
Scheduler Notes to Managers

Welcome to the 2010 season of MV-LA Girls Softball! I'm sure we're all looking forward to a fun (and rain-free) season of softball. If you're an "old-timer," I apologize if the following information is redundant. Even if you are a long-time experienced manager or coach, please take the time to read through this in case anything has changed from prior years.

First, the schedules will come out as soon as possible. With 50 teams this year and nearly 450 games across eight fields, it's not a trivial job. It's my goal to help all teams play all of their games this season, and to do that, I will very much appreciate your help when it comes to trying to limit changes to the schedule and, when that is not possible, to identify the challenge and work with the opposing team manager early to reschedule a game (the procedure will be outlined below).

The exception will be a "major reschedule" — like a field closure or rain-out (PLEASE NOTE: only the League will call a rain-out). In these cases I will reschedule all the games, and then you will need to review the changes and if there are any problems, work them out with the opposing manager as with a regular reschedule.

A change for a single team affects many people beyond that one team — the umpire staff, and the field crew, the snack bar, and particularly the girls on the opposing team. The League discourages canceling a game as it deprives the girls from an opportunity to play. While your team may not want to play, please be considerate of your opponents and make every effort to come to an early and cooperative resolution, including the option to play shorthanded. Rescheduling early and only if absolutely necessary will make this easier on all.

Immediate Actions

Even before the schedule becomes available, I would encourage you to poll all your players and parents as soon as possible regarding commitments that will conflict with your scheduled games. Some conversation starters might include: LASD Jr. Olympics, First Holy Communion, Confirmation, Girl Scout Camporee, and family plans. As soon as you determine that you will be unable to field a team for a particular game, you can begin the rescheduling process.

The preseason practice schedules are available now, so your teams (10U, 12U, and 14U) can start having infield and batting cage time beginning March 1. If your assigned time does not work, please feel free to work out a swap with another team or use the field if it's idle. However, the team on the schedule "owns" that slot and has priority.

Rescheduling Process

The process for rescheduling games is relatively straight-forward. It is very important that everyone follows this and keeps their changes to a minimum so that I don't miss any necessary changes and can keep the schedule current and all related groups (teams, umpires, field crew, snack bar, etc) informed.

Reschedules need to be resolved at least ONE WEEK before the original game time, to allow for scheduling of umpires, snack bar, and field crew.

The five steps to rescheduling are:

- Step 1: Learn that you have a need to reschedule
- Step 2: Contact the other team's manager
- Step 3: Contact the Scheduler
- Step 4: Scheduler confirms change
- Step 5: Play the game

Step 1: Learn that you have a need to reschedule

This is still the hardest one. You have to hear from the players or parents well before the game that they won't be able to make it on a given day.

- How much is well before? A week is preferred. Four days (96 hours) is minimally acceptable in an emergency situation
- How many players do you need? At least 8
- How do you find out people will not be showing up? Manager intuition. An awareness of the likely conflict dates (Junior Olympics, Girl Scout events, religious milestones such as First Communion, etc.). And relentless communication.

We've tried to take into account the most likely issues — Junior Olympics, spring break, parades, etc. as best as our crystal ball will allow.

Step 2: Contact the other team's manager

Contact the other manager to let her know your team can't make it and ask for her support and understanding. Then brainstorm one or (ideally) two alternative dates when both teams can play and a field is available. That last part is important. It's one of the reasons the League asks for a week's notice, so we can make sure the field will be prepared, and there will be an umpire present.

Resources for selecting a field and time

To determine which dates/fields are available, please see the website, www.mvlags.org, and click on "Master Field Schedule" under the

"Calendars" or "Resources" menus. Here you will find the latest listing of all scheduled and rescheduled games, showing date, time, and field. For fields other than at Stevenson, you will also see grayed-out dates and times when MVLAGE does not hold the permit.

Weekday games are scheduled only at 5:30pm, as an earlier start time can represent a hardship for the Fields Crew and/or Umpire.

With so many teams this year, field space is at a premium, which would again be a reason to try to avoid a reschedule. Preferred slots for rescheduled 14U/12U/10U games are:

- Wednesdays on DG; Fridays on AG or DG; or other vacated weekday slots on these two fields
- Slots on off-site fields. (These represent a relative hardship for the Fields Crew)

Preferred slots for rescheduled 8U games are:

- Mondays through Fridays on 8U field
- Other vacated slots

Step 3: Contact the Scheduler

With both managers in agreement on their reschedule, the manager should communicate their first and second choices to the Scheduler.

Since the Scheduler receives a lot of email during the season, it is important to follow a standard format for communicating the request which highlights the from, to, and agreement from both managers. To do this:

- Manager 1 sends a message to Manager 2. The subject line must be of the form: RESCHEDULE: <visitor team> v <home team> <original date> <original time> / <original field> TO <new date> <new time> / <new field>. You can include any commentary in the body of the message, including the manager's name, email, and phone number. In addition, if you have a second choice that you've agreed on, please include that in the body of the message in case the first choice is unavailable.

Example subject line:

RESCHEDULE: 10U2 v 10U7 04/05 9:00AM / DG TO 04/10 5:30PM / Graham

- Manager 2 forwards the message to the Scheduler with a brief note indicating their agreement with the request and their contact information. Please send these requests to scheduler@mvlags.org.

Note on rescheduling Interleague games

Rescheduling Interleague games follows the same process, except that in Step 3 a single email from the MVLAGE manager asserting that agreement has been reached with the inter-league team will suffice.

Note that Interleague games are notoriously difficult to reschedule, so please make every effort to play your games at the originally assigned times.

Step 4: Scheduler confirms change

Once the Scheduler receives the email from Manager 2, the Scheduler will process the request. The Scheduler will determine if the first choice is available and, if so, the Master Field Schedule will be updated and a confirmation sent to both managers. This will ensure that the field crews, snack bar, and umpires have been notified of the change.

If the first choice is not available, then the Scheduler will attempt a fit with the second choice if available. If no choices match, the Scheduler will send a note back to both managers for them to look for other alternatives.

Step 5: Play the game

Remember to treat the game as though it was played at the originally scheduled time. That is, a game scheduled for a given week still counts in that week (i.e. for pitch counts, etc.) no matter when it is played.

What are the rules of rescheduling?

Every year, we seem to encounter situations where one team wants to unilaterally cancel a game, usually with little notice to the other team. This results in unhappy players, unhappy parents, unhappy team staffs, and is, therefore, considered poor form by the League. Please keep in mind that all families and players count on a stable game schedule and being able to play. Please be considerate of everyone on all the teams and work cooperatively to ensure games get played.

The Free Pass

Each team gets one free pass during the season, when they can request a reschedule effectively with no questions asked, and the other team has to go along with it. The two teams still have to work together on the new date, but there is no penalty for requesting the reschedule. Typically this would be used on a day that there is some big event that one team has a lot of players going to, such as Junior Olympics or the Nobel Prize ceremony in Stockholm.

We have tried to account for most of the common events in the season. Since there are more teams and more games going on in a shorter time span, field space will be at a premium, so please don't use your free pass unless you absolutely have to.

After the Free Pass – 6U and 8U divisions

Beyond the first time reschedule, the consequences depend on the age group. In the 6U and 8U divisions there are no league standings, so the

concept of a forfeit is irrelevant. The managers should make every effort to reschedule the game so that the girls get to play the planned number of games. In general the 6U and 8U fields are available mid-week for the first half of the season; after mid-season Diamond Girl and Graham fields have some openings.

If the best you can come up with is a date when the combined number of players is enough to play, or if on game day, one 6U or 8U team shows up short of players, the game should be played using players borrowed from the other team.

After the Free Pass – 10U and above

At 10U and above wins and losses are recorded and league standings are tracked, so there is some significance to who wins. Once a team has used their free pass, it is up to the opposing manager to determine whether or not to grant a reschedule, or to force a forfeit. The reason for this rule is twofold:

- To avoid situations where a team routinely reschedules whenever their top players will be missing.
- To avoid situations where the only acceptable date to play for the team requesting the reschedule significantly disadvantages the opposing team (e.g. requesting team will have all of their players but opposing team will only have eight of theirs).

It is in everyone's interest for the games to be played, so the League encourages cooperation whenever possible.

What if nothing is known in advance, and less than seven girls show up at game time? Unfortunately this has been known to happen. If a team has less than seven players five minutes after the scheduled start time, that team has forfeited the game, and a 6-0 score (10U and 12U) or 7-0 (14U) should be recorded (if both teams have fewer than seven players, both officially forfeit).

Once this formality is out of the way, a scrimmage should be played using players borrowed from the other team, especially if there are more than nine girls available. Players from other teams can also be used to fill out a squad, but only after all players on the first two teams have been assigned starting positions. Generally speaking, no player from one of the scheduled teams should sit on the bench while a player from a third team plays, at least not as a starter.

Interleague play – 12U and 14U

Interleague play is somewhat different. It is not easy to reschedule Interleague games since we're dealing with many other leagues and do not have access to their schedules. As a result, there is a specific set of rules which apply ONLY to Interleague games which allow borrowing of players from other MVLGS teams to ensure that the game can be played at its originally-scheduled time. Therefore managers and coaches are encouraged to recruit otherwise eligible players from other teams (same age division or younger) if they know they will be short for a

given match. However, a borrowed player should never supplant a player rostered on the team. Managers should use their judgment of how best to handle situations when a player has been invited to play, but enough girls actually show up and, of course, always follow the League rules governing the borrowing of players.

Rainouts or field closures

In the event that the weather looks questionable on game day, make certain that you check the Field Status Hotline to determine whether your game will be on or rescheduled. Note that a single team, or team staff, MAY NOT cancel a game due to weather, as this leads to the “unilateral cancelation” problem previously described. No matter what the weather looks like at your house, it is likely different at the field. The League will determine playability.

Games cancelled by the League due to field conditions will be rescheduled by the League. They will not count against anyone’s Free Pass. Check the web site often for updates.

Final words

The goal of MVLAGE is always for the girls to play softball and have fun. If we can remind ourselves of this when things get a bit crazy, it will put it all back in perspective.