

FL District 20 Interleague Machine Pitch Rules

These supplemental rules are to be used in conjunction with the current year *Baseball Official Regulations and Playing Rules*.

OBJECTIVE OF MACHINE PITCH DIVISION

This is a training league to teach young children how to play baseball while keeping it as fun and safe as possible for young, inexperienced players.

- 1) PLACEMENT OF THE MACHINE:
 - a) Games will be played with a pitching machine placed at 46 feet from the plate.
 - b) A three-foot (front edge) by four-foot (sides) square will be drawn around the center of the pitching mound. This is to mark off a safety area around the pitching mound and machine, which fielders may not enter.
- 2) RULINGS INVOLVING THE MACHINE AND SAFETY SQUARE
 - a) Batted ball hits the pitching machine, associated equipment (power box, cord, etc), or the coach feeding the machine. RULING: Batter is awarded 1st base. All runners advance if forced.
 - b) The ball popped up, landed in the safety square, and comes to rest without touching anything. RULING: Batter is awarded 1st base and all runners advance if forced.
 - c) The ball is popped up between home and safety square untouched as it hits the ground and rolls into the square. RULING: Batter will be awarded 1st base and all runners advance if forced.
 - d) The ball is popped up and lands in the safety square, does not touch anything, and then rolls out of the square. RULING: Ball is live.
 - e) Batted ball rolls or passes directly through safety square without touching anything. RULING: Ball is live.
 - f) A standard baseball will be used during play - NO RIF balls.
 - g) The machine used for play will be a spring-loaded, catapult action pitching machine (i.e. Louisville Slugger Blue Flame Ultimate Pitching Machine or equivalent).
- 3) The "player-pitcher" on the field does not pitch; they are a fielder only. They must begin each pitch at a distance from the plate even with the pitching machine with one foot touching the safety square and the other foot outside of the square. For safety reasons, they cannot leave this position, even on an attempted bunt, until the ball exits the pitching machine. When player-pitcher leaves early, the first offense will be a team warning and each additional offense the batter is awarded 1st base and runners advance if forced.
- 4) For safety reasons, no fielder shall be closer than 30 feet away from the batters' box until the ball crosses the plate. A solid or dashed 30' arc will be striped for reference. When a player or multiple players violate this rule, the first offense will be a team warning, and each additional offense the batter is awarded 1st base, and runners advance if forced.
- 5) If any player crosses the safety square during play or deflects or throws a live ball into the square, the umpire will halt play and award the runner(s) the next base to which the base runners were headed. Entering the safety square includes stepping into, falling into, and/or placing any part of the player inside the square. Additional bases may be awarded, per the umpire's judgment, for extra-base hits or intentional safety square violations.
- 6) ADJUSTMENT OF MACHINE:
 - a) The managers and player agent will agree on the pitching machine's speed before the beginning of the season. The setting may be changed during the season with the approval of all managers and the player agent. Machines must be certified and labeled with settings clearly indicated.
 - b) The machine will be set at 38-44 MPH for regular season and tournament play. Using a stopwatch, the time from the pitching machine to the plate must measure between .70-.82 seconds.
 - c) The machine may be adjusted for accuracy at the beginning of a team's at-bat half-inning before the 1st batter.

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- d) The machine may be adjusted for accuracy during the game at the umpires' discretion. No pitch count for a player will be reset as a result of having to adjust the machine while an "at bat" of a player has already begun.
- 7) ADULT PLACEMENT:
- a) When a team is batting, two adult base coaches are permitted. One adult coach will be in the dugout at all times to maintain order. The base coaches must stay in the coaches' boxes at all times during play.
 - b) An adult will pitch to the offensive team's batters by feeding balls into the pitching machine from within the safety square. This adult shall be one of the following and chosen by the offensive team:
 - (1) An umpire or approved adult.
 - (2) A coach/manager from the defensive team.
 - (3) A coach/manager from the offensive team. (NOTE: In this case, an approved additional adult may be present in the dugout if a player is not used as a base coach. This adult must be league approved.)
 - c) The adult feeding the machine must remain within the safety square at all times during play.
 - d) The adult feeding the machine may verbally coach during the inning.
 - e) If, in the umpire's judgment, any action by the adult pitcher or any of the adult coaches on either team interferes with a play in progress, the umpire will declare a "dead ball" and will take such action, as the umpire deems appropriate to the situation.
 - f) Adult feeding machine will place ball into the machine immediately after presenting it to the batter.
 - g) When a team is on defense, they may have up to two and no more than two coaches in the field to coach the defense. They must be in the outfield (grass area).
- 8) Teams will play with 10 players on the field. If a team cannot field ten players, they may play with nine players. Continuous batting order is required.
- 9) The defensive team will have four outfielders all playing at outfield depth (IN THE GRASS). No "short fielder" or extra infielders will be allowed. If any outfielder enters the clay area before the ball is put in play, then a warning will be given to that team. The second offense will result in a one base advance by all runners and so on for each additional offense. If the outfielder fields a batted ball in violation of this rule, the batter will be awarded first and all runners will advance one base.
- 10) The batting team will be retired when they have accumulated three (3) outs or five (5) runs, whichever comes first. For tournament play, 6 innings (or more in the event of a tie) will be played. This rule applies through the third (3rd) inning. Starting the 4th inning, the "5-run" rule is lifted and the defensive team must make three (3) outs to end the inning. The 10-run rule is in effect [see rule 4.10(e)].
- 11) Each batter will receive five pitches or three strikes to get a hit.
- a) There will be no called balls or walks. If it is obvious, to the umpire, that a ball cannot be hit, the umpire will call "no pitch" and award the batter an additional pitch. A "no pitch" is a dead ball situation.
 - b) There will be no called strikes. However, missed swings and foul balls count as strikes just as in Little League baseball. Foul balls on the third strike or the fifth pitch do not count against the batter, just as in Little League baseball. Also like regular Little League baseball, if a third strike or fifth pitch is bunted foul, the batter is out.
- 12) STEALING: Stealing is not allowed.
- 13) INFIELD FLY RULE: Will not apply.
- 14) BUNTING: Will be allowed during the entire season.
- 15) Little League "Mandatory Play" rules apply [see Regulation IV(i)]. It is strongly encouraged that no player sits on the bench for more than three (3) consecutive defensive outs.

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- 16) HALTING PLAY:
 - a) When a batted ball is controlled by **any fielder** within the diamond, a runner can only advance to the base they're headed unless a play is attempted. At which time one more base can be attempted at their discretion, without further advance.
 - b) If any player controls the ball at any base, no runner can advance further than the base they occupy or are in an attempt to occupy. If an attempt is made by a fielder after control, then runners can attempt one base at their discretion without further advance. (NOTE: 1 base MAX may be attempted after the 1st overthrow. Runners advance at their own peril. Subsequent overthrows will not entitle runners to advance.)
 - c) If any play is attempted and an overthrow results, any runner can advance only one base at their discretion without further advance. Award is based on runner position at the time of play. This is a judgment call by the umpire.
- 17) The entire season and tournament will be played in the Machine Pitch Format.
- 18) Catchers must wear the appropriate equipment per Little League standards (chest protector, shin guards, facemask, dangling throat guard, mitt (or glove) and helmet. Male players must wear an athletic cup).
- 19) No new inning will begin after 1 hour and 15 minutes of play (from the SCHEDULED start time) or a total of 6 innings, whichever comes first (5-1/2 innings if the home team is ahead). For tournament games, this time limit does not apply. Ties will not be played out unless a tournament game.
- 20) No one is allowed on the playing field prior to their scheduled pre-game warm-up time.
 - a) Home team: May take the field 25 minutes prior to time of game and have possession for 10 minutes.
 - b) Visiting team: May take the field 15 minutes prior to time of game and have possession for 10 minutes.
 - c) Both teams: Must be in their dugouts 5 minutes prior to game time for game preliminaries.
- 21) Any situations that come up in a game which are not clearly defined by the above mentioned rules will be resolved by a quick on field meeting between the 2 opposing managers and the umpire. The umpire has the final decision on the situation if the opposing managers can't come up with an agreement in two minutes that would benefit all players involved and the league according to the league rules and in the spirit of Little League.
- 22) Tee ball bats will be allowed for this division.
- 23) Line-up cards must be presented to the scorekeeper prior to the start of the game. If umpires are used, they must be presented to him/her at the plate meeting prior to the start of the game.
- 24) When pool players are used, they must be players from the Machine Pitch division only. See Guidelines in Regulation V(c) of the current year *Baseball Official Regulations and Playing Rules* for details on conducting pool play operations.

ADDITIONAL POOL PLAYER RULES:

 - a) When pool players are used the roster for the game cannot exceed more than 11 players; only 3 of those players may be pool players.
 - b) Players can only be used from the Machine Pitch division. (i.e. cannot use a minor league player from the player pitch division)
 - c) Pool players are required to play 9 consecutive defensive outs and bat once (Reg. V(c)4).
 - d) The pool player may not start the game unless the team cannot field 9 roster players.
 - e) The player may bat anywhere in the line-up and play any position defensively.
 - f) The pool player must wear the jersey of their own team.
 - g) Pool players must be identified on the line-up sheet and in the scorebook.
 - h) Managers must announce the pool player(s) at the plate meeting. Failure to do so before the first pitch may result in the unannounced player not being allowed to play. If the manager

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does not follow the above rule and the pool player plays in the game the manager will be suspended for one game. Additional infractions may result in additional suspensions including removal for the season. Failure to follow these rules could result in a forfeit of the game. The interleague protest committee will decide any and all forfeits.

BASEBALL Machine Pitch ALL-STARS

- Players must consist of league age 6, 7, and 8 year olds selected from the Machine Pitch division regular season teams only.
- Regular season D20 Machine Pitch & applicable Minor League baseball rules will be followed.
- Managers and Coaches may be selected from any division, however, it is preferred they be selected from the Machine Pitch division.
- For tournament purposes, if the offensive team manager/coach is operating the pitching machine, an additional coach will be allowed to manage the dugout while the other coaches are coaching the bases.
- Regular season Mandatory Play rules apply.
- Tournament format is Double-Elimination.
- Male Catchers must wear an athletic cup.
- Line-up cards must be filled out and presented to the umpires at the plate meeting 5 minutes prior to game time.
- Mandatory Coaches Clinic to be held in advance of the start of the tournament.
- Rosters showing players names and league ages must be signed by the League President indicating that these players meet the requirements of play.
- Home team is determined by coin toss prior to each game.
- There is no time limit on these games.

SOFTBALL Machine Pitch ALL-STARS

- Players must consist of female player's league age 7 & 8 year olds selected from the Machine Pitch division and/or Minor League softball player pitch division regular season teams only.
- Regular season D20 Machine Pitch & applicable Minor League softball rules will be followed. Managers and Coaches may be selected from any softball division.
- Regular season Mandatory Play rules apply.
- Tournament format is Double-Elimination.
- Line-up cards must be filled out and presented to the umpires at the plate meeting 5 minutes prior to game time.
- Mandatory Coaches Clinic to be held in advance of the start of the tournament.
- Rosters showing players names and league ages must be signed by the League President indicating that these players meet the requirements of play.
- Home team is determined by coin toss prior to each game.
- There is no time limit on these games.

EXCEPTION TO THESE ALL-STAR RULES MUST HAVE DISTRICT APPROVAL.

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. **Q: Running through first base, can a player be tagged out if after running through first base and turns to the left [in field]?**

A: The direction a player turns after running through 1st base is irrelevant. This is a myth that has been around for decades. Rule 7.08(j) [page 100] of the 2016 Little League rule book states that a runner is out when "failing to return at once to the base after overrunning or over sliding that base. If attempting to run to second the runner is out when tagged. ...". The keyword here is "attempting". This is where judgment comes into play. "Attempting" can be a flinch, a step, or any motion that in the umpire's judgment (or usually coaches at the MP level) determines is an effort or "attempt" to advance to second base. Certainly turning to the right is a good coaching technique as it makes it a lot clearer to an umpire that their intentions are not to run to second. But a player who looks over their right shoulder to find the overthrown ball, steps with their left foot towards the infield thinking they have a chance to get to second base then decides not to and turns to the right to go back to first base would and should certainly be judged as an "attempt" and would be at risk of being tagged out even though they turned to the right.

2. **Q: Is the runner out if: he hits the ball, [bunt] its infield and ball hits him?**

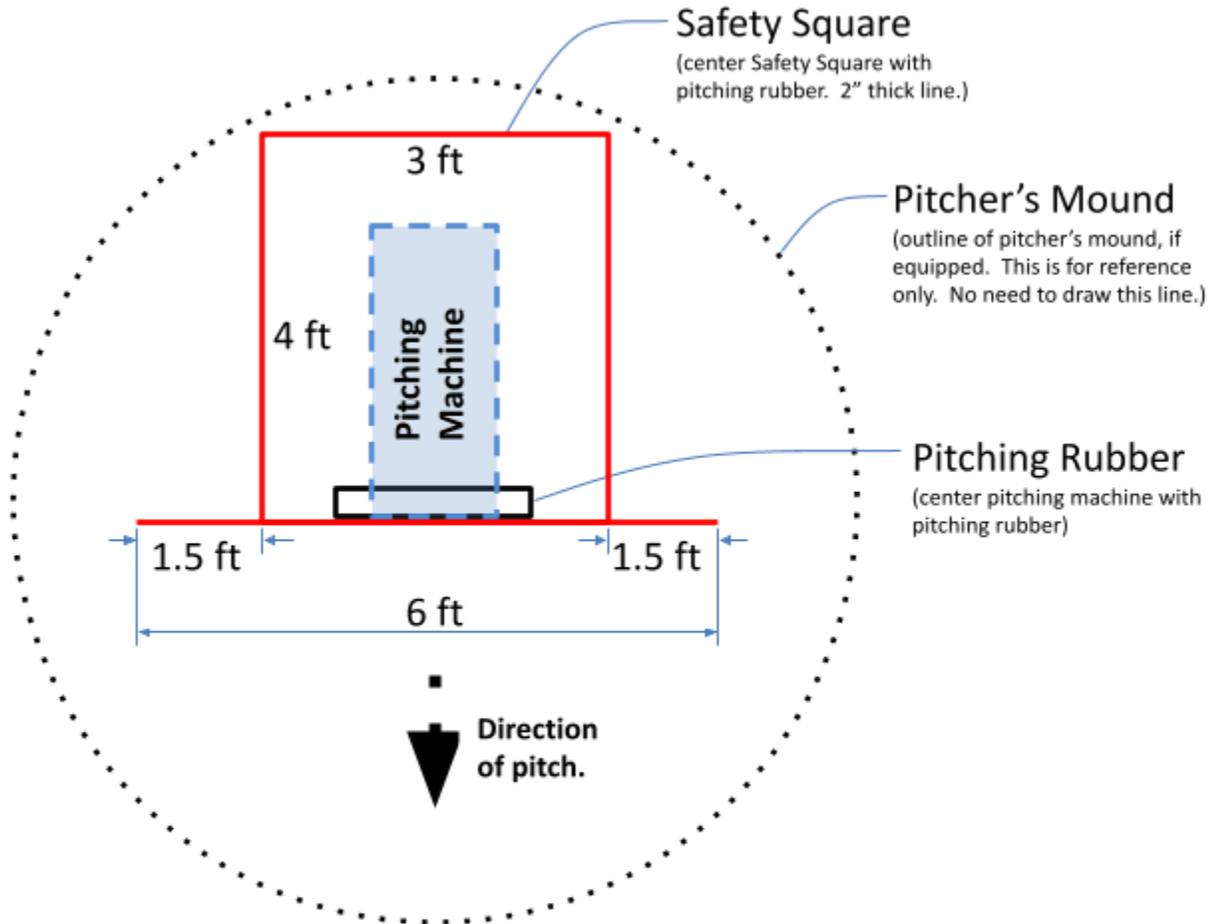
A: Anytime a fair batted ball touches a batter or runner the player touched by the ball is out, the ball is dead, and no runs may score. Rule 6.05(f) [p. 90] answers this question and rule 7.09(k) [p. 101] will give additional insight for other similar situations. Remember that it is a dead ball and no runners may advance when a batted or bunted ball touches the batter while he/she are still in the batter's box. So make sure you are positive that the batter was entirely out of the batter's box when he/she came in contact with the ball in fair territory.

3. **Q: Does batter get another pitch if on fifth pitch it is fouled?**

A: Yes. It should be treated the same as fouling the 3rd strike in traditional player/pitcher baseball. The rule is designed so that the player will either strike out swinging, strike out looking, or put the ball in play. A bunt that goes foul of the fifth pitch or third strike, however, is an out as per regular baseball rules.

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Safety Square Dimensions

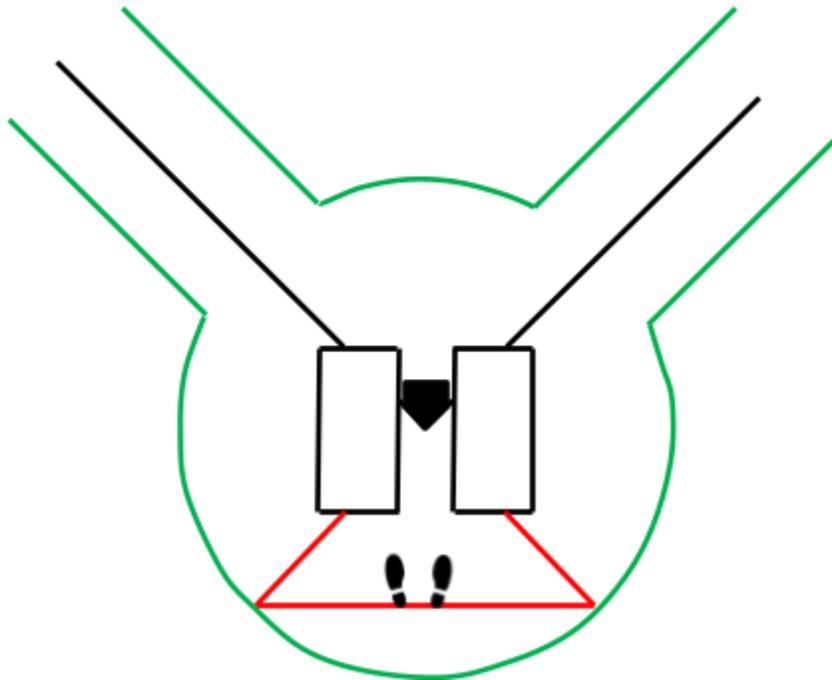


NOTE:

It may be necessary to move the pitching machine forward toward the batter with the front base of machine ahead of pitching rubber by as much as 12 inches to accommodate the crest of the pitcher's mound. This is permissible and but should not be more than 12 inches nor shall it be moved from that distance once the game has started.

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Acceptable Starting Position of Player Catcher

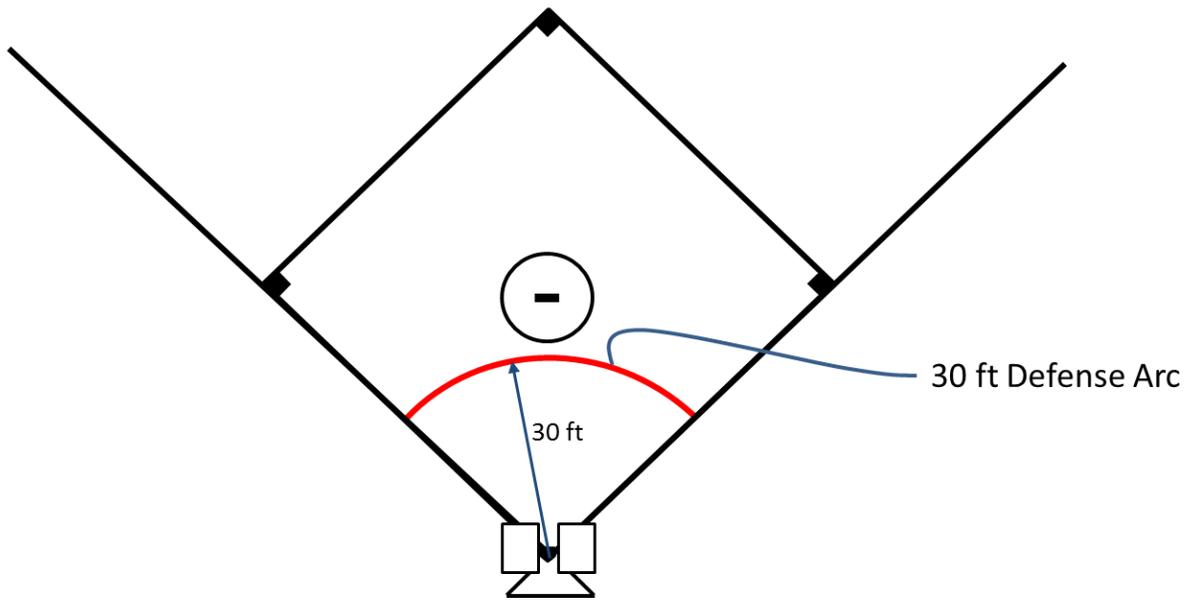


NOTE:

Catcher must have both feet within catcher's box (shown in red) at the time of pitch. The intent here is to ensure the catcher does not get an unfair advantage by being too deep or in some position that varies vastly from the traditional rules of the game.

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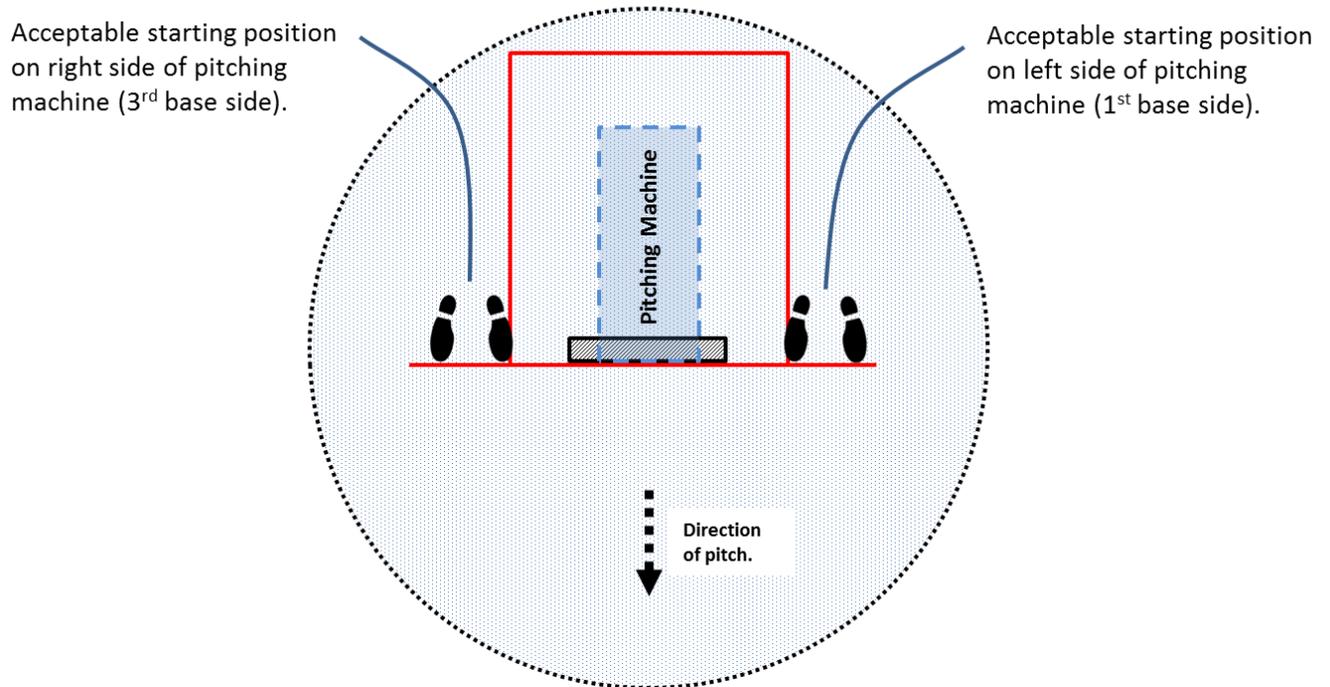
Defensive Arc Dimensions



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Acceptable Starting Position of Player Pitcher

- Player Pitcher may start on either side of pitching machine.
- Both feet must be behind front line.
- Foot nearest Safety Square line must be touching that line at the time of pitch.



NOTE:

The intent here is to ensure the pitcher does not act as a "short infielder". This rule is to help keep the player pitcher in the same general area as if he/she pitched the ball themselves. We must stay as true to the game as possible.