

## SENIOR SOFTBALL RULES – FALL 2023

*Any rule not covered herein will revert to the Municipal Sports Slow Pitch Softball rules. The following rules supersede those covered by Municipal Sports Softball rules.*

**SECTION 1**– Players must be 55 years & up (Men); 45 years & up (Women).

**SECTION 2**– SLOW PITCH: A strike is a pitched ball that lands touching any part of home plate or the extension mat, provided the pitch has an arc as high as the batter's head with a maximum of 12 feet.

**NOTE:** The pitcher may pitch from the pitcher's plate or from the pitcher's box, an area the width of the pitcher's plate and up to 12 feet behind the pitcher's plate. The pitcher must inform the umpire if he/she is going to pitch from the pitcher's box.

**SECTION 3**– GAME TIME LIMIT: No new inning can start after 1 hour and 15 minutes.

MERCY RULE: If a team is behind by 15 or more runs by the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> inning (or 4 ½ innings if home team is ahead), the game will be called. (Same as Slow Pitch Softball rule).

**Playoff games will have a game time limit of one hour and 30 minutes – No new inning after one hour and 30 minutes.**

**SECTION 4**– It is the responsibility of the manager to make sure that all players play a minimum of every other inning defensively. (If physically able)

**SECTION 5**– BATTING ORDER: All players on the legal roster present at the start of the game must be placed in the batting order (line-up). Late arriving players are to be placed at the end of the batting order. No other changes may be made in the batting order once the game has started.

**SECTION 6**– All games have a GRACE PERIOD of five minutes to field eight players. (Same as Slow Pitch Softball rule). See also Section 15.

**SECTION 7**– INNING RUN LIMIT: For the first five innings of any league game, the scoring in any half inning may not exceed 4 runs. There is no run limit after five complete innings or any earlier inning that begins with ten (10) or less minutes remaining in the game.

**SECTION 8**– COURTESY RUNNERS are permitted. Each player can be a courtesy runner a maximum once per inning and four times per game and need not be the last out. **The player being run for must initiate the request.** In extra inning games, (playoffs only) substitute runners can run 1 additional time every two innings, beginning with the 8<sup>th</sup> inning.

If a member of the runner's team (coach, manager, teammate) asks the runner if they need a courtesy runner and/or notifies the umpire that they want a courtesy runner teams will receive a warning (one per team per game), after that an out will be declared each time it happens.

If there are less than two outs the batter that follows the runner on first will take his/her turn at bat. If there are two outs the batter that follows the runner on first base will lead off the next inning. The runner who obtains first base must notify the umpire that they need a courtesy runner.

**SECTION 9**– DESIGNATED RUNNER: If a batter is physically unable to run, a team member may be designated to run in his/her place. The batters needing runners are to be established prior to the start of the game, or during the game for an obvious injury. The designated runner starting line will be 3 feet in front of the backstop fence directly behind home plate. The designated runner

will begin running when the batter makes contact with the ball. If the designated runner crosses the starting line before the batter makes contact with the ball the **runner** is out. **Note – the runner is out if the designated runner crosses the starting line before the batter hits the ball. The batter keeps his/her at bat with a fresh count.** The designated runner counts as a COURTESY RUNNER and follows the same rules (Section 8, above). **If a batter using a designated runner runs 15' or more towards first base (crosses line) the batter will be declared out and all baserunners must return to the base they occupied at the time of the pitch.**

**SECTION 10– BASERUNNERS:** All plays on extra base attempts are force plays. Once a player advances more than halfway to the next base or home plate, he/she may not return to the previous base (Exception – Players may return to original base if a fly ball is caught.) The baserunner will be called out if the ball is caught by the defensive player on the base. Players that round a base and are moving in the direction of the next base may be thrown out. A runner who “runs through” (past a base) need not return to the base to continue on to the next base/home plate. Runners may also “run though” a base when returning to that base. **The runner may run out of the basepath and/or miss the base in order to avoid a collision. Baserunners are allowed to stand on the orange base after they reach first base.**

**Note – Baserunners returning to first base may run 3' to the left or right of the base.**

BASERUNNERS MUST AVOID ANY CONTACT WITH DEFENSIVE PLAYERS.  
BASERUNNERS NEED NOT TOUCH THE BASE BUT THEY MUST CROSS THE **1<sup>ST</sup> BASE LINE, 2<sup>ND</sup> BASE LINE AND 3<sup>RD</sup> BASE LINE (SIMILAR TO HOME PLATE SCORING LINE).** **BASERUNNERS MAY RUN ON THE LEFT SIDE OF SECOND BASE AND THE LEFT SIDE OF THIRD BASE IN ORDER TO AVOID CONTACT WITH A DEFENSIVE PLAYER.** **BASERUNNERS WHO RUN ON THE LEFT SIDE OF SECOND OR THIRD BASE WHEN THEY ARE NOT ATTEMPTING TO AVOID CONTACT WITH A DEFENSIVE PLAYER WILL BE CALLED OUT IMMEDIATELY.**  
BASERUNNERS THAT CAUSE CONTACT TO OCCUR WITH A DEFENSIVE PLAYER WILL BE CALLED OUT.

**SECTION 11– SLIDING** is not allowed. A baserunner who slides will be called “out.”

**SECTION 12 – BATTERS** start with a one ball one strike count.

If a batter with a rating of 8 and above is walked on **three** consecutive balls with no strikes **thrown** the following penalty is in effect for subsequent at bats:

A batter (rated 8 and above) who is walked on **three** consecutive balls with no strikes **thrown** during his/her time at bat shall be awarded *second* base. Base runners advance only if forced to vacate their bases.

**SECTION 13–** Teams are allowed to play with **11 defensive players** but four of the players must be outfielders. All outfielders must play at least **110 feet from home plate.** UMPIRE JUDGMENT. The catcher may step on home plate or the extension to record an out. Teams with less than 11 defensive players are only required to have three outfielders.

**SECTION 14– SCORING LINE RULE:** The 1<sup>st</sup> base line will be extended to the backstop through home plate. The scoring line is approximately 9' from the regular home plate and is 6' long. This is for the runner from third base to touch before the catcher touches the regular plate with possession of the ball (forced play). Sliding into the scoring line is not allowed and the runner is called out. Also, if the runner goes to the regular plate he is out. Runners must touch the ground on or past the 6' scoring line before the catcher catches the ball while in contact with home plate and/or

the extension.

## **SECTION 15– FORFEITS, BORROWING PLAYERS, AND MISSING PLAYERS:**

(a) If a team has 5 players or less, forfeit.

(b) If a team has 6 players or more, they may replace their missing players. Only one of the replacement players may have a rating higher than 7.

(c) A player may not serve as a substitute in a game that's at the same time his/her original team is playing.

**(d) The following system is in effect for the regular season:**

Players rated 8-9 – Substitutes can be of equal rating or lower. If teams are missing two or more players rated 8 and above they may replace the first player with a player of equal rating, additional replacements (For missing 8s & 9s) must be rated 7 and below.

Players rated 4-7 – Substitutes must be of equal rating or lower.

All 2 rated players are now 3's.

4's are considered low rated players for the regular reason only.

**(e) The following system is in effect for the playoffs:**

“9+” - may have a player rated 9- or below as a substitute

“9” or “9-” - may have any player rated '8+' or below as a substitute

“8+” - may have a player rated '8-' or below as a substitute

“8” or “8-” - may have any player rated '7' or below

Any “7” - may have a player rated '6' or below

Any “6” - may have a player rated '5' or below

Any “5” - may have a player rated '4' or below

Any “4” - may have a player rated '4' or below

Any “3” - may have a player rated '3' or below

Any “2” or “1” - may have any player rated '2' or '1'

Managers may NOT use low rated players from the Tuesday League.

Managers must inform the opposing team's manager of which replacement players are being used during the pre-game meeting with the umpire.

**(f) A “low-rated player” is a player rated a “4” or lower. (Regular season only) If, for any game, for any reason, a team does not have two or more low-rated players in their batting order the following penalties take effect:**

**Only 1 low-rated player in the batting order** - If there is only one low rated player in the batting order, then an automatic out will occur at the end of the batting order each time a team rotates through the order.

**No low-rated players in the batting order** - If there are **no** low rated players in the batting order then two outs will occur automatically in order at the end of the batting order. If the first automatic out ends the inning, then the following inning, the batting team will start with one out to complete the automatic two out penalty.

Teams are encouraged to field low rated players whether drawing from other teams or preferably

using those that are on teams with bye weeks.

Note: Teams who only have one low-rated player on their roster may add a substitute low-rated

player so that they have two low-rated players in the lineup.

**If an out or outs are not taken in the appropriate inning(s) any runs scored in that inning will not count. A protest does not have to be lodged for the runs to be removed. The manager of the team at bat is responsible for calling time when they reach the end of the batting order and informing the umpire that they have to take one or two outs.**

Players rated 8 and above will not be added to teams at the mid-season manager's meeting. Exception – a team that loses a player from their original roster rated 8, 9, or 10.

New Rule Regarding substitutions: **ALL PLAYERS (regardless of rating)** may only sub for the same team for two consecutive games. Those substitutes must take a (1) week break from subbing for that same team before subbing for that team again. After the (1) week break, they may resume subbing for that team for another two game period before needing another (1) week break. PENALTY: Forfeit

### **SECTION 16 - Mid-season low-rated player wait list rule**

If there are any low-rated players on the wait list and there are one or more teams that do not have two low-rated players on their roster the following will rule will take effect.

1. Teams that have less than two-rated players on their roster will be ranked in order of record.
  - A. Points
  - B. run differential.
2. The number of low-rated players on the wait list will determine how many team with less than two low-rated players are required to add players.

Example - there are three low-rated players on the wait list and six teams with less than two low-rated players.

Of the six teams with less than two low-rated players, the team with the third best record will have first choice of which low-rated player to add.

Team with the second best record will have the second choice.

Team with the best record will have the third choice.

### **SECTION 17 – “PSS Rule” (Pitcher Safety Screen)**

The use of the “PSS” is voluntary and optional. However, pitcher utilization is strongly recommended by the Municipal Sports Office.

The PSS is a piece of safety equipment approved by Municipal Sports and permitted on the field solely for the pitcher's safety and protection, and is not intended nor approved for, or to be used to supplement a team's defense. The PSS rule was adopted with the specific intent that the pitcher release the ball with his/her body behind the PSS, not in front of the PSS. Therefore, the acceptable position of the PSS is that it must cover no less than 50% of the pitcher's plate, whether it is even or behind the pitcher's plate or a maximum of 4' in front of the pitching rubber. A left handed pitcher must have the screen of his/her right side and a right handed pitcher must have the screen on his/her left side.

If the pitcher is not using the PSS appropriately, or staying behind the PSS at the time of the release of the pitch for his/her own protection, then it will be the umpire's responsibility to assure the PSS is being used appropriately, or have it removed from the playing field immediately.

During a game it is permissible for one team to use a PSS while their opponent elects not to use it.

If a team elects to use a PSS it must be in place for the entire game. Relief pitchers are not required to use a PSS. When a PSS is not in play it must be removed completely off the playing field.

Any batted ball that makes contact with a PSS any time prior to being touched by a defensive player will be an automatic dead ball. The batter will not be penalized in any way.

Any thrown or touched ball by a defensive player that makes contact with a PSS will be a live ball.

A PSS may be constructed of plastic, metal, pvc, etc. It must be free of any sharp or dangerous projections. The umpire may remove a PSS from the game at anytime he/she feels player safety may be in jeopardy.

Maximum width: 6 feet

Maximum height: 8 feet

A. The screen will directly face home plate within four feet in front of the pitching plate (measured to the end of the screen legs). If a pitcher chooses to use the full depth of the 12 foot pitcher's box then the screen must be positioned in the 1'-4' limits of where he/she chooses to pitch.

B. The league strongly encourages pitchers to move entirely behind the screen upon release of each pitch and before the ball reaches home plate.

C. A pitcher using a screen may not make a defensive play on any batted ball. The pitcher may make a play (for example: backing up a throw, covering a base) after the initially batted ball is fielded by a different player. Penalty for doing so will be a dead ball single and all runners will advance one base if forced to do so.

E. A thrown ball that hits the screen is a live ball. A thrown ball that becomes lodged in the screen will be declared a dead ball, with runners returning to the last base touched. (Batter-runner is awarded a minimum of first base).

F. Pitcher's glove hand must be between screen and non-glove hand.

G. Any Pitcher rated (6) or below must wear a protective face mask if they are not using a PSS.

**SECTION 18** – Players from the two teams that advance to the championship game are not allowed to play in the All-Star game.

#### **SECTION 19 – TIEBREAKERS**

1. First tiebreaker is head to head record.
2. Second tiebreaker is record within the league.
3. Third tiebreaker is record against common opponents.
4. Fourth tiebreaker is a coin flip if breaking the tie only affects playoff seeding. If breaking the tie results in one or more teams being eliminated from the playoffs a one-game playoff will be held.