



EVENT AND PITCHING RULES

EVENT RULES

The National Team Championships North Carolina will follow the National Federation of State High School Associations' (NFHS) baseball rules. The following rules and guidelines are provided in addition to, in substitution of, or in place of the rules provided in the NFHS Baseball Rule Book.

ELIGIBILITY

- To be eligible for the 14U National Team Championships North Carolina, players must be born on or after May 1, 2006, or players with an expected graduation date of 2025 or later. Only players born Jan 1, 2007 or later are eligible for selection to the 13U/14U Athlete Development Program.
- To be eligible for the 15U National Team Championships North Carolina, players must be born on or after May 1, 2005, or players with an expected graduation date of 2024 or later. Only players born Jan 1, 2006 or later are eligible for selection to the 15U National Team Trials.
- To be eligible for the 16U National Team Championships North Carolina, players must be born on or after May 1, 2004, or players with an expected graduation date of 2023 or later. Only players born Jan 1, 2005 or later are eligible for selection to the 16U/17U National Team Development Program.
- To be eligible for the 17U National Team Championships North Carolina, players must be born on or after May 1, 2002, or players with an expected graduation date of 2022 or later. Only players born Jan 1, 2004 or later are eligible for selection to the 16U/17U National Team Development Program.

PENALTY: If physical evidence is presented to USA Baseball, or a team admits to using an illegal player, all games in which the illegal player participated shall be forfeited.

FACILITY GUIDELINES

USA Baseball tournaments utilize the following field dimensions:

- 13U+: 60.6' mound, 90' bases

TOURNAMENT FORMAT

14U, 15U, and 16U

- The 14U, 15U, and 16U tournaments will feature 16 teams.
- The first day of the tournament for each age group will feature USA Baseball's Testing Day, an opportunity for athletes to participate in Prospect Development

Pipeline Performance Assessments and on-field athletic assessments for the Task Force.

- Every team will be placed into a pool of four (4) teams and will compete in round robin play in its pool, playing one game on Day 1 and two games on Day 2 of the tournament. Teams will play in a fourth game against a team with a similar record from another pool.
 - Teams will be seeded following pool play using the "Standings Tie-Breakers" rules below.
 - Teams seeded #1–#8 will begin a single-elimination bracket-style playoff.
 - Teams who lose in the first round of the single-elimination playoff will play in one additional consolation game.
 - Teams seeded #9+ will play in two consolation games.
 - The semifinals, third place, and championship games will be played on the final day of the tournament.

17U

- The 17U tournament will feature 12 teams.
- The second day of the tournament will feature USA Baseball's Testing Day, an opportunity for athletes to participate in Prospect Development Pipeline Performance Assessments and on-field athletic assessments for the Task Force.
- Every team will be placed into a pool of four (4) teams and will compete in round robin play in its pool, playing two games on Day 1 and one game on Day 2 of the tournament.
 - The three (3) pool winners and one (1) wild card team will be seeded #1–#4 following pool play using the "Standings Tie-Breakers" rules below.
 - Teams seeded #1–#4 will begin a double-elimination bracket-style playoff.
 - Teams seeded #5+ will play in two consolation games.
 - The semifinals and gold medal games will be played on the final day of the tournament.

GAME PLAY

General Rules

- All team rosters must have a minimum of 15 players and 2 coaches. Rosters should not exceed 25 players.
- A "mandatory play" rule will not be enforced at the National Team Championships North Carolina. However, it is encouraged that all healthy players on the roster participate in the tournament.

- In an effort for fair play and competitive balance, USA Baseball recommends that each athlete participate in a minimum of eight (8) innings or five (5) at-bats for position players, and/or a minimum of three (innings) or nine (9) batters-faced for pitchers throughout the event.
- The USA Baseball Tournament Director will predetermine all home and away team assignments in all pool play games. The higher seed will serve as the home team throughout all bracket-round and consolation match-ups (E.g., #6 vs. #1; #1 is the home team).

Lineups

- A maximum of 10 players are allowed in a lineup.
- A tenth hitter, or extra hitter, hereby known as the "EH," may be utilized by any team. The use of an "EH" is optional. If one team elects to use an "EH," the opposing team is not required to do so as well. The extra hitter must be indicated in the line-up as the "EH." The "EH" will be treated as any other starter and cannot be eliminated during the course of the game. The "EH" can exchange positions with other defensive players in the lineup. The starting batting order must be followed in order; the changing of the "starting batting order" once the game begins is strictly prohibited.

Run-Rule

The following run-rule scenarios will be enforced in all games at the National Team Championships North Carolina:

- If a team is losing by 15 or more runs after having batted in at least three (3) innings, 10 or more runs after having batted in four (4) innings, or eight (8) runs after having batted in five (5) innings, the game will be called due to the run rule.

Extra-Innings/Tie-Breakers

- All pool-play, consolation, and third-place games at the National Team Championships North Carolina shall be Seven (7) innings or two hours and fifteen minutes (2:15). No new inning can begin after time has expired.
- If a pool-play, consolation, or third-place game is tied after seven (7) innings and time permits, teams shall continue the game using the international tie-breaker rule until a winner is decided or time has expired. If a game that exceeds the time limit ends in a stalemate, the game will be recorded as a tie.

- A time limit will not be enforced in quarterfinal, semifinal, and championship games.

International Tie-Breaker Rules

- The international tie-breaker rule dictates that a runner will be placed on first and second base with no outs to begin the inning. The batter must be the player deemed next-up in the batting order following the previous inning and the two players preceding the batter will be placed on first and second base, respectively.

Forfeits

- In the event a team must forfeit a game, a 7-0 loss will be assigned to a team's record.

STANDINGS TIE-BREAKERS

If, at the end of pool play (if applicable), two or more teams finish with identical records, the following procedures will be used to break standings ties for bracket-play seeding:

1. Pool play overall record
2. Head-to-head result; provided all tied teams have played each other
3. Fewest runs allowed (overall)
4. Overall run differential
5. Coin flip

EJECTIONS/SUSPENSIONS

- Any ejection of a participant (player, coach, or fan) during a game will receive an automatic one-game suspension. The incident will then be reviewed by the USA Baseball Technical Committee, consisting of the Tournament Director, Umpire-in-Chief (if available), Site Supervisor, and a member of the USA Baseball Task Force. The Technical Committee will assess the ejection and then determine an additional penalty, if any, for the participant.
- Penalties may include suspension for a subsequent game(s), suspension from the tournament, or a team forfeiture resulting in a 7-0 loss.
- Any participant who is ejected from a game a second time during the event shall receive an immediate suspension for the remainder of the tournament.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

- In the event inclement weather occurs during the tournament, the bracket-round games will be given priority in rescheduling. USA Baseball will do its best to ensure that all teams participating in consolation games will play in an even number of games; however, cannot guarantee an even number of games for all participating teams.

- Games rescheduled due to inclement weather may be played at an off-site facility at the discretion of USA Baseball.

UNIFORMS & SAFETY

- Coaches must wear a helmet in order to be on the field. A hard helmet is required; no flap, single flap, and double flap helmets are permitted, while "skullies" and cap inserts are strictly prohibited.

BAT GUIDELINES

All teams are required to adhere to the USA Baseball Bat Guidelines below (Bat Guidelines can be found at USABaseball.com/Bats/Guidelines).

- 11U, 12U tournaments bat requirements:
 - There are no specified weight/length ratio limits for bats in the tournament.
 - Bats may not exceed 32" in length and barrel diameters may not exceed 2 5/8.
 - Non-wood and multi-piece wood bats must be USABat certified in order to be used in the tournament. *
- 13U tournaments require bats to be any wood or metal BBCOR (-3) bat OR an approved USABat.
- 14U and 15U tournaments require bats to be any wood or metal BBCOR (-3) bat.
- 16U and 17U tournaments require bats to be any solid (one-piece) wood bat or an NFHS approved BBCOR wood barrel baseball bat.
- *USABat certifications are reflected in the Washington State University Sports Science Lab and the NCAA and NFHS BBCOR approved baseball bats list

PITCHING RULES

In accordance with USA Baseball's assimilation of Pitch Smart guidelines, the National Team Championships North Carolina will use a hard pitch count as the standard for setting pitcher-use limitations for the tournament. The 2021 Pitch Smart guidelines can be found on page 2 of the rules document.

- Pitchers may not pitch three consecutive days regardless of their pitch counts in the two previous days (e.g., if a pitcher throws 10 pitches on day one and 15 pitches on day two, they are still ineligible to pitch on day three)
- If a pitcher exceeds a pitch count threshold in a single game that requires a mandatory rest day, they are ineligible to pitch in an additional game in the same day regardless of their daily pitch count total.

PENALTY FOR VIOLATION OF PITCHER USE LIMITATION RULES

- If a pitcher is found to have exceeded their allowed numbers of pitches during a game, the illegal pitching situation will be rectified immediately and the incoming pitcher will be permitted as many warm up pitches as the umpire deems necessary prior to resuming the game. The Technical Committee will review the infraction and reserves the right to suspend the manager for the next game if the infraction is deemed a purposeful breach of the rules. The Technical Committee will be comprised of the Tournament Director(s), Umpire-in-Chief, Site Supervisor, and a member of the USA Baseball Task Force.
- If a pitcher is found to have exceeded their allowed pitches for a game after the game is completed, the manager may be suspended for the next tournament game. The Technical Committee will review the infraction and reserves the right to suspend the manager for the next tournament game plus one additional game if the infraction is deemed a purposeful breach of the rules.
- In either case, the pitcher in question will not receive any direct penalty, but will be made to adhere to the prescribed days of rest based on the number of pitches at the time of the infraction. The team in question will not receive any direct penalty (beyond penalization of the manager), but will continue to be required to adhere to the prescribed pitch count rules for the remainder of the event.

TOURNAMENT PITCHER USE LIMITATION RULES

6. If a pitcher reaches the daily max pitches in a game threshold (75 [10U], 85 [11U-12U], 95 [13U-16U], 105 [17U-18U]) while facing a batter, the pitcher may continue to pitch until any one of the following events occur: 1. That batter reaches base; 2. That batter is retired; 3. The third out is made to complete the half-inning.
- A pitcher's required rest is based off a hard pitch count of actual pitches thrown and does not reset to the pitch count tallied at the beginning of the last batter faced. If a player has thrown 29 pitches and, after facing the last batter of the inning, has thrown 34, then that pitcher's pitch count for the day is 34 (not 29) and they are required to take one day of rest.

REPORTING

- USA Baseball official scorers will be responsible for the official pitch count at each field.
- An aggregate pitch count report for all teams in the tournament will be distributed electronically at the completion of each day's games to the team contact on record. The pitch count is monitored and kept in the tower, and is the only official pitch count that will be used. Managers or coaches pitch counts are NOT official, but they are welcome to periodically check with the official scorer to ensure their count is correct. The official scorekeeper will communicate the pitch count at the beginning of each inning or as needed.
- Should a pitch count be protested, the protesting team must present an official score book or digital score keeping application to the Site Supervisor and Tournament Director(s).
- The pitch count kept by the tower can be overturned if both the Site Supervisor and Tournament Director conclude that a mistake was made on behalf of USA Baseball's scorekeeper. The new pitch count will be recorded and reflected in the following day's pitch count report.

SUSPENDED GAMES (PITCHING)

For purposes of applying the pitcher-use limitations in the event a team plays twice on a single day (because a prior game was either postponed or suspended), the following rules apply:

- A pitcher's per-game total pitch maximums (but not mandatory rest) shall be deemed to be "reset" in a resumed game. However, pitchers are still restricted to per-game and daily pitch maximums set forth by the Pitch Smart Guidelines prior to and after suspended and resumed games.
- The pitcher of record at the time a game is suspended becomes subject to a mandatory rest day if they exceed a pitch count threshold (20+ [10U-14U], 30+ [15U+]) and will not be eligible to pitch in the resumed game if it takes place during their required rest time, including a resumed game occurring at a later time on the same day.
- A pitcher who is required to rest for a day must rest for all games on that day (i.e., resting during the resumption of a postponed or suspended game shall not satisfy a mandatory rest day, even if there is a subsequent game on that same day).

DOUBLEHEADERS

- The second game of a scheduled doubleheader will not serve as a rest day for pitchers having thrown in the first game of the day (E.g., a pitcher who has thrown 20 [10U-14U], 30 [15U+] or more pitches in the first game of the day may not pitch in any subsequent game that day and is subject to the appropriate number of rest days based on the total pitches thrown).
- A pitcher who has thrown 1-20 [10U-14U], 1-30 [15U+] pitches is eligible to throw in any subsequent game that day; however, they will still be limited to the daily max of 75 [10U], 85 [11U-12U], 95 [13U-16U], 105 [17U-18U] pitches for the day.
- Due to the nature of the tournament format, the USA Baseball Operations Staff will provide each coach with an updated pitch count sheet as soon as possible prior to the start of their second game of the day on days where a doubleheader is scheduled.

2021 PITCH SMART GUIDELINES

Many players were limited in how much baseball they could play over the last year due to COVID-19. As players return in 2021, they should make sure to do so safely by following all applicable COVID-19 guidelines and the following return-to-sport recommendations:

1. Because many players missed seasons, they should be careful to ramp up slowly to avoid injury; we know players are excited to get out there and compete, but it's important to gradually increase the intensity and frequency of your playing to avoid injury.
2. Players should ramp up their strength and conditioning program in advance of resumption of throwing.
3. As much as possible, players should aim to lengthen and not shorten their standard pre-competition throwing progression timelines. An example throwing program is shown here ([link](#)).
4. Pitchers should account for all types of throws when systematically building up in preparation for game competition. The stress on the throwing arm from any long-toss, flat ground throws, weighted ball exercises, and bullpen pitches should

be considered. Weighted ball programs should not be used to accelerate pre-season throwing progression.

5. Players with reduced workloads last year should consider gradually building up their pitch counts, more rest between outings, and a lower overall workload this year.
6. Proper nutrition and sleep go a long way in maximizing baseball performance and reducing injury risk.
7. As always, it is important that players avoid pitching with arm fatigue or injuries to other body regions; being proactive about your health will help keep you healthy for the long-term.
8. It's beneficial for amateur athletes to take time off from baseball each year and play multiple sports to further athletic development.

9. Many baseball players have showcase opportunities to enhance their recruitment into collegiate and professional baseball. Players should only participate in showcases when they are healthy and have had appropriate time to build up their throwing and strength and conditioning.



Suggested Annual Workload:

For players with reduced workloads in 2020

	2021 Recommendations	Typical Season
Age	Annual Inning Limit	Annual Inning Limit
7-8	60	60
9-12	60	80
13-14	80	100
15-18	80	100

Suggested Pitch Counts Daily Max (Pitches in Game):

For players with reduced workloads in 2020

	EARLY SEASON 2021	MID SEASON 2021	LAST SEASON 2021	TYPICAL SEASON
Age	Daily Max	Daily Max	Daily Max	Daily Max
7-8	40	40	50	50
9-10	50	60	75	75
11-12	60	70	85	85
13-14	65	80	95	95
15-16	70	85	95	95
17-18	80	95	105	105
19-22	90	105	120	120

Pitch Counts and Required Rest Recommendations:

For all players

Age	0 Days Rest	1 Days Rest	2 Days Rest	3 Days Rest	4 Days Rest	5 Days Rest
7-8	1-20	21-35	36-50	N/A	N/A	N/A
9-10	1-20	21-35	36-50	51-65	66+	N/A
11-12	1-20	21-35	36-50	51-65	66+	N/A
13-14	1-20	21-35	36-50	51-65	66+	N/A
15-16	1-30	31-45	46-60	61-75	76+	N/A
17-18	1-30	31-45	46-60	61-80	81+	N/A
19-22	1-30	31-45	46-60	61-80	81-105	106+