



Softball Division Juniors – Frequently Asked Questions

General information regarding 2019 Softball Division Juniors 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.

The Juniors Division is the next level of play above Majors for players Little League Aged 13 and 14. More advanced 12-year old players may petition to play up at Juniors. Players pitch 12" hard compression softballs from a 43' pitching plate. Managers bat the line-up. Runners can leave a base after the pitcher releases the ball and there are no additional restrictions on base running outside of the Little League rules. The Infield Fly Rule is in effect, as is Third Strike Not Caught. There are no run limits for the offense in an inning. There may be additional rules agreed upon by the Charters combined in Inter-league play including which Mercy Rule is used, a limit on innings pitched by pitchers, and minimum play rules.

Our spring season begins with pre-season practices starting as early as February 25th, 2019. Our regular season consists of 14 games starting as early as March 16th and ending before Memorial Day weekend 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). Because of the High School Exemption rules for All-Stars, it is typical that the Juniors team will play one or even two games after Memorial Day and before June 1.

For those players who are interested, eligible, and selected for All-Stars, teams are announced on June 1st, 2019, practices begin thereafter, and continue through the District Tournament and beyond pending the success of the team. The Juniors All-Star Division also has a World Series which is held in Kirkland. Typically, the winner of the D9 All-Star tournament is granted a direct entry into the World Series as the home team, but that is not guaranteed. For the 2019 Softball All-Star schedule go to http://www.kirklandnational.com/SB_All_Star_Dates.

During the pre-season, Juniors teams will typically have two practices per week. Once games start, expect 2-3 events each week in a combination of games and practices. In some cases where games have been rescheduled, there may be as many as 4 events in a calendar week and rescheduled games may take place on Friday evenings or Sunday afternoons and evenings.

Home games are at Big Finn Hill Field 1 with a 5 PM start time on Mondays through Thursdays, and any time from 9 AM to 5 PM on Saturdays. Because KNLL typically does not register enough players to run its own Juniors Division league, we must play games against other leagues within District 9 and neighboring District 8. The D9 meeting to determine which teams will be grouped into one Inter-league schedule is held the last Monday of February. After that meeting, we will know if our away games would be in Bellevue, Mercer Island, Duvall, etc. D9 creates the schedule for Juniors Inter-leagues and the league and team managers may not get their official game schedule until a week before the first game- KNLL has no control over the scheduling at Majors beyond submitting our field availability on time to D9 along with blackout dates (i.e. LWSD Spring break).

Pre-season practices typically take place at BFH1 or JHS Field 2. Start times and durations are at the manager's discretion but practices typically start at 5 PM and last 2 hours or until it's too dark to play. 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 BFH 1 for practice on Tuesdays and

Thursdays but when games start, you may have a practice on a Monday at Juanita High School (only night a practice field was available that week) and a game on Wednesday at Hartman Park in Redmond, and a game on Saturday at Everest C in Kirkland.

Juniors games last 7 innings, when one team Mercy Rules the opposing team (earliest is after 4 innings), or the game is called for darkness- whichever comes first. Managers may request players to arrive up to 60 minutes early on game days for warm-ups.

Juniors registration closes on February 9th, 2019. All players Little League Aged 9 and above must attend our evaluation on [February 9th, 2019](#) at the JHS Field House. After evaluations, teams will be drafted as per our [2019 Local Rules](#) 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 with the potential of the request denied.

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 (and other cities) 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 Juniors season start earlier and have a game(s) after Memorial Day?

The upper levels must start earlier to complete the District mandated slate of 14 games before Memorial Day weekend in order to complete games before playoffs and All-Star selection which typically takes place the week after Memorial Day. Due to the High School Exemption, most Juniors teams will have one or two games scheduled after Memorial Day weekend to accommodate high school players on the team.

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), that distinction is not enough to require you to purchase separate cleats for recreational softball. For those who are serious about their performance in softball, we recommend cleats designed for fastpitch softball.

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 jersey (shirt) and visors or socks 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/>

During pregame inspection of the equipment by the umpires, umpires are empowered to adjudge if bats are in compliance with LLOR and the KNLL Local Rules or in safe condition. Any bats deemed out of compliance shall be removed from play.

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.

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

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.

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

Because teams are drafted for parity, friend requests are not granted. Coach requests are only granted if a player is requesting their parent who is a team manager. Parents who are coaches follow their kids.

How are teams formed?

Every softball player [Little League Aged 9](#) and above must attend an evaluation. From the evaluation results, the Junior pool is created and drafted to a team or teams, then Majors, and finally Coast. Any remaining players are then placed in the AAA Division and placed on a team using the AAA rules. All 13 and 14-year old players must be placed at Juniors. Any 12-year old players requesting to play up at Juniors will be placed at Juniors if their skills evaluation warrants playing at that level AND there is an open roster spot on the team.

At Juniors, teams are formed by a blind draft if there is more than one team. The full draft rules are detailed in our [Local Rules](#). In broad strokes, a blind serpentine draft is done for pitchers, a reverse blind serpentine draft is then done for catchers, and the remaining players are placed on teams via a third blind serpentine draft to provide as close of teams as we can.

In Juniors our target team size is 14-16 players pending the number of players on the roster who were accepted to their high school team and whether their high school coach allows them to play Little League during their season. Please see the section on All-Stars below for additional details about the High School Exception rule. Teams must have at least 9 players in the dugout at the start of a game or the game is postponed and must be rescheduled. Borrowing of players from the other team is not allowed and Pool Players (substitutes) must be arranged in advance with the Player Agent.

How does my daughter get selected to All-Stars?

For detailed information on All-Stars, please review our [Local Rules](#) and our [website](#). In broad strokes, players who played at Coast and above are part of the All-Star pool. Each team must have played a minimum of 12 games during the regular season for any player on that team to be All-Star eligible. Each player, must have played in at least 60% of the games played by the team on which they are rostered. Pool Play games played for other teams do not count towards All-Star eligibility.

For players who are playing on their high school team for a coach that prohibits their involvement with Little League during the high school season, Little League has a High School Exemption rule. The player must play in at least one game, and must play in at least 60% of the Juniors team's games that fall outside of the high school teams schedule. In our area, the high school state championships take place Memorial Day weekend, which is why our Juniors team typically re-schedules a game for after that weekend.

At the beginning of May, the league will send out forms for players to express their interest and availability based on the published [All-Star tournament dates](#). Sometime after Memorial Day and before June 1, the league will hold its player selection meeting and players may be selected to one All-Star team. Players are selected based on their softball, leadership, and teamwork skills and only as roster spots are available. The All-Star team rosters are announced on June 1.

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. Coast requires volunteer Managers (1)

and Coaches (2) to run our program. The Manager must also find a volunteer Scorekeeper (and backup) as the Home team is required to provide one. The Manager must also recruit 2 volunteer umpires as each team is required to provide one for each game.

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.

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 find more information regarding Kirkland National Little League at www.kirklandnational.com or send any additional inquiries to the Vice President of Softball – vp.softball@kirklandnational.com