



WAA 2026
SOFTBALL RULES

General Information.....	Page 2
1st/2nd Grade Girls.....	4
3rd/4th Grade Girls	7
5th/6th Grade Girls	10
7th/8th Grade Girls.....	13
Coach, Parents, and Player Responsibilities/Social Media..	14
Special Needs Children in Softball.....	15



GENERAL INFORMATION

Pre-Season Practice

The head coach of your child's team will conduct practices during the days following team assignments and prior to the start of regular season play. The head coach will decide on a practice schedule and you should assist your child in maintaining regular attendance. The players' skill, development and playing positions may depend upon this period of instruction.

League Play and Practice

During the WAA season, each team will usually play 2 games each week. In addition, practices will be scheduled during the week **at the discretion of the head coach**. Many head coaches could use some help at practice, please offer your assistance. Parents who have some knowledge of the game of baseball and softball will find some modifications in the rules as played by WAA. Rules and strategy are altered for reasons of safety, size of the playing field, the size of the children and their ability. All rules are contained in this booklet.

Canceling Games and Rainouts

- **Rainouts** – In the event of inclement weather OR poor field conditions, **game or field cancellations will be communicated is via our website at www.waasports.org**. Please go to the home page of the WAA website. www.waasports.org. Under "Quick Links", the first link is the "WAA Rainout Line". Click on the link and it will take you to all the field locations WAA is using. Scroll through the list to find your field. Green means "It's a GO, Yellow means "pending", Red means "Cancelled".

Our goal is to update the status of game fields by **4:30pm** weekdays, **9am** on Saturday or as soon as we know about the playability of the field. PLEASE DO NOT CALL THE WAA OFFICE. We update the status as soon as crews contact us. Typically, we will not cancel games due to a weather forecast. Please note that all coaches and parents may **download the free Rainout Line App**, or sign up for email or text alerts for your team's specific fields. Sign up is easy and located on the left side of the Rainout Line status page. After 4:30 PM, continue to check the Rainout Line, but in most cases cancellations after 4:30, will be based on a game time decision at the field by the umpires and coaches

Uniforms

All players must be in full uniform or they will not be permitted to play. A full uniform consists of the following:

1. Team jersey, and socks will be provided by WAA for:
 - ♦ All Softball Rec levels: 1st/2nd, 3rd/4th, 5th/6th, 7th/8th Grades
2. Players need to provide plain white/gray/black baseball pants or softball pants.
3. Players must provide a glove.
4. **ALL Infield players will be REQUIRED to provide and wear a protective fielding mask.**



A. Player Safety

- Do not allow players to throw a ball or swing a bat without adult supervision.
- Keep players in the dugout when not playing to avoid foul balls or overthrown balls.
- Helmets must be worn while batting, in the on-deck circle, and baserunning.
- The on-deck batter (with helmet on) must always be BEHIND the batter and is the only player allowed to pick up a bat on/near home plate. Do not allow others to leave the dugout to pick up loose equipment during game play. No youth "bat boys/girls" are allowed.
- Head first slides at bases are highly discouraged. Head first slides at home plate are not allowed.
- Pitchers warming up outside the field must throw to a coach only.
- Players warming up pitchers on the field in between innings must be in FULL protective gear.
- Players are not allowed to stand in the opening of the dugout during game play; they must remain behind the fence.
- Only players and coaches are allowed in the dugouts. Family and friends should refrain from entering the dugout and surrounding area.
- Only players and coaches are allowed on the field of play. Family and friends should refrain from entering the playing field and surrounding area.
- Players are not allowed to coach the bases. Only adults 18+ may coach bases

**** If you are short players, you cannot use non-registered participants! No travel players are allowed.**

Call a coach and borrow from your age group. All head coaches will have a coach list in your packet. However, subs must not take a priority over a team rostered player.



1st & 2nd GRADE SOFTBALL RULES (Coach Pitch)

A. Field Dimensions – You will be using dirt ball diamonds (New in 2025!)

- ♦ The diamond will have fifty (50) foot base lines.
- ♦ The pitcher's mound will be thirty-five (35) feet from home plate.

B. Equipment

- ♦ **ALL Infield players will be REQUIRED to provide and wear a protective fielding mask.**
- ♦ Each player must furnish her own glove.
- ♦ No metal or screw on cleats allowed.
- ♦ WAA will provide the players shirt and socks.
- ♦ Teams can decide on pants/shorts color so they look uniform.
- ♦ All shirts must be tucked in at the waist.
- ♦ Batting helmets must worn by players while in the on-deck circle, batting, and running the bases.
- ♦ ASA / USSA approved fast pitch softball bats only.
- ♦ The home team will supply an (11) inch "Soft" yellow softball as provided by WAA.

C. Games

- ♦ Games will be 1:45 in length. No inning will start once the 1:40 time limit has been reached.
- ♦ All games will be scheduled for five (5) innings.
- ♦ Each half inning will consist of three (3) outs or four (4) runs whichever occurs first.
- ♦ The score will be kept, but standings will not be maintained.
- ♦ A regulation game, if called by darkness or weather, will be four (4) complete innings or, if the home team is ahead 3½ innings.
- ♦ The home team will always occupy the dug out on the 3rd base side of the field.
- ♦ Rescheduling games can be done by contacting the WAA office. Every attempt should be made to play the game as scheduled.

D. Positions

- ♦ The team on the field will consist of ten (10) players: First baseman, second baseman, short-stop, third baseman, pitcher, catcher, and four (4) outfielders (left, left center, right, right center).
- ♦ Each player must play at least four (4) innings in the field.
- ♦ All players will bat and have a regular spot in the batting order.
- ♦ There is open substitution; however, each player must bat as scheduled within the line-up prepared before the game.
- ♦ No player may play more than two (2) innings at the same position.
- ♦ *Each player must have an opportunity to play infield and outfield in every game*
- ♦ Fielders must play in their designated position until the ball is hit, over-loading fielders to one side of the field is not allowed.
- ♦ Outfielders must all play in standard outfield positions (on the grass where applicable) and are not allowed to cover a base to gain a force out.



E. Batting

- ♦ A batter will be called out if he/she throws the bat.
- ♦ A strikeout will consist of three (3) strikes. There are NO WALKS.
- ♦ 2 bunts per inning are allowed.
- ♦ A batter is awarded 1st base when hit by a pitched ball. (Batters must make an attempt to move)
- ♦ A dropped 3rd strike rule is not in effect.
- ♦ On deck batter must be in the batter's box behind the hitter. If a left-handed hitter is up, on deck batter must be on first base side.

F. Base Running

- ♦ All bases must be held until the ball is batted.
- ♦ Base runners must tag up on caught fly balls or they will be called out. The infield fly rule will not apply.
- ♦ Sliding must be encouraged to avoid injury.
- ♦ Sliding is required if there is a play at the plate. If there is a play at the plate and the runner does not slide, she will be called out.
- ♦ **There are no:**
 - Lead offs
 - Stealing bases
 - Advancing on passed balls

G. Pitching

- ♦ The catcher will be encouraged to throw the ball back to the player not the coach.
- ♦ There are NO WALKS.
- ♦ A coach or assistant coach will pitch to his/her own team for the entire game.
- ♦ The coach will pitch a maximum of 8 pitches to a batter. The batter must put the ball in play by the conclusion of the 8th pitch or they will be declared out. There are strikeouts but no walks
- ♦ The player at the pitching position, when the coach is pitching will stand within 2 steps to the side of the coach. Right-handed player to the right, left handed player to the left

H. Coaching

- ♦ The batting team is allowed the following coaches; on deck coach, first base coach, and third base coach. All other coaches must remain within the dugout area and supervise the remaining players.
- ♦ The fielding team is allowed ONE coach on the field. There must be **one** coach of the fielding team that remains within the dugout area to supervise the remaining players.
- ♦ The head coach is responsible for maintaining order on the sideline and keeping equipment and players seated behind the bench lines (dug out). Batting helmets and hats should be kept by the on-deck circle away from the dugout.
- ♦ All coaching must be positive and instructional, not vulgar, critical, or demeaning. Coaches who are abusive to players must be reported to the Softball Director. Abusive behavior will not be tolerated.
- ♦ Set a good example of sportsmanship in all game situations.
- ♦ Any coaches who will not adhere to the WAA rules, policies and philosophy must resign their position.
- ♦ Coaches are not permitted to smoke, vape or chew tobacco products during games or practices.
- ♦ Coaches are not permitted to carry/brandish a weapon during games or practices.



I. Umpires

- ♦ The home team will supply an umpire who will be positioned behind the pitcher's mound.
- ♦ The umpire's decision will be final unless both team coaches agree that an error in interpretation of the rules has been made.
- ♦ The Umpire is responsible for:
 - Determining when each play has ended and the ball is dead.
 - Calling fair and foul balls.
 - Calling all outs.
 - Calling balls and strikes.
 - Rules interpretation, are not to be argued on the field. The umpire has the final say.

Any pre-game agreements made by managers regarding any rule changes NOT specifically authorized by the League Director shall be of no force or effect.

- ♦ ***Managers shall be responsible for keeping their coaches, players and spectators from shouting or making derogatory comments to players on both teams and umpires. Use of profane language by anyone associated with the team will not be tolerated!***



3rd & 4th GRADE SOFTBALL RULES

(Player and Coach Pitch)

A. Field Dimensions

- ♦ The diamond will have sixty (60) foot base lines.
- ♦ The pitcher's plate will be thirty-five (35) feet from home plate.

B. Equipment

- ♦ **ALL Infield players will be REQUIRED to provide and wear a protective fielding mask.**
- ♦ Each player must furnish her own glove.
- ♦ No metal or screw on cleats allowed.
- ♦ WAA will provide the players shirt and socks.
- ♦ Teams can decide on their own pant/shorts color so they look uniform.
- ♦ All shirts must be tucked in at the waist.
- ♦ Batting helmets must worn by players while in the on-deck circle, batting, and running the bases.
- ♦ ASA / USSA approved fast pitch softball bats only.
- ♦ The home team will supply an (11) inch "Hard" yellow softball as provided by WAA.
- ♦ The catcher must wear a mask, shin guards, chest protector with a protective flap, and a catcher's helmet as provided by WAA.

C. Games

- ♦ Games will be 1:45 in length. No inning will start once the 1:40 time limit has been reached.
- ♦ All games will be scheduled for six (6) innings.
- ♦ Each half inning will consist of three (3) outs or four (4) runs whichever occurs first.
- ♦ The score will be kept, but standings will not be maintained.
- ♦ The home team will always occupy the dug out on the 3rd base side of the field.
- ♦ Rescheduling games can be done by contacting the WAA office. Every attempt should be made to play the game as scheduled.

D. Positions

- ♦ A team on the field will consist of ten (10) players. First baseman, second baseman, shortstop, third baseman, pitcher, catcher, and four (4) outfielders (left, left center, right center, right).
- ♦ A game can be played with as few as eight (8) players. If either team has less than 8 players, an attempt should be made to balance the teams so the game may be played.
- ♦ Each player must play at least four (4) innings in the field and must bat as scheduled within the lineup prepared before the game.
 - *Each player is given a batting position regardless if she plays in the field or sits out an inning.*
 - *Each player must have an opportunity to play infield and outfield in every game.*
- ♦ Except for the pitcher, a player may not play the same position for more than two (2) innings in a game.
- ♦ Fielders must play in their designated position until the ball is hit. Over loading fielders to one side of the field is not allowed.
- ♦ Fielders must use the white base while the runner uses the orange safety base. In the event the fielder crosses over to the orange bag to complete the play, the runner will be considered safe as that would be interference of the safety bag.
- ♦ Outfielders must all play in standard outfield positions (on the grass where applicable) and are not allowed to cover a base to gain a force out.



E. Batting

- ♦ A batter will be called out if she throws the bat. The umpire's decision is final.
- ♦ There are NO walks.
- ♦ Bunting is allowed.
- ♦ A batter is awarded 1st base when hit by a pitched ball. Batters must make an attempt to move
- ♦ A batter hit by a pitched ball that bounces in will NOT be awarded a base.
- ♦ On deck batter must be in the batter's box behind the hitter. If a left-handed hitter is up, on deck batter must be on first base side.

F. Base Running

- ♦ All bases must be held until the ball reaches the plate.
- ♦ Base stealing is not allowed which includes advancing bases on passed balls/wild pitches.
- ♦ The infield fly rule will not apply.
- ♦ On any infield overthrow the base runner may only advance one base and the ball will be considered dead.
- ♦ Sliding is encouraged to avoid injury.
- ♦ Sliding is required if there is a play at the plate. If there is a play at the plate and the runner does not slide she will be called out.
- ♦ The umpire can rule the play dead if the ball comes in from the field and is then within a six foot radius of the pitching mound.

G. Pitching

- ♦ Players will pitch until the batter has reached 4 balls, at which point the coach of the team at bat will finish pitching to the batter who will receive a maximum of 4 more pitches. The batter must put the ball in play by the conclusion of the 8th pitch or they will be declared out.
- ♦ Strikes will carry over, and NO WALKS will be issued. Once batter has finished her "at bat", coach will allow a player to begin pitching to next batter.
- ♦ There are NO walks.
- ♦ No individual player will pitch more than 4 innings per game.
- ♦ The player at the pitching position, when the coach is pitching will stand within 2 steps to the side of the coach. Right-handed player to the right, left handed player to the left.
- ♦ The coach, when pitching, will wear a glove for protection.
- ♦ The coach will pitch underhand and at approximately the same speed as that of the players.
- ♦ The catcher will be encouraged to throw the ball back to the player at the pitching position.
- ♦ Any ball touched by the adult pitcher is live and "in play".

H. Modified Pitching

- ♦ Pitchers will take a position with both feet on the ground and in contact with the pitchers plate.
- ♦ The pitcher may use any windup desired, provided:
 - She does not continue to wind up after releasing the ball.
 - It is a continuous motion.
 - No sling shot deliveries.
 - Windmill is permitted.

I. Coaching

- ♦ The batting team is allowed a 1st base coach, and 3rd base coach.
- ♦ The fielding team is allowed one coach on the field for the first 3 games. All other coaches must remain within the dugout area and supervise the remaining players.
- ♦ The head coach is responsible for maintaining order on the sideline and keeping equipment and players seated behind the bench lines (dug out).
- ♦ All coaching must be positive and instructional, not vulgar, critical or demeaning. Coaches who are abusive to players must be reported to the Softball Director. Abusive behavior will not be tolerated.
- ♦ Set a good example of sportsmanship in all game situations.



- ♦ Coaches must refrain from constantly questioning umpire calls, balls/strikes.
- ♦ Any coaches who will not adhere to WAA rules, policies and philosophy must resign their position.
- ♦ Coaches are not permitted to smoke, vape or chew tobacco products during games or practices.
- ♦ Coaches are not permitted to carry/brandish a weapon during games or practices.

J. Umpire

- ♦ One umpire will be scheduled and provided by the league.
- ♦ Rules interpretation, are not to be argued on the field. The umpire has the final say. No protests are allowed.
- ♦ Softball rules for modified play will prevail where not previously stated or replaced herein.
- ♦ If league umpires are not present each team will furnish one adult umpire. The field and plate umpires will alternate positions after 3 field innings. In this situation the plate umpire will call balls and strikes from behind the pitcher.

Any pre-game agreements made by managers regarding any rule changes NOT specifically authorized by the League Director shall be of no force or effect.

Managers shall be responsible for keeping their coaches, players and spectators from shouting or making derogatory comments to players on both teams and umpires. Use of profane language by anyone associated with the team will not be tolerated!



5th & 6th GRADE SOFTBALL RULES (Player Pitch)

A. Field Dimensions

- ♦ The distance between bases will be sixty (60) feet going from home to first and so on.
- ♦ The pitchers plate will be forty (40) feet from home plate.

B. Equipment

- ♦ **ALL Infield players will be REQUIRED to provide and wear a protective fielding mask.**
- ♦ Each player must furnish her own glove.
- ♦ No metal or screw on cleats allowed.
- ♦ WAA will provide the players shirt and socks.
- ♦ Teams can decide on their own pants/shorts color so they all look uniform.
- ♦ All shirts must be tucked in at the waist.
- ♦ Batting helmets must be worn by players while in the on-deck circle, batting, and running the bases.
- ♦ ASA / USSA approved fast pitch softball bats only.
- ♦ The home team will supply a twelve (12) inch "Hard" yellow softball as provided by WAA.
- ♦ The catcher must wear a mask, shin guards, chest protector with a protective flap, and a catcher's helmet as provided by WAA.

C. Games

- ♦ Games will be 1:45 in length. No inning will start once the 1:40 time limit has been reached.
- ♦ All games will be scheduled for six (6) innings. A seventh (7th) inning can be played if the game is tied after six (6) innings and the overall time limit has not been exceeded.
- ♦ Each half inning will consist of three (3) outs or five (5) runs whichever occurs first.
- ♦ The score will be kept, but standings will not be maintained.
- ♦ The home team will always occupy the dug out on the 3rd base side of the field.
- ♦ Rescheduling games can be done by contacting the WAA office. Every attempt should be made to play the game as scheduled.

D. Positions

- ♦ A team on the field will consist of nine (9) players: First baseman, second baseman, shortstop, third baseman, pitcher, catcher, and three (3) outfielders (left, center, right).
- ♦ A game can be played with as few as eight (8) players. If either team has less than 8 players, an attempt should be made to balance the teams so the game may be played.
- ♦ Each player must play at least four (4) innings in the field and must bat as scheduled within the lineup prepared before the game.
 - *Note: Each player is given a batting position regardless if she plays in the field or sits out an inning.*
 - *Each player must have an opportunity to play infield and outfield in every game.*
- ♦ Except for the pitcher, a player may not play the same position for more than two (2) innings in a game.
- ♦ Fielders must play in their designated position until the ball is hit. Over loading fielders to one side of the field is not allowed.
- ♦ Outfielders must all play in standard outfield positions (on the grass where applicable) and are not allowed to cover a base to gain a force out.



E. Pitching

- ♦ Players pitch the entire game. No individual player will pitch more than four (4) innings per game.
- ♦ There are walks and strikeouts

F. Modified Pitching

- ♦ Pitchers will take a position with both feet on the ground and in contact with the pitchers' plate.
- ♦ The pitcher may use any windup desired, provided:
 - She does not continue to wind up after releasing the ball.
 - It is a continuous motion.
 - No sling shot deliveries.
 - Windmill is permitted.

G. Batting

- ♦ A batter will be called out if she throws the bat. The umpire's decision is final.
- ♦ Bunting is allowed.
- ♦ A batter is awarded 1st base when hit by a pitched ball. Batter must make an attempt to move
- ♦ A batter hit by a ball that bounces in will not be awarded a base
- ♦ A dropped 3rd strike rule is not in effect.
- ♦ The infield fly rule will be in effect.
- ♦ On deck batter must be in the batter's box behind the hitter. If a left-handed hitter is up, on deck batter must be on first base side.

H. Base Running

- ♦ All bases must be held until the ball leaves the pitcher's hand.
- ♦ Runners may advance on a passed ball. Only one base can be advanced on each passed ball.
- ♦ When attempting to steal, the runner cannot leave the base they occupy until the ball leaves the pitcher's hand.
- ♦ The infield fly rule will apply.
- ♦ On any infield overthrow the base runner may only advance one base and the ball will be considered dead.
- ♦ Sliding is encouraged to avoid injury. A base runner will be called out for failing to slide and causing a collision.
- ♦ Runner may steal home on a passed ball. Not on attempt to 3rd base.
- ♦ Sliding is required if there is a play at the plate. If there is a play at the plate and the runner does not slide, she will be called out.
- ♦ Continuation on a walk will not be permitted.

I. Coaching

- ♦ The batting team is allowed a 1st base coach and 3rd base coach.
- ♦ All coaching must be positive and instructional, not vulgar, critical or demeaning. Coaches who are abusive to players must be reported to the Softball Director. Abusive behavior will not be tolerated.
- ♦ Set a good example of sportsmanship in all game situations.
- ♦ Coaches must refrain from constantly questioning umpire calls, balls/strikes.
- ♦ Any coaches who will not adhere to WAA rules, policies and philosophy must resign their position.
- ♦ Coaches are not permitted to smoke or chew tobacco products during games or practices.
- ♦ Coaches are not permitted to carry/brandish a weapon during games or practices.



J. Umpire

- ♦ Umpires will be scheduled and provided by the league.
- ♦ The umpire is responsible for:
- ♦ Determining when each play has ended and when the ball is dead.
- ♦ Calling fair and foul balls.
- ♦ Calling all outs.
- ♦ Calling balls and strikes.
- ♦ Determining base runner movement.
- ♦ Rules interpretation, are not to be argued on the field. The umpire has the final say. No protests are allowed
- ♦ If league umpires are not present, each team will furnish one adult umpire. The field and plate umpire will alternate after 3 full innings. In this situation, balls and strikes will be called from behind the pitcher.

Any pre-game agreements made by managers regarding any rule changes NOT specifically authorized by the League Director shall be of no force or effect.

Managers shall be responsible for keeping their coaches, players and spectators from shouting or making derogatory comments to players on both teams and umpires. Use of profane language by anyone associated with the team will not be tolerated!



7th & 8th GRADE SOFTBALL RULES

All rules will follow the current USA Softball fast pitch rule book unless noted

7-8 Grade Softball will follow USA Softball Rules for 14U with noted exceptions:

- Metal cleats are allowed
- 40' pitcher's mound
- Full roster batting order
- Open substitution
- Courtesy runner for the catcher

General Rules

1. **ALL Infield players will be REQUIRED to provide and wear a protective fielding mask.**
2. A team shall field nine (9) players, but may play with eight (8). Any team not able to field eight (8) players within 15 minutes of the scheduled game time shall forfeit the game. A team playing with eight (8) players will record an out when the 9th position in the batting order comes to bat.
3. The first team listed on the schedule is the HOME team and will occupy the 3rd base dugout.
4. Pitching distance is forty (40) feet.
5. Games will be 1:50 in length. No inning will start after the 1:45 time limit has been reached.
6. All games will be scheduled for seven (7) innings
7. The score will be kept, but standings will not be maintained
8. If after 7 innings and the score is tied, extra innings may be played as long as the overall time limit has not been exceeded.
9. Players arriving after the game has begun will be added to the end of the batting order.
10. Every player must play at least two (2) innings in the field for a four (4) inning or less game.
11. Every player must play at least four (4) innings in the field for a 7 inning game.
12. Teams are limited to five (5) runs per inning.
13. Pitchers may not pitch more than five (5) innings in a game.
14. Continuation on a walk will not be permitted.
15. No protests are allowed.

Any pre-game agreements made by managers regarding any rule changes NOT specifically authorized by the League Director shall be of no force or effect.

Managers shall be responsible for keeping their coaches, players and spectators from shouting or making derogatory comments to players on both teams and umpires. Use of profane language by anyone associated with the team will not be tolerated!



Coach, Parents, and Player Responsibilities

- WAA works in partnership with the schools and you the families of the district and surrounding communities. Only together we can make this a fun positive experience for the kids. Many of our umpires are subjected to verbal abuse that is unfair and often presented at improper times. Occasionally, a bad call may be made. As a coach, you have a right to question a call. This has to be one in a proper manner and at the proper time-between innings or at the end of the game. As a WAA participant, please set an example for fellow coaches, players, and parents. If you have further concerns, please contact the WAA office. Harassment of umpires will not be tolerated. Such behavior can lead to the loss of coaching or playing privileges with Wheatland Athletic Association. Abusive behavior by coaches or parents can lead to the coach and/or player being dismissed from the baseball program. Parents and all family members should exhibit self-control and respect for players, coaches, umpires, and fans at all games. Abusive or derogatory behavior or language toward any player, coach, umpire or opposing teams' fans will not be tolerated. If an individual continues to exhibit such behavior after warning by a coach, umpire, or WAA official the individual will be required to leave the field. If the individual refuses to leave, the game will immediately be suspended. If the WAA General Manager of Sports and Operations and/or Program Director is present they may act in their official capacity prior, during, or after the game while on premises. In addition, they have the right to make any/all decisions pertaining to the enforcement of all WAA policies. This includes but not limited to resolving disputes, ending the game, removing coaches, parents, or players from the field due to behavior contradictory to WAA's Competitive Baseball rules and WAA's Code of Conduct. WAA adheres to a zero-tolerance policy with regards to fans, coaches, or player behavior that is contradictory to WAA Code of Conduct. This policy extends to practices, clinics, camps, and all activities where WAA participants are engaged. All use of illegal substances including but not limited to alcohol, tobacco products, vaping, and Cannabis is strictly prohibited at the field site and adjacent parking areas.

Social Media Responsibilities

We recognize and support that program participants—players, coaches, and parents—use social media to communicate accomplishments and actions that occurred as part of the Competitive Baseball Program. When making and/or commenting on these Competitive Baseball Program related postings, however, we expect they are done in an appropriate and respectable manner. Instances of inappropriate and disrespectful postings should be reported to the WAA office, and could result in reprimand or dismissal from the program after review by the WAA General Manager of Sports and Operations and/or Program Director



Special Needs Children in the Recreational Baseball/Softball Program

It is the philosophy of Wheatland Athletic Association to progressively develop children's skills by offering programs for various age levels. As they develop, the children are taught the value of good sportsmanship and teamwork. Our intent is for children to have FUN and to enjoy the sport they play while learning the character building lessons that come from participating in team sports.

WAA has children participating at all ability levels, including some children with special needs. Our goal is to create a fun, positive and safe environment for all of the children on the team as well as to teach that all people are not the same. For all grade levels, WAA asks that coaches institute a Buddy system for the teams with special needs children. This system was instituted in the 2009 baseball season for recreational players and worked well. Coaches and umpires should talk prior to the start of the game and agree that the "Buddy system" will be used for at least 3 innings of the game. Preferably the special needs child/children will play every other inning, and non-buddy play will occur the remaining innings of play.

WAA asks that one player be assigned to the same position as the child with special needs. The buddy should be rotated so that no one teammate has to be a buddy more than any other. The buddies should have a chance to play at least one half the game without a buddy. Please place the special needs child in the outfield or second base. The team with the special needs child will be allowed to have 10 players on the field. If the special needs child can throw and catch the ball, the Buddy should encourage him or her to do so. We do not want the Buddy to be making plays, they are there to encourage and help to keep the child focused on the game. When the special needs child is batting, the opposing team should go easy on them from a pitching standpoint. We do want to encourage the rules of the game be followed, so if the child is thrown out, he is to sit on the bench like the other kids. At the end of the game, we ask that the teams stay on the field and allow the special needs child to run the bases with encouragement from both teams. What we are trying to do is create a positive experience for the child.

If at any time the special needs child becomes difficult or poses a safety threat to him or herself or anyone on the team, they should not be allowed on the field. If needed, the special needs child's parent or guardian can be the Buddy. The best situation, however, is to have a teammate be the Buddy. Parents of special needs players are encouraged to assistant coach on their team in order to assist with the Buddy program as well as their child. Under certain circumstances, parents/guardians may be required to be present at practices and games.

On the waiver portion of the registration form, WAA asks for parents to note any limitations that their child may have and to communicate these limitations to the coach. This does not always happen so it is important that coaches evaluate and determine the child's level of disability and discuss any concerns with the family. Effective immediately, Wheatland Athletic Association will be adding the following sentence to the registration forms; "Under certain circumstances, parents/guardians may be required to be present and involved at practices and games".

Thank you, coaches and parents, for your continued commitment to youth sports. What we are trying to do is foster knowledge of the game, team work and create a positive experience for all participants. Please remember, this is a recreational league and we want it to be more about fun than about winning. The experiences of helping a teammate will last well beyond the memory of who won or lost. Parents of special needs children have told us that little things like what we are trying to do above make a world of difference to them and their children.