

Softball Rules and Modifications

The complete set of Special Olympic rules, which govern the Special Olympics Massachusetts Softball competition, are in the Official Special Olympics Summer Rules Book and can be found at <http://www.specialolympics.org/sports.aspx> Federation Internationale de Softball (FIS), American Softball Association (ASA) and United States Specialty Sports Association (USSSA) slow pitch softball rules shall be employed except when in conflict with Special Olympics Sports Rules and SOMA modifications. The SOMA modifications, as well as some pertinent general rules are noted below. SOMA modifications are noted in underlined Italics.

I. General Rules Notes

- A. A regulation game shall consist of seven innings. The game will be considered complete if after five full innings of play one team leads the other by ten runs or more. **No inning shall begin after sixty-five (70) minutes.** All innings started prior to 70 minutes must be completed unless the team batting in the bottom half of the inning is ahead. Time limit is subject to change.
- B. An additional player behind the catcher to assist during game is NOT permitted and may result in forfeit.
- C. The distance from home plate to the pitcher's rubber may be modified to a minimum distance of 40' from the official distance of 50'.
- D. Grounds Rule may be invoked where the fields have "short outfields" due to fencing and may be invoked at anytime during the tournament. When ground rule is invoked: a team will be allowed three homeruns per game, after the third homerun to clear the fence, any ball hit fair over any fence, on the fly, throughout the game will be considered an **out**. A ball hit fair that bounces over a fence will be considered an automatic double.
- E. The ball must be pitched in an underhand motion, and should travel in an arc that is no less than 6' and not greater than 12'.
- F. Four balls constitute a walk and three strikes constitute an out. **If the batter has two strikes and fouls off the third attempt, he/she will be declared out.**
- G. The umpires are empowered to make all decisions on the playing field. If a **PROTEST** is made it shall be brought to the Softball Rules Committee who will make the final decision. A protest may only be made if it questions the *applicability* of the rules. No protest will be considered which pertains to any judgment call made by an umpire. A protest can only be filed by a non-playing coach and he/she must declare the protest immediately. All games shall continue play under protest and the Softball Rules Committee upon completion of the game shall make the final decision.
- H. If a coach touches a runner while the ball is still in play, that runner will be declared out.
- I. Coaches are required to stay within the boundaries of the coaches' box.
- J. Sliding is legal for safety reasons.
- K. Between innings, the pitcher is only allowed two (2) warm up throws to the catcher.
- L. Courtesy Runners are allowed for those individuals who have problems running. Teams must notify umpires and opposing coaches prior to the start of the game of those individuals needing a courtesy runner. The courtesy runner will be allowed to enter game once the batter reaches first base and coach asks umpire for permission to make change. A partner can not run for an athlete and runner must be last athlete who made an out.
- M. Safety Bases: See equipment below for rules regarding safety bases

II. Unified Sports Team Competition Rules

- A. The roster shall contain a proportionate number of athletes and partners. A maximum of 15 players is allowed on a roster. In the event a FINAL registration is submitted with more than 15 players, each player, starting with the last name on the roster will be scratched until the maximum number of athletes is 15.
- B. A maximum of 18 players is allowed on a roster on Special Olympics Massachusetts Assessment registrations. If you have more than this on your Assessment Registration, please split your team into two teams. Please note that the maximum of 15 players will be implemented once Final registration is submitted AND at the State Tournament in August.

- C. Each team shall have an adult **NON-PLAYING** coach responsible for the line-up and conduct of the team during competition. (The conduct of the team includes but is not limited to changing the line-up and field positions of players).
- D. A team roster shall contain a proportionate number of Athletes and Partners; athlete to partner ration of 50:50 or 60:40 is preferred. However, under no circumstance will a team be allowed to play whereas the number of unified partners exceeds the number of athletes.
- E. **Failure to adhere to the above will result in a FORFIET.**
- F. A minimum of ten players must start each game. In case of injury, nine players may complete the game.
- G. Coaches may place athletes and partners in positions and batting order as they wish. (Athlete-partner ratios and EP rules must be observed.)
- H. Unlimited batting order is **NOT** allowed. Only players allowed to bat are those listed in the line up. If a player is not a position player or EP then they are substitutes and cannot bat until they have been inserted into the lineup replacing another player
- I. If an Extra Players (EP) is used, two (2) must be used, an athlete and a partner. If EP's are to be used it must be made known **PRIOR** to the start of the game and listed on the score sheet in the regular batting order.
 - 1. The EP must remain in the same position in the batting order for the game.
 - 2. If an EP is used, they must be used the entire game. The EP may be substituted for at any time but the substituted player must be one that has not yet been in the game. The starting EP may re-enter.

III. Equipment

- A. A 30cm (11 ¾ ") restricted softball must be used. Yellow balls will be allowed to accommodate sight-impaired athletes upon request.
- B. **NO METAL OR ALUMINUM BATS WILL BE ALLOWED. Only wooden softball bats will be allowed.** Umpires and Tournament Directors will make final ruling as to the legality of all bats.
- C. Only First Basemen and Catchers may wear a first baseman's trapping type mitt.
- D. The catcher must wear a face mask and helmet. It is strongly recommended that chest protector and shin guards be worn.
- E. All batters and base runners must wear a batter's helmet. On deck batters must also wear a helmet.
- F. **Safety Bases:** We will be using a safety base at both first base and home plate. At first base any ball hit to the infielder the runner must use the outside orange base or they will be declared out. At a play at home plate runners must always run the home plate safety base to avoid collisions. If they do not they will be out. The play will be called like a force play at a base and not as a tag. Runner will be considered committed to home plate once they are half way down the 3rd base line. The ½ point will be clearly marked. Once they cross this point and the runner retreats to 3rd but the catcher plays the plate and steps on the plate runner will be out.

IV. Miscellaneous

- A. Team **NAME** must be the **SAME** name used on the Assessment Round registration, Team Uniforms, AND on Final registration.
- B. **ONLY** teams that have attended a SOMA Assessment Round may advance to the State Tournament in August. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**
- C. Teams within the same Local Program may **NOT** share the same team name even with designated numbers or head coach name attached. Local Programs with several teams competing **MUST** assign a **DIFFERENT NAME** to each of their respective teams. FINAL registrations (team rosters) from a Local Program with two or more of those teams having the **same name** will be considered as a **single, combined roster.** (See IIA)
- D. **MISCONDUCT:** Any athlete or coach that demonstrates misconduct (i.e. foul language, abusive behavior towards teammates, opponents or officials) will be reprimanded at the discretion of the official or venue director and may result in expulsion from the game/tournament. Appropriate conduct is expected at all Events