



COVID-19: Return-to-Play Plan 2021 Guelph Gators

GUELPH MINOR SOFTBALL ASSOCIATION

COVID-19: RETURN-TO-PLAY PLAN

COMMITMENT TO HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Guelph Minor Softball Association (GMSA) will continue to monitor the coronavirus (COVID-19) spread throughout our region to ensure that appropriate safe practices, policies, and procedures are developed and implemented as necessary.

We will remain up-to-date and compliant with applicable legislation, including orders, guidance, and notices issued by regional health authorities.

As always, we remain committed to the preservation of the health and safety of all of our players, coaches, volunteers, umpires, and visitors.

We will identify, assess, and control risks associated with COVID-19. We will involve our Coaches and Board volunteers in this process.

The GMSA Board has:

- Developed the GMSA Return to Training & Return to Play Plan for our indoor / outdoor programs.
- Reviewed and applied the PWSA's Return to Play Guidelines as a minimum standard for Return to Training and Return to Play.
- Provided our coaches and teams with the information they need to stay healthy.
- Advised players and coaches to stay home if they are feeling sick.
- Advised coaches, players, and visitors to wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; alternatively, use hand sanitizer or an alcohol based rub if soap and water are not readily available.
- Identified, assessed, and controlled COVID-19 related risk exposures at our Gator Swamp indoor facility.
- Oriented our coaches to the policies, guidelines, and safe practices and procedures as applicable.
- Implemented physical distancing guidelines for all indoor training & outdoor training / practicing / playing wherever reasonably practicable.
- Discouraged carpooling as only family members should travel together to and from games and practices
- Implemented a mandatory use of face coverings policy for all indoor and outdoor softball activities.



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RETURN-TO-PLAY PROTOCOLS

The purpose of this document is to outline plans, guidelines and procedures for Return to Play. The document addresses major areas of concern with respect to physical distancing and to provide a certain level of comfort to participants by outlining steps to be taken to help maximize their safety and well-being.

The items listed in this document are suggestions of recommended safeguards for softball activity in Ontario. Players, Coaches, Parents, and Spectators must continue to follow Federal, Provincial and Local Governmental guidelines. Other Leagues or Associations are free to make their guidelines more stringent if deemed necessary. Remember that information and recommendations during the pandemic are very fluid and subject to change.

These protocols will be the responsibility of the Association, Home Team, and Coach. They are to be shared with visiting teams and adhered to by both teams when playing in the City of Guelph.

Teams will use the Javelin app for wellness declaration and testing. Active screening is mandatory for all games & practices. **Contact tracing is mandatory for all team personnel, administrators, umpires, and spectators.**

Park Entry Protocols

- All participants must complete a declaration waiver regarding COVID-19 exposure, and the declaration must be validated upon arrival at the park.
- Each team must record and collect individual's contact information admitted to the ball park.
- If a person is denied entry to the park for failing to meet screening requirements, the individual will be encouraged to visit a COVID-19 testing facility immediately. Contact information will be re-confirmed with the person prior to leaving the facility.
- Any player, parent, or coach showing symptoms should not show up at the ball park.
- Team snacks, picnics, shared lunches, BBQ's are not allowed.

Hand Sanitization

- Teams must bring their own supply of hand sanitizer for training, practices and games.
- Frequent hand sanitization shall be stressed and done consistently for players and bench staff.



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Reporting of COVID-19 suspected case / cases

- Suspected cases will be referred for COVID-19 testing.
- Coaches to report suspected case(s) or positive case(s) to the G.M.S.A. President.
- For COVID-19 positive cases, individual can only return to play / practice / participation after:
 - 1) A doctor's note is provided and received by G.M.S.A and P.W.S.A. leadership; or
 - 2) The local public health authority (WDG Health Unit) has advised that the individual is considered recovered per Ontario / Local Public Health guidelines and cleared to return to play.

ON-FIELD PLAY PROTOCOLS

Hand Sanitization

- Should be done consistently throughout the game.
- Teams are responsible for individual and team hand sanitizer for each player and coach.

Bats

- No bat sharing
- Each player must have their own: bat, helmet, and/or facemask which should be sanitized before and after each practice or game.
- Only the offensive team will remove a bat from the field (the batter if unsuccessful in reaching base in the at bat, or a designated team person with appropriate PPE if they do reach base).
- No bat persons allowed.
- Picking up the hitter's bat will be the responsibility of the bench coach, and must be cleaned after each use.
- In the event there is a bat near home plate that poses a danger for the players, the umpire will kick it out of the way.

Player's Equipment

- No gloves on the fence, no bringing out gloves / batting gloves for other players.
- Player's bags must be distanced 2 metres (6 feet) apart.
- Players are reminded to not share equipment and keep each individual's equipment at a 2 metre (6 feet) distance.



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- Personal batting gloves are permitted. They are not to be shared with any other players.
- Each catcher must have their own equipment and the equipment should be sanitized before and after each practice.
- Sharing of water bottles is not allowed.
- Teams will make it a priority to provide essentials to stay healthy – hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, disinfecting spray, etc.
- Players are responsible to disinfect and sanitize their own equipment.
- Sharing of protective face masks or helmets is not allowed.
- Sharing of sunscreen is not permitted. Personal use sunscreen is permitted.

Masks (non-protective)

- **Step 3 – Nonmedical face masks inclusive of gaiters / bandanas are highly recommended but not mandatory where 2 metre (6 feet) distancing can be maintained.**

Balls

- The defensive team will manage their own balls while in the field to reduce contact with individuals on the opposing team. No one on the offensive team is to retrieve or touch the ball.
- Additional official game balls will be supplied by each team for each game.
- The defensive team will retrieve all balls including homeruns and foul balls, unless a designated ball chaser for each team is used.
- Balls will require consistent sanitation by each team during games and practices.
- Each team will have disinfectant and will be responsible for cleaning the balls between innings.
- Umpires will not handle the balls at all

Bench Area

- Only Coaches and Players are permitted in the bench area. 3-person max per dugout unmasked and teams must be physically distanced outside the dugout.
- If any team decides to use the dugouts, everyone in the dugout must be masked, and coaches must be masked for the entire game.
- No contact with on-field coaches after hits / homeruns / reach base etc.



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General Protocols

- Handshakes, high fives, team huddles etc. **are not permitted.**
- Protests will be held at a safe distance.
- Defensive conferences at the pitcher's circle to be limited to one person who must remain outside the circle.
- Mound visits with the catcher / coach - both must remain outside the circle and maintain 2 metre (6 feet) physical distancing.

No sunflower seeds, gum chewing or spitting

- General spitting will be discouraged for all participants, both on and off the field
- Sunflower seeds / chewing tobacco / chewing gum will be handled with a zero tolerance policy.

Injured Player

- If medical personnel are on hand, injured players should be dealt with primarily by these individuals, unless further assistance is requested.
- The number of individuals attending to an injured player should be limited to the number necessary based on the severity of the injury. Sufficient first aid kits should be provided that include latex gloves and facemasks to help increase the safety of the interaction with the injured player.
- Players injured during the game must be positioned in a safe area. For younger ages the parent will need to remove the child from the field.

Pre-Game / Post-Game Huddles / Handshakes

- These will not be conducted at any time.
- They are not allowed or required before or following games at any level
- Larger circled team huddles and beginning of game cheers are allowed.
- Maintain physical distance (2 metres / 6 feet) when giving advice one on one, prioritize being engaged during conversations while giving yourself space.
- No high fives, handshakes, elbows etc.
- Air fives, cheers for certain situations and accomplishments, hand gestures and a group cheer thanking your opponent for participating are allowed.



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Post Games Bench / Dugout Cleaning

- Emphasis is placed on mandatory cleaning and sanitization of the bench area following the completion of the game.

SPECTATORS (WHEN APPLICABLE)

****PLEASE NOTE: The allowance of spectators will be dependent on the guidelines set out by the Ontario Government and local health officials.**

Step 3 of Ontario's Reopening Plan – City of Guelph requirements – 100 spectator max.

Exhibition A1 – Capacity = 52 people for each bleacher, 80 people around the diamond.

Exhibition A2 – Capacity = 17 people for each bleacher, 80 people around the diamond.

At no point will a softball event exceed the number of attendees (including players, coaches, umpires, volunteers, parents, and other family members) noted as the maximum number by the Province of Ontario or the WDG Public Health Unit.

Screening

- All spectators should self assess prior to leaving home. If any symptoms are present they are required to stay home.
- Spectators are required to sign in with their home team upon entering the park and record the Date, Name, and a contact phone number.

Seating

- It is preferred that spectators will not watch the game from the bleachers, but continue to bring their own chairs or blankets and sit down the foul line outside the infield baselines or outside the outfield fence, and adhere to the physical distancing requirements for anyone outside their immediate family that they reside with.
- **If teams allow spectators in the bleachers or behind home plate, all persons seated there must be masked at all times.**



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- Crowds and congregating of large groups is not tolerated.
- **Umpires will give a coach one warning for any persons in the dugout or behind the home plate without a mask, inclusive of scorekeepers. If they do not comply, the game will be forfeited and fines will apply.**

UMPIRES & UMPIRE RESPONSIBILITIES

Catcher & Home Plate Umpire

- To ensure a maintenance of safe distance, umpires will be required to utilize an exaggerated inside / outside slot position if the umpire can perform their duties as the home plate umpire from these positions.
- Home plate umpire is required to wear a non-medical face mask.

Player Equipment

- The removal of bats from the field **is not** the responsibility of the umpire. Specifically, the removal of bats from the field is the responsibility of the offensive team based on the guidelines outlined in the On-Field Protocol section.
- Umpires will not handle the balls.

Base Umpire / Other Field Umpires

- Must be able to position themselves in a position at least 2 metres (6 feet) away from any defensive player.

Umpire Conferences

- Umpire conferences are allowed and must be conducted in a safe manner such that the umpires can be away from any players and can maintain a 2 metre (6 feet) distance between one another.

Call Challenges / Protests

- Challenges / protests can be made by a coach in a safe and controlled manner. The umpire has the authority to eject said coach if they feel their safe distance is being encroached upon and the coach has not respected any request to remain at distance.



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Water Bottles

- No sharing of water bottles between umpires, and refillable water bottles are strongly recommended.

Hand Sanitization

- Umpires will be subject to any hand sanitization guidelines.
- Umpires will supply their own personal hand sanitizer.

Lightning / Inclement Weather

- If the umpires suspend or cancel a game due to lightning / inclement weather, all persons must return to the vehicle in which they arrived at the park. No congregating under tents, shelters, etc.

TEAM TRYOUTS GENERAL PROTOCOLS

Park Entry Protocols

- All participants must pre-register to ensure their contact information is collected and recorded.
- All participants must pre-screen for COVID-19 exposure upon arrival at the park.
- Each team must record and collect individual's contact information admitted to the ball park.
- If a person is denied entry to the park for failing to meet screening requirements, the individual will be encouraged to visit a COVID-19 testing facility immediately. Contact information will be re-confirmed with the person prior to leaving the facility.
- Any player, parent, or coach showing symptoms should not show up at the ball park.
- **Parents and/or guardians must observe spectator protocols as outlined in this document.**

Hand Sanitization

- Frequent hand sanitization shall be stressed and done consistently for players and coaches.

Bats

- No bat sharing
- Each player must have their own: bat, helmet, and/or facemask which should be sanitized before and after each tryout.



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Player's Equipment

- No gloves on the fence, no bringing out gloves / batting gloves for other players.
- Player's bags must be distanced 2 metres (6 feet) apart.
- Players are reminded to not share equipment and keep each individual's equipment at a 2 metre (6 feet) distance.
- Each catcher must have their own equipment and the equipment should be sanitized before and after each practice.
- Sharing of water bottles is not allowed.
- Players are responsible to disinfect and sanitize their own equipment.
- Sharing of protective face masks or helmets is not allowed.
- Sharing of sunscreen is not permitted. Personal use sunscreen is permitted.

Masks (non-protective)

- **Nonmedical face masks inclusive of gaiters / bandanas are highly recommended but not mandatory where 2 metre (6 feet) distancing can be maintained.**

Bench Area

- Only Coaches and Players are permitted in the bench area. Players must be physically distanced outside the dugout.
- If any team decides to use the dugouts, everyone in the dugout must be masked.

Drill Discussions / Instruction

- Must be conducted in a safe manner such that the coaches can maintain a 2 metre (6 feet) distance between players and themselves.

Coach / Player / Parent Conferences

- Nonmedical face masks are highly recommended but are not mandatory where 2 metre (6 feet) distancing can be maintained.

