

## **ADULT SOFTBALL – LEAGUE RULES & GUIDELINES**

### **LEAGUE GUIDELINES**

#### **Age Eligibility**

Players must be 16+ yrs old to participate

#### **Spring/Summer League Structure**

- 12-week regular season split into two halves
- After Week 4, records and divisions reset to allow rebalancing based on performance
- First-half champions (Weeks 1–4) receive a \$50 gift card to a local restaurant
- Second-half champions (Weeks 5–12) are awarded championship shirts
- The season concludes with a single-elimination tournament following the regular season, with tournament champions also receiving championship shirts

#### **Fall League Structure**

- 6-week regular season
- Single elimination tournament

#### **Competition Level Placements**

Select during registration based on preferred competition level (A = highest). Final placement is determined by your request and a review of prior season results, when applicable

#### **Travel Players on Lower Level Teams**

We prefer that players participating in travel leagues do not play in our lower-level leagues (e.g., B or C) to help maintain balanced competition and a positive experience for all teams

#### **Team Managers Expectations**

Team managers are responsible for team conduct, including the behavior of players and spectators, ensuring all league rules are communicated and followed, maintaining and updating rosters, and responding to all communication from Rec staff. All official communication with the Rec office must go through the team manager.

#### **Tobacco & Alcohol**

Tobacco products and alcohol are prohibited on all Zeeland Public School property.

### **Game Protests**

Rule Protests: Must be communicated to the umpire before the next pitch. The umpire will document the situation and forward it to the league director for review after the game.

Roster Protests: Must be made to the umpire before the game is complete. The umpire will confirm the player's name and report it to the league director for verification. If the player is found ineligible, the game is forfeited. If the player refuses to identify themselves or provides false information, the game is forfeited and the player receives a two-game suspension

### **Scoreboard Controller**

Home team is listed first on the schedule, occupies the 3rd base dugout, and is responsible for managing the scoreboard.

### **Bat Testing & Safety Rules**

Illegal, altered, or hazardous bats are prohibited to ensure player safety and fair competition.

### **Bat Testing Process**

- Bat testing times will be communicated before the season
- All bats must be tested and approved before game use
- Approved bats receive a yearly sticker valid for both Zeeland Rec and Holland Rec
- Umpires will check for valid stickers before each game

### **Bat Requirements**

- Meet compression standards (varies by brand/model)
- Be free of damage (cracks, dents, rattles, burrs, sharp edges, excessive wear, etc.)
- Not appear on the USA Softball Non-Approved Bat List
- Display valid ASA 2000, 2004, 2013, or USA 2019 certification marks

### **Penalties for Illegal Bats**

- 1st offense: Batter is out and bat is removed
- 2nd offense: Player ejected
- 3rd offense: Minimum 2-game suspension (up to season-long suspension)
- Use of illegal or altered bats may result in personal liability for any resulting injuries.

### **Roster Guidelines**

If a team violates any roster rules, the game will be forfeited and involved players will receive a two-game suspension.

- Teams may not play until an official roster is submitted to Zeeland Recreation
- Only players listed on the official roster may participate
- Players may not appear on multiple rosters within the same competition level
- Roster additions are allowed during the season but must be submitted using the “Roster Change Form” before game time for eligibility
- Players must participate in at least two regular season games to be eligible for tournaments
- Women are permitted to play in men’s leagues

### **Church League Roster Rules**

- 75% of each team’s roster must consist of members of the sponsoring church
- Women may participate in the church league but are not required to be on each team

### **Start of Game**

- Teams must have at least eight (8) players to start a game
- A 5-minute grace period is allowed for teams falling short of eight players, after which a forfeit may be enforced
- In situations where a team has seven (7) or fewer players, the umpire must offer the opposing manager the option to play; if accepted, the result stands. If a team plays with seven or fewer players, they are considered the visiting team and a 10-run mercy rule applies from the first inning.

### **Ejections & Suspensions**

Players, coaches, and spectators may be ejected by an umpire, site supervisor, or league director. Ejected individuals must leave the facility immediately and will receive at least a one-game suspension (additional games may be added depending on severity). If a player is ejected, their spot in the batting order will be recorded as an out unless a roster substitute is available.

### **Physical Contact**

Any player, coach, or spectator who makes physical contact with or throws an object at an umpire, staff member, opponent, or teammate will receive a minimum two-game suspension, with potential for a permanent ban depending on the severity of the incident.

### **Suspension Protocols**

Individuals serving a suspension are not permitted on-site at any league facility.

### **Appeals**

All suspensions may be appealed in writing by the team manager within 24 hours of ruling.

### **Tie-Breakers**

- Two-team ties: Head-to-head record determines the champion. If still unresolved, teams are declared co-champions.
- Three or more teams tied: Head-to-head record is used to determine standings. If a clear outcome cannot be determined, co-champions are awarded.
- Unequal games played: No team will be denied a championship or co-championship due to playing fewer games. For example, teams with 9-1 and 8-1 records may be named co-champions unless head-to-head results break the tie.
- Score differential: Not used in any tie-breaker determination.

### **Completed Game Policy**

A game terminated due to inclement weather is considered complete if five (5) innings have been played or 45 minutes of game time have elapsed (or if the home team is leading after 4½ innings). If a game is stopped mid-inning, the score reverts to the last completed inning. Umpires have final authority to suspend or end games due to weather conditions.

### **Mid-Game Postponements**

A game that is postponed mid-game before reaching five (5) innings or 45 minutes will be rescheduled and resumed from the exact point of interruption, including inning, score, outs, and base runners (e.g., same game situation at the time of stoppage). Best efforts should be made to maintain the original batting order for the rescheduled game, but it is not required.

### **Tournament Rules & Structure**

- A tournament is played in single elimination format following the regular season.
- The higher-seeded team is designated the home team.
- Teams finishing 1st move up a level, while teams finishing last move down a level.
- All games (except championship games) are subject to a 55-minute time limit, after which no new inning may begin.
- Championship games are played as a full 7 innings with no time limit.
- Standard mercy rules apply to all tournament games
- The league director may adjust team placements up or down as needed to ensure balanced and competitive play.

## **RULES**

All games are governed by official **USA/ASA Softball rules**, except where modified by these local league rules.

### **Equipment**

- Metal spikes are not allowed
- Official ball: USA Certified AHD 12" Hot Dot (.52 COR / 300 lb compression)

### **Pitching Rules**

- Pitch arc must be 6–10 feet
- Pitcher must keep at least one foot on the pitching rubber at release
- One stride step is allowed, ending with foot contact on the rubber (unless pitching from behind it)
- Pitcher may pitch from either side of the rubber, but must maintain contact at release

### **Strike Zone & Batting Rules**

- Strike zone: plate width + between front knee and back shoulder
- All at-bats begin with a 1–1 count
- Intentional walks must be declared to the umpire
- Grace foul rule: After 2 strikes, one foul ball is allowed | Second foul with 2 strikes = out

### **Game Timing (55–Minute Limit)**

- 55-minute timer starts at first pitch
- No new inning after 55 minutes
- If inning is in progress at 55 minutes, it is completed
- If time remains  $\leq 5$  minutes at inning end, Flip-Flop rule applies

### **Flip Flop Rule**

If the home team is down 7+ runs when an inning ends with  $\leq 5$  minutes remaining (or after 6 innings), the losing team bats first in the final inning

### **Mercy Rules**

- 20-run lead after 4 innings
- 15-run lead after 5 innings
- 10-run lead after 6+ innings

### **Lineup & Defensive Rules**

- Unlimited batting order size
- Defensive players do not need to be in batting order
- Players may not bat in a different lineup spot once set
- Late arrivals go to the end of the lineup
- Pinch hitting/subbing allowed if not already in lineup
- Skipped spots = automatic out each time
- Injured players may be replaced or skipped without penalty

### **International Tie-Breaker**

If tied after 7 innings with time remaining, the last recorded out starts on 2nd base

### **Tie Games**

- Regular season ties stand
- Tournament ties must be played until a winner is determined

### **Courtesy Runner**

- 1 per inning allowed
- If still on base when batting spot comes up → out is recorded and runner removed
- Injury exception: no automatic out

### **Defensive Play**

Defensive positions are free and interchangeable

### **Collision Rule**

- Players must avoid collisions
- Intentional contact may result in ejection

### **Forfeit Policy**

- 1st: Warning
- 2nd: \$50 fee
- 3rd: Suspension (no refund)

### **Home Run Rule (Progressive “3 & Up”)**

- Each team starts with 3 HRs allowed
- Once both teams reach 3, each earns +1 additional HR
- HR limit continues increasing only if both teams reach the same tier
- Exception: In final inning (clearly determined), home team cannot go +1 unless rule conditions are met and umpire announces final half inning

### **Batting Order Injury Exemption**

Injured player may be replaced or skipped without penalty

## **CO-ED GENDER & FIELDING RULES**

### **Roster & Participation Requirements**

- Standard roster: 10 players (5 men / 5 women)
- Minimum to play: 8 players, with at least 4 men and 4 women

### **Defensive Requirements**

- At least 2 females in the infield (1B, 2B, SS, 3B)
- Must use a male-female pitcher/catcher combination
- If fewer than 5 women are present, teams may not add a 6th male defender, but may play with 5 men and 4 women if minimum defensive rules are met

### **Infield & Outfield Positioning**

- All infielders must remain on the infield dirt (stone dust) at pitch release
- Outfield encroachment line at 175 feet. Crossing before contact results in a double or the outcome of the play, with base runners advancing accordingly

### **Batting Order Rules (Coed)**

- Batting order must alternate male and female hitters
- Exceptions allowed when necessary (e.g., more women may bat back-to-back)
- If men outnumber women, the lineup must be adjusted (“woven”) to prevent male back-to-back batting
- Unlimited batting order size
- Once set, batting order cannot be changed

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**Late Arrivals / Substitutions**

- Late arrivals are added to the end of the lineup
- Pinch hitting/subbing allowed if not already in the lineup
- Skipped spots = automatic out each time that spot comes up
- Injured players may be replaced or skipped without penalty

**Walking a Male Batter**

- Walk to a male batter = automatic advance to 2nd base
- Exception: with 2 outs, the next female batter may choose to walk or hit

**Courtesy Runner Rules (Coed)**

- One courtesy runner per inning per gender (from roster only)
- Male runs for male, female runs for female
  - If courtesy runner is still on base when their batting spot comes up:
  - Runner is removed
  - An out is recorded
  - That player still takes their scheduled at-bat
- Injury exception applies