

League Rules

2024 Manatee Church Softball (MCS)

OFFICERS

President..... Tammy Stinton 941-345-7085
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Secretary John Bean 941-524-0245
MCS Website.....www.manateechurchsoftball.org

Fees

2024 Spring Season (Men’s) \$ 860.00 14 Spring Games on Monday and Friday
2024 Fall Season (Men’s) \$ 615.00 8 Fall Games on Monday

NOTE: Any rules specific to COVID-19 will be listed on the website and will supersede any rules here.

1. Important Dates & Meetings:

1.1. Spring

- 1.1.1. Initial Coaches Meeting: Monday, Jan 6th 2025, Forward Community Church of God 209 7th St W. Palmetto, FL 34221 at 6:30 PM.
- 1.1.2. Roster Turn In: Monday, Jan 27th 2025, at Forward Community Church of God 209 7th St W. Palmetto, FL 34221 6:30 PM.
 - 1.1.2.1. Team fees are to be fully paid by check or cash at this meeting. If the fees are not received, a team will be ineligible for play.
 - 1.1.2.2. All checks must be made payable to “Manatee Church Softball or MCS”.
- 1.1.3. Proposed Season Start: Monday, February 17th, 2025
- 1.1.4. Mandatory Shirt Orders: Monday February 17th 2025
- 1.1.5. Mandatory Matching Shirts: Monday February 28th 2025
- 1.1.6. Proposed Playoff Start: Monday, Apr 14th 2025
- 1.1.7. Eligibility Date: Must turn 14 on or before Feb 12th, 2025
- 1.1.8. There will be no games played the week of Spring Break (March 17 thru March 21 2025) or Good Friday of our season goes that far.

1.2. Fall

- 1.2.1. Initial Coaches Meeting: TBD at Forward Community Church of God, 209 7th St W, Palmetto, FL 34221 at 6:30 PM.
- 1.2.2. Roster Turn In: TBD at Forward Community Church of God, 209 7th St W, Palmetto, FL 34221 at 6:30 PM.
 - 1.2.2.1. Team fees are to be fully paid by check or cash at this meeting. If the fees are not received, a team will be ineligible to play.
 - 1.2.2.2. All checks must be made payable to “Manatee Church Softball or MCS”.
- 1.2.3. Proposed Season Start: TBD
- 1.2.4. Mandatory Shirt Orders: TBD
- 1.2.5. Mandatory Matching Shirts: TBD
- 1.2.6. Proposed Playoff Start: TBD
- 1.2.7. Eligibility Date: Must turn 14 on or before September 9, 2025

The most current official rules for USA Church Slow Pitch Softball except for the ones stated below have been adopted and will govern the play during the MCS season. Where there is a conflict between the USA and MCS League rules, the MCS League shall take precedent.

2. Rosters & Waivers

- 2.1. No roster will be accepted without a minimum of **nine** players. Each listed players name must also be accompanied with that player's signature.
- 2.2. Any player added to a team after the rosters are turned in will be required to complete and sign a waiver form and submit it to a league officer prior to being allowed to play in a game.

PLEASE NOTE: MANATEE COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT, THE SCOREKEEPERS, AND UMPIRES WILL NOT ACCEPT ANY WAIVERS ASSOCIATED WITH MCS.

- 2.3. There is no limit to the number of players that a team can have on a roster if all applicable fees are paid as described above.
- 2.4. New players may be added to a team's roster at any time during the season (subject to all eligibility rules). Any player added to a roster after the last scheduled game of the first half of a team's season must attend the church for which he is playing. These players are also subject to approval by league officers/directors. If necessary, the league secretary will confirm membership with the player's church.
- 2.5. A team may have on its roster up to three (**3**) players that are a member of a church that is **not** fielding a team. A letter from said player's pastor will be required to accompany the roster or waiver stating that the player is meeting all other eligibility requirements.
- 2.6. Two or more churches may form a single team united under a single church with approval from the board prior to the league roster turn-in.
- 2.7. With league officer approval, a player may play for a different church they are attending. This request **MUST** be submitted in writing to a league official prior to being added to the roster and approval is not guaranteed.

3. Eligibility & Attire

- 3.1. A player must be at least 14 years of age. Refer to 1.7 for current date of eligibility. For a team to be able to field anyone under the age of 18, the requirements of Sections 8 and 9 must be adhered to.
- 3.2. A player joining a team is not required to be a member of the church for which he is playing provided the requirements of rules 3.3 and 3.5 are met.
- 3.3. No player may sign, nor be on, any other league roster if they play on the same night as MCS. 50 and over leagues or sanctioned school sports and activities are exempt.
- 3.4. Active military and returning college students are eligible to join their church's team at any time during the season. Normal playoff restrictions still apply (see rule 3.12).
- 3.5. All players must attend one worship service or bible study per week (minimum of **3** weeks a month). Verification of attendance will be the responsibility of the team manager or church's pastor. Teams may be subject to random visits or pastors may be contacted by league officers to confirm player eligibility.
- 3.6. All players must sign a roster or waiver before being allowed to participate in MCS League play.
- 3.7. All players must wear shoes. If cleats are worn, they must be non-metallic.
- 3.8. The USA "no jewelry rule" for players will be enforced except for wedding rings.
- 3.9. All players on the field will be required to wear matching shirts with minimum eight (8) inch numbers on the back. The only lettering permitted on a shirt will be the church's name, player's name (optional), and the player's number. Wearing caps is optional. Bandanas are not permitted. The **ONLY** time a player will be allowed to play out of uniform will be if he is the ninth player and is needed to avoid a forfeit.

- 3.10. All players must have matching shirts by the date in Section 1. Manager's may (and Manager's only), at their discretion, have a different color shirt and a different color logo. All other attributes must be matching. Altering shirts is not allowed (ex: cutting sleeves, neckline & or length). What defines a matching shirt will be determined by the league officers.
- 3.10. **Penalty:** If a team cannot meet the requirements above, then the offending team will forfeit the game.
- 3.11. If during the regular season or playoffs, a player is determined to be "ineligible", that player will immediately be disqualified from playing on his or her current team and from playing on any other MCS league team during the current season. Any games won by the team the ineligible player participated with shall be forfeited. The ineligible player's entry fee shall not be refunded. Statistics for forfeited games due to player ineligibility shall stand except for the offending party. Any coach/manager allowing a player that has been deemed ineligible by the league to play in a league game after notice has been given will be suspended from playing or coaching in MCS for a period of one year.
- 3.12. **A player must play a minimum of three (3) regular season games to be eligible to play in the playoffs.**
- 3.13. The league officers will have the final arbitrary authority and will rule on eligibility and other rule infractions as required.
- 3.14. To be eligible for the batting and home run champion a player must play a minimum of 5 games. In addition, to qualify for the batting champion you must have a minimum 15 at bats.

4. Equipment

- 4.1. Any offensive or defensive player may wear any protective equipment during play. This includes but is not limited to: helmets, catcher's mask, shin guards etc. All protective equipment shall be subject to the guidelines of Rule 3 (USA).
- 4.2. Softball.
 - 4.2. The official softball will be a USA/ASA Stamped Approved restricted flight, 300 compression, .52 core, optic yellow ball. Each team will be required to provide one (1) NEW ball as described above prior to each game. Softballs will be provided by MCS for each team at the beginning of the season.
 - 4.3. Penalty for using an illegal softball – if an illegal softball is thrown into the game the pitcher does not have to pitch the ball he will present it to the umpire and the batter will be called out.
- 4.4. Bats
 - 4.4. Only ASA (stamped 2004 or later) (or USA) approved bats are allowed for play in MCS. All bat guidelines as set forth in the USA rulebook will be followed.
 - 4.4. Grandfathered bats are no longer allowed.
 - 4.4. Physically altered bats (including shaved, rolled, corked, etc.) are prohibited from use. Any player found to be using an altered bat during MCS regular season or tournament play will be suspended indefinitely (subject to board of director review).
 - 4.4. Any bat deemed unsafe by an umpire or league official shall be removed from play.
 - 4.4. Any player caught using an altered bat in any MCS play that causes injury to another player while using said bat will be subject to a lifetime ban from MCS play as well as possible legal consequences.

5. Teams

- 5.1. A complete team consists of ten (10) players. A team must field at least nine (9) players to start a game. When and if a tenth player arrives, he or she may be added to the bottom of the team starting lineup if the players name was listed as a sub on the lineup card submitted prior to the start of the game.

- 5.2. One pick-up player can be used provided all the below criteria are met. If the ninth player shows up who plays for the team needing the pick-up player, the pick-up player must be removed from the line-up and the oncoming player must be added.
 - 5.2. They must be the 9th player and they must be a gender to fulfill the requirements of rule 4.1. A pick-up player cannot be used to make 10 players.
 - 5.2. The pick-up player must be from an equal or lower division. They also must already be registered with MCS.
 - 5.2. The pick-up player must wear the original jersey from their original team.
 - 5.2. They must be the 9th batter.
 - 5.2. In the result of an injury, or voluntary departure, of the pick-up player during the game, a new pick-up player may be added to continue playing if they meet the requirements of 5.2.2 and 5.2.3. They will be put in the injured or leaving player's slot.
 - 5.2. This cannot be used for the 10th player and a team may have only one pick-up player at a time.
 - 5.2. No pick-up players can be used during the play-offs.
 - 5.2. This rule cannot be used for an ejected player.
- 5.3. A lineup card will be submitted to the scorekeeper a minimum of five (5) minutes prior to scheduled game time. All players on a team roster should be named on the lineup card either as a starter or substitute. A player may **not** be added to the lineup card or sub list after the start of the game.
- 5.4. Forfeits
 - 5.4. If a team cannot be fielded by game time; a forfeit fee of **\$60.00** will be assessed to the losing team.
 - 5.4. Forfeit fees must be paid to a league officer prior to the team's next scheduled game.
 - 5.4. Winning managers of a forfeited game must inform a league officer within **24** hours of the forfeit.
 - 5.4. If a team informs a league official of forfeiture a minimum of **24** hours in advance no fee will be assessed. The winning team will be notified and not be required to be at the park.
- 5.5. MCS will be divided into as many divisions as deemed required by the board of directors to make the league as fun and competitive for all involved and per how many teams are participating. The top two teams in each division (from the previous season) will be moved up to the next highest division. The two last place teams in each division will have the opportunity to move down one division if desired. These moves will be made prior to allowing any petitioning up or down at the coaches meeting. If a team leaves the league for one year, it will be placed back in the same division it was in prior to leaving if possible. Teams wishing to petition up or down a division may do so at the coaches meeting where the rosters are turned in.
- 5.6. If a church has two or more teams in the league in a season, and one of those teams drops out the following season, the church must field a team in the higher division if there are **four** or more players returning from that higher division team.

6. Games

- 6.1. Game times are 7:00, 8:00, and 9:00 p.m. The second and third games may start five minutes after the end of the previous game providing both managers agree. Game time is forfeit time. There will be a five (5) minute grace period given for the first scheduled game on that field.
- 6.2. The forfeit or game time will be determined by the umpire. Both managers should confer with the umpire to determine official time. If cell phone time and watch times do not concur, the cell phone time will be considered the official time.
- 6.3. The length of the game shall be 7 innings or 65 minutes. A game is considered official if a minimum of four (4) complete innings are played, with exception to the run rule only (see rule 5.5).
- 6.4. Any game that goes beyond the 7 innings or time limit of 65 minutes and is still tied, will be subject to the Texas Tie-Breaker Rules. Play is as normal except as stated below.
 - 6.4. Before the batting team is pitched their first pitch, the last batter of the previous inning or the designated runner will go to second base.
 - 6.4. There is only one pitch thrown to each batter. The results of the pitch must be accepted regardless of outcome.

- 6.5. Run Rule (aka Mercy Rule)
 - 6.5. The **30**-run rule will be in effect before 3.5 or 4 innings (home team batting when necessary).
 - 6.5. The **20**-run rule will be in effect after 3.5 or 4 innings (home team batting when necessary).
 - 6.5. The **12**-run rule will be in effect after 4.5 or 5 innings (home team batting when necessary).
- 6.6. Home teams will be determined by the schedule prior to the start of the game. The home team will provide a representative to pray before the start of the game.
- 6.7. The large white “strike mat” will be used during the game.
 - 6.7. A “strike mat” will be used to determine balls and strikes.
 - 6.7. The catcher must allow the ball to strike the mat for it to be considered a strike. A pitched ball not landing on the strike mat will be called a “ball” by the umpire.
 - 6.7. If the softball touches any part of the mat on a legal pitch as defined by USA, it will be considered a strike. The strike mat is only used for calling balls and strikes.
 - 6.7. The strike mat is not part of home plate. Therefore, when a runner is trying to score, they must touch home plate to score. If he/she touches the strike mat and not home plate, and then is tagged with the ball, the runner will be called out.
 - 6.7. With the institution of the strike mat the pitcher will no longer be required to be in direct contact with the pitcher’s plate when delivering a pitch.
 - 6.7.5.1. The pitcher will be allowed to stand up to six feet behind the pitcher’s plate, if he desires, to deliver a pitch.
 - 6.7.5.2. The pitcher will be allowed to stand up to one foot to the left or the right of the pitcher’s plate.
 - 6.7.5.3. If releasing in front of the pitchers’ plate, one foot must be in contact with the plate at release.
 - 6.7. The umpire has sole responsibility in determining if a legal or illegal pitch has been delivered.
 - 6.7. There will be no arguing ball, strike and illegal pitch calls
- 6.8. The season will be a continuous play season consisting of an amount of games as determined by the board during the second league meeting.
- 6.9. To facilitate all divisions finishing the season as close to the same date as possible; it may be necessary to schedule teams to play double headers on some nights.
- 6.10. If a player must leave the game because of an injury, emergency or work, and there is no legal substitute to replace the player that is leaving, the player that is leaving will be called out only if a base must be vacated. Anytime the player that had to leave is scheduled to bat, that player will be skipped over. There will be no penalty. If this results in less than a legal team and no pick-up player is available a forfeit will occur with no monetary penalty.
- 6.11. Any game stopped prematurely due to weather, injuries or technical failures (i.e. light malfunctions) and is considered legal (see rule 5.3) will be reverted to the last complete inning and will be official.
- 6.12. If a player is ejected from the game and there is no legal substitute to replace the player that was ejected, the ejected player will be called out if a base must be vacated and anytime the ejected player is scheduled to bat.
- 6.13. If an injury or event occurs that stops the game for more than five minutes the manager should check with the umpire to assure he has stopped timing the game to assure full playing time will be allowed. Injury time and other events (i.e. rain delays) shall not be counted as game time.
- 6.14. Pitchers will be allowed three (3) underhand warm up pitches prior to the first inning and one (1) underhand warm up pitch every inning after the first. A new pitcher entering the game will be allowed three (3) underhanded warm up pitches. A pitcher reentering the game to pitch will be allowed one (1) underhand warm up pitch. All warm up pitches are to be slow pitch only.
- 6.15. The pitch must have an arc between 6 and 10 feet in height.
- 6.16. Each batter will have one (1) ball and one (1) strike on them prior to stepping up to the plate for his or her at bat.
- 6.17. In MCS play there will be up to two (2) “extra hitter(s)” allowed to be listed on a lineup card.
- 6.18. Home run limits are as follows:
 - 6.18. There is a five (5) home run limit for Upper Division
 - 6.18. There is a four (4) home run limit for A Division.
 - 6.18. There is a three (3) home run limit for A-B, B, or Middle Division.

- 6.18. There is a two (2) home run limit for C Division or a single division league.
- 6.18. There is a one (1) home run limit for any division lower than C or a combined Lower Division.
- 6.18. All home run limits are progressive than out.
- 6.18. A home run as defined by this rule will consist of a ball being hit out of the park in fair territory. There will be no limit on inside the park home runs in any division. A ball deflected off a player or equipment for a home run will not count towards that team's total for out of the park homeruns.
- 6.19. There will be **NO** base stealing or leading off in MCS.
- 6.20. Protests on rule interpretations must be made prior to the next pitch. The scorekeeper and umpire must both be informed when the misinterpretation occurs and the game will be played from that point under protest. A protest fee of **\$15.00** dollars must be paid to a league officer within **24** hours for the protest to be heard. If the protest is upheld the money will be refunded. Protest are only accepted in regards to misinterpretation of MCS and USA rules with MCS given higher priority. Protests are not allowed on judgment calls.
- 6.21. There will be two (2) umpires for regular season play.
- 6.22. All walks will be scored as hits for determining batting averages.
- 6.23. **Designated Runner (aka Freedom Runner) is the pinch runner. Each team will be allowed 2 Designated/Freedom Runners- A designated runner can be any player on the roster regardless if they are in the lineup or not. Designated/Freedom Runner(s) must be identified on your lineup FR.**
- 6.23. They can run an unlimited number of times per inning/game.
- 6.23. If the designated runner is in the batting lineup and is on base when his turn comes to bat, he must vacate the base and take his turn at bat and an out will be given. A team does not have the option of substituting the designated runner to avoid an out from being declared.
- 6.23. If the designated runner is injured, a substitute designated runner can be chosen but the injured runner must be removed from all play for the remainder of that game.
- 6.24. Designated Fielder (DF) -This player will play defense only. The DF will be the last person on the lineup. DF's can be substituted; normal substitutions rules apply.
- 6.25. **Pitcher MUST use at least one of the following – pitching screen or face mask NOTE: IF THE PITCHER USES THE SCREEN, THEY ARE NOT ALLOWED TO FIELD THE BALL.**
- 6.25.1 Pitching Screen Rules:
 - 6.25.1.1. The pitching screen is optional and will be chosen by the fielding team when taking the field each inning. This choice cannot be changed until the start of the next inning. If a pitching screen is not used, a mask covering the face and adhering to the equipment guidelines of 4.1 shall be used by the pitcher.

Exception: During a pitcher change, the screen may be removed or added to play.
 - 6.25.1.2. The “pitching screen” must be placed in front of the pitching plate/rubber no more than 1 ft in front of the plate/rubber and must cover a minimum of one half of the pitching plate/rubber.
 - 6.25.1.3. Once the screen is in place, it may not be moved in that half inning unless a new pitcher comes in or the screen is moved by a batted ball.
 - 6.25.1.4. The pitcher may release the ball from either side of the screen. Before releasing the ball, the pitcher must pause at least one second before they release the ball, or it is an illegal pitch.
 - 6.25.1.5. After the pitch they must immediately move completely behind the screen. If the batter hits the screen with a batted ball, it is counted as a foul/strike and you get a courtesy.
 - 6.25.1.6. Any live ball thrown from any fielder that hits the screen will remain in play.

7. Weather Events

- 7.1. Rainout alerts will be sent via message service to coaches only. To be included in the rainout alert you must text “mcscoach” to 84483. There will be no calls or e-mails from league officials.
- 7.2. Games may be canceled or delayed an if any of the following weather conditions exist: Tornado Warning, Tornado Watch, Hurricane Warning, Hurricane Watch, Tropical Storm Warning, Tropical

Storm Watch, Thunderstorm, "Heavy" Rain, Lightning strike within 5 miles or other major weather conditions.

- 7.3. Unhealthy air quality due to fire or other pollution and any Police or Fire emergency in the area could also cause games to be delayed or canceled. The League Officials, in accordance with the city and or the local law enforcement has the authority to cancel, if threatening conditions force the safety of the tournament/event.
- 7.4. When a weather event occurs, play will stop for 20 minutes. After that time, play will resume at the discretion of league official or the umpires. A maximum of 40 minutes will be waited before the remainder of the games are rescheduled.

8. Playoffs

- 8.1. The top four placed teams in each division will play in a single elimination divisional championship tournament at the end of the regular season.
- 8.2. Playoff berths will be determined with the following criteria:
 - 8.2. Win/Loss Record
 - 8.2. Head to Head record
 - 8.2. Lowest Total Runs Allowed
 - 8.2. Highest Total Runs Fielded.
 - 8.2. If still tied, league officers will flip a coin one time.
- 8.3. There will be no time limit on playoff games. Mercy rules will be in effect.
- 8.4. There will be two (2) umpires for all playoff games.
- 8.5. The nights that tournaments are played on may not necessarily be on the same nights that were played on during the regular season.
- 8.6. Balls will be provided to the teams or umpires at the start of each game by league officials.

9. Conduct of Players

- 9.1. Profanity and threats of any kind are prohibited. Players or managers heard using profane language and/or making threats will be ejected from the game and must leave the park. This type of ejection carries a one (1) game suspension. If this behavior continues the MCS Board Members will meet and discuss further consequences (ex: multiple game suspension or even suspended for the remainder of the season)
- 9.2. Any player or coach that verbally abuses a league official, other player or umpire before, during, or after a game may, upon review by the officers, be suspended for the remainder of the regular season and playoffs. Said player or manager will serve a minimum of a one (1) game suspension. If the abuse occurs during the game, that player will be ejected from play and must leave the park.
- 9.3. All ejections will result in a letter from the league being sent to the player's manager, church pastor, and to the player. The letter will inform all recipients of the details concerning the ejection and applicable suspensions. The letter will be sent by the league secretary as soon as possible after the infraction occurs.
- 9.4. Only the team captain or manager is to have any discussion with the umpire regarding a call that has been made.
- 9.5. No alcoholic beverages or drugs are allowed in any Manatee County Park. There is to be no smoking in the dugout or on the field. Penalty for this is being ejected from the game and must leave the park. This type of ejection carries a one (1) game suspension. If this behavior continues the MCS Board Members will meet and discuss further consequences (ex: multiple game suspension or even suspended for the remainder of the season)
- 9.6. A lifetime suspension will be given to any player involved in any physically violent act towards another player (including teammate) or official. This will also include a minimum one (1) year suspension from all USA play. Players will be allowed to appeal this suspension to the MCS directors and Manatee County Reviewing Board after one (1) year.
- 9.7. Any player or coach ejected for any reason not outlined above will be sent a letter informing them of possible consequences if another ejection should occur.
- 9.8. MCS may have reciprocity with Manatee County for suspended players at the subject to board approval.

10. Background Checks

- 10.1. In pursuant to Florida Statutes, any team, that has anyone under the age of 18 playing or in the dugout during sanctioned league or team events (i.e. practice) must have anyone in a position of authority for that team subject to background checks in pursuant to league policy.

- 10.2. This policy may be found by going to www.manateechurchsoftball.org/concusion_background.html.
- 10.3. If there is no background check on file for the coach/manager of the game, the team (or the youth) will not be allowed to play, even if this results in a forfeit.
- 10.4. Coaches will be responsible for incurring the costs of any Background Checks.

11. Concussion Protection for Youth

- 11.1. In pursuant to Florida Statutes, any league that allows anyone under the age of 18, a procedure must be in place to identify and prevent concussions.
- 11.2. If a suspected head injury occurs to anyone under the age of 18, the following steps must be followed:
 - 11.2. The injured player(s) will be removed from the game(s) for that night. If this would result in 8 players, a pick-up player may be substituted in that batter's place but all other rules in pursuant to pick-up players (see 4.2) will be adhered to.
 - 11.2. The coach/manager will need to fill out an incident report within 24 hours of the incident occurring. The incident report form can be found at www.manateechurchsoftball.org/concusion_background.html.
 - 11.2. The impacted player(s) will not be allowed to return to play until a note, provided by a doctor, can be provided to league officials.
- 11.3. If any of the guidelines in Step 11.2 are not followed, the coach/manager will be removed, and a new coach/manager will be required to act in his stead for the remainder of the season. This does not mean that he or she will be unable to play, just no longer able to coach.