

# Softball Rules

Revised: March 2017



Any rule not specifically covered will be governed in accordance with the [NIRSA Softball Slow Pitch Rule Book and Umpire's Manual](#).

## RULES CHANGES

All rules changes for the 2017 season have been highlighted for you to easily identify them.

## ASSUMPTION OF RISK STATEMENT

All Intramural Sports participants are responsible for their own medical expenses. Any participant unsure of his/her physical condition should check with their physician or the University Clinic before participating in an Intramural Sports contest.

Teams are responsible for keeping their spectators under control. Misconduct of participants, coaches or spectators can result in an unsportsmanlike penalty, ejection or forfeiture of the game. Team Captains will be held responsible for spectator, team and sideline misconduct. Two ejections from any contest will result in an automatic forfeiture.

## RULE 1: ELIGIBILITY

- PARTICIPATION:** Participation is limited to currently enrolled, fee-paying University of Southern Mississippi students and faculty/staff members with Recreational Sports Memberships.
  - Teams are allowed only two players who have participated collegiately in a sport related to softball (ie. Baseball/softball).
  - No current Southern Miss baseball or softball player can participate in intramural softball.
- SOUTHERN MISS ID CARD:** If a player is not on the printed roster, a current Southern Miss ID must be presented to the Supervisor to participate at each Intramural Sports activity. If a player is on the printed roster, any form of picture ID can be used to sign-in. No player shall participate that has not signed in with the supervisor.
- NUMBER OF TEAMS:** Players can compete for only one single sex team and one Co-Rec team, regardless of league classification (example: participants cannot play for a men's team as well as a fraternity team).
- SIGNED IN:** Once a participant has signed in for a team and participates, he/she may not transfer to another team.

## **RULE 2: TEAM COMPOSITION**

- 1. TEAMS:** Each team will consist of 10 players on the field, eleven players may bat. A minimum of 8 players are required to start the game. If a team drops below 8 players at any time during the game for reasons other than injury, the game shall be recorded as a forfeit. Any team that starts with less than the required number of players may add a 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> player to the bottom of the line-up but only at the top of the inning.
- 2. CAPTAIN:** Each team shall designate a team captain to make all decisions.
- 3. PARTICIPANTS:** Team representatives including players, coaches, spectators, and other persons affiliated with the team are subject to these sport rules and all Intramural Sports policies.

## **RULE 3: DEFAULTS, FORFEITS AND PROTESTS**

- 1. FORFEITS:** If a team fails to appear with the required minimum number of players, ready to play, at the scheduled location at the scheduled start of the game, a member of the Intramural Sports staff will declare the contest a forfeit. Teams that forfeit will receive a 'C' for sportsmanship and will be required to pay \$15 to the Payne Center welcome desk. The captain of the forfeiting team will be suspended from play until that payment is made. Teams are allowed one default or forfeit per sport. Upon the second infraction that team will be dropped from the league.
- 2. DEFAULTS:** If a team knows that they will be unable to play a scheduled game, the team captain must contact the Intramural Sports Office by 3:00 PM the day of the contest to declare a default. The defaulting team will receive a loss and a 'B' for sportsmanship. Teams are allowed one default or forfeit per sport. Upon the second infraction that team will be dropped from the league.
- 3. PROTESTS:** Protests involving rule interpretations will be considered immediately following the incident in question. Play will be suspended until an Intramural Sports supervisor rules on the protest. If a team continues to play without calling the supervisor to the game site, then that team forfeits its right to a protest. Protests will not be honored after play has resumed. Judgment calls cannot be protested. If the protest is not approved, the protesting team is charged with a time out and if the protesting team has no time outs remaining, a 10 yard penalty will be assess against that team. If the protest is upheld, they delay shall count as an official's time out. Official's judgment calls cannot be protested.
- 4. PLAYER ELIGIBILITY PROTESTS:** Protests concerning player eligibility must be made to the Intramural Sports supervisor before, during, or immediately after the contest in question. The protest will be ruled on by the Coordinator of Intramural Sports the following day.

#### **RULE 4: PLAYING AREA AND EQUIPMENT**

- 1. PLAYING AREA:** Games will be played in the intramural sports fields.
- 2. BATS:** Only "Certified ASA" bats that are not on the ASA banned list may be used during the games.
- 3. SOFTBALLS:** Participants must use the softballs provided by the Intramural Sports Program. The specifications of the softballs are 12" .375/.44 core.
- 4. GLOVES:** Participants have to wear a glove in the field. They may use their own glove or check out gloves from the supervisor.
- 5. SHOES:** Each player must wear shoes. Tennis/running shoes and rubber molded cleats are permitted. Spikes, screw-in cleats, cleats with metal or ceramic exposed, and apparel not intended for softball use (i.e. – gymnastic slippers, "vibram" toe shoes, flip-flops, ski and logger boots, dress shoes) will not be permitted.
- 6. JEWELRY:** No jewelry may be worn. Jewelry must be removed before the participant will be allowed to participate. Medical alert bracelets are permitted but they must be taped down. Taping of all other jewelry is not permitted. A player is subject to ejection for failure to remove any jewelry following the first warning.
- 7. SUNGLASSES:** Players may not wear sunglasses that are metal or rigid.
- 8. BLOOD RULE:** When a player is bleeding, has an open wound, or an excessive amount of blood on his/her uniform the player will be directed to leave the game. The injured player is not to return until the bleeding has stopped, the wound is covered, and the bloody uniform is changed.

\*\*\*The Intramural Sports Staff has the right to deem certain equipment unsafe or illegal.

## **RULE 5: LENGTH OF THE GAME AND TIMING**

- 1. GAME TIME:** Teams are allowed a grace period of 10 minutes after their officially scheduled game time to be fully ready to play. This officially scheduled game time could adjust based upon late games/extra innings, etc. In the event that a team fails to field at least 8 players within this 10 minute window, one run will be awarded to the opposing team for each minute that the offending team cannot play. At 10 minutes, if the offending team does not have enough players, the game will be considered a forfeit.
- 2. LENGTH OF GAME:** The game will consist of 6 innings or 50 minutes of play, whichever occurs first. The clock will run continuously for the entire game. If an inning has started before the time limit has expired, then the inning will be completed. Teams need not play six innings if:
  - a. The home team scores more runs in five and one half innings.
  - b. The home team scores more runs before the third out in the last half of the sixth inning.
  - c. The mercy rule is applied.
  - d. In the event of inclement weather or unforeseen circumstances, the game score will be official after the 3<sup>rd</sup> inning or at the bottom of the 3<sup>rd</sup> inning if the home team is winning. (Example: rain in the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> inning, score reverts to the 5<sup>th</sup> inning).
- 3. COIN TOSS:** A toss of a coin or odds/evens will determine which team shall have the first choice. The winning team of the toss shall have the following options:
  - a. Visiting Team – Bat first
  - b. Home Team – Play defense first
- 4. EXTRA INNINGS:** Regular season games can end in a tie. Extra innings will only be played during the postseason.
- 5. MERCY RULE:** The game shall be over if a team is winning by 10 runs after the conclusion of the 4<sup>th</sup> inning.

Note: If the visiting team reaches the run-ahead limit in the top half of the inning, the home team still has the opportunity to reduce the deficit below the limit in the bottom half of the inning. If the home team reaches the run-ahead limit while at bat, the game ends and the home team is declared the winner.

## **RULE 6: PLAYING THE GAME**

1. **PITCHING PRELIMINARIES:** The pitcher must begin with both feet firmly on the ground and with at least one foot touching the pitching rubber. The pitcher's pivot foot must stay in contact with the pitching rubber throughout the delivery. The pitcher must not perform any motion to pitch while not touching the pitching rubber. Before the delivery, the pitcher may hold or grip the softball in any manner. The pitcher must use a definite underhand motion in delivering the pitch.
2. **LEGAL DELIVERY:** After making any motion to pitch, the pitcher must immediately deliver the ball to the batter. The pitcher must perform the delivery in a continuous motion. In delivering the pitch, the pitcher must not stop or reverse the pitching motion. The pitcher may not pitch the ball through the legs or behind the back. The ball must reach a height of at least 6 feet from the ground and cannot exceed a height of 10 feet from the ground.
3. **ILLEGAL PITCH:** An illegal pitch will be called and signaled if the ball does not reach 6 feet or exceeds 10 feet while the ball is in flight. The batter is allowed to swing at illegal pitches. If the batter does not swing at the pitch, a ball will be awarded.
4. **BATTING ORDER:**
  - a. The official score sheet must list the batting order of each team. The captain must fill out the batting order with the scorekeeper before the start of the game.
  - b. Players must bat in the order that they are listed on the score sheet unless a substitute enters the game. The substitute must appear in the batting order in the place of the player that he/she is replacing.
  - c. Once the first hitter in the batting order has batted twice, the number of batters in the lineup is locked for that team.
    - i. For example, a team starts a game with 8 players but expects 1 more player to arrive during the game. When this player's position in the batting order is at bat and he/she is still not present, the shorthanded team will have the option of taking an automatic out or dropping that position from the batting order. If the team decides to take the automatic out, the automatic out will be assessed each time this position is at bat until the player is present. If the team decides to drop that position, they will be unable to add it back to the lineup.
  - d. The first player who bats in each inning shall be the player whose name follows the last player who has completed a turn at bat in the previous inning. When the 3<sup>rd</sup> out of an inning occurs before a batter has completed his or her turn at bat, that player will be the leadoff batter in the next inning with a new count.
5. **PLAYERS OR SUBSTITUTES:** A player or substitute is officially in the game when he or she is entered onto the official score sheet. A substitute may take the place of any player in the batting order of the team. When a substitute is announced, after the substitute enters the

game, any play that the substitute makes is legal. Substitutions may be made during any dead ball situation.

6. **RE-ENTRY RULES:** All players may withdraw and re-enter a game, but they must re-enter for the person that came in for him/her.
7. **BALLS AND STRIKES:** The batter will start with a 1 ball and 1 strike count. The batting count will consist of 3 strikes constituting an out and 4 balls constituting a walk.
8. **FOUL BALL:** If a batter with 2 strikes hits a foul ball, he/she will be declared out.
9. **STRIKE ZONE:** The space over any part of home plate, when a batter assumes a natural batting stance adjacent to home plate, between the batter's back shoulder and front knee.
10. **BATTER'S BOX:** The batter's box is not lined. If, on a batted ball (fair or foul) a batter steps on home plate, the batter will be called out. If the batter stands too far outside of where a normal batter's box would be, the official may ask the batter to move.
11. **INFIELD FLY RULE:** An "infield fly" occurs with all of the following conditions:
  - a. A fair fly ball (not including a line drive) which can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort.
  - b. There are 0 or 1 out in the inning.
  - c. There are runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> or runners on 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup>
  - d. When all three conditions are met, the umpire will declare an "infield fly" and rule the batter out immediately, whether or not the fly ball is caught. Base runners must tag up if the fly ball is caught. Base runners may advance if the fly ball is dropped, but are not required to run and may not be forced out at the next base.
12. **BUNTING:** The batter may not bunt or chop down on the ball. That batter will be declared out and all runners must return to their original base.
13. **BASE RUNNING:** Base runners may not leave their bases until the ball is hit by the batter. A base runner advances to the next base by touching it before being put out. The player may hold a base until he/she legally touches the next base or until the batter becomes a base runner and forces the player to leave the base. All base runners that leave the base early or fail to touch a base will be called out.
14. **COURTESY RUNNERS:**
  - a. A courtesy runner may run for any player who is injured during the play and is unable to run the bases safely.
  - b. The courtesy runner must be the player who made the last out of the previous inning.

- c. The umpire must be notified before a courtesy runner replaces a teammate. This replacement can occur only during a dead ball and before the first pitch to the next batter.

#### **15. BASE STEALING:**

- a. Players are not allowed to steal bases.
- b. Base runners must stay in contact with a base until the batter hits the ball.
- c. A pitch that does not reach home plate is dead. Base runners must return to their bases.

**16. EJECTIONS:** A player will be ejected from the game if he/she maliciously runs over a fielder. A substitute may replace the ejected player; if none are available, an automatic out will be assessed each time that position comes up in the batting order.

**17. MISCELLANEOUS:** All players not currently playing defense, occupying the base coaching position, at bat, or on deck must remain outside the fence.

#### **RULE 7: SPORTSMANSHIP**

**1. RATING:** Each team will begin the contest with a 4 sportsmanship rating and shall be rated by the officials at the end of the contest. The authority of the officials' ratings exists prior to, during, and following all contests to which that official is assigned, and extends to all persons on, at, or near the playing site. Sportsmanship ratings shall be marked on the score sheet prior to captain signing off on the score and sportsmanship rating.

**A. (4.0) – Excellent Sportsmanship:** Players cooperate fully with the intramural sports staff and opposing team members. If necessary, the captain converses calmly with officials about rule interpretations and calls.

**B. (3.0) - Good Sportsmanship:** Team members verbally complain about some decisions made by the intramural sports staff and/or show minor dissent which may or may not merit a conduct warning (unsportsmanlike penalty / technical foul / yellow cards / etc.). Teams that receive one conduct warning will receive no higher than a "B" rating.

**C. (2.0) - Mediocre Sportsmanship:** Team constantly comments to the intramural sports staff or the opposing team. The team captain exhibits little or no control over teammates or him/herself. Teams that receive one ejection or two conduct warnings (unsportsmanlike penalty / technical foul / yellow cards / etc.) will receive no higher than a "C" rating.

**D. (1.0) - Below Average Sportsmanship:** Team constantly comments to the intramural sports staff or the opposing team. The team captain exhibits little or no control over

teammates or him/herself. Teams that receive one ejection and one conduct warning or a combination of three conduct warnings (unsportsmanlike penalty / technical foul / yellow cards / etc.) will receive no higher than a "D" rating and the game will be forfeited.

**F. (0) - 1 - Unacceptable Sportsmanship:** Team is completely uncooperative. Captain has no control over teammates and/or him/herself. Any team that receives two ejections or four conduct warnings (unsportsmanlike penalty / technical foul / yellow cards / etc.) will receive a "F" rating and the game and season will be forfeited.

## **RULE 8: COREC CLARIFICATIONS**

- 1. TEAM:** Each team will consist of 10 players on the field at one time. A minimum of 8 players are required to start the game.
  - a. Extra Player Rule: Teams may elect to use 2 extra players – 1 male and 1 female. In this instance, all 12 players must bat and 10 of these players can play defense.
  - b. 12 players in the batting order – 6 males and 6 females
  - c. 10 players in the field – 5 males and 5 females
  - d. 9 players in the field – 5 males and 4 females, 4 males and 5 females
  - e. 8 players in the field – 4 males and 4 females, 5 males and 3 females, or 3 males and 5 females
  
- 2. DEFENSE:**
  - a. No more than 5 players of each gender may play in the field at a time.
  - b. Defensive players can play any position in the field.
  - c. Outfield Restraining Line: Once the pitcher has received the ball and assumes a stance to pitch the ball to a female batter, all outfielders must remain behind the outfield restraining line until the ball is hit.
  - d. No more than 4 players, excluding the pitcher and catcher, may play in the infield while a female batter is at bat.
  
- 3. ALTERNATING LINEUP:** The batting order must alternate between male and female batters. For each spot in the batting order that a player is not present, a team will be forced to take an out.
  
- 4. WALKED MALE BATTER:** A male batter who receives a walk (intentional or none intentional) is automatically awarded second base. With 2 outs, the female batter following the male batter who was walked may choose to bat or be automatically awarded first base.