared by the Ripken Athletic Trainer.

*In the event that a player will be late to the game, there are two options to utilize the player in the game:

- The player can be placed in the starting lineup, but if he is unavailable for any of his at-bats, an out will be recorded each time he is due up. Whenever the player arrives and is available, he can assume his spot in the lineup
- The player can be listed as a substitute, and whenever he arrives or is available, he can enter the lineup according to our substitution rules.

TOURNAMENT RULES CONTINUED

Rosters

Players are restricted to playing for one team during any tournament. If they are listed on multiple rosters prior to the event, then they will not be permitted to play until they are removed from all other rosters. All teams will be limited to 16 players on their roster. Their roster is permitted to consist of 2 grade exemptions (please refer to our Age Determination Chart for more on this rule). Teams also have the ability to add 3 players to their roster after their Ripken Qualifying event.

Re-entry

If a team does not bat the entire lineup and substitutes are available, we use the standard NFHS re-entry rule. Starters may be reentered once (including the DH for 15u-18u), as long as the player occupies their original position in the batting order.

Pitcher of Record

Once a pitcher throws a warm-up pitch, they must face at least one batter. If the pitcher is hurt during their warm-up pitches, another player may come into pitch. The previous pitcher of record will not be allowed to re-enter back onto the mound after a pitcher has thrown a warm-up pitch.

Pitcher Re-entry

If a pitcher is removed after throwing a pitch and goes to another defensive position, they may not return as a pitcher in that game. In other words, as soon as another pitcher throws a warm-up pitch (becoming the new 'pitcher of record'), the previous pitcher is no longer able to pitch in that game. If a team substitutes for the pitcher when on offense but then re-enters the pitcher before going out on defense, that pitcher is still the 'pitcher of record' and can continue to pitch in the game.

Pitcher / Fielder's Equipment

Pitchers are allowed to wear a protective helmet or head gear. The helmet/headgear can't be glossy or feature elements that will distract the batter. The umpire and Tournament Director will determine whether any of the pitcher's equipment or clothing is too distracting. This includes, but is not limited to: gloves, sunglasses, long sleeves, compression sleeves, athletic tape, and two-toned fielder gloves. No metal spikes are allowed on the complex. If a player is wearing metal cleats while playing in any tournament, they will be asked to remove them immediately.

Pitching Limits

There will be pitching limits, starting during the elimination games. Pitchers will be allowed to throw a total of 8 innings (24 outs) over the 2 days of bracket play. A pitcher is not allowed to throw more than 6 innings (18 outs) in 1 day. Pitching will be tracked on a recorded-out basis by the official scorekeeper. Reported innings will be communicated to the head coach after the conclusion of their game.

Electronic Pitch Calling Devices

One-way electronic communication devices will be allowed from the dugout to the catcher while the team is on defense for the purpose of calling pitches. When using the electronic communication device, the coach cannot be outside the dugout/bench area. Coaches may not use electronic devices to communicate with any other team member while on defense, or any team member when on offense.

Catcher's Equipment

Any helmet or helmet and mask combination must have ear protection, face protection, head protection, and a throat protector. A throat protector shall adequately cover the throat and can be a part of or attached to the catcher's mask. The commercially manufactured catcher's head, face, and throat protection may be a one-piece or multi-piece design.

TOURNAMENT RULES CONTINUED

Avoid Contact Rule

Players must attempt to avoid contact with other players in tag-out situations. If, in an umpire's judgment, there is intentional contact, that umpire may call the runner out on that play. If the contact is judged as intentional and malicious, that umpire may also eject the player from the game. If a player is ejected for this reason, they may face suspension for their team's next game with the possibility of further sanctions as well. The Tournament Director on-site will make the final ruling on a possible suspension.

On force out situations, if the runner slides, they must slide directly into the base. A slide that is not directly into the base is grounds for an interference call (umpire's judgment) and the runner could be declared out. In this instance, the batter/runner could also be declared out if the fielder was attempting to make a play on that batter/runner. It is important to note that if the runner makes a legal slide directly into the base and contact is made with the fielder, interference will not be called.

Time Limit

No new inning may start after the time limit elapses. The standard time limit for all age groups is 2 hours from the time of the first pitch of the game to the last out of an inning. Games can go into extra innings if the time limit has not expired. Pool play games can end in a tie. If the time limit is reached during an inning, that inning will be the last one of the game. If the home team is winning after the top half of that last inning, they will be declared the winner of the game and will not hit in the bottom half. If the home team is trailing and must hit in the bottom half of the last inning, the game will end the moment the home team scores the winning run or at the moment of their third out. If the time limit is reached during the bottom half of an inning and the home team is winning at that moment, we will let the current batter complete the at-bat and then the game will end.

- **Elimination games** – There will be no time limit on ALL elimination games.
- **Time in-between innings** – Our expectation is that teams will take 2 minutes in between innings.

Pitchers are permitted to throw 8 warm-up pitches in their first inning of work or 5 warm-up pitches every other inning. If a catcher is still getting dressed, a coach should be ready to warm-up the pitcher.

Extra Innings

The international tiebreaker will be in effect for all pool play games. The international tiebreaker will NOT be used for elimination games.

Pool Play/Consolation Games – If the score remains tied after regulation play AND the time limit has not been reached, the top of the next inning and each half inning thereafter will start with a runner on second base until there is a winner or the time limit is reached. The batter who leads off an inning shall continue to be the batter who would lead off the inning in the absence of this extra-innings rule. The runner on second base shall be the player (or substitute for such a player) in the batting order immediately preceding the batter who leads off the inning.

*NOTE: This rule only goes into effect if the game is tied AND the time limit has NOT been reached. If the time limit is reached, and the score is tied, the game will end in a tie.

Dugouts & Home / Visiting Team

All dugouts at The Ripken Experience complex are labeled Home or Visitor. If playing on a field that does not have labeled dugouts, the home team will occupy the first base side. During the playoff rounds, the home team will be the higher seeded team. In addition to being seeded in the division, teams will also have an overall seed, which will determine the home team. Teams are responsible for cleaning up their respective dugouts including picking up trash at the conclusion of their game.

TOURNAMENT RULES CONTINUED

Intentional Walk

Pitchers will no longer have to throw four pitches to intentionally walk a batter. A signal from the coach to the umpire, will be all that is required to intentionally walk the batter.

Intentional Delays

Intentionally delaying a game to achieve a victory through the time limit is considered unsportsmanlike conduct and will not be tolerated at The Ripken National Championship. The umpires and/or tournament officials at the game reserve the right to eject a coach or player for intentionally delaying a game and possibly declare a forfeit to that team.

Slash Bunt

For 9U-12U age groups, a slash bunt (aka butcher boy) is illegal and the player will be called out if this play is attempted. A slash bunt is defined as a player showing bunt at any time during the pitch and then swinging at that same pitch.

Tie Game in Pool Play

Pool play games can end in a tie. A tie game in pool play equals $\frac{1}{2}$ of a win and $\frac{1}{2}$ of a loss for both teams toward their overall record and/or winning percentage. Therefore, a team that is 2-0-1 would have a winning percentage of .833 and a team that is 2-1-0 would have a winning percentage of .667. In other words, the 2-0-1 record is better than the 2-1-0 record.

Line-up Cards

Teams must provide their own line-up cards. A copy should be given to opposing team each game. For 13U and older, umpires must be given your teams lineup in addition to giving it to the opposing team.

On-deck Batter

All on-deck batters must stay near their team's dugout on the warning track with a helmet on.

Official Scorebook

We recommend that both teams keep a scorebook. The Ripken Nationals will have an official scorekeeper at all games, who will be considered the official scorebook for all games. The official scorekeeper will work with the home plate umpire during all games.

Number of Players

Teams are permitted to start and/or end a game with 7 players. Anything less than 7 available players at any time during a game will result in a forfeit for that team.

Winning %

If teams play an uneven number of games during pool play, winning percentage will be the first tie breaker used to determine the final seeds. Example: Team (A) goes 4-1 in pool play and finishes with a winning % of .800. Team (B) goes 3-1 in pool play and finishes with a winning % of .750. Therefore, Team (A) will be seeded higher than Team (B) due to having a higher winning %.

Jewelry

Jewelry is permitted during game play, as long as it is not a distraction or dangerous to the player or opposing players. Any item that is deemed unsafe or distracting (Tournament Director's or Umpire's judgement) will not be allowed. The team will receive a warning if a player wears improper jewelry during the game and any players found wearing improper jewelry after the team warning will be ejected for the remainder of the game.

TOURNAMENT RULES CONTINUED

Mercy Rule

For all games – 10 runs after 5 innings.

Casts

Orthopedic casts can be worn if there is no exposed metal. Ripken Baseball requires casts be padded. The Tournament Director and Certified Athletic Trainer or Emergency Personnel on site have final judgement as to its safety.

Forfeits

If a team chooses to forfeit a pool play game, they are not eligible for the championship or consolation round and face suspension in future Ripken Baseball tournaments. The final score of the forfeited game will be based on the team giving up a run per inning for a complete game (e.g. for a 6-inning game the score would be 6-0; for a 7 inning game the score would be 7-0).

- If a team chooses to forfeit a consolation or elimination game, they face suspension in future Ripken tournaments.
- If a team is unable to play a single elimination game, The Ripken Experience has the right to advance the losing team / or next best seed.
- If a team chooses to forfeit a championship game, they are not eligible for tournament awards.
- The Ripken Experience will attempt to replace a forfeited team in an elimination game if possible.
- If a game becomes a forfeit after it has started due to a team having less than the required 7 available players, the official score of that game still follows the guidelines above no matter what the score was at the time of the forfeit.

*If a team is found to be using an illegal player (i.e. not age eligible) the team will be ejected from the tournament immediately. All previously played games will be reverted to a forfeit with score of 6-0. **No credits or refunds will be given to the ejected team.**

***Ripken Staff reserves the right to declare the game a forfeit if an ejected individual does not leave the complex within a reasonable amount of time.**

Cell Phones / Electronic Devices

Cell phones, iPad, and other electronic devices are permitted in the dugout only during the game. A coach, manager, or scorekeeper is not permitted to have them on the field during the game. Failure to comply may result in ejection.

Protests

It is the responsibility of the manager and/or coach of a team to stop the game at the time of the play and ask for a Ripken Tournament Official if they feel that a ruling during a game is incorrect (there is a radio or tournament official at each field for this purpose). **A game should never be stopped for umpire judgment calls as those cannot be protested.** Our staff will do everything possible to resolve issues as they occur.

Mound Visits

The pitcher must be removed on the second mound visit in an inning for all age groups.

TOURNAMENT RULES CONTINUED

Balks

We follow Official Baseball Rules (OBR) regarding balks, with the exemption being that for safety reasons, all balks called are an immediate dead ball. For the 11u age group, there will be one warning per pitcher issued for a balk. There will be no warnings issued for 12u and older age groups.

Proper Cheering / Noise Makers

All individuals (players, coaches, parents, and fans) are expected to cheer in a positive manner for their own team and never in a negative manner toward the opposing team. Noise makers are not permitted in the dugouts and if they are used by parents/fans, they must not cause any sort of distraction to the opposing team. Since the term "distraction" can be subjective, if an issue arises at a field involving noise makers, then Ripken Baseball staff may mandate that they not be used during moments of game play. They would only be permitted to be used when the ball is dead or in between innings. If that stipulation is not followed, the noise makers would be prohibited all together for that team for the remainder of the tournament.

Team Speakers

Team music/media players are NOT allowed on-site for pre-game warmups and walk-up songs before at bats. A Ripken Tournament Official will play pre-game music and advertisements, walk-up music, mid-inning music, and announce players names for each game.

Expected Behavior

Negative behavior/bad sportsmanship at youth sporting events has become a major issue. The Ripken Experience Tournaments are not immune as we still see coaches and parents that choose to act in a negative manner toward the opposing team or an umpire from time to time. Please remember that the games are for the kids, not the adults, and we expect each adult to set a positive example for the players through their words and actions.

Everyone that attends a tournament is expected to act in a positive manner, no matter the outcome of a play, call by an umpire, or the game itself. We simply ask the following:

- Let the players play
- Let the coaches coach
- Let the umpires umpire

Moreover, even when you're not on the complex, your personal behavior is a reflection on your team and The Ripken National Championship. We expect players, parents, coaches and family members to act in a positive manner at all times – with respect for people and property throughout our local community.

Confinement To The Bench

The Ripken Nationals Tournament Directors as well as the umpires working a game have the ability to confine a manager or coach to the bench. If this step is enacted that individual will not be able to leave the bench/dugout. The only exception that will be allowed is for a manager/coach to attend to an injured player on the field. If an individual that is confined to the bench violates this stipulation, they will be ejected from that game and will face further suspension as well.

General Fair Play / Sportsmanship

Intentional disregard for the stated rules (or the spirit in which those rules exist) as well as obvious unsportsmanlike behavior will not be tolerated and will place the individuals and/or teams involved at risk for a possible forfeit or banishment from any future Unrivaled Sports events. We do hold the right to alter tournament seeds for teams failing to abide by our general fair play and sportsmanship guidelines.

TOURNAMENT RULES CONTINUED

Tie Breaker System

2 Team Tie Breaker

When 2 teams are tied, follow the list below until the tie is broken

- Head-to-head results (if applicable)
- Least runs allowed (average per games played) - Lowest single game runs allowed
- Each subsequent lowest single game runs allowed (2nd lowest for each team, 3rd lowest, etc.)
- Highest average run differential per games played - Highest single game run differential
- Each subsequent highest single game run differential (2nd highest for each team, 3rd highest, etc.)
- Coin flip

3 or more Team Tie Breaker

If 3 or more teams are tied with the same record or winning %, use the following to break the tie

- Head-to-head results (only applicable if all of the tied teams played each other)
- If one team beat all of the other tied teams, they will be the highest seed of the tied teams. (Even if all tied teams have not played each other)
- Continue to use head to head results to seed the rest of the teams in the tie
- If one team has been beaten by all of the other tied teams, they will be the lowest seed of the tied teams. (Even if all tied teams have not played each other)
- If all tied teams have the same record against each other, then they are tied at head-to-head and you move to the next item on the list (least runs allowed)
- If all of the tied teams did not play each other, head-to-head is not applicable.
- Continue down the 2-Team Tie Breaker list as stated above

When 2 teams are tied at any one of the criteria, we revert back to the beginning of the 2-Team Tie Breaker system (head-to-head).

3 or more Team Tie Breaker Examples

Example 1

Team A 2-1 15 runs allowed
Team B 2-1 16 runs allowed
Team C 2-1 16 runs allowed

- Team A beat Team B / Team B beat Team C / Team C beat Team A
- All 3 teams are tied at head-to-head
- Go to next criteria - least runs allowed: Team A is the highest seed of the 3 tied teams
- There now exists a tie between Team B and Team C and since this is now a 2-team tie, we revert back to the beginning of the 2-Team Tie System (head-to-head) which makes Team B the next highest seed of the 3 teams since Team B beat Team C.

Example 2

Team A 1-1 12 runs allowed
Team B 1-1 13 runs allowed
Team C 1-1 15 runs allowed
Team D 1-1 16 runs allowed
Team E 1-1 16 runs allowed
Team F 1-1 17 runs allowed

- Team D beat Team E
- This is a 6-team tie at a 1-1 record
- Since all of the teams in the tie did not play each other, head-to-head is not applicable for this 6-team tie and we move to least runs allowed. Based on the 'least runs allowed' criteria, Team A is the highest seed of this group, followed by Team B and then Team C.
- Team D and Team E are locked in a 2-team tie at least runs allowed so we revert back to the beginning of the 2-team tie breaker system (head-to-head). In this case, Team D beat Team E so Team D is the higher seed over Team E.
- Team F is the lowest seed of this group of 6 tied teams.

TOURNAMENT RULES CONTINUED

Ejection / Suspension Policy

- **Managers / Coaches:** Managers or coaches (or scorekeepers or anyone else that is in the dugout or on the field during a game) that are ejected from a game (either by an umpire or by a Ripken Official) must leave the facility immediately and will automatically be suspended for 1 additional game. The Tournament Director may also lengthen the suspension to more games or expulsion from the facility for a period of time. If a manager or coach is ejected from a game twice during the same tournament, they will be suspended for the remainder of the tournament.
- **Players:** If a player is ejected from a game they may face further suspension.
- **Parents / Fans:** If a fan or parent is ejected from a game (either by an umpire or a Ripken Baseball Official), they must leave the facility immediately and will be suspended for the remainder of the event.

Bat Restrictions

Coaches are responsible for checking all of their player's bats before playing in the tournament. Please make sure all bats meet the guidelines below. Coach Pitch bats not permitted in any age group.

- **12u:** All bats must have either the BPF 1.15, USA Baseball, or BBCOR designation displayed on the bat. No other weight or size restrictions for 9-12u.
- **Penalty for use of an illegal bat:** If the umpire discovers that a batter enters the batter's box with an illegal bat, the batter will be called out (even if a pitch has not been thrown). If the illegal bat is discovered after the ball is put into play (but before the next pitch is thrown to the next batter), the defensive team will have the choice of the result of play or the batter being called out and all runners returning to the base occupied before the pitch. An appeal on the legality of the bat must be made prior to the next pitch thrown to the next batter or the result of the previous at- bat will stand. Second Offense – If a team is found in violation of this rule a second time (either in the same game or in any other game throughout the tournament), in addition to the previous penalty, the manager will be immediately ejected and could face further suspension.
- **Altered / Damaged Bats:** Damaged or Altered bats (shaved, rolled, or in any other way altered to increase performance) are not permitted in any way. Any player using an altered bat will be ejected from the game and their at bat will be recorded as an out. All runners will go back to the base they occupied when the batter put the ball in play. The player ejected for use of an altered bat may also face further suspension.
- **Thrown Bats:** Using umpire discretion, if a thrown bat by a player is said to be of concern for player safety the following steps will be taken:
 - Teachable moment / explanation
 - Verbal warning (1 per player)
 - Removal from remainder of game (to be treated as ejected/injured player at no penalty)
- **Wood Bats:** Wood bats are permitted in all tournaments. Composite bats are also legal.
- **Bat Sensors:** Sensors built inside the handle of the bat are legal. Sensors that are an addition to the exterior of the bat are not permitted. In case of a discrepancy, the Tournament Director will deem whether a sensor is permitted.

PRE-GAME WARM-UP GUIDELINES

General Guidelines

- Respect all tournament facilities (clean up all trash and equipment).
- Teams must warm-up/practice in designated areas only.
- Infield/outfield is permitted on the game fields during assigned time. Each team will be allowed 5 minutes prior to the start of their game for infield/outfield. The visiting team will be allowed on the field prior to the home team. A Ripken Nationals Tournament Official will notify the teams prior to warm-ups.
- Each team must make sure that the starting pitcher is ready by game time.
- Teams that do not follow these guidelines can be banned from practice areas.
- See a Ripken Tournament Official if any problems/conflicts arise.

RULES SUMMARY SHEET

RULE	DETAILS	RULE	DETAILS
BASE DISTANCE	70'	MERCY RULE	10 RUNS AFTER 5 INNINGS
PITCHING DISTANCE	50'	CLEATS	RUBBER
GAME LENGTH COMPLETE GAME	6 INNINGS 4 INNINGS	BUNTING	YES
LEADS	YES	IF FLY RULE	YES
STEALING (INCLUDING HOME)	YES	MUST AVOID CONTACT	YES
RUN ON DROPPED 3RD STRIKE	YES	RUN ON DROPPED 3RD STRIKE	YES

RULES SUMMARY SHEET CONTINUED

RULE	DETAILS
BALKS	<p>YES</p> <p>NO WARNINGS</p> <p>*We use the OBR (Official Baseball Rules) rule book when pertaining to what constitutes a balk</p> <p>*Immediate dead ball for all balks 11U and older (not a delayed dead ball)</p>
BATS	<p>2-1/4" - 2-3/4"</p> <p>*All bats must have either the BPF 1.15 USA Baseball or BBCOR designation displayed on the bat (12U)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wood bats are permitted in all tournaments - Coach Pitch bats are not permitted
LINEUP	<p>12U: Anywhere from 9 to the whole roster can bat in the lineup with the option of using 1DH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teams that choose to bat the entire roster will have free defensive substitution during that game - Any player starting in the lineup but not in the field is an EH and is considered a defensive starter for substitution purposes. - It is each team's responsibility to check the opposing lineup prior to the game and call for a Ripken Tournament Official if there is an issue.
ROSTERS	16 players are allowed on the roster. Up to 4 adults allowed in the dugout. Rosters are locked once a team's first game begins. Players are restricted to playing for one team. Teams are allowed to add an additional 3 players to their qualifying roster before The Ripken National Championship.
RE-ENTRY	Starters may be re-entered once, as long as the player occupies the same position in the batting order. Starting pitchers may be re-entered, but not as pitchers'. *If a pitcher is removed from the mound and goes to another defensive position, they may not return as a pitcher in that game.
COURTESY RUNNERS	There is NO courtesy runner rule for Ripken Baseball tournaments - all catchers and pitchers run for themselves unless a substitution is made.
ON-DECK BATTERS	All on-deck batters must stay near their own dugout on the warning track with a helmet on.
MOUND VISITS	Pitcher must be removed on second mound visit in the same inning (all ages)
INTENTIONAL WALK	Four balls out of the zone are not required, dugout signal from coach is all that is required.
EJECTIONS	If a manager, coach, or scorekeeper is ejected from a game, they are automatically suspended for the next game with further sanctions possible. If a player is ejected from a game and there is no substitute available, that spot in the lineup will be skipped with no penalty. If a fan or parent is ejected from a game, they will not be allowed back for the rest of the tournament.
INJURIES	If a player is injured and no substitute is available, that spot in the lineup will be skipped with no penalty.
SLIDING	Head first and feet first slides are allowed.

*This sheet represents only a summary of some of The Ripken National Championship rules.