2020 SOFTBALL SEASON OVERVIEW

Softball Season Calendar

- **Registration Deadlines**
  - Team intentions due – June 24, 2020
  - Qualifying Tournaments – July 8, 2020
  - Season Ending Tournament, Tournament of Champions – July 29, 2020
- **Qualifying Tournaments**
  - Nonotuck Park July 18, 2020
  - Bellingham Softball complex & Middle School July 25, 2020
  - Teams will be assigned to a qualifier
- **Season Ending State Tournaments**
  - Tournament of Champions August 22 & 23, 2020

**Registration**

- Programs **must** abide by registration deadlines. Programs that do not meet registration deadlines will not be eligible to compete
- In order to attend any event or practice all participants must have up to date forms and/or certifications on file with Special Olympics Massachusetts by published deadline

**Waivers**

- In order to advance to a State level season ending tournament (*tournament of champions*) all participants must compete at and qualify through a regional qualifier.
  - An athlete who is sick or injured may be granted a waiver if Special Olympics MA is notified in advance or immediately after tournament and there is still space available at Tournament of Champions
  - No team waivers will be given
- Waivers will not be giving out for behavioral issues or athlete doesn’t feel like attending that day

**Sport Resources**

A variety of coaching resources are available for download at the Special Olympics [sport resource page](https://resources.specialolympics.org/sports-essentials). These include

- **Sport Essentials**
  - Article One / Coaching S.O. Athlete / Sport Rules / Coaching Guides / Athlete & Coach Development Models
- **Unified Sports**
  - Online Certification Course / Unified Sport Models / Team Assessment Tools / Principles of Meaningful Involvement / Tutorial Videos / Unified Guidelines
Age Guidelines
- 8-15
- 16-21
- 22+
- These are guidelines athletes maybe bumped up in age group to make competitive divisions. But will not be bumped up an age group that spans two age groups. Divisioning comes down to ability being the determining factor.
- Athletes age is determined by age of athlete at State Games
- Age group is determined by oldest member of the team

Uniform Guidelines for Golf (Participants & Coaches)
- Matching shirts with numbers on back
- If tank top used all undershirts must be same color
- Matching hats (all same color)
- Matching shorts or pants
  - All shorts or pants must be same color

Website / Event Info
- All Events are posted to the calendar page Special Olympics MA website.
- Event pages will include:
  - Programs assigned to event
  - Event timelines
  - Event contact Information and On site leaders
  - Event Schedule with participation #’s by event
  - Weather policy
- Spring Season Resource Page
  - Links to events
  - Sport rules
  - Registration form

Levels of Competition
- Qualifying Tournament
  - In order to advance on to Tournament of Champions athletes must participate in a qualifying tournament
  - Ribbons will be awarded based on placement with in their division
- Season Ending State Tournaments
  - Tournament of Champions
    - Criteria to attend: must have competed at a qualifying tournament and received a pre-determined award. No waivers will be granted
    - Have attended all assigned competition events
    - Medals and Ribbons will be awarded based on teams placement.
SOMA Softball Rules

- All Batters will start with 1 ball and 1 strike. This will be for all tournaments including Qualifiers and Tournament of Champions. Batter will be allowed a max of three fouls balls per at bat. The third foul ball will be strike three.
- Once the catcher bats and makes it on base they are allowed to have a courtesy runner. An athlete catcher can be subbed for an athlete or partner. A partner can only be subbed in for a partner. This is to allow for the catcher to have more time to get their gear on for when team is in the field.
- At home plate and first base there will be an orange safety base. The base runner must touch the safety base to be safe. If they touch the normal plate, they will not be considered safe and can be tagged out.
- Sliding is legal
- Pitches must be thrown underhand
- There shall be no one behind the catcher to help retrieve balls

Softball Leagues

Softball leagues give programs and extra opportunity to practice and scrimmage against other teams in the area. Umpires will be at each game.

Softball leagues will start at the beginning of the season and run for a couple weeks throughout the summer on a weekday night. Locations and teams and still TBD.

Best Practices of a Safe Coach

The following bullets are simple best practices of a safe coach and reminders for all Special Olympic Massachusetts coach

- Limit 1 to 1 interaction with athletes
  - always be with in the sight line or ear shot of others
- Always submit an incident report after an injury
- Follow injury and concussion return to play policy
- Never distribute any medication that is not in its original container
- Mandated reporter
  - SOMA coaches are not mandated reporters,
  - you know your athletes and if you suspect that they are subject to any abuse or in immediate danger do not hesitate to notify the police and Special Olympics staff
- Before any trip, event or overnight
  - review code of conduct
  - clearly explain rules and behavior expectations for all (athletes, chaperones, partners)
- Create a session long training plan that sets goals that focus on athlete development and skill improvement
Smoking, Drinking, Illegal Substances

- Special Olympics Massachusetts has established that all competition venues, housing facilities, ceremonies venues, and Olympic Towns will be alcohol, tobacco, cannabis (of any form), non-control substances & vaping free. Any coach, chaperone, volunteer, family member or athlete in violation of the Policy will face disciplinary action from SOMA, which could result in the violating individual(s) being sent home and suspended from future participation. SOMA Coaches, Chaperones, Volunteers, Family Members or Athletes must agree to abstain from the consumption of alcoholic beverages, tobacco, cannabis, and vaping during the entire course of all Special Olympics Massachusetts competition events.

- No concealed weapons, firearms are allowed at any Special Olympics Massachusetts event!
Coaching Criteria

Below is the most current version of the United States Coaches Education system that is required of all Special Olympics coaches as outlined by Special Olympics North America. This progression chart was approved by the Special Olympics United States Leadership Committee in Fall of 2018.

Sport Assistant Coach
- Valid Class A Form
- Special Olympics MA General Orientation
- Concussion Certification
- Protective Behaviors

Level 1 - Certified Coach (*core coach knowledge*)
Traditional Special Olympics Coach
- All Sport Assistant Coach Requirements
- Coaching Special Olympics Athlete
  - Online course via Human Kinetics Coach Education
  - Or in person training conducted by a Chapter approved trainer

Unified Sports
- All Sport Assistant Coach Requirements
- Coaching Unified Sports
  - Online Unified Sports course via NFHS
  - Or in person training conducted by a Chapter approved trainer

Level 2 - Certified Coach (*Sports Specific Knowledge*)
Traditional Special Olympics and Unified Sports
- All Level 1 requirements
- Sports Specific Course
  - Online for those sports where online courses have been developed
  - Or in person sport specific training

** NOTE- Level required of Head Coaches attending a USA Games in specific sport being coached

Level 3 - Certified Coach (*Advanced Coaching Knowledge*)
- All Level 2 requirements
- Principles of Coaching
  - Or in person training conducted by a Chapter approved trainer

** NOTE- Level required of Head Coaches attending a World Games in specific sport being coached

If you have any questions about your certification status or certification status of the coaches in your program please contact your Business Operations contact

March 26, 2020