2026 Play at the Plate New Jersey Rules

A. Official Rules

1. Any rules not covered in the PATPNJ rules shall be governed by the official rules of NFHS.

2. A manager can submit a new rule or modification of a rule for consideration by the Rules Committee at any time.

3. NFHS Exceptions

A. Batters and base runners are permitted to wear either double earflap, or single earflap helmets.

B.Coaches' helmets are not required but strongly recommended.

C. Jewelry is permitted providing it is not distractive or a hazard in nature.

D. There is no penalty should a helmet dislodge from a player.

B. Game Day Procedures, Field Protocols

1. On days when the field condition is questionable, it is the responsibility of the home team to check the field 2 hours before the scheduled start of the game. If there is standing water on the field, the game must be canceled.

2. All efforts should be made to cancel a game as early as possible when it is obvious the field conditions do not warrant play.

3. **Rescheduled Games-** Every effort will be made to reschedule rainouts. Teams must be prepared to play makeup games on dates where AP/MU is built into the schedule. Once games are rescheduled, it is the responsibility of teams to fulfill their obligation to the schedule.

3. Team Conduct at all fields

A. Dugouts and surroundings near the dugouts must be cleaned before leaving the field.
B. The pitching mound, batter's boxes, catcher's box, and bases must be raked
C. Pitcher's mound and home plate covers must be in place before leaving the field.
D. Lights must be turned off before leaving the field unless separate arrangements have been made.
E. No alcoholic beverage is permitted on any field or dugout during a game.
F. Pursuant to law, alcohol is not permitted on any school property.
G. Fines or disciplinary action will be taken against teams and managers for not complying with these rules.

4. If teams are playing on a turf field, metal spikes, seeds, and chewing gum are strictly prohibited.

5. When the game field is unplayable, and the opposing team has access to their home field, that is playable, the game will be switched to the opposing team's home field.

6. No manager or players are to contact any town, school or recreation department without the consent of the league commissioner, unless that person is the initial field contact for that field.

C. Player Eligibility

1. A player must be at least 35 years old by opening day of the current season.

   a. A team may have one 34-year-old, <u>having reached that age by opening day.</u>

   b. **Pitching eligibility for different divisions is as follows:**
      1. Sunday American and National leagues- <u>must be 39</u>
      2. Weeknight division- <u>must be 35.</u>
      3. Weeknight and Sunday Masters' Division- <u>must be 55</u>

2. All player transactions must be completed on or before **August 1st.**

3. 4. All players must be on the team roster on the league website.
   a. All players on the roster must be registered with the league and have executed a League Waiver

   b. A player may be added to the roster any time up to the player transaction deadline of **August 1st.**

   c. A player must be added to the roster at least 24 hours before the next scheduled game in order for that player to be eligible to play in that game.

   d. A player is permitted to be on only one team roster, with the following exemptions:

      1) A player can move to another team once during the season.
      2) A player may not move back to the original team during the current season.

4. Players must provide proof of age upon registration.
    a. In the event a player's eligibility is challenged, they must present their driver's license upon request. That ID must match the ID on record in the league database.

5. A player found to be ineligible will be disciplined in accordance with the Rules Committee findings. It is the team owners' responsibility to know if their players are ineligible.
    a. A team using an ineligible player shall forfeit all games (regular season or playoff) in which that player participated.

    b. A team owner who knew or should have known that he was using an ineligible player shall be subject to disciplinary proceedings.

    c. Any player who aids, abets, or otherwise conspires to facilitate play of an ineligible player shall be subject to disciplinary action.

    d. Opposing managers may at any time request proof of a player's eligibility through the umpires. If the question is not resolved at the time of the request, a protest must be filed within 24 hours of completion of the game.

D. Post Season Eligibility

1. Post Season eligibility for a player on a given team is as follows
    a. Post season eligibility is established by playing in at least 6 regular season games, **and** recording at least 18 plate appearances.

    b. Post season pitching eligibility is established by recording at least 12 innings pitched **and** played in at least 6 games during the regular season. Postseason pitching eligibility for a position player would be determined by article a.

    c. Designated fielder- In the event there is a player who wants to play on defense in the playoffs, and that player has mostly been a defensive sub and lacks the number of ABs to be eligible; that player can play on defense only. When entering stats, a player can be listed as DEF, meaning defense only. This will then show that the player played in games as a defense only player and if

the player has at least six games played, they could participate in the playoffs as a designated fielder.

d. In the event a player is injured during the season, those games missed shall count as games played.

e. The team manager is exempt from these restrictions.

f. In the event that a team does not complete its full schedule of games, pitchers will be credited with 1 additional game and 2 additional innings pitched. Position players will be credited with one additional game and 2 plate appearances.

E. Player Ejections

1. Players who have been ejected from a game shall be ineligible to play for the remainder of the ejected game, plus **TWO** additional games whether they be weeknight or Sunday games, in addition to any additional penalty assigned by the league commissioner. **Ejected players must also pay a $50 fee to be reinstated to league play.**

2. A player ejected from a game has the right to appeal the automatic one game suspension.

a. Within two days after the game, the player must file a written statement to the Rules Committee that includes the circumstances of the ejection and a reason why the appeal should be granted.

b. A decision will be issued by the Rules Committee before the player's next scheduled game. If a decision cannot be made before the next scheduled game, the commissioner will notify the player that he can play in the next scheduled game.If upheld, the suspension will be applied to the following game.

c. The Rules Committee can investigate and possibly impose a suspension for any action other than an ejection from a game. This would include repeated violations of any league rule or action determined to be harmful to the integrity and reputation of the league.

F. Game Scores and Statistics

1. Managers shall exchange lineup cards at the pregame conference.
2. Managers or their designated representative must enter game scores into the PATPNJ.COM website after each regular game. If player stats are not entered, that team's players are not eligible for playoffs, all-star games or awards.

   a. Scores must be entered by the winning team no later than 1 hour from the end of the game either on the website or text to the commissioner.

   b. Statistics should be entered no later than 5 days following a completed game

3. The league will use these stats as an indicator of eligibility for post-season play.

4. Teams that do not have statistics up to date at time of playoffs, will be ineligible to participate.

G. Tie Breaker and Playoff Rules

1. Games tied after the scheduled number of innings will continue if the 3-hour time limit has not been reached.

   a. Tied games will be decided by the "shootout rule" until the 3-hour time limit has expired.

   b. Each half inning starts with the last batter from the previous inning on second base.

   c. Each new batter begins their at bat with a 2-2 count.

   d. It takes 3 outs to end the half inning.

   e. Each full inning continues within the time limit.

   f. If the 3-hour time limit expires the game shall end in a tie unless the managers and umpires agree to continue with the shootout rules

2. Playoff games tied after the scheduled number of innings:
   a. Will continue into extra innings until a winner is declared

b. If the teams are required to exit the field due to time restrictions, the game will be picked up where it left off.

H. Uniforms

1. All teams must have full uniforms (hats, pants, jersey) by June 1st
2. Each player's uniform must be of substantially similar design to his teammates' uniforms.
3. No player out of uniform may play without the opposing manager's consent.
4. On the roster and in the scorebook all players must be identified by name and uniform number
5. Uniforms without a number will be assigned #99

I. Equipment

1. Each team should provide 3 league balls for each game, if one team does not have balls available the other team shall provide the balls as needed. Teams low on balls shall let the commissioner know in advance of running out
2. Only league supplied balls are permitted for game use.
3. All bats must comply with existing NFHS rules.
4. All bats must be made of all-wood or wood composite that is BBCOR certified.
5. A player found to have used an illegal bat (by the umpire, before a pitch is thrown to the next batter) will be declared out in the scorebook and any runner on base during the at-bat will be returned to their original base at the start of the at-bat.
6. A bat whose legality is questioned, but not verified by the umpire, can continue to be used during that game. The manager raising the question can send an inquiry to the commissioner to determine its legality.

J. Mercy Rule

1. Nine-inning games
   a. A game is ruled complete after 7 innings of play if a 10 or more run differential exists at the bottom of the 7th inning.

   b. For playoffs the mercy rule is 15 runs after 7 innings.

K. League Divisions

1.In the best interest of the league, divisions shall be based on prior year’s records. At the discretion of the league commissioner teams may be moved to another division to create more balanced competition at each level of play

L. Game Length

1. All games shall be nine (9) innings or three (3) hours. No new inning shall start after 2:45 of game play or less than 15 minutes prior to the end of regulation time. All double headers games shall be seven (7) innings or 2.5 hours, unless advised otherwise by the league.
2. Playoff games shall be nine innings with no limitation of time unless field is unavailable after league's allotted time period.
3. A game called due to inclement weather or field use restrictions shall be official after five completed innings in a 9-inning game and four completed innings in a 7-inning game
4. A game called during playoffs due to inclement weather shall be continued from where it was left off.
5. All line ups must remain the same or the use of substitutions to the appropriate positions in the lineup.
6. A game called that is not official shall not count in the standings and shall be replayed as a new game.
7. Player and team statistics shall not be counted as official and will not be counted toward playoff eligibility.

M. Standings and Tie Breakers

1. League standings shall be determined by a point system, as follows:
    a. Playoff seeding shall be based on the total number of wins.

    b. A tie shall count as ½ win and ½ loss.

2. Ties for playoff eligibility seeding will be broken in the following order:
    a. Head-to-Head winner

    b. Best division record

    c. Run differential

    d. Least runs Against (Only if Runs Scored are tied)

    e. Most runs scored

N. Defensive Lineup

1. All players may be substituted defensively at any time without affecting the player's status in the batting order (Free Substitution)

2. Defensive players are not required to bat

3. A pitcher may be removed from the game and return to pitch after his replacement has faced at least one batter. If the replacement pitcher is injured and unable to pitch to one batter, the original pitcher may return to pitching.

4. A removed pitcher may play any other position.

O. Speed-Up Rule

1. At the discretion of the manager, only the last batted out may run for the catcher with 2 outs. This runner shall not count as a Courtesy Runner.

P. Batting Order

1. A team may bat as many batters as it wishes, batters may be added to the bottom of the batting order at any time.

2. Once a batter is removed from the batting order via substitution (pinch-hitter, pinch-runner, injury, etc.), or been dropped from the order due to injury, or having physically left the game, he may not reenter the batting order.

3. If a player is forced to leave a game due to any reason other than game strategy, a reserve player, not previously entered into the game as a batter, must be inserted into the vacated spot in the batting order.

4. All lineups are allowed to use the A/B batting rule. This rule consists of assigning two hitters to bat in the same spot in the order. These batters are fully interchangeable and can alternate at bats or not alternate at bats as long as each batter gets at least one at bat during the game. The A/B batters can be written into the lineup prior to the start of the game. An A/B slot can also be created during the game by adding a late arriving player to a slot in the lineup. Batter A cannot run for Batter B and Batter B cannot run for Batter A. If either of the players in the A/B slot are medicals, then the last batted out prior to that slot will run for the medical designated player.

5. If a batter is removed from the lineup and not replaced by a bench player, an out will be recorded each time that vacant batting position is reached. The only exception to this are emergency situations covered by rule R.6

6. A player must bat at least once or play the field at least three innings, when practical in the manager’s view

7. An automatic out in a batting order position cannot be the last out of the inning. If an automatic out position is reached with 2 outs that position is skipped, and the next batter will bat. When the next inning starts for that team with the automatic out, that skipped automatic out will be applied at the start of the inning.

8. A team fielding nine roster players must maintain at least a nine-man batting order.

9. Only a team having eight roster players/fielders in a game can use an eight-man batting order.

10. A player batting out of order must be brought to the umpire's attention before a pitch is thrown to the next batter. The player batting out of order will be declared out in the scorebook, all runners returned to their base at the start of that at-bat, and the correct batter or batting position will then bat. The player batting out of order will lose that spot (recorded as a "non-batted out" [NBO]) until it comes again the next time through the lineup.

Q. Number of Players

1. A team must have a minimum of eight players to start a game.
2. A team must have eight players within thirty (30) minutes after the scheduled start time, otherwise the game is a forfeit.
3. The time limit still starts from the scheduled start time.
4. A team may borrow a ninth player from the opposing team upon consent of the opposing manager.
    a. If a ninth player arrives after the start of the game, the borrowed player shall return to the lineup of the original team.

    b. If this returned player is added to the batting order, he must be placed at the bottom.

    c. If the opposing team has only nine players, then the team with eight players may not borrow a player for defensive reasons unless agreed to by the umpire.

    d. A borrowed player may play defense for the eight-player team and bat for the original team if agreed upon by the managers.

5. If a team begins a game with eight players, and a ninth player arrives, that player must be inserted into the bottom of the lineup if one

pitch has been thrown, even if the bottom of the batting order has not yet been reached.

6. If a player leaves and goes home (agreed to during ground rules discussion) or is seriously injured as not to be able to continue playing, no out shall be charged to his future at bats. His spot in the order shall be skipped unless replaced by a substitute player.

7. If there is a player that has not played offense on the bench, and the team has eight offensive players in the lineup (e.g., due to injury or players leaving), that player must bat in the order or an out shall be recorded in the open batter's spot.

8. A team with only eight roster players at game time has the following options:

a. Borrow a fielder with permission from the opposing team and have an automatic out in the 9th batter position.

b. Play the game with eight fielders and eight batters and have an automatic out in 9th batter position. This out is recorded every time that position comes up in the order during the game.

R. Forfeits

1. A forfeit may be declared if a team is unable to field the minimum number of eight players within thirty (30) minutes of the scheduled starting time of the game.
2. When a public emergency prevents a team from being able to field at least 8 players, the game will be postponed and rescheduled on a makeup or advance play date on the schedule.
3. If a team begins a game with 8 or more players, then loses a player to fall below 8, the team will be charged with a loss regardless of the score or inning the game is stopped.

4. If a team has 2 inexcusable forfeits the team will be ineligible for participation in the playoffs

5. In the event of a forfeit, the players on the team that did not create the forfeit shall be credited with a game played.
6. Once a forfeit is declared the forfeit stands

S. Pitchers

1.Pitchers may not wear light colored (e.g., white or gray) long sleeves, batting gloves, white, gray, or multicolored fielding mitt, wristbands,

watches, jewelry, or other items, which are potentially distracting to a batter.
2. Intentional walks are issued automatically. The manager or pitcher will tell the umpire that they want to walk the batter intentionally, and the batter will take first base without a pitch being thrown.

3. If a pitcher hits four batters in a game, he must be removed upon hitting the fourth batsman.

a. The pitcher is not permitted to re-enter the game as a pitcher if removed under this rule.

4. A fake throw to third with an immediate fake throw or throw to first is treated as a balk.
5. Balks will be called per NFHS rules.

T. Courtesy Runners

1. A team may insert a courtesy runner for any runner upon reaching base before the next pitch is thrown, otherwise the runner must run for himself.

2. After a pitch is thrown the runner must run for himself for the remainder of the inning

a. For a shared A/B batting spot, the non-batter can be used as a substitute runner without the team being charged a courtesy runner, but ethe change must take place before a pitch is thrown to the next batter

3. Each team is allocated five (5) Courtesy Runners per 9 inning game or three (3) courtesy runners in a 7-inning game.

a. A Courtesy Runner is defined as the last batted out player before the runner being replaced.

b. If the last batted out is not used, the previous batted out may be used.

c. For each player skipped it shall count as 1 courtesy runner used

4. Pitchers and catchers must run for themselves unless an official courtesy runner is used.
5. In an extra inning game, each team shall be allotted one (1) courtesy runner in the first extra-inning and one additional runner every two innings thereafter.

6. In the event that a courtesy runner is needed due to an in-play injury, the last batted out only may be used and not counted towards the allotted runners. The injured player may not return to the game on offense or defense. If the player does return, then the runner shall be counted.
7. If for medical reasons, a player is unable to run for himself, a pregame agreement between both managers and the umpire may be made to exempt the player from running.

a. The opposing team may choose one of their players to do the same.

b. Only one player can be exempt per team in a game.
c. Only a Courtesy Runner as defined above may run for the exempted player.
d. The Courtesy Runner is not counted against the team allotment.
e. If the Courtesy Runner is skipped for the next Courtesy Runner, then this skip counts against the team allotment.

U. Slide or Avoid

1. General Rules

a. The umpire has final ruling and discretion on all elements of the rules in this section.

b. Any contact or collision deemed by the umpire to be flagrant, intentional, and avoidable shall be cause for ejection from the game of the offending player.
c. Any contact or attempted contact that is deemed by the umpire to be an attempt to injure an opposing player shall be cause for ejection, suspension, and review by the Rules Committee.

d. All players must avoid a collision if possible.

e. If a collision occurs, any decisions on his being out or safe or whether he remains in the game will be decided by the umpire at the time of the occurrence.

2. Runners Responsibility

a. Runners must slide to avoid collisions at all bases and on the base paths.

b. Sliding is considered avoiding a collision.

c. Incidental contact is not considered colliding.

d. Runners are required to slide through the bag.

e. Attempts to obstruct the defender's actions will result in the other runner to be called out based on the following criteria:

I. making contact with the defensive player
ii.Disrupting the defensive player's ability to move
iii. Sliding outside the base
iv. Running outside the basepath
v. Standing up normally on the base after sliding is not considered obstruction

3. Defensive Player Responsibility
   a. A fielder may not purposely block the base.

   b. A fielder may obstruct the runner's path only if he possesses the ball.

   c. The catcher may block the plate only if he has the ball.

   d. The catcher may move towards the plate only when ball arrival is imminent.

V. Protests

1. A manager who wishes to protest must advise the opposing manager and the home-plate umpire of his decision to protest the game prior to the next pitch thrown or before a runner is retired.
2. A protest arising from a game-ending play must be lodged on the date of the incident.
3. Protests shall be submitted to the league administration via the protest form found on the league website.
4. In the event that a replay is ordered, the game is picked up at the point of the protest if the protest is upheld.
5. A protest must be indicated in the scorebook with the inning, outs, strike/ball count and batter, the team initiating the protest and the signature of the umpire. The manager initiating the protest must complete a protest form (on website) and submit it to the commissioner within 24 hours of the end of the game.
6. Upon receipt of the protest, the Rules Committee will review it and render a decision.

W. Umpires

1. It is the responsibility of each manager for payment of the umpire fees.Umpires are paid prior to the start of each game. Umpires receive $120 each per 9-inning game if two umpires are present. For a doubleheader, each umpire receives $110 per game. Doubleheader games are 7 innings.

2. If only one umpire shows, teams will pay that umpire $190 or $95 per team.

3. If, upon arrival at a field, the umpires determine that the field is unplayable, and the game has not yet started, teams must pay each umpire a $35 travel fee.

4. In the event that only one umpire arrives to officiate a game, the game shall proceed to be played and shall be official. The umpire assignor must be notified by the working umpire.

5. If no umpires arrive to officiate a game a call to the league must be made and the umpire assignor will be contacted.

6. Umpire complaints must be made in writing (via email) to the league and the head umpire assignor who shall review and remedy the complaint.

7. Umpires shall remain at the field for 30 minutes in accordance with the minimum player rule.

X. Insurance

1. The league shall provide $1,000,000.00 Liability Insurance and an additional excess secondary medical policy for each active player.
   a. In the event of a player injury, the manager shall report the injury to the league President or his designee via email or other written correspondence.

   b. The league President or his designee shall follow up with the injured player within 24 hours of the reported injury.

   c. The league shall provide Insurance riders for each allocated field.

Y. Master's Division

1. Players must be at least 55 years of age to be eligible to pitch in the master's division.

2. Each team should have at least 12 players over 55 on their roster.

3. The minimum age for players in this division is 50 years old and to be eligible, the player must have turned 50 during the season.

4. Medical Runners and Courtesy Runners

a. Medical runners and courtesy runners cannot steal any base.
b. If a medical or courtesy runner does attempt to steal, the play is ruled dead and the player must return to the previous base.
c. Runners must always be the last BATTED out.
d. To facilitate the speed up rule, both pitchers and catchers can be replaced with a courtesy runner with two outs in the inning. These runners cannot steal.

5. When providing a lineup, players under 55 should be listed with a star next to their names.

6. Every effort should be made to play all of the 55 and over players on your roster each and every week.