

# Union County Senior Softball League Rules

Revised 03/08/2021

*"Let's play ball and have some fun"*

**\* New rules and changes for 2021 in red \***

## 1. GENERAL RULES

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 ASA/USA rules will be used unless superseded by UCSSL rules.

### 1.2. NEW TEAMS:

A team interested in joining the league must submit a non-refundable check equal to the sponsor's fee to the UCSSL. The check will be applied toward sponsor or player fees should the team enter the league. A 50's team will enter the league as an 'A' team unless the league grants a waiver.

## 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

This will be initiated in the 60s division in 2019 **and the 50s division in 2021.**

2.5.2. If a play is being made at 1<sup>st</sup> 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. 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.

### **3.2. 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.

### **3.3. 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. 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.

### **3.4. BATS:**

**3.4.1.** 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 player will be declared out and ejected from the game but all previous play will stand.

**3.4.2.** 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.

**3.4.3.** 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."

**3.5.** 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.

## **4. PLAYERS, COACHES & SUBSTITUTES**

### **4.1. MEMBERSHIP:**

**4.1.1.** All members must complete and return the registration form along with the yearly fee for the upcoming season

**4.1.2.** Members must submit a proof of age document with photo I.D.

~~4.1.3. All players will be members of the New Jersey Senior Softball Association (NJSSA)~~

**4.2. TEAMS:**

Each team roster will consist of a minimum of 13 and a maximum of 22 players. Emergency roster changes can only be made by the league if a roster is reduced to fewer than thirteen 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.

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.

- 4.2.1. OVER 50: A team may have a maximum of 8 out of county (OOC) players
- OVER 60: A team may have a maximum of 10 OOC players.
- 4.2.2. OVER **68**: Any player, **68** or older, playing at least the most recent 5 consecutive years in the UCSSL will be considered a Union County resident, regardless of his current residence.
- 4.2.3. OVER 80: A Union County resident age 80 or above, while paying his yearly fee, does not count against the roster size.

**4.3. GRANDFATHERED PLAYERS:**

- 4.3.1. 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".
- 4.3.2. 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.
- 4.3.3. The league commissioner will maintain the list of "grandfathered" players.

**4.4. REGISTRATION:**

- 4.4.1. All registration materials must be in the hands of the commissioner by the usual **May 15th** deadline. 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.
- 4.4.2. 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.
- 4.4.3. 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.
- 4.4.4. No team may legally participate in a game without having properly submitted their preliminary and final rosters to the Commissioner by the proscribed dates.  
Violation of this rule will result in forfeiture of game(s).

#### **4.5. ELIGIBILITY:**

- 4.5.1. All players must be 50 or 60 (depending on the division) or older during the current calendar year.
- 4.5.2. Players must have played in a minimum of **25% of regular season games** in order to be eligible for the playoffs.
- 4.5.3. If due to medical reasons a player does NOT play 6 games, the league can allow him an exemption to play. The league MUST be notified of the player's medical condition.
- 4.5.4. If a player is challenged on his games played, his manager must show proof of the number of games played.

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

#### **4.7. PLAYING TIME:- BOTH DIVISIONS:**

- 4.7.1. Except for the manager, each player present at the start of the game must be in the batting order for a minimum of three (3) innings. The manager will inform the other manager whether he will be playing. He shall also announce which other, if any, players will not be playing that game.
- 4.7.2. Players DO NOT have to play a defensive position.
- 4.7.3. Any player entering the game after the 3rd inning must replace a starting player and be announced to the umpire and opposing manager before entering the game.
- 4.7.4. All substitute players must enter the game before the first pitch of the 5<sup>th</sup> inning. **UCSSL does not have a re-entry provision.**

**4.8. INJURED PLAYER:** A substitute can replace an injured player. If there are no substitute players available for an OBVIOUSLY injured player, NO slot out will occur when the player is due to bat. His spot will be skipped. A player who leaves for any other reason, and is NOT replaced, will result in a slot out recorded when the removed player is due to hit.

If a player is injured during an at bat, he is replaced by a player who has not yet played in the game or who played the first half of the game and has been removed from the game, if such a player is available. If no such replacement is available, the next batter in the order replaces him at bat with no slot out recorded. The replacement batter in either circumstance will assume the ball-strike count of the injured player.

**4.9. 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.

#### 4.10. **PLAYER TRANSFER FROM TEAM TO TEAM:**

4.10.1. Players may not change teams during the season.

4.10.2. 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 January 31<sup>st</sup>. 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 February 1<sup>st</sup>. A player giving notice after January 31<sup>st</sup> will not be permitted to change teams for the upcoming season. Such a player will become a free agent on February 1<sup>st</sup> of the year following the upcoming season. He may remain a member of his current team or sit out the season.

## 5. THE GAME

### 5.1. FORFEITS:

5.1.1. **On all unlighted 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.

Games scheduled on any of the lighted Linden fields (Tremley, Memorial 2, Memorial 3) will begin at 6:30pm, with a 6:40 forfeit time.

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.

### 5.2. 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 plays.

### 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<sup>1/2</sup> 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 8 innings will continue using the International Tie Breaker Rule 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 beginning in the ninth (9th) inning.

The last batter in the previous inning is placed on 2<sup>nd</sup> base. He cannot get a courtesy runner until he reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> base.

The game proceeds as normal.

#### 5.6. END OF SEASON 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.

#### 5.7. 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 second Thursday in August. **(August 5<sup>th</sup> in 2021)**

#### 5.8. SCORING & PUBLICITY:

5.8.1. The Home team's score book is the official book.

5.8.2. Both managers must report the game scores to the Publicity Chairman within 24 hours, advising him of game highlights and their team's won/lost record.

#### 5.9. PLAYOFFS:

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

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

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

5.9.4. [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

## 5.10 HOME TEAM:

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

## 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. THIRD STRIKE FOUL

- 7.1.1. Dead ball out, whether caught or not.  
7.1.2. Runners CANNOT advance.

7.2. **FOUL TIP:** A foul tip is a batted ball that goes directly into the catcher's glove.

- 7.2.1. With less than two strikes a batter is not out.  
7.2.2. If the batter has two strikes a foul tip is considered a third strike foul and the batter is out.

*Note: A batted ball which does not go directly into the catcher's glove is considered a FOUL BALL and, if caught, is an out. There is no longer a height restriction on a foul tip.*

### 7.3. MAXIMUM RUNS PER INNING

#### [60s Division]

- 7.3.1. A team may score 6 runs per half inning. However, a trailing team can 'catch up' and score an additional 6 runs. This is called 'catch up + 6'. (Please see exception to this rule in **11.2.A** and **11.2.B**)  
7.3.2. Neither team can score more than six (6) runs in the first inning.

#### [50s Division]

- 7.3.3. 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.

#### [50s and 60s Divisions]

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

#### 7.4. [50s only] **MAXIMUM HOME RUN RULE**

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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

8.3.7. If a courtesy runner is on base when he is due to bat:  
The courtesy runner is out.  
The courtesy runner comes to bat.  
If the out is the 3<sup>rd</sup> out, he leads off in the next inning.

#### 8.4. **SLIDING, OVER-RUNNING:**

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

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

#### 8.5. **INTERFERENCE:**

Runner must slide or otherwise avoid interfering with a fielder attempting to throw to first base. 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.*



#### **8.6. COMMITMENT LINE:**

A line drawn halfway between 3<sup>rd</sup> and home plate. A runner touching or crossing this line (with his foot), MUST continue toward home plate. Returning toward 3<sup>rd</sup> base is an automatic out.

#### **8.7 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

#### **8.8. SCORING:**

A run will score when the runner touches the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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**

**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.**

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

**10.3.** 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.

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

## 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 (11<sup>th</sup>) 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 2021, as there are no A vs. C games.**

11.2. [‘60s Division] When the 5 “A” division teams (teams **16-20**) play the **5** “B” division teams (teams **21-25**) the following will apply:

**A.** In all but the open inning(s) the A Division team can score a maximum of 6 runs. The B Division team retains the ability to catch up and then go up by six runs as noted in **7.3.1**.

**B.** Exception: If the “A” division team is behind by more than 6 runs they may score enough runs to equal the score of the “B” division team.

**C.** 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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.

### 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> base and cannot advance, except:
  - a) If the GGD hits the ball over a fence for a home run.
  - b) If a ball being played on another runner goes out of play and bases are awarded to all runners.