

5 October 2011

Softball New Zealand
Under 15 “Share the Load” National Tournament Rule
Limited playing time for U15 Pitchers & Catchers
2011/2012 season:

In order to encourage the development and protection of pitchers and catchers at Under 15 level, all pitchers & catchers who are eligible for the U15 National tournaments in 2012 will be restricted to facing a limited number of batters at all Softball NZ Age Grade National Tournaments.

The rule will apply at the U15, U17 & U19 National Tournaments. The rule will only apply to players who are Under 15 years of age and pitching and catching. At the U17 & U19 National Tournaments players who are under 15 will be identified at the Managers Meeting.

The specifics of the U15 Share the Load Rule are the same at all tournaments:

When a team is allocated 1-2 games a day on the official draw the following will apply.

1. Pitcher to pitch to no more than 36 batters per day which is the equivalent of 4 times through the batting order.
2. Catcher to catch for no more than 36 batters per day which is the equivalent of 4 times through the batting order.
3. Coaches should ensure they are familiar with the substitution rule in order to use the limited playing time rule effectively.
4. NB: The pitch count is not a consideration, only number of batters faced.
5. No player can pitch and catch in the same game; they can however pitch and catch in the same day as per the batters faced limits. Eg a player can pitch to 36 batters and catch to 36 batters in the same day.

When a team is allocated 3 games a day on the official draw the following will apply:

1. Pitcher to pitch to no more than 45 batters per day which is the equivalent of 5 times through the batting order.
2. Catcher to catch for no more than 45 batters per day which is the equivalent of 5 times through the batting order.
3. Coaches should ensure they are familiar with the substitution rule in order to use the limited playing time rule effectively.
4. No player can pitch and catch in the same game; they can however pitch and catch in the same day as per the batters faced limits. Eg a player can pitch to 45 batters and catch to 45 batters in the same day.

PITCHING FOR THE FUTURE

Exceptions to the Limited Playing Time Rule

1. Tie Breaker: Once a tie breaker is in effect, the limited playing time rule for pitchers & catchers no longer applies. Anyone who pitches or catches from tie breaker innings on does not have the Batters Faced count allocated to their limited totals.
2. Day 4: The intention of the rule is to limit the amount an individual can pitch and catch over 3 days of the 4 day tournament. Once the tournament progresses into the final day the limited playing rule no longer applies to certain games. The number of teams competing in each tournament will determine which games are exempt on day 4. The draw will clearly indicate which games are exempt from the rule. This will be communicated at the managers meeting once the final draw has been produced.
3. Blood Bin Replacement Player: This exception is to do with the blood bin rule, Rule 4, Section 11, page 40 in the SNZ Rule Book.

Clarification

- Limited pitching and catching time per day is exactly that – limited time in these positions only. There is no limit on general playing time.
- When a starting pitcher & catcher come out of their position, he/she may continue in the game in another position other than pitching and catching. Therefore, any player who pitches in a game, cannot ever catch in that particular game; likewise a player who catches in the game, cannot pitch in that particular game.
- If the player moves to another position in the field, then they have not been removed from the game and therefore the substitution rule does not apply to this person.
- A starting pitcher once removed to another position in the field, may return to the pitching position as long as they have not faced more batters than the daily limits.
- A starting catcher once removed to another position in the field, may return to the catching position as long as they have not faced more batters than the daily limits.
- Completed at bats: Batters faced as pertains to this rule is completed at bats. Eg if a runner is caught stealing during an at bat and this is the third out of the innings, the at bat was not completed and therefore is not counted against the limited pitcher/catchers totals.
- It is important that coaches have a good understanding of the substitution rule prior to the tournament.

Scorer & Statistician Support

In order to prevent a breach of the rule, the official scorer of each game will be expected to bring to the umpires attention when a pitcher or catcher has come to their specific limit. The umpire will then call over the coach and advise that the pitcher or catcher must be removed from their positions. These players can stay in the game in any defensive position other than pitcher or catcher.

There may be an instance where the official scorer gets so busy she/he forgets to pick up the limit. In this case, the scorer notifies the umpire when she realises, and the player is removed then. All previous play stands as valid.

The official scorers and statistician's co-operation and attention to the rule are imperative to ensure the coach implements the rule correctly.

The official tournament scorers will provide coaches with the number of batters faced by each pitcher and catcher for every game. The coach can obtain this information the following ways:

- Batters faced information will be provided on both teams to the team representatives on presentation of the line-up and ball toss 30 minutes prior to the game. This information will only be given to the team official present.
- During any game, the coach or manager can request information from the official scorer as to how many batters each pitcher and catcher has faced. This request is to be made between innings only.
- In providing live statistics every effort is being made to assist coaches with managing the rule, but ultimately, coaches and managers are responsible for keeping track of their own player's progress. It would be wise to keep track of the opposition's progress as well.
- There should not be a breach of the rule, as the official scorer will now bring to the umpires attention when a pitcher or catcher is at their limit. The opposing coach can also bring it to the attention of the umpire.

Penalty

- The immediate effect is the removal of the pitcher or catcher from either of these positions for the game in question only. All rules relating to substitutions will apply.
- Should the coach refuse to remove the player from the position on request, the umpire will apply Rule 5 Sec 3 f5. The game will be declared a forfeit and a 7-0 loss to the team in breach. The coach's behaviour will be brought to the attention of their Association.

It is hoped that all parties (coaches, managers, umpires and scorers) will fully support the development rotation of these important positions and recognize the reasons why the limited pitching and catching rule has been implemented for the U15 age group.

The rule will also be raised as an agenda item at the Managers Meeting prior to the tournament to answer any questions people might have.

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