

Union County Senior Softball League Rules

Updated 04/11/2024

“Let’s play ball and have some fun” * New rules and changes for 2024 in red *

1. GENERAL RULES

1.1 ASA/USA rules will be used unless superseded by UCSSL rules.

2. THE PLAYING FIELD

2.1 COMMITMENT LINE: A three (3) foot line shall be marked perpendicular to the foul line and placed halfway (32' 6") between third base and home plate mat.

2.2 SCORING PLATE: A 2nd home plate will be used as a scoring plate. It will be placed in foul territory, 8' from the back tip of home plate (on the 3rd base side) on an extended line from first base. A runner attempting to score MUST touch the 2nd home plate.

2.3 STRIKE ZONE MAT: The rectangular mat will be 19" wide and 36" long. It will be placed with the painted home plate of the mat directly over the permanent home plate. Putouts at home plate can be made by touching any part of the mat.

2.4 BASES: Bases will be sixty-five (65') feet apart.

2.5. DOUBLE FIRST BASE:

2.5.1. A double bag shall be used at first base. Two individual bases will be used. The outside base will be in foul territory 1' away from the regular base. The 1' separation is a safety issue.

2.5.2. If a play is being made at 1st base, the batter/runner MUST use the outer base or will be called out (ball is still live). The defensive player MUST use the inner base or the batter/runner will be called safe (ball is still live).

2.6 BATTER’S BOX: [If not already drawn] Before play begins the umpire will draw two batters boxes 3’x7’ at the positions laid out in the ASA/USA rule book. These lines will be redrawn if they become indistinguishable during the game. Any batter completely stepping outside these lines and making contact with a pitched ball shall be called out.

3. EQUIPMENT

3.1 CLEATS / SPIKES: Metal cleats are NOT permitted. A player found wearing metal cleats will be ejected from the game. If on base, a dead ball out will be called and all runners must return to the base occupied before the play began.

3.2 SHIRTS: ALL players must wear the official team game shirt. Teams that have had the same sponsor for the past two years (or more) will be required to wear a shirt that acknowledges their current team sponsor as well as being of the same color. Shirts must have the UCSSL logo displayed. A player may NOT alter his shirt by

cutting sleeves, etc. Duplicate numbers are permissible. When weather conditions dictate, it is acceptable to wear a garment OVER one's uniform shirt. Players not wearing an official team shirt may not participate in any league game. Failure to follow rule will result in a FORFEIT for the offending player's team.

3.3. BATS: (see also UCSSL Policies)

3.3.1. We will abide by the ASA/USA NON-APPROVED BAT LIST. Wooden bats may be used. Penalty – A player using an illegal bat shall be ejected from the game and an out recorded. The bat will also be removed from the game. If the bat is discovered after a play has been completed, before the first pitch to the next batter, all runners must return to the base(s) they occupied before the play. A substitute player, if available can replace the ejected player. If not replaced, a slot out will occur each time the ejected player is due at bat. If discovered after the first pitch to the next batter the illegal bat will be removed from the game and no player ejection will be recorded.

3.3.2. Players of league age 70 or older may use "senior bats" in all league games. All "70+ senior bats" used must be official softball bats certified by the ASA and/or marked BPF 1.21 or less. Note – The original Miken Ultra bat is not allowed "70+ senior bats" will be marked with a different sticker than other approved bats. "70+ senior bats" may only be used by players of age 70 or more."

4. PLAYERS, COACHES, AND SUBSTITUTES

4.1 PLAYING TIME:- BOTH DIVISIONS:

4.1.1 It will be the manager's discretion which players play and for how many innings during the regular season and playoffs. Players present in uniform are not obligated to play at all.

4.1.2. Players DO NOT have to play a defensive position.

4.1.3. Re-entry. Any of the starting players may be withdrawn and reentered once for the player that replaced him and must occupy the same spot in the batting order. Upon reentering the game, both the umpire and the opposing team must be informed of the move.

4.1.4 INJURED PLAYER If an injured player is removed from the game he can be replaced by a player not yet in the game. If there are no players to replace him, there will be no slotted out when his at bat is due and he will simply be skipped in the order. If a player is EJECTED from the game and there is no one to replace him, there will be a slotted out recorded each time the ejected player is due at bat. If a player is injured while at bat he may be replaced by a player not yet in the game who will then assume the ball-strike account of the injured player. If there is no available player to replace a player injured while at bat, the next batter in the lineup will come up and assume the ball-strike count of the injured player.

4.1.5 LATE PLAYERS: If a team starts the game with fewer than the standard number of players, (10 in the 50's, 11 in the 60's), late arriving players are added to the bottom of the lineup until the full lineup is reached. Additional late arriving players can be added to the bottom of the lineup until the leadoff batters of both teams have come to bat for the 2nd time.

4.1.6 "Manager's Dream" rule. Two players may occupy the same position in the batting order and alternate times at bat each time through the lineup. Managers shall announce to umpire and opposing manager prior to the start of the game that this option is being used.

5. THE GAME

5.1. FORFEITS: On all fields game time 6:15, Forfeit time 6:30. Game will start at 6:15 if both teams have the minimum number of players to start the game. Late games are scheduled to begin at 7:45 pm or as soon as possible following the early game.

5.1.2. If a shorthanded team has called in a forfeit before 3 pm on a game day to avoid a forfeit fee, that game will be considered a forfeit even if later inclement weather might have had the game rained out.

5.1.3 From Opening Day through games played in the week where May 15 falls, batters will begin their at-bat with a 1-1 count with NO COURTESY FOUL PROVIDED.

5.2. MINIMUM NUMBER OF PLAYERS:

5.2.1. [50's division] 8 Players to start the game. 9th spot in the batting order will not be a slot out.

5.2.2. [60's division] 9 players to start the game. 10th spot in the batting order will not be a slot out.

5.2.3. In both of the above, the opposing team will supply a player to stand behind the plate and return the ball to the pitcher. He will NOT make any play.

5.3. LENGTH OF GAME:

5.3.1. Length of the game is 7 innings or until a winner is determined.

5.3.2. An official game is 5 innings or 4 1/2 innings if the home team is ahead.

5.3.3. All regular season tied games of official length that are suspended due to darkness or weather will be counted as a "tie" in the official standings and not replayed.

5.4. MERCY RULE:

5.4.1. A 15-run mercy rule will be in effect after 4½ innings, 5 if the home team is behind.

5.4.2. The mercy rule will not be in effect during playoff games, however, a team losing by the usual mercy rule may request taking a loss rather than playing a full 7 innings.

5.5 TIE GAMES: Tie games after will use the International Tie Breaker Rule beginning with the 8th inning until one team is ahead after a completed inning. All extra innings are open innings. **INTERNATIONAL TIE BREAKER:** It is used to start each half inning in extra-inning games. The last batter in the previous inning is placed on 2nd base. He cannot get a courtesy runner until he reaches 3rd base. The game proceeds as normal.

5.6 HOME TEAM: Occupies the 1st base dugout/bench Brings the following equipment: Bases, Strike mat, 2nd home plate. Pays the umpire. Keeps the official score book.

5.7 TREMLEY FIELD: 50s Division A teams may not play on Tremley unless no other suitable field is available.

6. PITCHING

6.1. ARC PITCH: The height of a legal pitch is between 6' and 12' from the ground.

6.2. CALLED STRIKE: A legal pitch striking ANY portion of the mat.

6.3. PITCHER'S BOX: The pitcher's box is a 2' by 10' rectangle starting from the pitching rubber (50') and extending back 10'. The pitcher can pitch from anywhere within this box as long as his pivot foot is within or

touching the boundary line of the box. The pitcher CANNOT walk up and pitch, he MUST come to a COMPLETE stop and present the ball before pitching. ALL other ASA/USA pitching rules must be observed.

7. BATTING

7.1. MAXIMUM RUNS PER INNING

7.1.1. A team can only score 6 runs in an inning unless the additional runs enable the trailing team to 'catch up' to the team with the lead.

7.1.2. The last and subsequent innings are open innings, with teams allowed to score an unlimited number of runs.

7.2. MAXIMUM HOME RUN RULE [now applies to both 50s and 60s Divisions] Fair fly balls over the fence are limited to three (3) per team per game on fenced fields. Any fair fly balls which leave the field over the limit will be ruled an out with no advancement by the base runners. If both teams have reached the limit (3) a team is allowed to go "one up" with an additional home run over the fence. A fair fly ball hit over the fence will still count against the maximum 3 per game even if it does not result in a run or runs scored as the team has reached their maximum six or six-up runs for the inning. If a fly ball is first touched by a defensive player and then goes over the fence, it shall count as a home run but not against the 3 maximum fair fly balls over the fence.

8. BASE RUNNING

8.1. [Both divisions] All runners must reach 1st base on his own.

8.2. Base runners may leave the base when a pitched ball is hit, touches the ground, or reaches home plate.

8.3 COURTESY RUNNERS:

8.3.1. Any player on the roster, and active for the game, may be a courtesy runner. He need not be in the lineup at that time.

8.3.2. There is no limit to courtesy runners, but a runner may only run once per inning.

8.3.3. A runner who is replaced by a courtesy runner cannot be a courtesy runner in the SAME inning.

8.3.4. A courtesy runner may be inserted at any time during the runner's time on the bases.

8.3.5. A courtesy runner can be replaced by another courtesy runner at any time.

8.3.6. If a pitch is thrown with an illegal courtesy runner on base, an appeal can be made and the illegal runner is out.

8.4. SLIDING, OVER-RUNNING:

8.4.1. Sliding is permitted into any base including 1st base and the 2nd home plate.

8.4.2. Overrunning 2nd and 3rd base without liability to be tagged out is NOT allowed.

8.5 Base runners on 1st or 3rd base may start the play off the base in foul territory and must retouch the base prior to proceeding to the next base. These baserunners must inform the umpire of this intention prior to the beginning of the play.

8.6. INTERFERENCE: Runner must slide or otherwise avoid interfering with a fielder. If, in the umpire's judgment, the player did not attempt to avoid interfering, he may rule a double play. **IMPORTANT: THIS IS A JUDGMENT CALL.** You cannot protest the umpire's call.

Note – This is a clarification of the current rule. There is a misconception that runners must veer (or slide) on ANY play being made at 2nd base. There is already a rule in effect regarding collisions so this clarification eliminates the jeopardy of a runner veering away from the base only to be tagged (or called) out if the fielder drops the ball or there is no clear intention to throw to first base.

8.7. COMMITMENT LINE: A line drawn halfway between 3rd and home plate. A runner touching or crossing this line (with his foot), **MUST** continue toward home plate. Returning toward 3rd base is an automatic out.

8.8 HOME PLATE OUT: A play at home plate is always a force out. The defensive player must have possession of the ball, tagging any part of the strike mat, before the runner touches the 2nd home plate. The defensive player may **NOT** tag the runner after the runner steps on or crosses the commitment line. A runner crossing or touching the strike zone mat will be called out.

8.9. SCORING: A run will score when the runner touches the 2nd home plate before the defensive player tags any part of the strike mat.

9. PROTESTS / UMPIRES

9.1. PROTESTS: ASA/USA Rule #11 will apply. The umpire and opposing manager must be notified of your intention of protesting **BEFORE** the next pitch. A protest committee consisting of league officers will determine the results of the protests. A protest **MUST** be filed in writing along with a \$50 check. The check will be returned if the protest is allowed.

9.2. DISPUTED PLAYS: **ONLY** managers or assistants can discuss disputed plays with the umpire.

9.3. LACK OF AN UMPIRE: If the ASA/USA umpire is not present, the game must still be played. Managers should agree on a substitute umpire. Players, spectators or a combination of both can be used. A spectator, who can be a player from another team, should be paid the normal umpire's fee. The league coordinator should be notified so that he can follow up with the ASA/USA umpire assignor.

10. EJECTIONS AND SUSPENSIONS (see also UCSSL Policies)

10.1. Players ejected from a game must immediately leave the playing area. The playing area includes, but is not limited to, the bench and/or stands.

11. SPECIAL TEAM ACCOMMODATIONS

11.1. [‘50s Division] All C division teams, when playing an A division team, will be allowed to use an additional (11th) defensive player or get 1 additional run in all but the first and “open” inning(s). The added run will be in addition to any other runs scored. This rule does not apply in 2023, as there is no C Division.

11.2. [60s Division] When the 4 “A” division teams (teams 13-16) play the 7 “B” division teams (teams 17-23) the following will apply: The “B” division team has the option at the start of the game to get 1 additional run (5 total) in all but the first and ‘open’ inning(s) or add a 12th defensive player. The added run will be in addition to any other runs scored. The “B” division team has the option of being the visitors in all games regardless of schedule.

[50s Division] When the 4 “A” division teams (teams 1-4) play the 4 “C” division teams (teams 9-12) the following will apply: The “C” division team has the option at the start of the game to get 1 additional run (5 total) in all but the first and ‘open’ inning(s) or add a 12th defensive player. The added run will be in addition to any other runs scored. The “C” division team has the option of being the visitors in all games regardless of schedule.

11.3. “GREEN GRASS DESIGNATES” (GGDs) [60’s division only] This provision is for players who, due to physical limitations, have difficulty running bases. The following will apply: 1. Each manager may designate up to 2 players each game as GGDs. 2. A GGD cannot be thrown out at 1st base by an outfielder. 3. A batted ball must reach the outfield grass untouched after passing an infielder (other than the pitcher) 4. The “middle fielder” is considered an infielder if he is playing in the infield and an outfielder if positioned on the grass at the start of the pitch. 5. The ball is alive and other runners can be put out. 6. The GGD must stop at 1st base and cannot advance, *with no exception even in the case of a ball going over the fence on a fly or a bounce or if the ball goes into dead ball territory off the bat or on an errant throw.* All other base runners may advance any number of bases they choose at the risk of being put out. All other base runners are awarded the appropriate number of bases when a ball goes into dead ball territory.

Union County Senior Softball League Policies

Updated 04/10/2024

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12. General Policies

12.1 TEAM PLACEMENT: A team interested in joining the league must submit a non-refundable check equal to the one half sponsor’s fee to the UCSSL and will be due no later than Dec. 1 prior to the beginning of the new season. The balance of the sponsor fee shall be due no later than opening Day of the Season. The check will be applied toward sponsor or player fees should the team enter the league.

12.1.1 New teams joining the league in both the 50s and 60s Divisions will be evaluated by the officers in consultation with the team manager to determine proper placement in the league.

~~**12.2.1.** The team finishing last in the regular season standings will move down to the lower division for the next season. The team finishing first in the regular season standings will move up to the higher division for the next season. If both teams agree to remain in their respective divisions for the subsequent season, the request will be granted.~~

Each season the UCSSL officers will determine the configuration of the divisions and the placement of teams in those divisions based upon their perception of relative team strengths.

12.2.2. In the event that new teams are added, or existing teams do not return which necessitates a realignment of divisions, officers will place teams in the new format using the order of regular season finish in the previous season as a guideline.

12.3 TEMPERATURE POLICY. Games will be postponed if the National Weather Service forecasts a GAME TIME heat index of 103 degree or above or a Wind Chill “feels Like” temperature of 45 degree or below.

13. Equipment

13.1 Masks. Pitchers are strongly encouraged to wear a protective mask in all league games. The league will reimburse one pitcher per team for the cost of a suitable protective mask up to a specified amount (currently \$45). The mask will be retained by the team but will be the property of the league.

13.2 BATS. (see also UCSSL Rules)

13.2.1 All bats must be ASA/USA approved and must be tested for safety in compliance with ASA/USA compression standards. Bats will be tested by league officers and those that pass will have a tamper-evident UCSSL sticker affixed to signify compliance with safety standards. Any player using a non-certified bat will be declared out and ejected from the game.

13.1.2 Bats that have not been tested and/or do not have an appropriate sticker may not be used in games OR batting practices.

13.2.3 BAT TESTING It is the intention of the league to have one bat testing session prior to the season Opening Game. Only new bats, or bats that do not have a sticker from the previous season may be tested at this session. At the field testing will be done in the opening weeks of the season. Until the team's testing is done at the field, players may continue to use bats with the previous year's sticker affixed. Every effort will be made to have an additional bat testing session during the season, preferably after Father's Day.

13.2.4 Wood and aluminum bats are allowed for play but will not be tested by the compression tester

13.3 BALL: The official game ball is a 'RESTRICTED FLIGHT' as provided by the league, Before each season, the managers will approve the ball to be used. Each manager will supply a game ball.

14 PLAYERS, COACHES & SUBSTITUTES

14.1 MEMBERSHIP:

14.1.1. All members must complete and return the registration form along with the yearly fee for the upcoming season. Players must sign the waiver on the registration before they can participate in any team game or practice.

14.1.2. Members must submit a proof of age document with photo I.D. when they join the league.

14.2. TEAMS: Each team roster will consist of a minimum of 14 and a maximum of 23 players. Emergency roster changes can only be made by the league if a roster is reduced to fewer than fourteen players. Players added to team rosters due to team hardship after the May deadline must pay the full league fee and submit a signed waiver form before participating in games, as must all other players. Emergency roster additions after the May deadline are also governed by the minimum 25% of all regular season games played by the team in order to qualify for playoffs. If a hardship waiver is requested, the team manager must submit the names of the players who have left the team thereby creating the hardship. Removed players may not return during the current season.

14.2.1. OVER 50: A team may have a maximum of 10 out of county (OOC) players. **OVER 60:** A team may have a maximum of 10 OOC players. **OVER 80:** A Union County resident age 80 or above, while paying his yearly fee, does not count against the roster size.

14.3. GRANDFATHERED PLAYERS:

14.3.1. If a player, living in Union County, while playing in the UCSSL moves out of the county while continuing to play in the league the player will be considered "GRANDFATHERED" as an in-county player.

14.3.2. Also "GRANDFATHERED": Any player, playing at least the most recent 5 consecutive years in the UCSSL will be considered a Union County resident, regardless of his current residence.

14.3.3. If for any reason a player misses a season (not on a team roster), he will no longer be grandfathered, and will be treated as an OOC player if he reapplies to play in the league. An exception may be made by the league officers if the reason for missing is medically based.

14.3.4. The league commissioner will maintain the list of "grandfathered" players.

14.4. REGISTRATION:

14.4.1. All registration materials (registration/waiver forms, and all checks) must be in the hands of the commissioner by Opening Day. Final rosters will be disseminated to team leaders via email immediately after the May 15th deadline. NO player will appear on a team's official roster unless his completed registration form

and full league payment have been received by that date. No changes can be made after that date unless deemed necessary by league officials.

14.4.2. Each team will be required to submit a separate check in the amount of \$50 in addition to their sponsor's fee. This will be kept by the league only if the team forfeits a game any time after 3pm on game day. If the team does not forfeit any games the amount will be returned at the end of the season

14.4.3. Any player found to have participated in a game without having first submitted his signed registration form with league fee to his manager will be deemed an illegal player and the team will be subjected to forfeit(s) for the game(s) in which that player participated. Registration forms and fees must be in the hands of the Commissioner within 48 hours after the player participated in a game in order for that player to be deemed a legal participant in that game.

14.4.4. No team may legally participate in a game without confirming that the roster provided by the Commissioner is accurate. Violation of this rule will result in forfeiture of game(s).

14.4.5 Additions to the roster may be made up until May 15. Managers must confirm that the Final Roster provided by the Commissioner is accurate as in **3.4.4** above.

14.5 ELIGIBILITY:

14.5.1 All players must be 50 or 60 (depending on the division) or older during the current calendar year.

14.5.2 Players must have played in a minimum of 25% of regular season games played in order to be eligible for the playoffs.

14.5.3 If due to medical reasons a player does NOT play 25% of regular season games played, the league can allow him an exemption to play. The league MUST be notified of the player's medical condition.

14.5.4. If a player is challenged on his games played, his manager must show proof of the number of games played.

14.6. LIABILITY: All players and managers must sign a statement of discharge of liability before entering into any league activity

14.7 PLAYER TRANSFER FROM TEAM TO TEAM:

14.7.1. Players may not change teams during the season.

14.7.2 A player wishing to transfer to another team must give written notice to his manager, as well as the League Commissioner OR to the league commissioner who will provide written notification to the previous team manager. The notice must be given during the "open period" – from opening day of the current season until March 1. If notice is given during the season the player will continue as a member of his current team for the remainder of the season. He will then become a free agent on March 2. A player giving notice after March 1 will not be permitted to change teams for the upcoming season. Such a player will become a free agent on March 2 of the year following the upcoming season. He may remain a member of his current team or sit out the season.

15. END OF SEASON

15.1 TIE BREAKERS:

Head to head record.

Division record

Run differential, head to head.

Least runs allowed, head to head.
Run differential, all games.
Run differential, within the Division
A playoff game. A coin flip determines the home team.

15.2 RAINOUTS & END OF SEASON: Rainouts will be scheduled as soon as possible. Every attempt will be made to reschedule and play a full regular season schedule each season if possible. No regular season games will be scheduled or played any later than the **third Thursday in August. (August 16th in 2024)**

15.3 Bumper Games. A postponed mid-season Bumper Game will be rescheduled at the end of the season with the same teams, and same home team as would have played had the game not be postponed. Postponed bumper games will be rescheduled after all other postponed regular season games are played. If two Bumper Games are scheduled, the end of season scheduled bumper game will be played before the postponed mid-season bumper game is rescheduled.

15.4. PLAYOFFS:

15.4.1. Highest seeded team will have the home field advantage.

15.4.2. The highest seeded team will always play the lowest seeded team in a playoff round.

15.4.3. In a three (3) game series, the highest seeded team is the home team for game 1 and the “if necessary” game.

15.4.4. [50s division] All Finals playoff games will be held at the following fields: A Division – Memorial Field # 2 (Linden) B Division – Memorial Field # 3 (Linden) C Division – Tremley Field [60s division] All Finals playoff games will be held at the following fields: A Division – Memorial Field #3 (Linden) B Division – Tremley Field

16. EJECTIONS AND SUSPENSIONS (see also UCSSL Rules)

16.1 Any player ejected from a game, for any reason, will be reported to the league commissioner.

16.2 Any player ejected from a game will be suspended for the next PLAYED game even if that game is a playoff game. Officers have the authority to amend this disciplinary action depending upon the circumstances of the infraction(s).

16.3 A player ejected for the second time, for any reason(s) in the same season may be suspended from the league for the remainder of the season at the discretion of the league officials.

16.4. There will be no reimbursement of fees to any players suspended from the league.