

Vancouver Metro Senior Softball Association

Adopted League Rules for 2021

as amended by the VMSSA Board of Directors on 06/14/2021.

The rules of play allow for amendments as necessary for non-championship recreational play. The intent of these amendments is to promote fair competition and minimize injuries. The 2020-2021 Senior Softball USA rulebook (www.seniorsoftball.com) applies to any ruling(s) not specifically listed here. (Amended 03/24/2021)

1. **Balls and Bats**

VMSSA shall conform to Senior Softball USA rules.

2. **Determination for Play**

- A. The league will adhere to the current and any updated Covid-19 rules as mandated by the State of Washington (www.governor.wa.gov) for Sporting Activities COVID-19 Requirements - Adult Recreational Team Sports (Outdoor - Moderate Risk Sports). (Amended 03/24/2021)
- B. At game time, and at any time during the course of a game, the home plate umpire shall be the sole judge of the fitness of the field for play.
- C. Hot Weather Procedures - All games are cancelled if the forecasted temperature is 96 degrees Fahrenheit or higher at game time per the Accu-Weather App using Vancouver, WA 98684 as the location.
- D. Unhealthy Air Procedures – All games are cancelled if the air quality is indexed at 151 or over at 3:00 pm of game day per www.airnow.gov for zip code 98684. (Amended 03/24/2021)

3. **Designation of Home Team**

- A. The home team shall be the team listed first on the schedule.
- B. Home team is assigned the first base dugout.

4. **Game and Run Limitations**

- A. During league play, a five run limit per inning will be in effect for all innings with the exception of the last inning, which is unlimited.

- B. Should approaching darkness limit the number of innings which can be played, the home plate umpire will designate the last inning.
- C. A game shall end after five or more innings, if one team is ahead by 15 or more runs.
- D. A weather or daylight shortened game will become official after four and one-half innings with the home team ahead or after five innings with the visiting team ahead. *(Amended 2/13/2020)*
- E. The flip-flop rule will be invoked in any game when there is a 10-run differential in favor of the visiting team at the start of the "open inning." If the visiting team is ahead by ten or more runs, the home team will remain at bat and start a new at-bats (beginning their seventh or last inning at-bats), meaning all runners then on base will return to the dugout. It will be an open inning. If the home team fails to tie or go ahead of the visiting team, the game ends and the visiting team wins. If the home team ties or goes ahead, the visiting team takes its turn at bat. *(Amended 2/13/2020)*
- F. In the event of a tie at the end of regulation, Teams start each half-inning with a runner on second base. The runner is the last batter of the previous inning whose turn at bat had been completed, assuming a position on second base. No substitute or courtesy runner may replace them until they have reached third base. EFFECT: If the last batter of the previous inning cannot continue to play because of injury, illness, etc., he will be declared out and the next previous batter will be the tie-breaker runner. *(Amended 2/13/2020)*

5. Number of Players

- A. Each team may play 9 to 11 players in the field.
- B. Player Pick-Up Rule. The intent of the player pick-up rule is to prevent forfeitures. However, a game will be considered forfeited if a team has fewer than seven of its own roster players available for the game. Teams may pick up sub players, as necessary, as long as they match the player ratings to the player(s) they are replacing. *(Amended 6/14/2021)* Pick-up players must bat last in the lineup.
- C. All roster members present and able to play shall be included in the batting order and shall play a minimum of three innings in the field in a non-shortened game. Teams have the option to sit roster players in favor of non-roster players, if necessary. *(Amended 6/14/2021)*
- D. If a team cannot field at least 9 players for the scheduled game, that team shall

forfeit the games. However, a scrimmage game may be played at the discretion of the team managers.

6. **Pitching**

- A. Pitches must be delivered with an underhand, continuous motion. The pitcher must start the delivery from a stationary position in an area 50 to 56 feet from the home plate. At the highest point of the arc, the ball must be at least 6 feet above the ground, but not more than 12 feet above the ground. Pitches judged by the umpire to be outside of such parameters shall be called an illegal pitch and counted as a ball even if the ball lands in the strike zone. If a batter swings at an illegal pitch, the illegal pitch call by the umpire is nullified and all play stands.
- B. Pitches are strikes when:
 - (i) The ball hits home plate or the strike zone mat.
 - (ii) The batter swings and misses.
 - (iii) The ball is hit foul.
 - (iv) The ball hits the batter in the strike zone.
- C. Pitchers are always required to wear a protective facemask when pitching. Pitchers may elect to wear additional safety equipment such as a helmet, shin guards, and chest protector, but these are not required.
- D. A pitching screen is available for the protection of the pitchers. The screen is to be placed 47 feet from the front edge of home plate parallel with the pitching rubber. The screen may be moved to the left or right based on the pitcher's preference but may not be moved into a position exposing more than half of the pitching rubber.
- E. The pitcher must move to a position behind the pitching screen after the ball is pitched and may not move into a defensive position until the ball is hit. If the pitcher does not step behind the pitching screen after a pitch has been delivered, they will receive two warnings and on the third instance will be removed as the pitcher, but may continue to play at a different position. Once the pitching screen is set at the beginning of an inning it may not be moved unless there is a pitching change.
- F. If only one team is using a pitching screen, that team is responsible for moving the screen on and off the field when not in use.

- G. A batted ball that hits any portion of screen shall be considered a dead ball. A ball hitting the pitching screen thrown from any defensive position will be considered a live ball and runners may advance at their own risk.
- H. One intentional walk allowed per team, per game.
- I. If, in the judgment of the umpire, the pitcher is walking another batter intentionally, that batter will advance to second base. All base runners will advance accordingly.
- J. In significantly windy conditions, if, in the judgment of the umpire, the wind is having a discernible adverse effect on the accuracy of both pitchers, the umpire may declare that only strikes count. (*Amended 2/13/2020*)

7. **Batting**

- A. All roster members present and able to play at game time must be included in the batting order. Late arrivals can be added to the batting order, but must bat last.
- B. A batter is out when:
 - (i) The batter steps into the batter's box with an illegal bat. (See rule 1.)
 - (ii) The batter's entire foot is planted completely outside the batter's box when the ball is hit.
 - (iii) The batter's foot touches home plate/mat when the ball is hit.
 - (iv) The batter bunts or chops the ball (a chopped hit, as judged by the umpire, occurs when the batter strikes downward with a chopping motion, so that the batted ball bounces high into the air).
 - (v) The batter bats out of order. However, if the error is discovered while the incorrect batter is at bat, the correct batter may take his/her place and assumes the count. If the error is discovered after the incorrect batter has completed his/her turn at bat, but before the next batter, the player who should have batted shall be called out.
 - (vi) The batter hits a foul tip on the third strike (caught or not). However, the batter is not out on a foul tip that is caught on the first or second strike. A foul tip is a batted ball that goes directly from the bat, not higher than the batter's head, directly to the catcher's hand or glove and is legally

caught by the catcher. If that ball hits the body or the equipment, it is a foul/dead ball.

- C. If a player leaves the game due to injury or physical condition, such player will not be called out for failing to bat.

8. Base Running

- A. Base runners must run base to base and all tag rules apply.
- B. Base runners cannot advance on a third strike foul tip ball.
- C. A base runner shall be called out and a dead ball declared, if he/she interferes with the fielder at any point on a base path or on a base. Said fielder is the prime player fielding a batted ball. The runner may also be called out for intentionally interfering physically or verbally with any defensive player at the umpire's discretion.
- D. A base runner shall be awarded the base to which they were advancing, plus one additional base, if the runner is impeded at any point by a fielder.
- E. Base runners may advance at their own risk following an infield fly that is caught, dropped, or not caught.
- F. A base runner may request a substitute runner at any time after reaching first base. A substitute runner may enter the game only prior to the first pitch to any batter. *(Amended 2/13/2020)* A player may be a substitute runner only once per inning. A substitute runner may request a substitute runner if injured while running the bases.
- G. A substitute runner on base when it is his/her turn to bat will be declared out. The runner will be removed from the base and a second courtesy runner may not be substituted. The substitute runner called out on base does not lose his/her turn at bat.
- H. If a player goes out of bounds after catching a fly ball, then any/all runners will advance one base.
- I. A runner must make every effort to avoid colliding with opposing players while running the bases. If, in the umpire's judgment, a runner misses a base completely to avoid a collision with a defensive player, the runner will not be called out. *(Amended 2/13/2020)*

9. Running to First Base

- A. Sliding or diving into first base is not permitted and such players will be called out.
- B. The base runner may touch the white part (left side) of first base only if they have a reasonable opportunity, as determined by the umpire, to try to advance toward second base or if they do so to avoid a collision with the first baseman. The defensive player has only the white base in fair territory to make the putout. Once the batter-runner reaches first base, the double base shall be treated as one base and the fielder or runner may use either portion. (*Amended 2/13/2020*) In all other cases, the runner must run to and touch the orange part (right side) of first base. The runner shall be called out for failure to observe this rule.
- C. After overrunning first base, the runner may turn to his/her left or right when returning to the base.
- D. A batter cannot be thrown out by an outfielder while running to first base after hitting the ball safely to the outfield. The rover is not considered an outfielder and may throw out the batter regardless of where the ball is hit. However, an outfielder may not relay the ball to the rover to make the play to first. The exception to this rule: if the batter attempts to advance to second base, he/she may be thrown out by any defensive player even if batter/runner tries to return to first base.
- E. Players with health conditions or injuries (not for being slow) will be allowed a pinch runner from home plate, but these players must be identified prior to the start of the game. The pinch runner will take his/her place on the designated pitching rubber next to the backstop and must maintain contact with the rubber until the ball is hit. (*Amended 6/14/2021*) Under ALL circumstances, the pinch runner may only advance to first base. Any pinch or courtesy runner may only be used once per inning.

10. Running to Second and Third Base

- A. A player may slide or dive into second or third base and when returning to any base.
- B. Runners shall be called out for contact or interference with a defensive player if, in the umpire's judgment, it was deliberate or could be reasonably avoided and runner failed to do so.
- C. Sliding is optional and at the discretion of the individual player. It shall never

be considered necessary or required.

- D. SLIDING SHOULD NEVER BE SO AGGRESSIVE THAT IT ENDANGERS THE DEFENSIVE PLAYER. Depending on the severity of the infraction, it will be up to the umpire to give a verbal warning or to eject the player from the game.
(Amended 2/13/2020)

11. **Running to Home Plate**

- A. A second home plate will be placed 9'-5" from the front left point of home plate as shown in the USSAA Official Senior Softball Field Dimensions Guide. This plate will be used as the scoring plate for runners advancing from third base in place of a line. Runners must touch this plate to be considered safe prior to a defensive player fielding the ball and touching the strike mat.
- B. A chalk line will be placed 30 feet from home plate and perpendicular to the foul line. A runner passing this line shall be committed to continuing toward home plate and may not return to third base or will be called out. In this case the ball remains in play.
- C. The runner must always run to the alternate home plate. The runner shall be called out for touching the home plate mat and also touching or crossing the batter's box. The ball remains in play.
- D. To put out the runner, a defensive player must touch the home plate mat while in possession of the ball before the runner touches the alternate home plate. A fielder cannot tag out a runner after the runner has crossed the commitment line.
- E. Sliding or diving into home plate is not permitted and such players will be called out.

12. **Outfield Encroachment Line**

- A. A line shall be painted in an arc from foul line to foul line 140 feet from the pitching rubber.
- B. Outfielders must remain behind the encroachment line until the ball is batted, as viewed by the field umpire. The rover may play on either side of the line. A batter who otherwise would have been put out shall be awarded first base for violation of this rule and a batter who hit safely shall be awarded one additional base.

13. **Infield Fly**

The infield fly rule is in effect whenever there are runners on first and second base, or first, second and third base with less than two outs. If an umpire judges that a fly ball can be reasonably caught by an infielder (or rover positioned as an infielder) the umpire shall immediately call “infield fly, if fair, batter is out”. After such fly ball is either caught, dropped, or not caught, runners may advance at their own risk. If the ball goes foul, it is simply a foul ball.

14. **Expediting Play**

- A. Infield warm-up is permitted during each team’s turn in the field for the first inning and at the discretion of the umpire thereafter.
- B. After the first inning, pitchers are permitted only two warm-up pitches or until the batter is ready.
- C. A substitute pitcher may take up to six warm-up pitches.
- D. Teams may play two innings at a time with the mutual consent of the managers in an effort to conserve daylight.

15. **Conduct & Safety**

- A. The guidelines for all member conduct are to enjoy the game while playing safely and showing respect for the rules, umpires, teammates, opponents, spectators, property, and equipment. All members are expected to adhere to the following specific provisions:
 - (i) Judgment calls by umpires should not be argued.
 - (ii) In the event of a question of the interpretation of a rule by an umpire, only the manager should approach the umpire and limit his remarks to the specific rule in question.
 - (iii) Any of the following actions are contrary to the spirit and intent of the rules and are grounds for ejection from the game by an umpire:
 - (a) Use of profane, abusive, or threatening language.
 - (b) Laying hands on or striking an umpire, player or spectator.

- (c) Reckless play or conduct that exposes other to possible injury.
 - (d) Umpire shall warn one or both of the managers to have the player or players stop the unwarranted and unwanted behavior. If the offending player continues after being told to stop, the umpire may eject the player for the balance of the game. If the player is ejected, that player must sit out the next game.
 - (e) Consuming alcohol or being intoxicated on the field.
 - (f) Smoking on the field or the player's bench.
 - (g) Delaying a game with stalling tactics.
- B. A player, coach, or umpire who is bleeding shall be prohibited from participating further in the game until appropriate treatment can be administered.
- C. No pets are to be allowed in the dugouts or on the playing field during practices or league play. At no time shall a pet to be left unattended, tethered to the bleachers or fences. Pets shall be supervised by an owner or their representative at all times.

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