



Softball Division AAA – Frequently Asked Questions

General information regarding 2019 Softball Division AAA Season:

Online registration for Kirkland National Little League opens in December 2018 at <http://www.kirklandnational.com/registernow>. You will need to login or create a new member account if you are new to the league. If you require additional instructions or assistance with registration please email registrar@kirklandnational.com.

Division AAA is a “modified player pitch” league. The player pitcher pitches an 11” Safety softball from 35’ using the Little League pitching rules. When a batter’s count reaches 4 balls, instead of being awarded first base, the batter’s coach comes in to pitch to them until they either put the ball in play or strike out. Managers bat the line-up but 3 outs ends an inning. There is no Third Strike Not Caught or Mercy Rule. The Infield Fly Rule is in effect. At this level we typically combine with another league like KALL and pending the Inter-league rules for the level, there may be restrictions on stealing (i.e. only on passed balls, must slide when stealing home), base running (one base on an overthrow), and pitching (pitchers may only pitch 2 innings a game).

Our spring season begins with pre-season practices starting as early as March 1st, 2019. Our season is 14 games starting as early as March 25th and ending mid-June pending make-up games for rainouts. No events will be scheduled over LWSD Spring Break (April 6-14) or Memorial Day Weekend (May 24-27).

While AAA is not part of the official All-Star Pool, on June 8th, 2019 the KNLL AAA Super Stars will play against the KALL AAA Super Stars in a competitive game using the same rules as the AAA regular season. Each regular season team will nominate an equal number of players to the team to play in this game.

Division AAA typically has 2 events each week in a mixture of practices and games pending weather and field availability. In rare occasions, there may be 3 or 4 events in a week (i.e. a rescheduled game). Cancellations due to inclement weather are posted at <http://www.kirklandnational.com> under “Rainout Lines”. Team managers will update players through Team Connect (team scheduling and communication feature).

Games are typically at 132nd Square Park with a 5 PM start time on Mondays through Thursdays, and any time from 9 AM to 5 PM on Saturdays. In seasons where KNLL runs an Inter-league with Kirkland American, games may be scheduled at Everest C or Big Finn Hill Field 2.

Practices typically take place at elementary school fields within our league boundary (Frost, Juanita, Keller, Muir, Sandburg, or Thoreau) and 132nd Square Park 1 or 2. Start times and durations are at the manager’s discretion but practices typically start at 5 PM and last 90 minutes. There are two practice schedules: pre-season and in-season. Because games rotate to different days of the week, the in-season practice schedule will vary pending the number of games scheduled, the day(s) on which games are scheduled, and practice field availability. For example, in pre-season your manager may secure 132nd Square Park for practice on Tuesdays and Thursdays but when games start, you may have a practice on a Monday at Sandburg (only night a practice field was available that week) and a game on Wednesday at 132nd Square Park. KNLL communicates changes in the schedule through Team Connect and the Softball Director is available to assist.

Division AAA games last 2 hours after the start time, or 6 innings, whichever comes first. Managers may request players to show up 30-45 minutes early on game days for warm-ups. The home team is required to provide a trained volunteer umpire for the game.

Division AAA registration closes on February 18th, 2019. After registration closes, teams will be formed and your Team Manager will contact you. Players who would like to join after registration is closed and teams are formed will need to be reviewed on a case by case basis (see Team Formation below).

Why are practices and games not on a fixed schedule like other youth sports leagues or T-Ball?

Little League has specific dimensions and equipment requirements (i.e. installed pitcher's plates, bases, dugouts, backstops, etc.) for a field to be approved for games at levels above Tee Ball. The inventory of such fields within our area of Kirkland is limited. Game length and available daylight limit the number of games that can be played on our tight supply of approved game fields during the week and when combined with the number of registered teams each year, this requires us to create a revolving game schedule.

Why does the Division AAA season start later than the higher divisions and go longer?

The upper levels must start earlier so they can play a full season before Memorial Day weekend. The Washington weather is not always the most favorable for baseball/softball activities in March. We start our season a little later in hopes of reducing the likelihood for bad weather and rain-outs and end a little later to ensure the upper levels can complete their required schedule of games before Memorial Day weekend.

What equipment do I need to purchase for the season?

Softball glove, cleats (if you don't have a pair from soccer already), uniform pants, uniform belt, uniform socks- once you meet with your Team Manager and know the team colors. While technically, softball and soccer cleats are built differently (the cleat pattern on the sole), for lower divisions like A and AAA, that distinction is not enough to require you to purchase separate cleats for each sport.

Optional / Recommended: Some families prefer to purchase their own helmet and bat for their child – that's ok, but it's not required – please see the next sections regarding bats and helmets!

A team visor and jersey (shirt) will be provided by the league. Additionally, each team manager will receive gear bags with shared equipment: helmets, bats, balls, tees, and other equipment to use for practices and games for the duration of the season.

Bat Regulations:

As per Little League Softball Rule 1.10

The bat must be a softball bat which meets Little League specifications and standards as noted in this rule. It shall be a smooth, rounded stick and made of wood or a material tested and proved acceptable to Little League standards.

*The bat shall be no more than 33 inches (34 inches for **Junior/Senior League**) in length, not more than two and one-quarter (2¼) inches in diameter, and if wood, not less than fifteen-sixteenth (15/16) inches in diameter (7/8 inch for bats less than 30 inches) at its smallest part. Non-wood bats shall be printed with a BPF (bat performance factor) of 1.20. Bats may be taped or fitted with a sleeve for a distance not exceeding 16 inches from the small end. Colored bats are acceptable. A non-wood bat must have a grip of cork, tape or composition material, and must extend a minimum of 10 inches from the small end. Slippery tape or similar material is prohibited.*

An illegal or altered bat must be removed.

In all divisions, non-wood bat must have a grip of cork, tape, or composition material, and must extend a minimum of 10 inches from the small end. Slippery tape or similar material is prohibited.

NOTE 1: *The traditional batting donut is not permissible.*

NOTE 2: *The use of pine tar or any other similar adhesive substance is prohibited at all levels of Little League Baseball and Softball. Use of these substances will result in the bat being declared illegal and removed from play.*

NOTE 3: Non-wood bats may develop dents from time to time. Bats that have cracks or sharp edges, or that cannot pass through the approved Little League bat ring for the appropriate division must be removed from play. The 2¼-inch bat ring must be used for bats labeled 2¼. The 2⅝-inch bat ring must be used for bats labeled for 2⅝.

NOTE 4: An illegal bat must be removed. Any bat that has been altered shall be removed from play. **PENALTY** – See Rule – 6.06(d).

Look for a **Fastpitch Softball** bat that adheres to the above requirements and carries the following stamp:



Full details on the Little League Softball Bat Rules can be found at the following link:

<https://www.littleleague.org/playing-rules/bat-rules/>

Helmet Regulations:

LLOR 1.16 states that “helmets may not be re-painted and may not contain tape or re-applied decals or stickers unless approved in writing by the helmet manufacturer or authorized dealer.” Such written approval may not be recorded by KNLL, D9, Western Region, or Little League International. Therefore, the burden falls to the parent or guardian to obtain such written approval and the manager to ensure the alterations are in compliance with that approval.

Many manufacturers of softball helmets also manufacture face guards built for that specific helmet. Helmets that are equipped with manufacturer provided face guards are allowable for use in Little League Softball. Any non-OEM attachments that required alteration of the helmet by drilling holes and removing padding are not allowed as these alterations void the NOCSAE certification of the helmet, making it illegal to use in Little League play.

During pregame inspection of the equipment by the umpires, umpires are empowered to adjudge if those alterations are in compliance with LLOR and the KNLL Local Rules. Any altered helmets shall be removed from play.

LLOR 1.16 advises that “altering helmets in any way can be dangerous.” Therefore, KNLL strongly discourages any alterations to helmets

Where can I purchase softball equipment?

There are a number local sporting goods stores and online websites from which to purchase gear. KNLL purchases our league’s gear locally from Risan Athletics- www.risan.com

Do Boys and Girls play on the same team?

Little League’s Fastpitch Softball program is girls only.

Can my child hit off of a tee during games?

No. KNLL’s Softball Division AAA is “player pitch”. A player from the opposing team will pitch softballs underhand (Softball Fast pitch) to your child. An umpire will keep the count and assist in the placement and safety of the players while batting and pitching. One of the key development areas for this Division is to teach the girls how to hit a moving softball and how to pitch to opposing players.

Can I request my child be placed on a team with a specific coach or friend?

Friend, yes, coach sort of. Please note that a friend request must be done through online registration, can only be one friend, and that friend has to also request your daughter in their registration. We do our best to honor friend requests but sometimes registration numbers preclude us from doing so. While we are happy to receive coach requests, in team formation keeping schools together and reciprocal friend requests both take priority over coach requests.

How are teams formed?

In the lower divisions, KNLL we form teams by elementary school. Since we need to distribute the players to balance the team sizes, there are no guarantees that your child will be placed on a team with players all from their same school. If you know of a specific player with which your daughter would like to be teammates, please refer to the previous FAQ category for creating a friend request.

In Division AAA our target team size is 10-12 players. Because every player must receive equal playing time, smaller team sizes ensure that more innings are played and players get more at-bats each game. Catchers are used at Division AAA. Pitchers are located within the pitcher's circle. Each team must have at least 8 players on a team at a game in order to play the game. Player substitutions from opposing teams are allowed if mutually agreed upon before the start of the game.

If a player would like to register after player teams have formed, the league will allow this on a case by case basis pending available roster space. Because Little League has strict rules on teams having even numbers, the Director of Softball Lower Levels will determine on which team the player will join. This may or may not be on the same team as the one in which a coach or friend "recruited" the player to join. Manage your daughter's expectations accordingly.

How do I volunteer to become a manager or coach?

KNLL is 100% run by volunteers – this includes Board Members, Umpires, Managers, Coaches, Scorekeepers, and more. We cannot successfully run the league without the help of our parents. Division AAA does not require the fulfillment of as many positions as the higher divisions, but we still require volunteer Managers (1) and Coaches (2) to run our program. We recommend each team find a volunteer Scorekeeper so that they can start their training when game complexity and the stakes are low.

To ensure the safety of the KNLL participants, anyone that wants to participate as a league volunteer (in any capacity) is required to register as a volunteer and complete a background check. Registration is done online at www.kirklandnational.com – similar to registering a player, but now you are registering yourself as a volunteer. If you have additional questions about registering or what is required of the different roles contact the Director of Softball Lower Levels – director.sb.lower@kirklandnational.com

KNLL has recently partnered with the [Positive Coaching Alliance \(PCA\)](#) to further develop our coaches.

What is the difference between a manager and a coach?

In addition to mandatory background checks, all managers and coaches must be reviewed and approved by the League's Board of Directors each season. Volunteers may be approved for both roles or only one role.

The Manager, assigned to a team by the League, "takes ownership" of the team as the *Head Coach*. Managers are the primary focal point for conducting correspondence with the league and they flow-down information to the rest of the team. They are the single point of accountability for the management of the team and its adherence to Little League and the KNLL Local League Rules. Typically, they lead the practices (plans) and manage the game day line-ups (requires more involvement, specifically in the higher divisions), but they may choose to delegate those responsibilities on a case by case basis. However, they are ultimately responsible to ensure that players are safe,

following the rules, and the League's minimum play rules are being adhered to.

Coaches, selected by managers from the pool of Board approved volunteers, support the managers by assisting with drills in practice, in the dugout & on-the-field during games.

Typically teams are limited to 1 manager and 2 additional coaches. In Division AAA there are many additional opportunities to help the team by registering as a "Team Parent". As a Team Parent, you are an approved volunteer and allowed to be on the field during practices to help with coaching activities (when help is requested by the Manager) or during games when the team is at-bat.

Please Note: Additional information (e.g. team details, schedules) will be provided by Team Managers after teams are formed and we approach the beginning of our season.

You can be find more information regarding Kirkland National Little League at www.kirklandnational.com or send any additional inquiries to the Director of Softball Lower Levels – director.sb.lower@kirklandnational.com