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# **Softball Players Association**

## **“The Fun & Rewarding Place To Play”**

# **2026 OFFICIAL MEN’S RULE BOOK**

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**Changes for 2026 are highlighted in yellow.**

### **Table of Contents**

<b>RULE 1 DEFINITIONS..... 1</b>	<b>Sec. 27 FOUL BALL..... 4</b>
<b>Sec. 1 ALTERED BAT..... 1</b>	<b>Sec. 28 FOUL TIP..... 4</b>
<b>Sec. 2 APPEAL PLAY ..... 1</b>	<b>Sec. 29 HOME PLATE ..... 4</b>
<b>Sec. 3 A BALL..... 1</b>	<b>Sec. 30 ILLEGAL BAT ..... 4</b>
<b>Sec. 4 BASE PATH ..... 1</b>	<b>Sec. 31 ILLEGALLY BATTED BALL 4</b>
<b>Sec. 5 BASERUNNER..... 1</b>	<b>Sec. 32 ILLEGALLY CAUGHT ..... 4</b>
<b>Sec. 6 BATTER’S BOX ..... 1</b>	<b>Sec. 33 ILLEGAL PITCH..... 4</b>
<b>Sec. 7 BATTER-RUNNER..... 1</b>	<b>Sec. 34 IN FLIGHT..... 5</b>
<b>Sec. 8 BATTING ORDER ..... 1</b>	<b>Sec. 35 IN JEOPARDY ..... 5</b>
<b>Sec. 9 BLOCKED BALL..... 2</b>	<b>Sec. 36 INFIELD ..... 5</b>
<b>Sec. 10 CALLED GAME..... 2</b>	<b>Sec. 37 INFIELD FLY ..... 5</b>
<b>Sec. 11 CATCH ..... 2</b>	<b>Sec. 38 INNING..... 5</b>
<b>Sec. 12 CATCHER’S BOX ..... 2</b>	<b>Sec. 39 INTENTIONAL WALK ..... 5</b>
<b>Sec. 13 CHARGED CONFERENCE. 2</b>	<b>Sec. 40 INTERFERENCE ..... 5</b>
<b>Sec. 14 CHOPPED BALL..... 2</b>	<b>Sec. 41 LEGAL TOUCH ..... 5</b>
<b>Sec. 15 COACH..... 2</b>	<b>Sec. 42 LEGALLY CAUGHT BALL.. 5</b>
<b>Sec. 16 COMMITMENT LINE ..... 2</b>	<b>Sec. 43 OBSTRUCTION..... 5</b>
<b>Sec. 17 COURTESY RUNNER..... 3</b>	<b>Sec. 44 OFFENSIVE TEAM..... 6</b>
<b>Sec. 18 DEAD BALL ..... 3</b>	<b>Sec. 45 OUTFIELD ..... 6</b>
<b>Sec. 19 DEFENSIVE TEAM ..... 3</b>	<b>Sec. 46 OVERSLIDE ..... 6</b>
<b>Sec. 20 DOUBLE PLAY ..... 3</b>	<b>Sec. 47 OVERTHROW ..... 6</b>
<b>Sec. 21 DOUBLE ROSTERED ..... 3</b>	<b>Sec. 48 PITCHERS BOX ..... 6</b>
<b>Sec. 22 DISLODGED BASE..... 3</b>	<b>Sec. 49 PLAYER RATING..... 6</b>
<b>Sec. 23 FAIR BALL ..... 3</b>	<b>Sec. 50 PLAY/PLAYBALL ..... 6</b>
<b>Sec. 24 FAIR TERRITORY ..... 3</b>	<b>Sec. 51 QUICK PITCH..... 6</b>
<b>Sec. 25 FAKE TAG..... 3</b>	<b>Sec. 52 ROSTER ..... 6</b>
<b>Sec. 26 FORCE OUT..... 4</b>	<b>Sec. 53 SACRIFICE FLY ..... 6</b>

Sec. 54	SCORING PLATE.....	6
Sec. 55	STRIKE ZONE MAT .....	6
Sec. 56	TIE-BREAKER.....	7
Sec. 57	TIME OUT .....	7
Sec. 58	TIMING PLAY .....	7
Sec. 59	TURN AT BAT .....	7

## **RULE 2 PLAYING FIELD .....7**

Sec. 1	PLAYING FIELD AREA.....	7
Sec. 2	GROUND RULES .....	7
Sec. 3	PLAYING FIELD LAYOUT .7	

## **RULE 3 EQUIPMENT .....9**

Sec. 1	OFFICIAL BAT .....	9
Sec. 2	OFFICIAL SOFTBALL.....	10
Sec. 3	GLOVES .....	10
Sec. 4	SHOES.....	11
Sec. 5	EQUIPMENT ON FIELD ...	11
Sec. 6	UNIFORM .....	11
Sec. 7	JEWELRY RULE .....	11
Sec. 8	HELMET .....	11
Sec. 9	CASTS .....	11
Sec. 10	ELECTRONIC DEVICES ..	11

## **RULE 4 PLAYERS & SUBS .12**

Sec. 1	OFFENSE .....	12
Sec. 2	DEFENSE .....	12
Sec. 3	RE-ENTRY RULE .....	13
Sec. 4	OFFICIALLY IN GAME.....	13
Sec. 5	WHEEL-CHAIR RULE .....	14
Sec. 6	BLOOD RULE PROCEDURES .....	14

## **RULE 5 THE GAME .....15**

Sec. 1	FIRST OR LAST BAT .....	15
Sec. 2	FITNESS OF GROUNDS..	15
Sec. 3	REGULATION GAME.....	15
Sec. 4	RUN RULE.....	15
Sec. 5	INTNATL TIE BREAKER..	15
Sec. 6	CALLED GAME.....	15

Sec. 7	FORFEIT GAME .....	16
Sec. 8	RESUMED GAME .....	16
Sec. 9	TIME LIMIT .....	16
Sec. 10	HOME RUN REQTS .....	17
Sec. 11	ONE (1) UP RULE .....	17
Sec. 12	WINNER OF THE GAME.....	17
Sec. 13	RUN NOT SCORED.....	17
Sec. 14	NO SUCCEED RUNNER .....	17
Sec. 15	PASSED RUNNER .....	17
Sec. 16	CHARGED CONFERENCE .	17
Sec. 17	PLAYER ELIGIBILITY .....	17
Sec. 18	SPA OFFICIAL ROSTER ....	18
Sec. 19	TOURN POOL PLAY HOMERUN/INNING LIMIT ...	18
Sec. 20	TOURN BRACKET PLAY HOMERUN/INNING LIMIT ...	19
Sec. 21	OVER FENCE HOME RUN .	20
Sec. 22	FOUR BASE ERROR .....	20
Sec. 23	EQUALIZER RULE.....	20

## **RULE 6 PITCHING..... 20**

Sec. 1	THE PITCHER POSITION ...	20
Sec. 2	PITCHING MOTION.....	21
Sec. 3	A LEGAL DELIVERY .....	21
Sec. 4	PITCHING WIND-UP .....	21
Sec. 5	PITCHER SHALL NOT .....	21
Sec. 6	PITCHER SHALL NOT .....	21
Sec. 7	PITCHER RELIEF .....	22
Sec. 8	NO PITCH DECLARED .....	22
Sec. 9	CHARGED CONFERENCE .	22
Sec. 10	AT NO TIME .....	22
Sec. 11	PITCH COUNT .....	22
Sec. 12	PITCHERS MASK .....	22

## **RULE 7 BATTING..... 23**

Sec. 1	BATTER POSITION.....	23
Sec. 2	BATTING ORDER .....	23
Sec. 3	INTERFERENCE .....	24
Sec. 4	BATTER SHALL NOT .....	24
Sec. 5	STRIKE IS CALLED .....	24
Sec. 6	BALL IS CALLED.....	25

Sec. 7	FAIR BALL .....	25
Sec. 8	FOUL BALL .....	25
Sec. 9	BATTER IS OUT .....	25
Sec. 10	BATTER/BASERUNNER ....	26
Sec. 11	ON-DECK BATTER .....	26

## **RULE 8 BASERUNNING..... 27**

Sec. 1	SAFETY BASE .....	27
Sec. 2	COURTESY RUNNER .....	27
Sec. 3	BASE RUNNER MUST .....	27
Sec. 4	BATTER – RUNNER .....	28
Sec. 5	BASE-RUNNERS ADV .....	29
Sec. 6	PLAYER OUT LIABILITY ....	29
Sec. 7	BASE-RUNNERS ADV .....	29
Sec. 8	BASE-RUNNER MUST RETURN .....	30
Sec. 9	BATTER-RUNNER OUT .....	31
Sec. 10	BASE-RUNNER IS OUT .....	31
Sec. 11	BASE-RUNNER NOT OUT..	33

## **RULE 9 DEAD BALL .....**

Sec. 1	THE BALL IS DEAD .....	34
Sec. 2	BALL IS IN PLAY .....	35
Sec. 3	BALL REMAINS ALIVE.....	36

## **RULE 10 UMPIRES .....**

Sec. 1	POWERS & DUTIES.....	36
Sec. 2	PLATE UMPIRE .....	37
Sec. 3	BASE UMPIRE .....	38
Sec. 4	CHANGING OF UMPIRE.....	38
Sec. 5	UMPIRES JUDGEMENT .....	38
Sec. 6	SUSPENSION OF PLAY .....	38
Sec. 7	VIOLATION & PENALTIES .	39

## **RULE 11 PROTESTS .....**

Sec. 1	PROTEST NOT ALLOWED.	40
Sec. 2	PLAYER ELIGIBILITY .....	40
Sec. 3	BAT LEGALITY .....	40
Sec. 4	ALL OTHER PROTESTS ....	40
Sec. 5	WRITTEN PROTEST .....	41

Sec. 6	DECISION .....	41
--------	----------------	----

## **POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

Player Eligibility.....	42
Player Registration.....	42
Team Registration Fee .....	43
Team Classification.....	43
Team Roster .....	43
Geographic Guidelines .....	43
Frozen Roster .....	44
Roster Additions .....	44
Playing in Two Age Groups.....	45
Player Participation Rules .....	45
Snowbird Rule .....	46
Team Participation Rules .....	47
70+ Division Rosters .....	48
75+ Division Rosters .....	48
80+ Division Rosters .....	48
85+ Division Rosters .....	48

## **TOURNAMENT GUIDELINES**

Tournament Dir. Options .....	48
SPA Triple Crown .....	49
SPA Tournament Format .....	50
Weather Delay Policy .....	50

Entry Fee Refund Policy .....	51
Rainout Refund Policy .....	51
Finance Responsibility Policy.	51

## **SPA FIELD SPECIFICATIONS .....**

ACTS OF DISBARMENT OR SUSPENSION.....	53
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<u>TABLE GEOGRAPHIC ELIGIBILITY .....</u>	<u>56</u>
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# Softball Players Association

## “The Fun & Rewarding Place To Play”

The SPA Executive Director must approve any exceptions to these rules, policies, and procedures.

### **RULE 1 – DEFINITIONS**

**Sec. 1 ALTERED BAT:** A bat is considered altered when the physical structure of a legal bat has been changed.

**EFFECT:** If the bat has been determined to have been intentionally altered, the ball is dead, the batter is out and the base runners cannot advance. The batter is ejected from the tournament and suspended from any SPA events for a period of one (1) year. If the UIC and Tournament Director cannot determine if a bat has been altered without further testing, the bat will be removed from the tournament and the player will be allowed to continue playing with the understanding that should further testing prove the bat to be altered, he/she will be suspended from SPA play for two (2) years.

**NOTE: THERE IS NO APPEAL REGARDING RULE 1, SECTION 1**

**Sec. 2 APPEAL PLAY:** A play in which an umpire cannot make a decision until requested by a manager, coach or player. The appeal must be made before the next legal or illegal pitch, or before all fielders (including the pitcher) have left the field (crossed the foul lines). The appealed play does not change the type of out that is being appealed.

**Sec. 3 BALL:** A pitch which is not struck at that does not strike the strike zone mat or does not conform to fairly delivered pitch stipulations.

**Sec. 4 BASE PATH:** An imaginary line running three feet on either side of a direct line between the base runner and the base he/she is attempting to obtain.

**Sec. 5 BASERUNNER:** A player on the team at bat, who has finished his/her batting turn, reached first base, and has not yet been put out.

**Sec. 6 BATTER'S BOX:** The area to which the batter is restricted. The batter must have both feet within the lines of the box prior to the pitch (the lines are considered to be within the box).

**Sec. 7 BATTER-RUNNER:** A player who has finished his/her turn at bat, but has not yet either been put out or touched first base.

**Sec. 8 BATTING ORDER:** The official lineup of offensive players, listing the order in which team members must come to bat. A lineup card must include each starter's last name, first name, uniform number and defensive position. Lineup cards without complete information will not be accepted by the umpires at the pre-game meeting. Names of all possible substitute players **should** be listed on the lineup card.

**Sec. 9 BLOCKED BALL:** A live ball that is touched, stopped or handled by a person not engaged in the game, or which touches any object that is not part of the official equipment or playing area. See Rule 8, Sec. 7f.

**Sec. 10 CALLED GAME:** A game that the UIC or Tournament Director terminates for any reason.

**Sec. 11 CATCH:** A legally caught ball that occurs when a fielder secures a batted or thrown ball with his/her hand or glove. If the ball is merely held in the arms of the defensive player or prevented from dropping to the ground by some part of the defensive player's body or clothing, the catch is not complete until the ball is in the grasp of the defensive player's hand or glove. It is not a catch if, immediately after he/she contacts the ball, a fielder collides with another player or wall (fence), or falls to the ground and drops the ball as a result of the collision or falling to the ground. In establishing a valid catch, the fielder shall have complete control of the ball, and his/her release of the ball is voluntary and intentional.

**Sec. 12 CATCHER'S BOX:** The area within which the catcher must stay until the pitched ball is released (the lines of the box are considered within the box).

**Sec. 13 CHARGED CONFERENCE:** A charged conference takes place when:

- a. (Defensive conference) the defensive team requests a suspension of play for any reason and a representative, not in the field, enters the playing field and delivers a message, by any means, to the pitcher. It is not a conference when the defensive team confers while the offense is in conference.
- b. (Offensive conference) the offensive team requests a suspension of play to allow the manager or other team representative, on or off the field, to confer with the batter or base runner. It is not a charged conference when an offensive pitcher is putting on a warm-up jacket after reaching base, or if the offensive team confers while the defensive team is in conference.

**Sec. 14 CHOPPED BALL:** When the batter strikes downward with a chopping motion so that the ball bounces high into the air. The chopping motion should resemble chopping a piece of wood lying on the ground.

**Sec. 15 COACH:** A member of the offensive team who takes his/her place in the coach's box to direct his/her players in running the bases. Two coaches are allowed, one positioned in the first base coach's box and one positioned in the third base coach's box. One coach can have in his/her possession a scorebook and an indicator which shall be used for scorekeeping purposes only. The defensive coaches/manager must remain in the dugout when their team is playing defense. Coaches not participating as players need not be on that team's roster.

**Sec. 16 COMMITMENT LINE:** In the Seniors Program, a six-foot line drawn perpendicular to the third base line, beginning at the base line and extending into foul territory. This line is located 30 feet from the point of home plate, measured along the 3<sup>rd</sup> base line.

**Sec. 17 COURTESY RUNNER:** A player replacing another player as a base runner. (See Rule 8, Sec. 2, for complete details and effect.)

**Sec. 18 DEAD BALL:** A term used when a ball has left the playing area or is blocked, and the umpire has called time. The ball is not in play and not considered in play again until the pitcher has the ball in his/her possession and the umpire has called "play ball."

**DELAYED DEAD BALL:** An infraction signaled by the umpire, in which the ball remains alive until all play has been completed and the umpire has called time.

**Sec. 19 DEFENSIVE TEAM:** The team that is playing defense in the field.

**Sec. 20 DOUBLE PLAY:** A continuous play by the defense in which two offensive players are legally put out without an intervening play or an error.

**Sec. 21 DOUBLE-ROSTERED PLAYER:** A player that has checked in and signed two rosters in different age groups for the same tournament on the same weekend.

**Sec. 22 DISLODGED BASE:** A base removed from its proper position.

**Sec. 23 FAIR BALL:** A batted ball that:

- a. Settles on fair territory between home plate and 1st base or home plate and 3rd base.
- b. Is on or over fair territory, including any part of 1st and 3rd bases, when bounding toward the outfield, or touches 1st, 2nd or 3rd base.
- c. First falls in fair territory beyond 1st or 3rd base.
- d. While in or over fair territory, touches the person of any umpire or player.
- e. While over fair territory, passes out of the playing field beyond the outfield fence.

**NOTE:** A fair fly or ground ball shall be judged according to the relative position of the ball and foul line/pole and not as to the position of the fielder at the time he/she touches the ball. It does not matter whether the ball first touches fair or foul territory, as long as it does not touch anything foreign to the natural ground in foul territory and complies with all other aspects of a fair ball. Home plate is in fair territory.

**Sec. 24 FAIR TERRITORY:** That part of the playing field within and including the 1st and 3rd base foul lines from home plate to the bottom of the playing field fence and perpendicularly upward.

**Sec. 25 FAKE TAG:** The act of a fielder(s), without the ball, faking a tag. Penalty for a fake tag is ejection from the game of the defensive player(s) who committed the infraction and the award of an additional base(s) from the point of the infraction.

**Sec. 26 FORCE OUT:** An out that can be made only when a base runner loses the right to the base he/she is occupying because the batter becomes a batter-runner, and before the batter-runner or a succeeding base runner has been put out.

**Sec. 27 FOUL BALL:** A batted ball which:

- a. Settles on foul territory between home and 1st base or home and 3rd base.
- b. Bounds past 1st or 3rd base on or over foul territory.
- c. Falls first on foul territory beyond 1st or 3rd base.
- d. Touches an umpire, player or object foreign to the natural ground while on or over foul ground.
- e. Touches the batter, or bat in the batter's hand, while the batter is within the lines of the batter's box.

**NOTE:** A foul fly or ground ball shall be judged according to the relative position of the ball and the foul pole, not the position of the fielder.

**Sec. 28 FOUL TIP:** A batted ball which goes directly from the bat, not higher than the batter's head, to the catcher's hands and is legally caught by the catcher. A foul tip is a strike.

**NOTE:** If the ball goes higher than the batter's head, and then is legally caught, the batter is out. If the ball does not go higher than the batter's head, it is merely a foul tip.

**Sec. 29 HOME PLATE:** The white portion of the strike zone mat, used to record outs at home plate. The black portion of the mat is not considered to be a part of home plate.

**Sec. 30 ILLEGAL BAT:** A bat that does not meet the requirements of Rule 3, Sec 1.

**Sec. 31 ILLEGALLY BATTED BALL:** Occurs when:

- a. A batter's foot is completely out of the box, and on the ground, when he/she hits the ball, fair or foul.
- b. Any part of the batter's foot is touching home plate when he/she hits the ball.
- c. The batter hits the ball with an illegal or altered bat. See Rule 7 Sec 1 for Effect.

**Sec. 32 ILLEGALLY CAUGHT BALL:** Occurs when a fielder catches a batted or thrown ball with his cap, illegal glove or any part of his/her uniform detached from its proper place. Effect is the same as detached equipment. See Rule 8 Sec 7e for effect.

**Sec. 33 ILLEGAL PITCH:** Occurs when any pitch does not comply with Rule 6 Sec.

**Sec. 34 IN FLIGHT:** Any batted, thrown or pitched ball that has not yet touched the ground or some object other than a fielder.

**Sec. 35 IN JEOPARDY:** A term indicating that the ball is in play and an offensive player may be put out.

**Sec. 36 INFIELD:** The portion of the field in fair territory that includes areas normally covered by infielders.

**Sec. 37 INFIELD FLY:** A fair ball, not including a line drive, which could be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort when 1st and 2nd or 1st, 2nd and 3rd bases are occupied, before 2 are out. Any fielder can catch an infield fly.

**NOTE:** When it seems apparent that a batted ball will be an infield fly, the umpire shall immediately declare "INFIELD FLY - BATTER IS OUT" to aid the runners. If the ball is near the foul lines, the umpire shall declare "INFIELD FLY - BATTER IS OUT, IF FAIR". The ball is alive and runners may advance at the risk of the ball being caught, or re-touch and advance after the ball has been touched. If the hit ball becomes a foul ball, it is treated the same as any other foul ball.

**Sec. 38 INNING:** That portion of a game within which the teams alternate between offense/defense and there are 3 outs for each team.

**Sec. 39 INTENTIONAL WALK:** When the pitcher signals to the home plate umpire that he/she wants to walk the batter with no additional pitches delivered to that batter.

**Sec. 40 INTERFERENCE:** The act of an offensive team member, which impedes, hinders or confuses a defensive player while attempting to execute a play. If judged so by the umpire, vocal interference may be called against any player (s) whether on the field or in the dugout area.

**Sec. 41 LEGAL TOUCH:** Occurs when a runner or batter-runner not touching a base to which he/she is entitled, is touched by the ball, while the ball is held securely in a fielders' hand. The ball is not considered as being securely held if it is juggled or dropped by the fielder after having touched the runner, unless the runner deliberately knocks the ball from the hand of the fielder. It is sufficient for the fielder to touch the runner with the glove, which holds the ball.

**Sec. 42 LEGALLY CAUGHT BALL:** Occurs when a fielder catches a batted or thrown ball, provided the ball is not caught in the fielders' cap, hat, pocket, protector or any other part of his/her uniform. It must be caught and firmly held with the hand or hands.

**Sec. 43 OBSTRUCTION:** The act of a defensive team member who hinders or impedes a batter's attempt to make contact with a pitched ball, or who impedes the progress of a base runner. If judged so by the umpire, vocal obstruction may be called against any player (s) inside the playing area, whether on the field or in the dugout area.



**Sec. 44 OFFENSIVE TEAM:** The team at bat.

**Sec. 45 OUTFIELD:** That portion of the field which is outside the diamond formed by the baseline or the area not normally covered by an infielder and within the foul lines beyond 1st and 3rd bases and boundaries of the grounds.

**Sec. 46 OVERSLIDE:** The act of the offensive player sliding over and beyond a base he/she is attempting to reach. This is usually caused when his/her momentum causes him/her to lose contact with the base, which then causes him/her to be in jeopardy. The batter-runner may over slide 1st base, without being in jeopardy, if he/she returns to that base without attempting to advance.

**Sec. 47 OVERTHROW:** A play in which a ball is thrown to retire a runner who has not yet reached or is off base, then goes into foul territory beyond the boundary lines of the playing field.

**Sec. 48 PITCHERS BOX:** The area within which the pitcher must stay until the pitched ball is released (the lines of the box are considered within the box). One or both feet must be within the box when the pitch is released.

**Sec. 49 PLAYER RATING:** A rating established for each SPA-registered player, based upon an evaluation of the classifications of his/her highest team roster affiliations. This rating is not a measurement of overall player skill.

**Sec. 50 PLAY/PLAY BALL:** The verbal term used by the home plate umpire to signal time is in and play will begin.

**Sec. 51 QUICK PITCH:** A pitch made by the pitcher in an attempt to catch the batter off balance. This occurs when the batter is still off balance as a result of the previous pitch, or when the pitcher fails to pause as required by Rule 6, Sec. 1.

**Sec. 52 ROSTER:** The official list of players entered by the Team Manager as the players that will participate in a tournament. Entry into the SPA on-line roster system does NOT guarantee or attest to the eligibility of players. This responsibility resides with the Team Manager.

**Sec. 53 SACRIFICE FLY:** When, with less than two outs, the batter scores a runner by hitting a fly ball that is caught.

**Sec. 54 SCORING PLATE:** An additional base identical in dimensions to home plate, located in foul territory eight feet from the point of home plate and in line with the first base line. Base runners scoring from third base must touch the scoring plate instead of home plate. Runners touching home plate prior to touching the scoring plate will be called out and no run will be scored. The Scoring Plate is not used in the Men's Master's Program.

**Sec. 55 STRIKE ZONE MAT:** An SPA approved mat used in the Seniors Program to determine balls, strikes and outs at home plate. The top of the mat will be placed at the top of home plate. When the strike zone mat is displaced, the original home plate will be used to record the out. This mat is not used in the Men's Master's Program.

**Sec 56 TIE- BREAKER RULE:** International Tie Breaker Rule will be used in all SPA events. Each team will start each additional inning with a runner on second base. The runner will be the last player that completed his/her turn at bat when the third out was made in the previous inning. No courtesy runner is allowed to replace the runner starting at second base until he/she has advanced to third base. If this runner is unable to continue to play for any reason and no substitute is available, he/she will be declared out and the next previous batter will be the tie-breaker runner. The runner that was unable to continue may not play for the remainder of the game.

**Sec. 57 TIME OUT:** The term used by an umpire to order suspension of play.

**Sec. 58 TIMING PLAY:** A play in which the umpire must determine whether the runner touched the scoring plate prior to the third out of the inning.

**Sec. 59 TURN AT BAT:** A player's turn at bat begins when he/she enters the batter's box and continues until he/she is put out or becomes a base runner.

## **RULE 2 - THE PLAYING FIELD**

**Sec. 1 The playing field is the area** within which the ball may be legally played and fielded. The playing field shall have a clear and unobstructed area within the radius of the prescribed fence distances from home plate between the foul lines (diagram in back of book). Umpire equipment and ball racks shall be considered part of the playing field.

**Sec. 2 Ground rules or special rules** establishing the limits of the playing field may be agreed upon by leagues or opposing teams whenever backstops, fences, stands, vehicles, spectators or other obstructions are within the prescribed area.

**Sec. 3 PLAYING FIELD LAYOUT** should include foul lines and the following:

- a. **SCORING PLATE** is located in foul territory eight feet from the point of home plate and in line with the first base line.
- b. **BATTER'S ON-DECK CIRCLES** are five-foot circles placed in foul territory close to the dugout area. They are located between home plate and first base, and between home plate and third base.
- c. **BATTER'S BOX** - one on each side of the strike zone plate, each measuring three feet by seven feet, six inches. The inside lines of the batter's box shall be six inches from home plate. The front line shall be four feet, six inches in front of the center of the plate.
- d. **CATCHER'S BOX** shall be ten feet in length from the rear outside corners of the batter's boxes and shall be eight feet, five inches wide.

- e. **COACH'S BOX**: A box 15 feet long, drawn in foul territory just inside the first and third base bags. The box is parallel to and eight feet from the foul lines and extends from first and third bases toward home plate.
- f. **OFFICIAL DIAMOND**: Shall have base distances of 65 feet (or 70 feet if 65-foot facilities are not available). The outfield fence distance shall be a maximum of 325 feet and a minimum of 300 feet for all ages 65+ and younger. The outfield fence distance shall be a maximum of 275 feet and a minimum of 250 feet for all ages 70+ and older when available.
- g. **PITCHER'S PLATE/BOX**: Shall consist of an area from the front of the pitcher's plate (50 feet from home plate) that extends back ten feet behind the pitcher's plate. **Exception: In the 75+, 80+, and 85+ divisions only, the front of the pitching box will be 45 feet from home plate.** The pitcher's box shall be 24 inches wide and perpendicular to the pitcher's plate. This area should be chalked off. **EFFECT**: Allows the pitcher to release the ball from 50 feet to 60 feet from home plate.
- h. **DISTANCE ERROR**: If during the course of a game any base distance, field distance or pitching distance is found to be in error, the error should be corrected immediately, and the game will continue. All previous plays stand. This is not a point to be protested.
- i. **STRIKE ZONE MAT**: **The mat will measure 21 inches wide and 35 inches long** with a white home plate centered at the front of the mat that measures **17 inches** across the front, **eight and one-half inches** down each side and **12 inches** diagonally to a point nearest the catcher. The white area will be referred to as home plate.

When the strike zone mat is displaced, the original home plate will be used to record the out.

- j. **COMMITMENT LINE**: A six-foot line drawn perpendicular to the third base line that begins at the base line and extends into foul territory. This line is located 30 feet from the point of home plate, measured along the third base line. In the Men's Master's Program, the Commitment line is not used.

## **RULE 3 – EQUIPMENT**

**NOTE:** SPA reserves the right to approve or reject any softball- related equipment for its intended use in the SPA program. Equipment does not merely need to meet industry standards; but must meet SPA standards before approval for its use is granted. Should SPA believe in any way, shape or form that a particular piece of equipment is dangerous and/or not acceptable for fair play, SPA reserves the right to ban such equipment immediately.

### **Sec. 1 THE OFFICIAL BAT:**

- a. In collaboration with major bat manufacturers and National Technical Systems (NTS) representatives, SPA has approved bat testing standards developed by NTS for senior softball play. Likewise, SPA continues to accept bats marked Bat Performance Factor (BPF) of 1.21 or less. All bats meeting the NTS senior standards OR bats with a BPF of 1.21 or less for the entire length of the barrel or hitting surface are approved for use in the SPA program, unless the SPA believes that a particular bat has been altered. If a bat fails to meet these test standards, then it is not legal for SPA play and the user could be suspended by SPA.
- b. All bats used in SPA play must be stamped with either “Senior Softball NTS Approved,” OR a BPF of 1.21 or less. All bats must be of a diameter no greater than 2 ¼ inches and must have either a manufacturer-installed non-slip grip surface or a minimum of one wrap of tape. Tape is not allowed to cover the end of the bat knob on any bat. Pine tar or other foreign substances are not allowed more than 15 inches from the knob of the bat. Bats not meeting these requirements will be considered illegal. Exception: Wooden bats do not have to be stamped with NTS approval or BPF 1.21. They may be used and are legal in all SPA play if they meet the standards set forth by the SPA (the bat shall not be more than 34 inches in length and no more than 38 ounces in weight). Wooden bats must be stamped “Official Softball.”
- c. A bat is considered altered when the physical structure of a legal bat has been changed. Examples of altering a bat include, but are not limited to, the following: painting a bat to disguise its true identity, shaving the wall of a bat to increase the flex of a bat, replacing or altering the handle of a bat to extend the length of the bat or changing the weight or distribution of the weight of the bat by inserting or removing materials inside the bat. A manufactured or professionally installed flare or cone grip is considered legal.
- d. When a bat is suspected of being altered, the opposing team may protest the bat. In order for the protest to be allowed, the opposing team must submit a \$500 cash protest fee to the home plate umpire. If the fee is not paid immediately, the protest is waived, and that opposing team cannot make any additional protest against that bat for the duration of the tournament. A suspected altered bat will be

removed from play and will remain in the custody of the SPA Umpire-In-Chief or Tournament Director until it can be forwarded to SPA National Headquarters for further evaluation and resolution of the protest. If the bat is found to be not altered, either that bat or a replacement bat will be provided to the challenged player. If the bat is found to be altered, the protest fee will be returned to the opposing manager.

- e. If the player refuses to turn over the bat, the player will be ejected from the tournament and suspended from SPA for ten years. Also, the manager of record may be suspended for one year, and the team will forfeit all games. If the player voluntarily releases the bat and it is found to be altered, the player will be suspended for five years and the manager of record may be suspended for one year. A second offense may result in a lifetime ban from SPA for the player.
- f. All bat protests are subject to final review by the SPA Executive Director and the National Umpire-In-Chief.

**Sec. 2 THE OFFICIAL SOFTBALL** shall be a smooth-seamed, concealed-stitched or flat-surfaced ball. The solid-core center of the ball may be either long-fiber kapok or a mixture of cork and rubber. It shall be machine-wound with fine twisted yarn and covered with latex, rubber cement or other materials approved by the SPA. The cover of the ball shall be tanned horsehide, cowhide or any other materials approved by the SPA. It shall be affixed to the ball by application of cement to the underside of the cover and sewn with waxed cotton or linen thread. The 12-inch ball for men shall have a maximum COR of .44 and a maximum compression of 375.

- a. **BALL:** The optic yellow softball is required in all programs. The men's program will use a 12-inch softball.
- b. **EXCEPTION:** The SPA Owner/Executive Director must approve the use of any balls **used** in SPA events that do not comply with Rule 3.
- c. **ALTERED BALL:** At any time during an SPA game, an umpire has the authority to remove a ball from play if he/she suspects it has been altered. For the purpose of this rule, the umpire's decision is not subject to appeal.

A ball is considered altered when the physical structure of a legal ball has been changed. An example of an altered ball is any ball that's been frozen or kept cold to make it harder.

**EFFECT:** If a determination is made that a ball has been intentionally altered, a dead ball is declared. The ball is immediately removed from the game and turned over to the Tournament Director or UIC. The game is forfeited, the manager is ejected from the tournament, and he/she may be suspended by the SPA from future events.

**Sec. 3 GLOVES:** Gloves/mitts must be worn by all fielders. Gloves that are white or optic yellow in color are illegal. Gloves that have circles or any other marking on the inside or outside of the glove that prove to be distracting are illegal. Gloves worn by all fielders shall be governed by the following:

- a. The height of the glove, measured from the bottom edge across the center of the palm to a line even with the highest point of the glove/mitt, shall be a minimum of eight inches and maximum of fifteen inches.
- b. The width of the glove, measured from the bottom edge of the webbing farthest from the thumb in a horizontal line to the outside edge of the little finger, shall be eight inches.
- c. The webbing across the top of the glove shall be measured parallel to the top end and shall not exceed five and three-fourths inches.

**Sec. 4 SHOES:** All players, coaches and participants must wear shoes. Sandals are not considered proper shoes. A shoe shall be made with either canvas or leather uppers or similar materials. The sole may be either smooth or have cleats made of soft or hard rubber or polyurethane. Metal cleats, or any type of shoe that has exposed metal on the sole other than a rivet, may not be worn in any division of play.

**Sec. 5 NO EQUIPMENT** shall be left on the field, either in foul or fair territory.

**Sec. 6 UNIFORM:** All players on a team shall wear uniforms alike in color and style and not ragged, frayed, torn or "cut-off," except as allowed in Rule 4, Sec. 6.

- a. All headgear must be of the same predominant color and worn as intended by the manufacturer. Hard plastic visors are not approved headgear.
- b. Numbers must be worn on all uniforms. No players on the same team may wear identical numbers. Numbers must be a minimum of 6 inches in height, be clearly visible and worn in a manner that can be clearly seen.
- c. Violation of uniform requirements may only be protested by the Tournament Director, and may result in the player being removed from the game if he/she cannot or will not comply.

**Sec. 7 JEWELRY RULE:** The SPA strongly recommends that any type of jewelry not be worn in any SPA play. If determined unsafe by the umpire, jewelry must be removed, or the player will not be allowed to play.

**Sec. 8 HELMET/MASK:** Any helmet worn on the field must be stamped with the NOCSAE stamp of approval, and all safety related equipment including masks must conform to the manufacturer's original safety standards. Pitchers in all programs are required to wear safety masks.

**Sec. 9 CAST:** Casts are prohibited. Plaster, metal or other hard substances judged dangerous by the umpire may not be worn during the game by any base coach or any player.

**NOTE:** Prosthesis may be worn; however, any metal that is part of a brace or support must be covered by soft material and taped.

**Sec. 10 ELECTRONIC DEVICES:** Cell phones, pagers and other electronic devices are not allowed on the playing field.

**RECOMMENDATION:** SPA always recommends that protective equipment be used.

## **RULE 4 – PLAYERS & SUBSTITUTIONS**

**Sec. 1 OFFENSE:** Teams may bat up to 20 players, and all starters must be listed in the batting order on the lineup card. An automatic out will be recorded if a player(s) in the batting lineup is unable to bat, unless a substitution can be made

**Sec. 2 DEFENSE:** SPA will allow:

Men 35+, 40+, 45+, 50+, 55+, 60+, and 65+ Major Plus

A maximum of ten (10) players on defense

A minimum of nine (9) players to start a game

A minimum of eight (8) players to finish a game

Men's 70+, 75+, 80+, 65+ AA, 65 + Major, and 65+ AAA

A maximum of eleven (11) players on defense

A minimum of nine (9) players to start a game

A minimum of eight (8) players to finish a game

Men's 80+, and 85+

A maximum of 12 players on defense

A minimum of ten (10) players to start a game

A minimum of nine (9) players to finish a game

The following information pertains to players:

- a. Teams beginning a game with the minimum allowable number of players will record an automatic out at the bottom of the batting order for the missing players' first turn at bat only. The missing player(s) may be added when he/she shows up, must be reported to both the home plate umpire and score keeper, and must bat last in the batting order.
- b. Teams that lose players (with no substitutes available) during the course of the game for reasons other than due to player ejection, and do not go below the minimum number required to finish, will record an automatic out for that player's first missed turn at bat only. Players recording an automatic out under this rule may not return to the game. In all programs, teams that lose players (with no substitutes available) due to player ejection will record an automatic out each time that player's position in the batting lineup occurs.
- c. If a team has less than the minimum number required to finish the game, it must forfeit the game. With two outs, the defensive team cannot intentionally or unintentionally walk the batter prior to a vacant spot in the batting order to get the automatic out. Should the defense walk the batter preceding a vacant spot in the batting order, the automatic out is skipped and the batter whose name succeeds the vacant spot now becomes the batter of record.
- d. Official lineup cards are to be completed and submitted to the official scorekeeper and home plate umpire at the start of each game. The lineup card must contain the first and last name of each starter, position (if

applicable) and uniform number. Names of substitutes **should** be included. An automatic out will be recorded if players in the lineup are unable to bat.

**NOTE:** If a wrong number is on the lineup card, correct it and continue play with no penalty. Substitutes should be listed by their last name, first name and uniform number.

**Sec. 3 RE-ENTRY RULE:** The original starter may be withdrawn from the game and re-entered once, provided that the re-entered player occupies his/her original position in the batting order. Substitutes may not be re-entered.

**NOTE:** The original player and his/her substitute cannot be in the game at the same time except as courtesy runners. Violation of the re-entry rule results in the use of an illegal substitute. Penalty for use of an illegal substitute shall be the immediate ejection of the illegal substitute when the violation is brought to the attention of the umpire by the offended team. Violation of the re-entry rule is handled as an appeal.

**Sec. 4 A PLAYER SHALL BE OFFICIALLY IN THE GAME:** At the beginning of the game when his/her name has been entered on the official score sheet, or at any time during the game when he/she has been announced and the home plate umpire has been notified. The following regulations govern the substitution of players:

- a. The manager or team representative shall notify the home plate umpire when a substitute enters the game. Failure to notify the umpire of a substitution would create an illegal substitution. The penalty for an illegal substitution is **IMMEDIATE PLAYER EJECTION FROM THE GAME WHENEVER DISCOVERED.**

**NOTE:** Re-entry is considered a substitution. If an illegal substitution occurs, the penalty is the immediate ejection of the player.

**PLAY...** (1) Smith entered the game in the fourth inning and was not reported. In the sixth inning, the opposing team reports this to the umpire.

**RULING:** The player (Smith) is immediately ejected from the game. All prior play involving Smith is legal.

**PLAY...** (2) Smith enters the game in the fourth inning and is not reported. Smith legally reaches first base and, before the next pitch, is reported to the home plate umpire by the opposing manager.

**RULING:** The player (Smith) is called out and immediately ejected from the game. All runners must return to the bases occupied when Smith first came to bat.

- b. Substitute players will be considered in the game as follows:
  1. Batter: when he/she takes his/her place in the batter's box.
  2. Fielder: when he/she takes the place of the previous fielder.
  3. Runner: when he/she replaces the player on the base.
  4. Pitcher: when he/she takes his/her place on the pitcher's plate.

**NOTE:** Each pitcher (starter or substitute) must pitch until the first



batter facing him/her has completed his/her turn at bat, the side has been retired or he/she has been removed from the game. A pitcher removed from the game by rule or ejection is not subject to this rule.

**NOTE:** Any player participating in any SPA-sanctioned event must be physically able to participate. The player must be able to walk on and off the field and play the game as intended. This is intended to keep injured people from further injury.

**Sec. 5 WHEELCHAIR RULE:** Coaches in wheelchairs may not be on the field of play during any live ball situations unless the chair has all exposed metal parts covered by soft substances taped in such a way that eliminates the risk of bodily injury to players/coaches/officials.

**Sec. 6 BLOOD RULE PROCEDURES**

When a player is bleeding or has an open wound, the bleeding must be stopped, and the open wound covered with a bandage/dressing strong enough to withstand the rigors of competition. This treatment must be immediate and a suspension of play for a reasonable amount of time (see note below) will be awarded the team. Should the treatment of this wound exceed a reasonable amount of time, the affected player must be substituted for. If no substitute is available, the team may play on with fewer players until the affected player can continue. All penalties set forth in Rule 4 will be in effect. When the affected player can continue, he/she may return to the lineup in the same position in the batting order. Resumption of play will be determined by appropriate medical personnel or the home plate umpire. Any player whose uniform is saturated with blood, regardless of the source, must follow the same guidelines as stated above for a person bleeding. Their uniform must be changed before returning to the game.

**NOTE:** A reasonable amount of time, not to exceed five minutes, will be determined by the home plate umpire. If a game clock is in use, the clock will be stopped during this time. Soiled clothing must be changed, and the change of clothing need not match team uniforms. This is not a point of protest.

## **RULE 5 - THE GAME**

It is the option of the tournament director to either use an official scorekeeper or not. If an official scorekeeper is not used, the home team book shall be official. It is the obligation of the visiting team to verify the score at the end of each half-inning. SPA recommends the use of official scorekeepers.

**NOTE:** No alcoholic beverages will be allowed in the dugouts or on the field during any SPA-sanctioned event.

**Sec. 1 THE CHOICE OF FIRST OR LAST BAT** - When teams are seeded in bracket play, the highest seeded team in winners bracket play shall automatically be allowed the option to be home or visiting team. In the championship game the team coming from the winner's bracket will have the option to be home or visiting team. In all other play (including loser's bracket) home team shall be decided by a coin flip prior to each game, including "if" games.

**Sec. 2 THE FITNESS OF THE GROUNDS** shall be decided by the home plate umpire, and local Parks Officials.

**Sec. 3 REGULATION GAME** shall consist of seven innings. A full seven innings need not be played. No game is considered complete until the umpires have left the playing field. **NOTE:** Games shortened by time limits or run rules will be in accordance with Rule 5.

**Sec 4 RUN RULE:** The run rule for all SPA games (including the championship game) will be 20 runs after four innings, 15 runs after five innings, 10 runs after six innings, or any time a team may not mathematically score enough runs to stay in the game.

**Sec 5 INTERNATIONAL TIE BREAKER RULE:** Tie games after seven innings shall continue until one team has scored more runs than the other at the completion of an inning. Each team will start each additional inning with a runner on second base. The runner will be the last player to complete his/her turn at bat when the third out was made in the previous inning. No courtesy runner is allowed to replace the runner starting at second base until he/she has advanced to third base. If for any reason this runner is unable to continue to play and no substitute is available, he/she will be declared out and the next previous batter will be the tie breaker runner. The runner that was unable to continue may not play for the remainder of the game.

**Sec 6 CALLED GAME:** The umpire is empowered to suspend a game at any time because of darkness, rain, lightning, fire, panic, or for other conditions that may place the patrons or players in peril. The umpire will forfeit the game if intentionally bumped, attacked physically, or is the recipient of profanity by any team member or spectator. The Tournament Director or Tournament UIC will immediately have the player(s), coach(s) or spectator(s) removed from the complex. A determination will be made by the tournament committee concerning the duration of the removal.

**Sec 7 FORFEIT GAME:** A game may be declared a forfeit in favor of a team not at fault in the following cases:

- a. If a team fails to appear on the field, or being on the field refuses to begin a game at the time the team is scheduled to play, or within a time set for forfeitures (grace period) by the organization in which the team is playing. In this case the forfeiting team will be awarded last place and shall forfeit any and all team awards, All-Tournament or All-American selections, and any other awards if offered.
- b. If after the game has started, one team refuses to continue play unless the game has been suspended or terminated by the umpire.
- c. If one side fails to resume playing within two minutes after the umpire has called "play ball" restarting a suspended game.
- d. If a team uses tactics to delay or to hasten the game.
- e. If, after being warned by the umpire, any one of the rules is willfully violated.
- f. If the order for the removal of a player or manager/coach from the game is not obeyed within one minute.
- g. If because of the removal of a player by the umpire, or for any other reason, there are less than eight eligible players remaining.

**NOTE:** The score recorded to any team forfeiting a game will be a **7-0** loss or the score of the game at the time of the forfeit, whichever is more advantageous to the winning team.

**Sec 8 RESUMED GAME:**

- a. Games that are interrupted shall be resumed from the point of interruption of that game.
- b. In all tournament games (qualifying, national and world championships) interrupted by rain or other causes, the game must be resumed at the exact point where it was stopped. Teams can mutually agree to accept the existing score as the final score.
- c. In the event that a game cannot be completed, an official game may be called after five innings of play or four and one-half innings if the home team is ahead.

**Sec 9 TIME LIMIT:** A time limit of one hour will be used in pool play, and 75 minutes will be used in bracket play. There will be no time limit used in championship games. The game clock will be started when the home plate umpire takes his position and declares "play ball" to begin the first inning. When the game has been played to the end of the time limit, the home plate umpire will stop the game and notify the teams that they will finish that inning and play one additional inning. No game can end in a tie at the end of the last declared/regulation inning. The game must continue using the international tie breaker rule. The Tournament Director and SPA National Headquarters reserve the right to make any changes to this policy depending upon tournament format, number of available fields, weather conditions, park curfew, etc.

**Sec 10 HOME RUN REQUIREMENTS:** Home runs, whether over-the-fence or four-base errors, do not have to be run out. (Hit and Sit)

**Sec 11 ONE (1) UP RULE:** In programs where specified, once both teams have reached the home run limit, either team may hit an additional home run. However, neither team may go more than one home run up on the other team. In the bottom of the seventh or last declared inning, the home team cannot hit a home run to go one-up.

**Sec 12 THE WINNER OF THE GAME** shall be the team that scores the most runs in a regulation game. The score of a called regulation game shall be the score at the end of the last complete inning, unless the home team has scored more runs than the visiting team in the incomplete inning. In this case, the score shall be that at completion of the incomplete inning.

**Sec 13 A RUN SHALL NOT BE** scored if the third out of the inning is a result of:

- The batter-runner being put out before legally touching first base.
- A base runner being forced out due to the batter-runner becoming a base runner.
- A base runner leaving base before a pitched ball reaches home plate or before the pitched ball is either hit or touches the ground.
- Any upheld appeal play.
- The batter-runner touching first base with the bat in his/her possession.

**Sec. 14 NO SUCCEEDING RUNNER** shall score a run when a preceding runner has been declared the third out of an inning.

**Sec. 15 A BASERUNNER SHALL** not score a run ahead of a base runner preceding him/her in the batting order.

**Sec. 16 A MANAGER OR TEAM REPRESENTATIVE** from each team shall be allowed only one charged conference in each half inning.

**PENALTY:** A strike will be called on the batter if more than one offensive conference occurs. When a second defensive conference occurs with the same pitcher in the same half inning, that pitcher must be removed from the pitching position.

**Sec. 17 PLAYER ELIGIBILITY/ROSTERS:** In all programs a team roster must be entered into the Official SPA Online Roster System by the team manager/representative prior to the applicable roster cut-off date for that tournament. Entry into the SPA on-line roster system does NOT guarantee or attest to the eligibility of players. This responsibility resides with the team manager. Team managers or their authorized representatives may log into the Official SPA Online Roster System at [www.softballspa.com](http://www.softballspa.com). Rosters must be signed by all players at each tournament prior to participation in the tournament. Hand-written or typed rosters **will not** be accepted at the tournament in lieu of the on-line roster submission. Roster changes or additions are NOT allowed after the beginning of a team's 1<sup>st</sup> game in any tournament.

**Sec. 18 SPA OFFICIAL ROSTER:** All teams are required to have an official roster entered in the Official SPA Online Roster System 14 days prior to any SPA play. A team may have no more than 20 players on its roster, and not more than 3 of those may have Player Ratings that are higher than the team's current classification regardless of age. No player with a Player Rating that is more than one step higher than their team's current classification may participate with that team. A player may not be on more than two rosters at any given time. Players may not participate in more than two SPA World Tournaments in the calendar year.

**Note:** Team managers and all players are required to read the waiver on the roster form. All managers and players are required to individually sign the team roster form prior to playing their first game. Players not signed in will be considered ineligible players. On-line roster entry must be complete and entry fees submitted prior to all SPA events.

**Team rosters that have participated in any SPA tournament during the season will be declared "qualified" for World Tournament Play. All rosters will be "frozen" on July 1. Up until that date, rosters are not considered "frozen" and remain open to change (other than during tournament participation).**

Except as discussed under "Roster Additions", a team may replace a maximum of two players on their roster after that date. Such additions may be no more than one higher classification and may change the team's classification.

**When a team disbands, the team manager is required to send notification of disbandment to the SPA National Headquarters.**

**PLAYER REGISTRATION:** All SPA senior players must be registered with the SPA National Office. All legal identification forms such as state driver's licenses and photo IDs must be submitted by new player registrants, along with a completed registration form signed by the applicant.

**\*\*Note\*\* Player Registration forms may be printed from [www.softballspa.com](http://www.softballspa.com)**

## **Sec. 19 TOURNAMENT POOL PLAY - HOME RUN & INNING RUN LIMITS:**

**Men's Program - Pool Play:** For all classifications, a maximum of five runs per team per inning will be allowed (unlimited in last declared inning and all extra innings).

When classifications are combined, the upper classification bracket play homerun rules will apply as shown in Sec 20. (except with 5 runs per inning limit). The Tournament Director has the authority to change runs per inning and home runs limits if enough Major and Major Plus teams are present to have a separate bracket. After the pool play games have been completed, the teams will be separated into appropriate brackets.

The Tournament Director has the authorization to place the teams in each division based upon the overall strength and skill of the team, using the following information as a guideline:

Win – loss record

Head-to-head results (**applies only when all tied teams play one another**)

Runs allowed (minus equalizer points if given)

Run differential (minus equalizer points if given)

Total runs scored (minus equalizer points if given)

Flip of a coin

**NOTE:** When classifications are not combined and all teams are of the same classification, Bracket Play rules (see Sec 20) will apply to all pool play games.

**Once the maximum runs per inning has been obtained, no additional runs will score as a result of an over-the-fence home run; however, the over-the-fence home run will count in the team's total.**

## **Sec 20 TOURNAMENT BRACKET PLAY - HOME RUN & INNING RUN LIMITS:**

### **a. Senior Men's Program:**

**Major Plus-** Nine runs per inning per team  
(unlimited in last declared inning and all extra innings)  
**Nine** home runs allowed + one-up  
Additional home run is an OUT until both teams reach  
**Nine** home runs

**Major -** Seven runs per inning per team  
(unlimited in last declared inning and all extra innings)  
**Seven** home runs allowed + one-up  
Additional home run is an OUT until both teams reach  
**seven** home runs

**AAA -** Five runs per inning per team  
(unlimited in last declared inning and all extra innings)  
**Four** home runs allowed, no one-up  
Additional home run is an out  
Base runners do not advance

**AA -** Five runs per inning per team  
(unlimited in last declared inning and all extra innings)  
One home run allowed, no one-up  
Additional home run is an out  
Base runners do not advance

### **b. Men's Master's Program:**

**Major Plus-** Nine runs per inning per team  
(unlimited in last declared inning and all extra innings)  
Twelve home runs allowed + one-up  
Additional home run is an OUT until both teams reach  
twelve home runs

**Major -** Seven runs per inning per team  
Nine home runs allowed + one-up  
Additional home run is an OUT until both teams reach  
Nine home runs

- AAA -** Five runs per inning per team  
Six home runs allowed, no one-up  
Additional home run is an out

**Note:** In all programs when classifications are combined into brackets, the lower classification runs per inning rules and the upper classification homerun rules will apply.

**Once the maximum runs per inning has been obtained, no additional runs will score as a result of an over-the-fence home run; however, the over-the-fence home run will count in the team's total.**

**Sec. 21 EACH UNTOUCHED BALL** hit over the fence in the Major Plus and Major divisions that exceed the team's home run limit will be scored as an out.

**NOTE:** Any untouched batted ball that goes over the fence in fair territory shall be considered a home run against the team's home run total.

**Sec. 22 ANY BALL TOUCHED BY** a defensive player which goes over the fence in fair territory shall not be included in the team's over-the-fence home run total. It shall be ruled and scored as a four-base error. See Rule 5, Sec 10.

**Sec. 23 EQUALIZER:**

- a. For all play the equalization rule will be in effect when a team is playing against a lower age division team, or a team of different classification. At the beginning of the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth innings, one run will be added to the score for the older age division or lower classified team. (for a maximum of five runs). If the game is concluded before the maximum run addition is reached, only the runs added to that point will be allowed. Runs added by this rule are not included in maximum run per inning counts. (Example: If the maximum per inning of five runs is scored, the equalizer- added run results in six runs for that inning.)
- b. When both teams meet the requirements above in a single game, the equalization rule will not apply.

**NOTE:** No team shall receive more than 5 "equalizer" runs in the same game. If one team qualifies for the runs while the other team also qualifies for runs, the two cancel and no award will be made to either team.

## **RULE 6 - PITCHING REGULATIONS**

**Sec. 1 THE PITCHER SHALL** take a position with one or both feet in contact with the pitcher's plate or one foot within the pitcher's box (the lines are considered within the box). Prior to pitching, the pitcher must come to a full stop with the ball held in either the pitching hand or both hands in front of the body. This position must be maintained at least one second and not more than ten seconds before making the

delivery. The pitcher shall not be considered in the pitching position unless the catcher is in the catcher's box.

**Sec. 2 THE PITCH STARTS** when the pitcher makes any motion that is part of his/her wind-up, after the required pause. Prior to the required pause, any legal wind-up may be used. The pivot foot must remain in the pitcher's box until the ball leaves the hand.

**NOTE:** It is not necessary to step but if a step is taken, the step may be forward, backward or sideways.

**Sec. 3 A LEGAL DELIVERY** shall be delivered with an underhand motion, and:

- a. The pitch shall be released at a moderate speed. The home plate umpire will issue a warning to a pitcher using excessive speed, and award a ball to the batter. If the pitcher repeats such an act after being warned, he/she shall be removed from the pitcher's position for the remainder of the game.
- b. The hand shall be below the hip.
- c. The ball must be delivered with a perceptible arc and reach a height of at least 6 feet from the ground. The maximum height may not exceed 12 feet from the ground.
- d. The catcher must be within the lines of the catcher's box until the pitched ball reaches the plate or until the ball is batted.

**EXCEPTION:** If a batter swings at any illegal pitch, it shall be a strike and there shall be no penalty. The ball remains in play if hit by the batter.

- e. The catcher shall return the ball directly to the pitcher after each pitch except after a strikeout or putout made by the catcher. The pitcher has ten seconds to release the next pitch.

**EFFECT:** An additional "BALL" shall be awarded to the batter.

- f. Any action or motion by the pitcher (i.e. stops or pauses in the pitching motion, fakes a pitch or any other illegal action prior to the release of the pitch) after presenting the ball is ruled a dead ball.

**EFFECT:** Dead ball is called by the umpire, a ball is awarded to the batter and a warning issued to the pitcher. Similar acts will be grounds for removal from the pitching position for the remainder of the game. These acts are considered illegal pitching actions.

**Sec. 4 THE PITCHER MAY** use any wind-up desired providing:

- a. When in the pitcher's box, he/she does not make any motion to pitch without immediately delivering the ball to the batter.
- b. His/her wind-up is a continuous motion.
- c. He/she does not use a windup in which there is a stop or reversal of the forward motion.
- d. He/she delivers the ball on the first forward swing of the pitching arm past the hip.



**Sec. 5 THE PITCHER SHALL NOT** deliberately drop, roll or bounce the ball to the batter from the pitching box after presenting the ball. He/she may not release the ball behind his/her back or between his/her legs. **EFFECT:** Rule 6, Sec 3f

**Sec. 6 THE PITCHER SHALL NOT** be allowed to use tape or other substances on the ball, pitching hand or fingers; nor shall any other player apply a foreign substance to the ball. Under the supervision of the umpire, powdered resin may be used to dry the hands or a sheer or skin-colored band-aid may be used. The pitcher may wear a sweatband on the pitching arm forearm or above.

**Sec. 7 AT THE BEGINNING** of each half-inning or when a pitcher relieves another, not more than one minute may be used to deliver not more than three warm-up pitches to the catcher or other teammate. Play shall be suspended during this time.

**EFFECT:** Non-compliance with Sec. 7 is considered an illegal pitch and the ball is dead. A ball shall be awarded to the batter for each excessive pitch, and base runners do not advance unless forced.

**Sec. 8 NO-PITCH SHALL** be declared when:

- a. The pitcher pitches during the suspension of play.
- b. The runner is called out for leaving the base too soon.
- c. The pitcher pitches before a base runner has retouched his/her base after a foul ball and the ball is dead.
- d. The ball slips from the pitcher's hand during his/her wind-up or during the back swing.
- e. A player, manager or coach calls "Time" or any other word or phrase, or commits any act while the ball is alive and in play for the obvious purpose of trying to make the pitcher commit an illegal pitch.

**EFFECT:** No pitch shall be declared and a warning issued to the offending team. A repeat of this type of act shall result in the offender being removed from the game.

**Sec. 9 THERE SHALL BE** only one charged conference between the manager (or other team representative from the dugout) and each pitcher in an inning. A second charged conference shall result in the removal of that pitcher from the pitching position.

**Sec. 10 AT NO TIME DURING** the game shall a player or coach argue whether a pitch was a strike or a ball. Any player or coach that leaves his/her position on the field or from the dugout to argue balls and strikes is subject to immediate ejection.

**Sec. 11 PITCH COUNT** – Batters are allowed 3 balls and/or 2 strikes. **All batters start with a 1-1 ball/strike count.** There will be one "courtesy" foul available to a batter after there are two strikes in the count.

**Sec. 12 PITCHER'S MASK** is required to be properly worn by the pitcher while pitching the ball.

**EFFECT:** A warning will be issued to the pitcher. More than two warnings of this type shall result in the pitcher being removed from the pitching position for the remainder of the game.

## **RULE 7 – BATTING**

**Sec. 1 THE BATTER SHALL** take his/her position within the batter's box, and:

- a. The batter shall not have his/her entire foot on the ground completely outside the lines of the batter's box or touching home plate when the ball is hit.
- b. The batter shall not step directly across in front of the catcher to the other side of the batter's box while the pitcher is in position to pitch and the catcher is in the catcher's box.

**EFFECT:** The ball is dead, the batter is out and base runners may not advance.

- c. The batter shall not enter the batter's box with an illegal or altered bat.  
**EFFECT:** If discovered prior to the pitch, the batter is immediately called "out" and ejected from the game. If discovered after that batter has hit the ball and before the next pitch, the ball is dead, the batter is out, ejected from the game. The opposing team then has the option of taking the results of the play or returning all base runners to their previous bases. The bat will be confiscated and given to a Tournament Director or UIC to be held for an unlimited period of time or until the bat is made legal.
- d. The batter must take his/her position within ten seconds after the umpire has called "play ball". He/she must have both feet within the box before the start of the pitch. If the batter is standing on the line, the whole foot is considered in the box.

**EFFECT:** Violation of this section will result in a dead ball. The umpire will call a strike and also issue a warning to the batter to take his/her position or risk being called out. If the batter refuses to take his/her position after the warning, he/she will be called out. The warning will be given to a batter only one time per game. Any repeated violation during the game by that player will result in an out being called. This rule is intended to help speed up the play of the game. Umpires, using discretion in enforcement of the rule, must prohibit the batter from delaying the game by taking an excessive or unnecessary amount of time entering the batter's box.

- e. When a player throws the bat intentionally in anger, the player will be ejected. Should the bat slip from the batter's hands, there is no penalty unless the discarded bat prevents the defense from making a play on the ball, and then interference should be ruled.

**Sec. 2 EACH PLAYER OF THE** side at bat shall become a **batter** in the order in

which his/her name appears on the lineup card. The batting order of each team must be on the lineup card and delivered by **the manager or captain to the home plate umpire, official scorekeeper and opposing manager**. The batting order must be followed throughout the entire game, unless a player is substituted for. When this occurs, the substitute must take the place of the player he/she is replacing in the batting order. The first batter in each inning shall be the batter whose name follows that of the last player who completed a turn at bat in the preceding inning.

**EFFECT:** Batting out of order is an appeal play, which may be made by the defensive team only and:

- a. If the error is discovered while the incorrect batter is at bat, the correct batter takes his/her place and assumes any balls and strikes.
- b. If the error is discovered after the incorrect batter has batted, and before the next pitch to the following batter, the player who should have batted is out. Any advance or score made because of a batted ball by the improper batter's advance to first base on a hit, error or a base on balls shall be nullified. The next batter is the player whose name follows that of the player called out for failing to bat.
- c. If the error is discovered after the first pitch to the next batter, the turn at bat of the incorrect batter is legal. All runs scored and bases run are legal and the next batter shall be the one whose name follows that of the incorrect batter. No one is called out for failure to bat. Players who have not batted and who have not been called out have lost their turn at bat until reached again in the regular order.
- d. When the third out of the inning is made before the batter has completed his/her turn at bat, he/she shall be the first batter in the next inning.

**Sec. 3 MEMBERS OF THE TEAM** at bat shall not interfere, physically or vocally, with a player attempting to field a fair or foul ball. This includes a base coach.

**EFFECT:** The ball is dead, the interfering runner is out, and base runners may not advance unless forced.

**Sec. 4 THE BATTER SHALL NOT** intentionally hit a fair ball a second time.

**EFFECT:** The ball is dead, the batter is out and base runners may not advance.

**NOTE:** If the batter drops the bat and the ball rolls against the bat in fair territory, and in the opinion of the umpire there was no intention to interfere with the course of the ball, the batter is not out and the ball is alive and in play.

**Sec. 5 A STRIKE IS CALLED BY** the umpire:

- a. For each legally pitched ball hitting any portion of the strike zone mat at which the batter does not swing.
- b. For each ball swung at and missed by the batter.
- c. For each foul tip, including the third strike.
- d. For each foul ball, including the third strike.

**EFFECT:** Ball is dead and base runners must return to their bases without liability to be put out.

**NOTE:** A pitched ball that hits the ground (including the strike zone mat)

is a "dead ball" and may not be hit by the batter.

**Sec. 6 A BALL IS CALLED BY the umpire:**

- a. For each pitch which does not hit the strike zone mat and is not struck at by the batter.
- b. For each illegal pitch.
- c. When the catcher fails to return the ball directly to the pitcher as required in Rule 6.
- d. When the pitcher fails to pitch within ten seconds.
- e. For each additional warm-up pitch.
- f. When the pitcher attempts a "quick pitch" (the pitcher shall be given a first warning).
- g. For each illegal pitching action.

**EFFECT:** Per Rule 7, Sec. 6 a-g, the ball is dead and base runners may not advance.

**Sec. 7 A FAIR BALL IS A LEGALLY batted ball which:**

- a. Settles or is touched on fair ground between home and 1st or home and third base.
- b. Bounds past first or third base on or over fair ground.
- c. Touches first, second or third base.
- d. Touches the person or clothing of a player in contact with the base or an umpire while on or over fair ground.
- e. First touches fair ground beyond first or third base. A fly ball must be judged fair or foul according to the relative position of the ball and the foul line/pole, regardless of whether the fielder is on fair or foul ground at the time he/she touches the ball.

**EFFECT:** Rule 7, Sec 7 a-e. The ball is in play and base runners are entitled to advance any number of bases with liability to be put out. The batter becomes a batter-runner unless the infield fly rule applies.

- f. While on or over fair ground, lands behind a fence or into a stand beyond the outfield fence. This is a home run.
- g. Hits a foul pole on the fly above the fence level. This is a home run.

**Sec. 8 A FOUL BALL IS A LEGALLY batted ball which:**

- a. Settles on foul ground between home and first base or between home and third base.
- b. Bounds past first or third base on or over foul ground.
- c. First touches on foul ground beyond first or third base.
- d. Touches the person or clothing of a player in contact with the base or an umpire while on or over foul ground.
- e. Is a fly ball caught in foul territory.

**EFFECT:** Rule 7, Sec 8 a-d, Ball is dead. A strike is called on the batter for each foul ball, including the third strike. Base runners must return to their bases without liability to be put out.

**EFFECT:** Rule 7, Sec 8 e, Ball remains alive and all runners may tag-up and advance at the risk of being put out.

## **Sec. 9 THE BATTER IS OUT:**

- a. When the third strike is struck at and missed.
- b. When a batter appears in the batter's box with, or is discovered using, an illegal or altered bat prior to or after hitting the ball. The batter is also ejected from the game for using an illegal or altered bat. The illegal or altered bat will be confiscated and given to the Tournament Director or UIC to be held for an unlimited period of time.
- c. When a fair or foul fly ball is legally caught.
- d. When he/she hits an infield fly, and the umpire has declared "Infield Fly".
- e. If a fielder intentionally drops a fair fly ball, including a line drive, which can be caught with ordinary effort.

**EFFECT:** The ball is dead, the batter is out and base runners must return to the last base touched at the time of the pitch. This does not apply to an infield fly; the dropped ball remains alive on an infield fly.

**NOTE:** A trapped ball shall not be considered as having been intentionally dropped.

- f. If a preceding runner, in the umpire's opinion, intentionally interferes with a fielder who is attempting to catch a thrown ball or is attempting to throw a ball to complete a play, the preceding runner and the batter are both declared out.
- g. When the batter bunts or chops the ball downward.  
**EFFECT:** The ball is dead, the batter is out and runners may not advance.
- h. When any batter-runner carries the bat and touches first base (hit or walk), while still holding the bat. Should this be the third out of an inning, no preceding runner shall score.  
**EFFECT:** If less than two outs, a delayed dead ball signal will be given and the ball will remain alive.
- i. On a third strike foul ball.
- j. When hit by his/her batted ball in fair territory, outside the batter's box.
- k. When the batter has his/her entire foot on the ground completely outside the lines of the batter's box or touching home plate when the ball is hit.
- l. If the batter steps directly across in front of the catcher to the other side of the batter's box while the pitcher is in position to pitch and the catcher is in the catcher's box.

**Sec. 10 THE BATTER OR BASERUNNER** is not out if a fielder making a play on him/her uses an illegal glove. The manager of the offended team has the option of having the batter hit again with the ball/strike count he/she had prior to the pitch he/she hit, or taking the result of the play. The umpire(s) will signal a delayed dead ball.

## **Sec. 11 ON-DECK BATTER:**

- a. The on-deck batter is the offensive player whose name follows the name of the batter in the batting order.
- b. The on-deck batter shall take a position within the lines of the on-deck circle nearest his/her bench.
- c. The on-deck batter may loosen up with two official softball bats or an official warm-up bat. The player may also use the Power Wrap, Worth WBS, H & B

BW1 or any other official warm-up bat or product that has been approved by the SPA National Office.

- d. The on-deck batter may leave the on-deck circle when he/she becomes the batter, to direct base runners advancing from third base to home plate or to avoid contact with a defensive player.
- e. When the on-deck batter or any other representative of the offensive team interferes with the defensive player's opportunity to make a play on a runner, the runner closest to home plate at the time of the interference is declared out.

**NOTE:** The provision of Rule 7, Sec 3, shall apply to the on-deck batter.

## **RULE 8 - BASERUNNING**

**Sec 1 DOUBLE BASE AT 1ST BASE:** At facilities that use the white and orange safety bag at first base, the following rule will be implemented. The batter-runner must use the base in foul territory (orange) if the first play is at first base, either from the infield or outfield. A batter-runner may be called out for touching the inside bag (white), while not touching any part of the "orange" base. If the play is elsewhere, the inside base (white) may be tagged in a continuation toward second base. The batter-runner running toward first base may tag either base to avoid a collision if an errant throw occurs. A defensive player may tag either base to record an out in this situation. An errant throw is defined to be such that it causes the defensive player to move off the base, and into foul territory. The inside bag (white) will be used by both the runner and defensive player if a play is the result of an attempt to get back to first base. The runner may maintain contact with either base (orange or white) once he/she is safe at first base.

**Sec 2 COURTESY RUNNER:** Courtesy runners are allowed in all programs. Except in the 80+ and older ages, a player may only be a courtesy runner once per inning. A courtesy runner may be any player on the roster, whether or not he/she is in the line-up. A courtesy runner may only be replaced by another courtesy runner due to an injury or illness. The replaced courtesy runner must be removed from the game. The original runner cannot re-enter as a courtesy runner for another player in the same inning. Once a designated player or any roster player touches a base, he/she is the courtesy runner for that player at that base. Removal of that courtesy runner for any reason other than illness or injury is a violation of the illegal substitution rule. Courtesy runners are to be inserted into the game only during a time-out, prior to the first pitch to any batter, and with verbal notification to the home plate umpire. If a courtesy runner is on base when his/her time at bat occurs, an "OUT" is registered on the base, and the courtesy runner must bat unless it is the third out of the inning. In that case, that courtesy runner will be the lead-off batter in the following inning. (See Rule 5, Sec 5, for differences during international tie breaker play.)

**Sec. 3 THE BASE RUNNER MUST** touch bases in legal order that is first, second, third and Scoring Plate, except as allowed in Rule 5, Sec 10, and:

- a. When a base runner must return to a previous base while the ball is in play, he/she must touch the bases in reverse order.

**EFFECT:** The ball is in play and base runners must return with liability to be put out.

- b. When a base runner acquires the right to a base, by touching it before being put out, he/she may hold the base until he/she has legally touched the next base, or is forced to vacate it for a succeeding runner.
- c. When a runner dislodges a base from its proper position, neither he/she nor the succeeding runners in the same series of plays are compelled to follow a base unreasonably out of position. The ball is in play and runners may advance with liability of being put out.
- d. A base runner may not run the bases in reverse order, either to confuse the fielders or to make a travesty of the game.

**EFFECT:** The ball is dead and the runner is out.

**NOTE:** A runner in a double play situation who stops or retreats back towards the base left is not considered to be running the bases in reverse order or making a travesty of the game.

- e. Two base runners may not occupy the same base simultaneously.

**EFFECT:** The runner who first legally occupied the base is entitled to it. The other runner may be put out if touched with the ball.
- f. A preceding runner that is declared out for failure to touch a base or failure to leave a base legally on a caught fly ball does not affect the status of a succeeding runner who touches the bases in proper order. However, if the preceding runner were to be called out for the third out of the inning, no succeeding runner may score.
- g. No runner may return to touch home plate after a following runner has scored.
- h. When the ball is dead, no runner may return to touch a missed base or a base he/she left illegally, even after the ball becomes alive. However, when a dead ball occurs, a runner may return to a missed base or a base he/she left illegally if he/she is required to by the umpire in the awarding or determination of bases. The runner is not liable to be put out for missing a base beyond the base he/she is awarded by the umpire. The runner is not liable to be put out for missing a base he/she is required to return to if awarded a succeeding base by the umpire.
- i. No runner may return to touch a missed base or one left illegally once he/she enters his/her dugout or bench area.
- j. When a walk is issued, runners must touch all bases in legal order. Base runners do not advance unless forced.
- k. Bases left too soon on a caught fly ball must be retouched before advancing to awarded bases. Awarded bases must also be touched in proper order.
- l. Runners must continue towards the scoring plate once he/she touches or steps across the commitment line. A runner that retreats toward 3rd base and re-touches or steps back across the commitment line will be called out.

**NOTE:** If the runner touches home plate instead of the scoring plate in a not-over-the-fence home run situation, the runner is automatically out.

**NOTE:** If a defensive player tags the runner after the runner has crossed the commitment line, the runner is automatically safe.

**Sec. 4 THE BATTER BECOMES** a batter-runner:

- a. As soon as he/she hits the ball,
- b. When four pitches have been judged balls or the batter has been intentionally walked
- c. When the catcher or any other fielder obstructs or hinders the batter from striking at or hitting a pitched ball.

**Sec. 5 BASE-RUNNERS ARE** entitled to advance with liability to be put out:

- a. When the ball is thrown and is not blocked.
- b. When the ball is batted into fair territory and is not blocked.
- c. When a legally caught fly ball is first touched.
- d. When a fair ball strikes a runner in contact with a base or an umpire.

**Sec. 6 A PLAYER FORFEITS** his/her exemption from liability to be put out if:

- a. While the ball is in play, he/she is off the base he/she is entitled to.
- b. After passing first base, the batter-runner attempts to advance toward second base.
- c. After dislodging the base, the batter-runner or base-runner attempts to continue to the next base.

**Sec. 7 BASE-RUNNERS ARE** entitled to advance without liability to be put out:

- a. When he/she is forced to vacate a base because the batter was awarded a base on balls or for catcher obstruction. The ball is dead.
- b. When a fielder obstructs a base-runner from advancing to a base.

**EFFECT:** When obstruction occurs, the umpire shall signal obstruction. All runners, except the obstructed runner, advance at their own risk. The obstructed runner may advance without liability to be put out to the next base he/she would have reached.

**EXCEPTION:** A base-runner obstructed in a rundown shall be awarded the lead base at the time of the obstruction. Any preceding runners forced to advance by the award of bases for obstruction shall advance without liability to be put out.

- c. If no play is being made on the obstructed runner at the time of obstruction, the play shall proceed until completed (delayed dead ball). The umpire shall call "time" and impose such penalties, if any, that in his opinion will nullify the act of obstruction.
- d. If a fielder without the ball fakes a tag, the umpire may award the obstructed runner and each other runner affected by the obstruction the bases they would have reached, had there been no obstruction.

**NOTE:** In the case of a "fake tag", the fielder will be automatically ejected from the game.

- e. When, by throwing his/her glove, hat, or any part of his/her uniform, a fielder contacts or catches a batted or thrown ball.

**NOTE:** The umpire(s) will give a "delayed dead ball" signal.

**EFFECT:** The runner(s) shall be entitled to three bases if a batted ball or two bases if a thrown ball. In either case, runners may advance further at their own risk. If the illegal act was made on a fair ball that, in the opinion of the umpire, would have cleared the outfield fence in flight, a home run shall be awarded.



- f. When the ball is in play and is overthrown (beyond the boundary lines), or is blocked.

**EFFECT:** Awarded bases shall be determined by the position of the base-runners at the time of the infraction.

**EFFECT:** For offensive equipment causing a blocked ball, the player closest to home plate is declared out, and all other runners must return to the last base touched when the ball became blocked.

**EFFECT:** For defensive equipment causing a blocked ball, each base-runner shall be awarded two bases from the time the ball became blocked.

- g. In all cases where a thrown ball goes into the spectator's seats; goes over, through or under any fence surrounding the playing field; hits any person or object not engaged in the game; goes into the player's benches (including bats lying near benches) whether the ball rebounds onto the playing field or not; or remains in the meshes of any wire screen, each base-runner shall be awarded two bases.
- h. When the first throw is made by an infielder, two bases shall be awarded. The award shall be governed by the position of each runner at the time the pitch was made. However, if all runners, including the batter-runner, have advanced at least one base before the infielder makes a wild throw on the first play after a pitch, the award shall be governed by the position of the runners when the wild throw was made.
- i. When a throw is made by an outfielder, or is the result of any succeeding play or attempted play, the two base award shall be governed by the position of each runner and the last base he/she had touched at the time the throw was made. If two runners are between the same bases, the award is based on the position of the lead runner.
- j. When a fielder loses possession of the ball, such as on an attempted tag play, and the ball enters a dead ball area or becomes blocked, all runners are awarded one base from the last base touched at the time the ball entered the dead ball area or became blocked. If a runner touches the next base and returns to his/her original base, the original base he/she left is considered the "last base touched" for the purpose of an overthrow award.
- k. When a fair ball bounds or rolls into spectator seating; over, under or through a fence; bounds out of play unintentionally off a defensive player, or other obstruction marking the boundaries of the playing field.
- EFFECT:** Rule 8, Sec 7, The ball is dead and all base-runners are awarded two bases from the time of the pitch.
- l. When a fielder unintentionally carries a live ball from playable territory into a dead ball area, the ball becomes dead. All base-runners are awarded one base from the last base touched at the time the fielder entered dead ball territory. If, in the opinion of the umpire, a fielder intentionally carries a live ball into dead ball territory, the ball becomes dead and all base runners are awarded two bases from the last base touched at the time he/she entered the dead ball area.

**Sec. 8 A BASE-RUNNER MUST** return to his/her base:

- a. When a foul ball is illegally caught and so declared by the umpire.
- b. When the umpire declares an illegally batted ball.

- c. When a batter or base-runner is called out for interference. Other base-runners shall return to the last base touched at the time of the interference unless forced.
- d. When a pitched ball that is swung at and missed touches any part of the batters' person.
- e. When a foul ball is not caught.

**EFFECT:** The ball is dead and base-runners must return to base. Base-runners need not touch the intervening bases when returning, but must return promptly. Umpires must allow them sufficient time to return.

#### **Sec. 9 BATTER-RUNNER is out:**

- a. When, after hitting a fair ball, he/she is legally touched with the ball before he/she touches first base.
- b. When, after hitting a fair ball, the ball is held by a fielder touching first base (white base) with any part of his/her person before the batter-runner touches first base.
- c. When a fly ball is legally caught.
- d. When, after hitting a fair ball or being awarded a base on balls, he/she fails to advance to first base and enters his/her dugout.

**EFFECT:** Rule 8, Sec. 9 a-d. The ball is in play and the batter-runner is out.

- e. When he/she runs outside the three-foot running lane and, in the opinion of the umpire, interferes with the fielder taking the throw at first base. However, he/she may run outside the three-foot lane to avoid a fielder attempting to field a batted ball or overthrow.
- f. When he/she interferes with a fielder attempting to field a batted ball, or intentionally interferes with a thrown ball. If the interference, in the opinion of the umpire, is an obvious attempt to prevent a double play, the base-runner closest to home plate shall also be called out.
- g. When a batter-runner interferes with a play at home in an attempt to prevent an obvious out at home plate. The runner is also out.
- h. When he/she is discovered using an illegal, but unaltered bat.

**EFFECT:** The opposing team has the option of taking either the result of the play, or the ball is dead, the batter is out and the base-runner(s) may not advance.

- i. When it is discovered he/she is using an illegally altered bat.

**EFFECT: If the ball has been hit, the opposing team has the option of taking the result of the play, or the ball is dead, the batter is out and, without warning, is ejected from the game. Base runners may not advance. The bat will be confiscated and held by the Tournament Director or UIC for an unlimited period of time. When bat checks are employed at SPA tournaments, bats ruled illegal due to missing bat approvals will be subject to penalties concerning illegal bats.**

#### **Sec. 10 THE BASE-RUNNER IS OUT:**

- a. When, while running to any base, he/she runs more than three feet from a direct line between that base and the next base in regular or reverse order

to avoid being touched by the ball in the hand of a fielder. When a play, such as a rundown, is made on a runner who has "rounded" a base, and that runner is outside of a direct line between bases, the runner establishes his/her baseline as a direct line between him/her and the next base in regular or reverse order.

- b. When, while off the base and the ball is in play, the base-runner is hit by a batted ball or touched by the ball while it is in the hand of the fielder.
- c. When, on a force out, a fielder tags him/her with the ball or tags the base/home plate.
- d. When the base-runner fails to return to touch the base he/she previously occupied when play is resumed after suspension of play.
- e. When a base-runner physically passes a preceding runner before that runner has been put out.
- f. When, on a fly ball, the base-runner leaves his/her base to advance to another base before the ball has been touched by a fielder, provided the ball is caught and returned to a fielder and legally held on that base, or a fielder legally touches the base-runner before he/she returns to his/her base resulting in a force out.
- g. When the base-runner fails to touch the intervening base or bases, in regular or reverse order, and the ball is in play and legally held on that base; or the base-runner is legally touched while off the base he/she missed.
- h. When the batter-runner overruns first base, attempts to run to second base and is legally touched while off the base.
- i. When running or sliding for the scoring plate, he/she fails to touch the scoring plate and makes no attempt to return to the base. An out is declared when a fielder holds the ball in his/her hand while touching home plate and appeals to the umpire for a decision.

**EFFECT:** Rule 8, Sec. 10f-i. These are appeal plays, and the defensive team loses the privilege of putting the base-runner out if the appeal is not made before the next legal or illegal pitch. If an appeal is made after the ball is dead and before the next pitch is made, the ball remains dead and runners may not advance. Any player may then make an appeal by stating which runner is being appealed; which base has been missed or left too soon. Any player may also make an appeal while the ball is still alive by tagging the runner or the base being appealed, with the ball.

- j. When the base-runner interferes with a fielder attempting to field a batted ball or intentionally interferes with a thrown ball. If this interference, in the opinion of the umpire, is an obvious attempt to prevent a double play and occurs before the base-runner is put out, the immediate succeeding runner shall be called out also.
- k. When a base-runner is struck with a batted ball in fair territory while off base and before it passes an infielder, excluding the pitcher.
- l. When a base-runner intentionally kicks a ball which an infielder has missed.
- m. When, with a base-runner on third base, the batter interferes with a play being made at home plate.
- n. When anyone, other than another base-runner, physically assists a base-

runner while the ball is in play.

- o. When the coach near third base runs in the direction of home plate, on or near the baseline, while a fielder is attempting to make a play on a batted or thrown ball, and thereby draws a throw to home plate. The base-runner nearest to home-plate shall be declared out.
- p. When one or more members of the offensive team stand or collect at or around a base to which a base-runner is advancing, thereby confusing the fielders and adding to the difficulty of making the play. This includes the bat boy/girl or any other person authorized to sit on the team's bench.
- q. When any base-runner runs the bases in reverse order to confuse the defensive team or to make a farce of the game. This includes the batter-runner moving backward toward home plate to avoid or delay a tag.
- r. When a coach intentionally interferes with a thrown ball.
- s. When a runner, after being declared out or after scoring, interferes with a defensive player's opportunity to make a play on another runner. The runner closest to home plate, at the time of the interference, shall also be called out.

**EFFECT:** Rule 8, Sec. 10j-s. The ball is dead and the base-runner is out. Other runners must return to the last base legally touched at the time of the illegal action.

- t. When a defensive player has the ball and is waiting for the runner, and the runner remains on his/her feet and deliberately crashes with great force into the defensive player. The ball is dead and all runners must return to the last base touched at the time of the collision unless Rule 8, Sec 10j or 10s applies.

**NOTE:** IF THE ACT IS DETERMINED TO BE FLAGRANT, THE OFFENDER SHALL BE EJECTED.

- u. When the base-runner fails to keep contact with his/her base until a legally pitched ball has reached (crosses front edge) home plate. The ball is dead. "No Pitch" is declared and the base-runner is called out.
- v. When he/she abandons a base, does not attempt to advance to the next base and enters the team area or leaves the field of play. The base-runner shall be called out immediately when he/she enters the team area or leaves the field of play.
- w. If hit by the ball which is an infield fly, when not in contact with the base. The ball is dead and the runner and batter are both declared out. Other runners must return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch.
- x. When the base-runner touches or steps across the commitment line towards home, then moves back to touch or cross the commitment line.

**EFFECT:** Rule 8, Sec. 10 (x). The runner will be declared out and the ball remains alive.

- y. When the base-runner touches home plate instead of the scoring plate.
- z. If a courtesy runner is on base when it is his/her turn to bat, an out will be declared on the base, and the courtesy runner becomes the batter.

## **Sec. 11 BASE-RUNNER IS NOT OUT:**

- a. When a base-runner runs behind or in front of a fielder and outside the baseline in order to avoid interfering with a fielder who is attempting to field the ball in the baseline.
- b. When a base-runner does not run in a direct line to the base, providing the

- fielder in the direct line does not have the ball in his/her possession.
- c. When more than one fielder attempts to field a batted ball, and the base-runner comes into contact with the fielder who, in the umpire's opinion, was not in position to field the ball.
  - d. When a base-runner is hit with a fair ball that has passed an infielder, excluding the pitcher, and in the opinion of the umpire, no other fielder had a chance to make a play on the ball.
  - e. When a base-runner is touched with a ball not securely held by a fielder.
  - f. When the defensive team does not appeal a play until after the next pitch.
  - g. When a batter-runner over runs first base and makes no attempt to advance
  - h. When the base-runner is not given sufficient time to return to a base, he/she shall not be called out for being off the base before the pitcher pitches the ball. The umpire shall call no pitch.
  - i. When a runner has started to advance before the umpire calls time.
  - j. When a base-runner holds his/her base until a fielder touches a fly ball, then attempts to advance.
  - k. When a runner is in contact with the base and is hit by a batted ground ball or fly ball in fair territory.
  - l. When a base-runner slides into a base and dislodges it from its proper place. The base is considered to have followed the runner.  
**REFERENCE:** Rule 8, Sec. 3c and Sec. 6c.
  - m. When a fielder makes a play on a batter or base runner while using an illegal glove.  
**REFERENCE:** Rule 7, Sec 10. Option given to the manager of the offensive team.
  - n. When a runner is struck by a fair ball after it is touched or touches any fielder, including the pitcher.
  - o. When the defensive player tags a runner that has crossed the commitment line or touches the scoring plate on a base-runner advancing to score.
  - p. Sliding is permitted at all bases.

## **RULE 9 - DEAD BALL**

### **Sec. 1 THE BALL IS DEAD AND BASE RUNNERS MAY NOT ADVANCE:**

- a. When the ball is batted illegally.
- b. When a batter steps from one box to another when the pitcher is ready to pitch.
- c. When a ball is pitched illegally.  
**EXCEPTION:** If the batter swings at an illegal pitch, the play stands.
- d. When the umpire declares "No Pitch".
- e. When a pitched ball touches any part of the batter's person or clothing, whether or not the ball is struck.
- f. When a foul ball is not caught.
- g. When a base-runner is called out for leaving a base too soon on a pitched ball.
- h. When the offensive team commits interference.
- i. When the ball is outside the playing limits of the playing field. A ball is

considered “out of play” when it touches the ground, person on the ground or object outside the playing area.

- j. When an accident to a runner prevents him/her from proceeding to a base he/she is awarded. A substitute or courtesy runner shall be permitted for the injured player.
- k. When the batter bunts or chops a pitched ball.
- l. When the umpire calls time out.
- m. When the umpire calls time out and an appeal play follows. The ball remains dead throughout the appeal.
- n. When any part of the batter’s person is hit by his/her batted ball while he/she is in the batter’s box.
- o. If a base-runner runs the bases in reverse order,
- p. When a coach touches or physically helps a runner or when a coach near third base runs in the direction of home plate on or near the baseline while the fielder is attempting to make a play and thereby draws a throw to home plate.
- q. When a base-runner fails to keep contact with his/her base until the pitched ball has reached home plate.
- r. When a blocked ball is declared.
- s. When the batter enters the batter’s box with, or uses, an illegal bat or altered bat.
- t. When a caught fair ball, including a line drive, which can be handled by any infielder with ordinary effort is intentionally dropped with less than two outs, and a runner on first, first and second, first and third or first, second or third bases.
- u. When a fielder carries a live ball into dead ball territory.
- v. When a batter is out of the batter’s box in fair territory and is hit by his/her own batted ball.

## **Sec. 2 THE BALL REMAINS IS IN PLAY:**

- a. When the pitcher has the ball in the pitching position and the umpire has called “Play Ball.”
- b. When the infield fly rule is declared.
- c. When a thrown ball goes past a fielder and remains in playable territory.
- d. When a fair ball strikes an umpire or base-runner on fair ground after passing or touching an infielder.
- e. When a fair ball strikes an umpire on foul ground.
- f. When the base-runners have reached the bases to which they are entitled.
- g. When a base-runner is called out for passing a preceding runner.
- h. When an obstruction occurs. The ball shall remain alive until the play is over (delayed dead ball).
- i. When the batter legally hits a fair ball.
- j. When a base-runner, running in reverse order, must return to a previous base.
- k. When a base-runner acquires the right to a base by touching it before being put out.
- l. When a base is dislodged while runners are running the bases.
- m. When a runner runs out of the base line in regular or reverse order to avoid a tag by a fielder.
- n. When a runner is forced or tagged out.

- o. When the umpire calls the base-runner out for failure to return and touch the base after a suspension of play.
- p. When a ball strikes a groundskeeper, photographer, policeman etc. assigned to the game.
- q. When a thrown ball strikes an offensive player.
- r. When the batter drops the bat and the ball rolls against the bat in fair territory if, in the opinion of the umpire, there was no intention to interfere with the course of the ball.
- s. When a thrown ball strikes an umpire.
- t. When a thrown ball strikes a coach.
- u. When there is a play as a result of the hit by the batter. This would include an immediate live ball appeal before the umpire has called "time". Once the umpire has called "time," the ball will continue to be dead during a subsequent appeal play.
- v. When a foul ball is caught with less than two outs.
- w. When the fielder illegally fields a batted or thrown ball.
- x. When the base-runner is in contact with first or third base, and is standing in foul territory when hit by the batted ball.

**Sec. 3 THE BALL REMAINS ALIVE** until the umpire calls/grants "time."

## **RULE 10 – UMPIRES**

**Sec. 1 POWERS AND DUTIES OF UMPIRES:** The umpires are representatives of the SPA organization for the particular game which they have been assigned. They are authorized and required to enforce the rules contained in this book. The umpires have the power to order a player, coach, captain or manager to do, or refrain from doing, any act that is necessary to enforce any of these rules and to inflict any penalties prescribed.

- a. The plate umpire, after consulting with his/her partner, shall have the authority to rule on any situation not specifically covered in these rules. However, should this rule be used, the home plate umpire **MUST** notify the Tournament Umpire-in Chief and **Tournament Director** immediately. The home plate umpire is to also notify the Tournament Director and the Tournament UIC.
- b. An umpire shall not be a member of any team in the tournament (i.e. player, coach, official scorer or sponsor).
- c. An umpire will wear an official SPA umpiring uniform, consisting of the following:
  - Official SPA three-button white umpire shirt w/SPA logo  
(Any clothing worn under the official umpire shirt must be white. No logos or printing is allowed on this clothing.)
  - Navy trousers/ navy socks
  - Navy jacket or pullover - rain gear should be clear if possible
  - Navy shorts with solid white crew socks  
(Trousers do not include jeans, sweatpants, jogging pants or other pants or slacks that would not be considered dress trousers.)
  - Shined black shoes / shoes bearing the white logo, trademark or

manufacturers name are legal.

Plate brush & clicker

Red cap w/official SPA logo

Navy ball bag with official SPA Logo or solid navy ball bag with no logo.

- d. The official SPA umpiring uniform includes Navy shorts or slacks, with belt loops, and must be worn at all levels of SPA-sanctioned play. All belts worn must be black or blue to match uniform. It is up to the discretion of the Tournament Director/UIC to allow umpires to wear shorts or slacks during all post-season play. It is mandatory that umpires, in cooperation with the league/tournament Umpire-In-Chief, coordinate their uniforms to look alike. When shorts are worn, solid white crew socks, not ankle socks, must be worn properly. The official uniform as described above cannot be changed without approval of the National UIC or the Executive Director.

**NOTE:** No player or coach, during the course of any SPA-sanctioned softball event, may wear an official umpire's uniform or any part thereof.

- e. The umpires should inspect the playing field and equipment, and clarify all ground rules to team managers/coaches and scorekeepers prior to the start of the game.
- f. Each umpire shall have the power to make decisions on violations committed anytime during playing time or suspension of play until the game is over.
- g. No umpire has the authority to set aside or question decisions made by another umpire within the limits of his/her respective duties.
- h. An umpire may consult with his/her partners at any time; however, the final decision shall rest with the umpire whose authority it is to make the decision and who requested the opinion of the other umpires.
- i. The plate and base umpires shall have equal authority to:
  - 1. Call a runner out for leaving a base too soon.
  - 2. Call "time" for suspension of play.
  - 3. Remove a player, manager, coach or other team member from the game for violation of the rules.

**NOTE:** Unless appealed, the umpire shall not call a player out for having failed to touch the proper base, leaving a base too soon on a caught fly ball, batting out of order, or any infraction regarding illegal courtesy runners.

- j. At no time will an umpire enforce a rule which is to the benefit of a team offending the rule.
- k. Any time a stoppage of play occurs due to injuries, protests, rules interpretations or for other extended time periods, the home plate umpire must notify either the Tournament Director or the UIC at the time of the stoppage of the circumstances. The Tournament Director and UIC must subsequently collaborate to review the circumstances surrounding the event.

## **Sec. 2 THE PLATE UMPIRE:**

- a. Shall take a position near the catcher's batter side shoulder and have full responsibility for the proper conduct of the game.
- b. Shall call all balls and strikes.



- c. Shall be in agreement and in cooperation with the base umpire's call on plays, fair or foul balls, legally or illegally caught balls. On plays which require the base umpire to leave the infield, the plate umpire shall assume the duties that the base umpire is normally required to cover.
- d. Shall determine and declare whether a batter chops or bunts a ball, whether a batted ball touches the person or clothing of the batter, and whether a fly ball is an infield fly.
- e. Shall render decisions on the bases when required.
- f. Shall declare if a game is forfeited only in conjunction with the Tournament Director or his designee.
- g. Shall document in real time any pertinent information concerning protests.

### **Sec. 3 THE BASE UMPIRE:**

- a. Shall take a position on the playing field to be in the most advantageous position to make a call. At the beginning of each inning, he/she should start 10-15 feet behind first base in foul territory.
- b. Shall assist the plate umpire in every way to enforce the rules of the game.
- c. Can call an infield fly.

**NOTE:** If any umpire is hit by a fair batted ball, the ball remains live and in play

**Sec. 4 CHANGING OF UMPIRE:** Umpires may only be changed during a game by the Tournament Director, and Tournament UIC for injury, illness or failure to perform their assigned duties as prescribed by this rule book and any additional special rule requirements.

**Sec. 5 UMPIRES JUDGMENT:** There shall be no appeal of any judgment call by an umpire on the grounds that he/she was not correct in his/her decision that a batted ball was fair or foul, a base runner was out or safe, a pitched ball was a ball or a strike, or any other play involving accuracy of a call. Any argument is grounds for a player or coach to be ejected from the game. No decision of an umpire shall be reversed, except when he/she is convinced it is in violation of a rule. If the manager, captain or either team seeks reversal of a decision based solely on an umpire's judgment, the umpire whose decision is in question, shall, if in doubt, confer with his/her associates before taking any action. But under no circumstances shall any player or person, other than the manager or captain of either team, have any legal right to protest any decision and seek its reversal on a claim that it is in conflict with these rules. Under no circumstances should any umpire seek to reverse a decision made by his/her associates, nor shall any umpire criticize or interfere with the duties of his/her associates unless asked to do so by his/her associate.

### **Sec. 6 SUSPENSION OF PLAY:**

- a. An umpire may suspend play when, in his/her opinion, conditions justify such action.
- b. Play shall be suspended when the plate umpire leaves his/her position to brush the plate or to perform other duties not directly related with the calling of a play.
- c. The umpire shall suspend play whenever the batter or pitcher steps out of

- position for a legitimate reason.
- d. The umpire shall not call "Time" after the pitcher has started his/her pitching motion or while play is in progress. "Time" shall not be called until all action in progress by either team has been completed.  
**EXCEPT:** To prevent confusion and to promote safety.
  - e. Time shall be called when, in the opinion of the umpire, all play is apparently completed, and the ball is in the possession of a player in the infield.
  - f. In the case of any injury to a player or coach, the umpire may suspend play immediately. Baserunners shall advance one base if not required by rule to return to the previous base. If the bat and/or ball is deemed to be involved in the injury, the home plate umpire will immediately confiscate both the bat and the ball.

## **Sec. 7 VIOLATIONS AND PENALTIES:**

- a. Players, managers, coaches, scorekeepers, other team members or spectators shall not make disparaging or insulting remarks to, or about, any opposing players, officials or spectators; or commit other acts that could be considered inappropriate conduct.  
**RESULT:** The offender will be promptly removed from the game and must leave the grounds within three minutes. A warning will be issued to the manager or coach. For a second offense in the same game, the team member(s) and the manager or coach is removed from the game and must leave the grounds within three minutes. Failure to do so will warrant a forfeiture of the game, and the team member(s), manager, and/or coach may be suspended for the remainder of the tournament. The SPA National Headquarters will suspend an ejected player(s), manager, coach, or team member(s) for any additional flagrant or un-sportsman act for a period of one year from all SPA events.
- b. Players ejected other than for violations of Sec. a, must immediately leave the playing field and dugout area, and may not participate further in the game in any way.
- c. There shall be no more than two base coaches for each team giving words of assistance and direction to the members of the team while at bat. One coach shall be stationed near first base and the other near third base. Each coach must remain in the coach's box.
- d. Any player or coach that leaves his/her position on the field, including the dugout, to argue balls and strikes will be subject to ejection.

# **RULE 11 – PROTESTS**

**Sec. 1 PROTESTS SHALL NOT** be allowed or considered if they are based solely upon a decision involving the judgment of an umpire. Examples of a protest which will not be considered are:

- a. Whether a batted ball was fair or foul.
- b. Whether a base runner was safe or out.
- c. Whether a pitched ball was a strike or ball.
- d. Whether a runner did or did not touch a base.
- e. Whether a runner left his/her base too soon on a caught fly ball.
- f. Whether a fly ball was or was not legally caught.
- g. Whether it was or was not an infield fly.
- h. Whether there was or was not interference.
- i. Whether the field is fit to continue or resume play.
- j. Whether there is sufficient light to continue play.
- k. Any other matter involving only the umpire's judgment.

## **SEC. 2 PLAYER ELIGIBILITY PROTEST**

- a. All play ceases until the protest is resolved. A cash protest fee of \$75 per player protested must be paid immediately at the time of the protest. Such protest must be made prior to the end of the game being protested. Any protest lodged following the end of the game, must be made in writing through the SPA National Office and will not be ruled upon prior to SPA executive review. Games protested in this "post-game" manner will stand as played, unless ruled otherwise by the SPA Executive Director. If any protest is upheld, the protest fee shall be returned.
- b. Player eligibility will be determined by a Player Eligibility Committee appointed by the SPA Executive Director. **NOTE:** The Tournament Director/Coordinator or Tournament UIC may inspect the SPA player card and picture I.D. (i.e. drivers license) at any time. Play ceases until the protest is resolved.
- c. When a player eligibility protest is found invalid, the game stands as played.
- d. When protests for eligibility are upheld, the offending team shall forfeit the game.

**NOTE:** Any time that an illegal player is discovered the illegal player and his team manager are immediately ejected.

## **SEC. 3 BAT LEGALITY PROTEST:** See Rule 3, Sec. 1d

## **SEC. 4 ALL OTHER PROTESTS:**

- a. The notification of intent to protest for rules interpretations must be made before the next legal or illegal pitch. If a rules interpretation protest occurs on the final play of the game, it must be made before the umpires leave the playing field.
- b. For all protests, the manager of the protesting team shall immediately notify the plate umpire that the game is being played under protest. The plate umpire will then notify the Tournament Director, the Tournament UIC, scorekeeper and the opposing manager.

- c. If the protest cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of both teams by the Tournament Director and UIC, they will contact a protest committee appointed by the SPA Executive Director for a final decision.  
**NOTE:** The Tournament Director/Coordinator or Tournament UIC may talk to any player, spectator, umpire, director, or other individual that it deems necessary to reach a correct decision. Play ceases until the protest is resolved.
- d. It is the umpire's responsibility to record the surrounding conditions to aid in the correct determination of the issue. (i.e. inning, outs, names of players involved, runners on base, etc.)
- e. If the protest is found invalid, the play stands as called.
- f. When a protest is upheld for misinterpretation of a playing rule, the correction is made and the play is replayed from the point at which the incorrect decision was made.
- g. Decisions rendered by the Protest Committee are final.

**SEC. 5** If a **written protest** is requested by the UIC and Tournament Director, it **must be submitted by the protesting team manager, and should contain the following information:**

- a. The date, time and place of the game.
- b. The names of the umpires and scorekeeper.
- c. The decision and conditions surrounding the making of the decision.
- d. All essential facts involved in the matter protested.

**SEC. 6 DECISION** made on a protested game must result in one of the following:

- a. The protest is found invalid and the game stands as played.
- b. When a protest is upheld for misinterpretation of a playing rule, the correction is made and the game is replayed from the point at which the incorrect decision was made.
- c. When protests for eligibility are upheld, the team shall forfeit the game played to the offended team.

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# SOFTBALL PLAYERS ASSOCIATION

## POLICIES & PROCEDURES

### Player Eligibility

In all programs the calendar year will determine the age and eligibility of the player. A player's age on Dec 31, of the current year, is considered to be that player's age for the entire calendar year.

Senior competition shall begin at the age of fifty (50).

All players must be a minimum of fifty years old (50) during the calendar year to be eligible to play in the Senior's program and register with the SPA.

Master's competition shall begin at the age of thirty-five (35).

SPA Tournament Staff may not make any ruling, have any input, or have influence of any kind concerning any tournament in which he/she participates as a manager, coach, player, or umpire.

### Player Registration

**All players participating in an SPA Senior event must be registered with the association, and must submit the following:**

- A completed and signed SPA National Player Registration application.
- Copy of a current valid Driver's License or government-issued picture ID to verify age and geographic eligibility rules.
- A high-quality color photo of yourself.
- Registration Fee - check, cashier's check, or money order made payable to SPA, \$35 for a single season (expiring December 31), \$65 for a three (3) year card (expiring December 31, of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year), or \$85 for a five (5) year card (expiring December 31, of the 5<sup>th</sup> year).
- FIRST TIME PLAYER REGISTRATION. This one time \$20 offer is good for all tournaments in the entire calendar year and is for any 1<sup>st</sup> time players that are interested in playing SPA tournaments anywhere!
- Lifetime memberships are available following a player's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday (onetime \$35 registration fee applies).

Forms and on-line registration and/or renewal available on [www.softballspa.com](http://www.softballspa.com)

**"PLAYERS PLEASE CHECK YOUR CARD FOR THE EXPIRATION DATE"**

Registration Applications are available from the SPA National Headquarters.

SPA National Headquarters  
P.O. Box 1307  
Mustang, OK 73064  
(405) 376-7034 – office      (405) 376-7035 - fax

or may be completed online at [www.softballspa.com](http://www.softballspa.com)

## **Team Registration Fee**

All teams that participate in a SPA-sanctioned event are required to be registered with the SPA National Headquarters prior to participating in the event. The fee is **\$45** per calendar year. Any exceptions to this rule must be approved by the SPA Executive Director.

## **Team Classification**

Although classification changes are never “automatic”, SPA reserves the right to classify or reclassify a team at any time, including the National/World Championships. SPA reserves the right to issue an invitation to a team for the **National/World** Championships, based upon that classification and teams conduct. Teams are always classified based upon their overall offensive and defensive strengths and skills.

Teams may request reclassification by writing or via e-mail to the SPA National Office after participating in two **SPA** tournament events. There is a specific form that will need to be filled out and submitted. The request must have supporting information, i.e. team scores, teams played, tournament location and affiliation with a written reason and detailed explanation of why the classification should be changed. The decision of the SPA National Classification Committee is final. Reclassifications requests will be reviewed April 15, May 15, June 15, and July 15 of each year. **Teams may only appeal their team classification ONCE per calendar year.**

All new teams will start the season classified as AAA (Excluding Major Plus, Major, and Men's Master's program Teams). In the Men's Master's Program, all new teams will start the season classified as Major (Excluding Master's Major Plus teams) No requests for reclassification will be accepted after July 15th. No team will be reclassified down after July 15th.

A new team wanting to play AA must play a minimum of two SPA tournaments before they will be considered eligible for AA classification. All exceptions to this rule must be approved by the SPA National Headquarters.

**NOTE:** If a team divides for any reason and a resulting new team has four (4) or more players from the original team's Roster, the new team will be required at a minimum to participate at the classification level of the original team.

## **Team Roster**

**Geographic Guidelines:** Teams may only select players from their home state and the states listed in the “Table of Geographic Eligibility” at the back of this book, as part of the geographic area of that state.

The Home State of a team will be determined by where the majority of the players reside.

Men's Senior Program Major Plus teams may additionally select four players without geographic restriction. No additional "Snowbirds" will be allowed.

Except in the 75+ Division, Men's Senior Major teams may select three players from that team's geographic area, defined as East or West of the Mississippi River, and no additional "Snowbirds" will be allowed.

Except in the 75+ Division, Men's Senior AAA teams may select two players from that team's geographic area, defined as East or West of the Mississippi River, and no additional "Snowbirds" will be allowed.

Except in the Major Plus classification, players on Men's 75+ Division rosters must be from their specific area of the country based upon being East or West of the Mississippi River or from states listed in the "Table of Geographic Eligibility" at the back of this book, as part of the geographic area of that team's state. These teams additionally may select one player without geographic restriction.

Players on Men's 80+ and 85+ Division rosters may be from any area of the country.

Men's Master's teams may select two players from that team's geographic area, defined as East or West of the Mississippi River, and no additional "Snowbirds" will be allowed.

**Frozen Roster:** A player is frozen to a team roster after **July 1**. AFTER THAT DATE, a player is frozen to the roster, may only make one move to another team, and cannot return to his/her original team. Players that are going to play in the same age division are required to play at the same or higher classification level.

It is the dual responsibility of the player and team manager to ensure that a player's name does not appear on more than one qualifying tournament team roster per age group.

**Roster Additions:** Prior to **July 1**, rosters are considered "Open" and may be updated/changed between tournaments. Except as discussed below, a team may replace a maximum of two players to their roster after that date. These players may be no more than one higher classification and may change the team's classification.

No team may add a player with a higher player rating to their roster after **July 1** of the current year.

**Deadline:** All players must be added to the roster **14 days** prior to their specific World Championship Tournament. The SPA Executive Director or SPA National Headquarters must approve any exceptions to this policy.

**NOTE:** 69 year-old players may NOT be added to qualified rosters in the 65+ Age Division.

**Example:** A 60 year-old team may add two sixty-five or over players to its roster.

Roster additions must be submitted on-line prior to the Roster cut-off date for each tournament.

### **PLAYING IN TWO DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS**

A double-rostered player may play in two different age groups on any given weekend including **World Tournaments** for which he/she is eligible. Such play must be at the same level of classification or at the next lower level of classification on the younger team. Eligibility rules concerning player ratings will still apply for participation with either team.

Example: A 65+ player with a major player rating may play on a 65+ Major team, and also play on either a 60+ Major or 60+ AAA team. However, if the 65+ player is playing on a 60+ Major team then he/she would not be eligible to also play on a 65+ AAA team. Likewise, A 65+ player with a Major Plus rating would not be eligible to also play on a 60+ AAA team.

A player may not be on more than two rosters at any given time. Players may not participate on more than two World Tournament rosters in the calendar year.

No team may have more than two double-rostered players.

**NOTE:** Double rostering will not be allowed when 2 ages/classifications are combined in a single tournament, such that the two teams could potentially meet at any point in the tournament.

Double-roster protests will require submission of a \$75 protest fee. Protests that are upheld due to double roster violations under this policy will result in the immediate ejection of the offending team manager and the youngest double-rostered player on the offending team. The ejected player will then be stricken from the offending team's roster for the remainder of the tournament.

### **Player Participation Rules**

All Senior SPA Players properly entered in the SPA on-line roster system prior to the tournament AND shown on the printed roster provided by the Tournament Director at the tournament will be required to show their current driver's license or government-issued picture ID showing their state of residence, prior to participating in any SPA event. ECARDS and E-Driver's licenses are acceptable.

Players added or handwritten on the roster will be required to show BOTH their National Player Registration card and their current driver's license or government-issued picture ID showing their state of residence, prior to participating in any SPA event. ECARDS and E-Driver's licenses are acceptable.

When player "wrist bands", or other check-in registration identifiers are employed, players must properly wear and display the bands/identifiers during all play. Players found to be in violation of the "wrist-band" rule will be immediately removed from the game until they obtain and properly display a



valid band/identifier. Play will not be suspended to accommodate the offending player, and if he/she is a batter or base runner, an out will be recorded.

All players are required to carefully read and sign the official team roster before playing their first game in any SPA-sanctioned event. Any player entering a game without first reading and signing the official team roster will be considered an ineligible player.

All exceptions to this rule must be approved by the Tournament Director, or the SPA Executive Director.

**Player Ratings:** No more than three (3) players with individual player ratings that are higher than their team's classification will be allowed to play with that team, however all three must be from that team's age group or older. As an exception, not more than 2 players at least ten years higher in age than the team's registered age will be allowed to play in this manner and will not count toward this three-player limit. No player with a Player Rating that is more than one step higher than a team's current classification may participate with that team at any time.

Example: A player rated Major may never participate on a AA team, and a Major Plus player may never participate on a AAA team.

**Player Rating Appeal:** Players may appeal their current rating to the SPA Classification/Appeal committee **only ONCE per year and for not more than ONE rating level**, by submitting the SPA Player Rating Appeal Via email or regular mail. The player rating appeal form can be found on the SPA official website. A player requesting rerating for Medical Reasons must also submit Via email or regular mail a note/letter from his doctor. Stating that because of the players Injury or health, the players ability to play at the higher skill level is significantly affected and that the injury or health issue is a permanent condition.

The decision of the SPA Classification/Appeal Committee is final. Rerating appeals will be considered/reviewed on March 15<sup>th</sup>, April 15<sup>th</sup>, May 15<sup>th</sup> and June 15<sup>th</sup>.

All player rating changes by appeal have a mandatory 30 day waiting period before player can participate at a rerated lower skill level, **unless that player remains on their same existing team roster**. This waiting period starts on the date of the player's approved appeal.

Any player that is moved down in player rating by appeal will be frozen to the new rating and may not participate in classes lower than the new rating for 1 year from the date of appeal approval.

## **Snowbird Rule**

No AA team may have more than three (3) players with Snowbird Status on its roster. Snowbird players are not allowed in the AAA, Major, or Major Plus programs. Players maintaining residency in multiple states may apply for Snowbird Status. Snowbird applicants must complete and submit an

"OFFICIAL SPA SNOWBIRD" application with proof of residency for both locations. Application must be approved by the SPA Executive Director prior to "Snowbird Status" award. The following rules will apply:

- a. All applicants must reside for a period of a minimum of three (3) consecutive and complete months at each residence.
- b. All applicants will be validated and location and residency will be checked by an SPA representative.
- c. Owning property is not the only requirement for Snowbird Status. Residing on the property for the required length of time is mandatory.
- d. Leasing property is acceptable but the same residency requirements must be met.
- e. Applicants are **only eligible** to compete with **ONE (1)** team in their "snowbird state", and must declare what team they will play for, prior to Snowbird approval.

**NOTE:** Snowbird players may NOT participate with another team and subsequently return to their original team.

**EXAMPLE:** A player that has participated as a "snowbird" player on Team A from Florida, returns to his home state of residence in Michigan, and subsequently plays with Team B from Michigan. That player may **NOT** return to Florida to participate with ANY Florida registered team during that calendar year.

Snowbird Applications must include:

1. Both residence addresses, and phone numbers (Telephone numbers may be the same number if cell phones are used).
2. Proof of three (3) months of residency in each location.
3. Current SPA Player card registration number.
4. Team Name, Age, Classification that Snowbird player will be participating with.
5. Team Manager's name, address, and phone number
6. All applications submitted for Snowbird Status must include a \$30 processing fee.

### **Team Participation Rules**

A team is required to participate in SPA Tournament play to be eligible to advance to the World Championships as follows:

- To qualify, teams must play in at least one (1) SPA qualifier to be eligible.
- Men's Master's Program teams, Senior Program Major Plus, and 75+ and 80+ age group teams are not required to qualify.

A team that enters an SPA-sanctioned event must play in all pool play or round-robin games to be eligible to advance and play in the championship tournament bracket. **PENALTY:** Any failure to do so will result in the team being seeded last.

The SPA tournament director or the SPA Executive Director must approve exceptions to participation rules.

### **70+ Age Division Rosters**

In the Men's 70+ age division, teams may have a maximum of three players that are 69 years of age.

### **75+ Age Division Rosters**

In the Men's 75+ age divisions, teams may have a maximum of five players that are 74 years of age.

### **Men's 80+ Division Roster**

In the Men's 80+ age division, teams may have a maximum of seven players that are younger than 80. No more than 3 of these players may be 78. The remaining players under this rule must be 79.

### **Men's 85+ Division Roster**

In the Men's 85+ age division, teams may have a maximum of ten players that are younger than 85. No more than 5 of these players may be 83. The remaining players under this rule must be 84.

**Any exceptions or changes to the Rules set forth in this SPA Official Rulebook must be approved by the SPA Executive Director PRIOR to implementation of the exception or change.**

## **SPA TOURNAMENT GUIDELINES**

The following tournament guidelines are to be used when hosting an SPA-sanctioned event:

- When an odd number of teams have entered a 3-game pool, the last team submitting a paid entry to the tournament will be scheduled to play only two pool games with an average of their pool scores being used as their 3<sup>rd</sup> game score.
- All SPA playing rules will be enforced.
- All SPA Policies and Procedures will be enforced.
- All teams are required to be SPA-registered.
- All players must have a current SPA player card.
- SPA recommends the use of two umpires in all SPA-sanctioned play, however, one (1) umpire may be used in all pool play games based on umpire availabilities. Two (2) umpires will be used for all bracket games.
- Whenever possible SPA umpires should be used..
- Awards Package
  - All-Tournament Awards
  - MVP - Champion Team
  - Best Defensive - Finalist Team
- Negotiated SPA tournament sanction FEE, plus \$10 per team with

\$300 minimum if a Tournament Director is provided by SPA. These fees will be sent to the SPA Headquarters along with the following tournament information:

- Tournament standings
- Team scores in both pool play and double elimination tournament, or any other formats.
- Team Rosters
- Player Exception Forms and any Exception fees.
- SPA On-line Roster Management System entries must be made within three (3) days of the conclusion of the tournament. These entries include but are not limited to:
  - Player exception entries
  - Roster Freezes
  - Tournament Results

All administrative forms and information and fees are due in the SPA National office **within ten days** of conclusion of the tournament. **Note: this information must be sent Express Mail, Second Day Air, or Overnight to allow tracking.** This will enable us to update our web site. This tournament information, (i.e. Team standings and game scores) are passed onto the National Classification Board for the use of classifying teams nationally.

## **SPA TRIPLE CROWN PROGRAM**

The **SPA Triple Crown Program** consists of four geographical regional qualifying tournaments in each age and classification. A team must enter and be the highest finishing team in a Triple Crown qualifying tournament. The highest finishing non-Triple Crown qualified team in this **1st leg** earns a berth to play in the second leg of the SPA Triple Crown tournament.

**2nd Leg -** Triple Crown qualified teams will be paired against each other during pool play at the SPA World Championship tournament for their respective class and age group. The North, South, East, and West representatives will play against each other in a 2 game single elimination tournament. The winners of these first games will play each other with the winner being recognized as **SPA Triple Crown 2<sup>nd</sup> Leg Champion.**

**3rd Leg -** Should the winner of the 2nd Leg **also** win the SPA World Tournament **bracket play**, that team will be declared **SPA World Champions, AND SPA Triple Crown Champion!**

- Once a team completes and wins the first leg of the "Triple Crown", it will have two weeks from the completion of that tournament to accept or decline the berth. This berth can only be passed down to the team that finishes in second place if the winner refuses to accept the berth. The team that accepts this berth must pay a \$100.00 deposit to the SPA National Office to secure their berth. There will be no refunds of this deposit. The team must submit the balance of their team's entry fee to the National Tournament by the entry deadline in order to enter the tournament.

- Should the winner of the 1<sup>st</sup> Leg win the SPA World Tournament Bracket play, that team will be declared SPA World Champions **AND** SPA Triple Crown Champion.

**Note:** When only one team is entered in Triple Crown play at the SPA World Championship, no awards will be presented and the #1 seed is not automatically awarded.

## **Tournament Format Policy:**

SPA reserves the right to combine teams with other age groups or classifications as deemed necessary. When ages or classifications are combined in the same finals bracket, only 1 set of awards will be presented for that bracket.

SPA tournament format guidelines are as follows:

When

- Only two teams are entered and cannot be combined with another age group or classification – tournament will be played as a “best of 5” competition.
- 3 or more teams are entered – tournament played as a two-game pool followed by a Double Elimination Bracket, except in the 75+ and older age divisions which will play three game pools.

**Note: When ages/classifications are combined for Championship play, only one set of awards will be provided.**

**Seeding Process:** The Tournament Director has the authorization to place the teams in each division based upon the overall strength and skill of the team, using the following information as a guideline:

Win - loss record

Head to head results (**only when all tied teams play one another**)

Runs allowed (minus equalizer points if given)

Run differential (minus equalizer points if given)

Total runs scored (minus equalizer points if given)

Flip of a coin

## **WEATHER DELAY POLICY:**

When issues arise around field availability due to inclement weather (i.e. rain, temperature, etc.), or other circumstances beyond our control, the following SPA options may be implemented as required by the Tournament Director.

- A Time limit of not less than 50 minutes may be enforced.
- Once the time limit has expired, the teams will then complete that inning and the game is over.

- All games may be started with the count of 3 balls and 2 strikes. (1 Pitch)
- Tournament bracket or pool play format change. (may include a change to single elimination)
- Suspension or cancellation of the event.

### **Entry Fee Refund Policy**

No entry fee refunds will be given after schedules/brackets have been published for any SPA National/World Championship. If refund credits are elected, such credits must be used in the current calendar year for entry into SPA sponsored tournaments only.

### **Rainout Refund Policy**

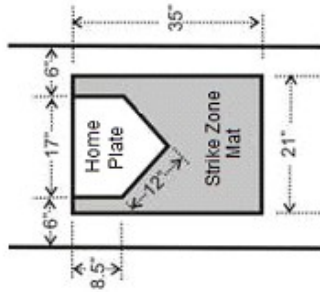
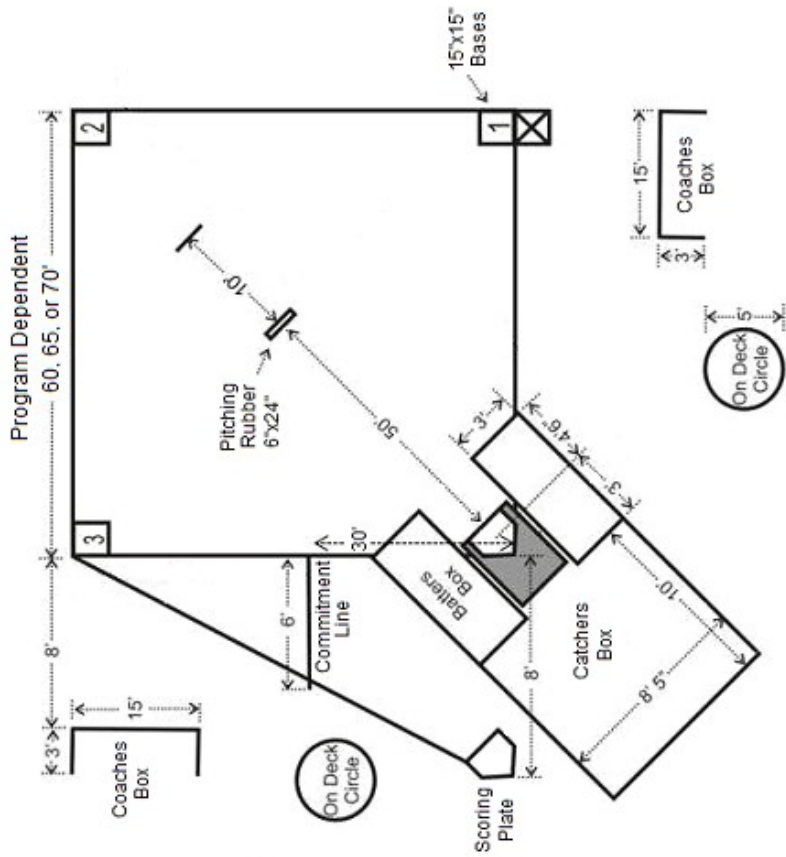
No entry fee refunds will be given once Pool Play is completed due to discontinuation/cancellation due to rain or other acts of nature. If such discontinuation/cancellation occurs after beginning play and **prior** to the completion of Pool Play a 50% refund will be issued in the form of credit toward entry into SPA sponsored tournaments. Such credits must be used in the current calendar year for entry into SPA sponsored tournaments only.

### **Financial Responsibility Policy**

SPA and its directors are not responsible for any expenses incurred by a team, player, or players as a result of arrangements made (hotel, airplane flights, etc.) to attend a SPA-sanctioned event. All participants are solely responsible for any and all expenses incurred as a result of attending or making arrangements to attend a SPA event.

# SPA Field Specifications

(Not drawn to scale)



## **ACTS OF DISBARMENT OR SUSPENSION**

Any team, player, manager/coach, umpire, director, or any other person, whose conduct on or off the field would be detrimental to SPA, will be dealt with immediately. SPA expects all managers/coaches, players, and team representatives to act in a manner where sportsmanship is always practiced. The SPA also expects team coaches or officials to ensure that all tournaments in which they participate are sanctioned. SPA, through its Directors and National Headquarters, shall have and reserve the right to withdraw registration at any time to include during the playing of any sanctioned tournament.

The SPA will not tolerate and may eject, suspend, or disbar any coach, player, team official, umpire, director, or any other person for any of the following unsportsmanlike actions or behaviors:

- The display of abusive behavior in any form during the playing of a SPA event:

- Using words or actions that will incite demonstrations.

- Using any form of intimidation tactics (profanity, baiting, ridicule, etc.) in the taunting of any team and its members.

- The use of any behavior that is not conducive to fair play.

- Fighting and/or leaving the bench area when a fight has broken out.

- Any type of physical attack on a player, umpire, or tournament official during the playing of the game, or at any time following the game.

If upon further investigation by the SPA Director, any of the above unsportsmanlike conduct is warranted to be severe enough in nature, the SPA has the right to issue additional penalties. Such penalties may involve the suspension of further play of the team and/or its members, or disbarment of the guilty parties from the SPA.

### **Further Acts of Disbarment or Suspension:**

- Any team or player knowingly competing with or against ineligible or suspended players.

- Any team, player, coach, umpire, director, or any other person participating in, or permitting a fraud to be perpetrated.

- Any person, official or director who refuses to submit collected or owed funds that are due the SPA.

- Any team, player, coach, manager, umpire, director or any other person who is disbarred or suspended from any other organization for unsportsmanlike conduct, may also be disbarred or suspended from SPA.

- Any player, coach, or team that competes under an assumed name.

- Any person or persons submitting a bad check/credit card charge to the SPA or any of its tournament hosts.



Any team failing to show up after entering an SPA Qualifying, National, World Championship, or World Series Tournament unless reasonable advance notice has been given. Reasonable advance notice, in most cases, will be the tournament entry deadline or fifteen (15) days prior to the start of the tournament.

Any person purposely using false information to damage the reputation, image, or credibility of the SPA or its Officials

Any SPA officer, Director, or persons representing the SPA, that does not adhere to the Policies or Procedures of the SPA.

Any SPA officer, Director, or persons representing SPA, that fail to submit fees and/or information due the SPA, in a timely manner.

Any participant, team, or other party who threatens in writing, through legal council or otherwise to take legal action against the SPA, files a legal action against the SPA, or has a lawyer contact the SPA verbally regarding a dispute will automatically be suspended from all SPA activities until the legal discussions are concluded to the satisfaction of the SPA.

Additionally, if legal action is filed against SPA or an SPA affiliated person, park, or facility by an participant, team, coach, or any related person, the person filing the action, the person's team and each of its members may be suspended from any and all SPA events until the legal actions are resolved to the satisfaction of SPA.

Any person suspended for any reason, will not be allowed to participate in any capacity within the SPA, until such suspension has been lifted. This would include any Sanctioned event or any event being conducted under the administration of the SPA.

Outline of the SPA Appeal Procedure:

Step 1: Any team or player affected by the occurrence or condition that would cause an appeal may present that appeal in writing to the appropriate Director within fifteen (15) days after the occurrence or condition. If not filed within fifteen (15) days, the applicant will lose their right to appeal.

Step 2: If the appealing team/person does not receive a satisfactory resolution to the first appeal, the applicant may indicate dissatisfaction with the first appeal. The applicant may then submit the proper forms within fifteen (15) days to the appropriate SPA Official duly appointed by the Executive Director to conduct the second step of the appeal process. If not filed within fifteen (15) days, the applicant loses their right to appeal.

Step 3: If the appealing team/person does not receive a satisfactory resolution to the second appeal, the applicant may indicate dissatisfaction with the second appeal. The applicant may submit within ten (10) days the proper forms to the Executive Director of the

SPA, unless there has been a mutual agreement for an extension. The applicant may submit this final appeal in writing or may request that a hearing be conducted. All parties involved may have legal counsel and any witnesses at this hearing. The applicant must pay all financial responsibilities for such legal counsel or witnesses.

NOTE: The Executive Director must render a decision within twenty (20) days pertaining to the final appeal. The decision rendered by the Executive Director is final and under no circumstances will another appeal be granted.

DISCLAIMER: THE SOFTBALL PLAYERS ASSOCIATION (SPA), ITS OFFICIALS, AGENTS, EMPLOYEES, SPONSORS, VOLUNTEERS, CONTRACTORS, LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS, AND AFFILIATES ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY INJURY (INCLUDING DEATH) OR LOSS OF PROPERTY TO ANY PERSON SUFFERED WHILE WATCHING, PLAYING, PRACTICING, OR IN ANY OTHER WAY AT OR INVOLVED IN THE GAME OF SOFTBALL FOR ANY REASON WHATSOEVER, INCLUDING ORDINARY NEGLIGENCE ON THE PART OF SPA OR ITS AGENTS, EMPLOYEES, SPONSORS, VOLUNTEERS, THE OWNERS AND LESSORS OF THE PREMISES AND ALL OTHERS WHO ARE INVOLVED AND INCLUDING THE RECKLESS CONDUCT OF OTHER PARTICIPANTS. SPA EXPRESSLY DISCLAIMS ANY AND ALL LIABILITY FOR ANY INJURY OR PROPERTY LOSS RELATED IN ANY WAY TO THE GAME OF SOFTBALL. THE INFORMATION PROVIDED HEREIN IS PROVIDED "AS-IS" AND WITHOUT WARRANTY OF ANY KIND. SPA MAKES NO WARRANTY, THAT THE INFORMATION IN THIS GUIDE WILL PREVENT INJURIES OR ELIMINATE THE RISK OF INJURIES. THE INFORMATION IN THIS GUIDE IS BELIEVED TO BE ACCURATE BUT IS NOT WARRANTED TO BE ACCURATE. This warning, disclosure and disclaimer is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by applicable laws. If any portion is held invalid the remainder of the warning, disclosure and disclaimer will continue in full legal force and effect.

### Table of Geographic Eligibility

	State	Players Eligible From:							
AK	ALASKA	WA							
AL	ALABAMA	TN	GA	FL	MS	LA			
AR	ARKANSAS	MO	TN	MS	LA	TX	OK		
AZ	ARIZONA	UT	CO	NM	CA	NV			
CA	CALIFORNIA	OR	NV	AZ	HI				
CN	CANADA	MI	OH	WI	PA	NY			
CO	COLORADO	WY	NE	KS	OK	NM	AZ	UT	
CT	CONNECTICUT	MA	RI	NY	ME	NH	VT	PA	NJ
DC	DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	MD	VA						
DE	DELAWARE	PA	NJ	MD	NY				
FL	FLORIDA	GA	AL						
GA	GEORGIA	NC	SC	FL	AL	TN			
HI	HAWAII	CA							
IA	IOWA	MN	WI	IL	MO	NE	SD		
ID	IDAHO	MT	WY	UT	NV	OR	WA		
IL	ILLINOIS	WI	IN	KY	MO	IA			
IN	INDIANA	MI	OH	KY	IL				
KS	KANSAS	NE	MO	OK	CO				
KY	KENTUCKY	OH	WV	VA	TN	MO	IL	IN	
LA	LOUISIANA	AR	MS	TX	TN	AL			
MA	MASSACHUSETTS	NH	RI	CT	NY	VT	PA	NJ	ME
MD	MARYLAND	PA	DE	DC	VA	WV			
ME	MAINE	NH	CT	NY	MA	RI	VT	PA	NJ
MI	MICHIGAN	OH	IN	WI					
MN	MINNESOTA	WI	IA	SD	ND				
MO	MISSOURI	IA	IL	KY	TN	AR	OK	KS	NE
MS	MISSISSIPPI	TN	AL	LA	AR	TX			
MT	MONTANA	ND	SD	WY	ID				

	State	Players Eligible From:							
NC	NORTH CAROLINA	VA	SC	GA	TN				
ND	NORTH DAKOTA	MN	SD	MT					
NE	NEBRASKA	SD	IA	MO	KS	CO	WY		
NH	NEW HAMPSHIRE	ME	MA	VT	CT	RI	PA	NJ	NY
NJ	NEW JERSEY	NY	MD	DE	PA				
NM	NEW MEXICO	CO	OK	TX	AZ	UT			
NV	NEVADA	ID	UT	AZ	CA	OR			
NY	NEW YORK	VT	MA	CT	NJ	PA	ME	NH	RI
OH	OHIO	PA	WV	KY	IN	MI			
OK	OKLAHOMA	KS	MO	AR	TX	NM	CO		
OR	OREGON	WA	ID	NV	CA				
PA	PENNSYLVANIA	NY	NJ	DE	MD	WV	OH		
RI	RHODE ISLAND	MA	CT	NY	ME	NH	VT	PA	NJ
SC	SOUTH CAROLINA	NC	GA						
SD	SOUTH DAKOTA	ND	MN	IA	NE	WY	MT		
TN	TENNESSEE	KY	VA	NC	GA	AL	MS	AR	MO
TX	TEXAS	OK	AR	LA	NM				
UT	UTAH	ID	WY	CO	NM	AZ	NV		
VA	VIRGINIA	MD	DC	NC	TN	KY	WV		
VT	VERMONT	NH	MA	NY	CT	ME	RI	PA	NJ
WA	WASHINGTON	AK	ID	OR					
WI	WISCONSIN	MI	IL	IA	MN				
WV	WEST VIRGINIA	PA	MD	VA	KY	OH			
WY	WYOMING	MT	SD	NE	CO	UT	ID		