SOFTBALL RULES

All policies and procedures governing Intramural Sport programs at The University of Alabama are outlined in the Intramural Sports Handbook. All softball games will follow the rules detailed in the 2019 USSSA Slowpitch Softball Rule Book with the following interpretations.

PLAYERS AND EQUIPMENT

- **Number of Players**: The game shall be played between two teams of 10 players each. Eight players are required to start the game. A team may have an 11th player hit but not play the field.
- **All players must sign-in with the supervisor at the event site prior to the event to be eligible to participate.**
- **Lineup**: The team captain shall present the official scorekeeper with a lineup before the game begins. The lineup shall only include players that appear on the roster and are legally signed in. Players that are not present shall not be put on the lineup.
- **Jerseys**: Players of the opposing teams must wear contrasting colored jerseys, without pockets.
- **Shorts/Pants**: All players are required to wear either shorts or pants. There shall be NO belts, belt loops, or exposed drawstrings on the pants or shorts of the player. Players are not permitted to play in boxer shorts or any other form of undergarments.
- **Shoes**: Regulation rubber soled cleats, plastic cleats, detachable rubber cleats that screw into the shoe, and tennis shoes are the only permissible footwear. Sandals, street shoes, hiking boots, combat boots, or metal spikes are not allowed. No steel cleats, metal tips or shoes with detachable steel cleats that screw onto the shoes may be worn. 5-finger shoes are not allowed.
- **Illegal Equipment**: A player wearing illegal equipment shall not be permitted to play. Types of equipment or substances which shall always be declared illegal include, but are not limited to:
  A. Headwear containing exposed knots
  B. Jewelry
  C. Pads, Casts, or Braces worn above the waist
  D. Shoes with metal, ceramic, screw-in, or detachable cleats. **Exception: Screw in cleats are allowed if the screws are part of the cleat**
  E. Shirts or jerseys with names that may be deemed vulgar by the Intramural Sports Staff
  F. Pants or shorts with any belt(s), belt loop(s), or exposed drawstring(s)
  G. Any leg or knee brace deemed unsafe by the Certified Athletic Trainer on staff.
  H. Exposed metal on clothes or person.
- **Medical Bracelets**: Any participant required to wear medical bracelets or medical medals will be permitted to do so. They must be taped to the body with medial data visible by the Athletic Trainer on site.
- **Bats**: All bats must have an ASA or USSSA stamp certifying that it is approved for use. Bats must be round and smooth free of any large dents. Bats shall be of one-piece construction made of metal, aluminum, fiberglass, or graphite. The Competitive Sports staff shall rule on the legality of any bats.
- **Game Balls**: All game balls will be provided by the Competitive Sports office. If a ball is hit out of play, the batting team is responsible for retrieving the ball.
- **Gloves**: All defensive players must wear gloves. All defensive players are permitted to use a first baseman mitt.
- **Helmets/Masks**: A player or coach may wear a batting helmet at any time. A player may also wear a plastic or metal face mask. A catcher also has the option of wearing a catcher’s mask.

FIELD, TIMING AND SUBSTITUTE SUBSTITUTIONS

- **Playing Field**: The playing field is the area in which teams can legally play and field the ball. The bases shall be 65 feet in length. The pitching rubber shall be 50 feet from home plate.
- **Fair Territory**: All of the field area within and including the lines and the plate is considered fair territory. A fair ball is a batted ball that:
  A. Settles or is touched while fair.
  B. Touches or bounds a base.
  C. Touches 1st, 2nd, or 3rd base.
D. While fair, touches anybody or anything.
E. Touches fair beyond a base.

- **Foul Territory:** All of the field area outside of the lines is considered foul territory. A foul ball is a batted ball that:
  A. Settled or is touched while foul
  B. Bounds outside 1st or 3rd base
  C. First to hit ground foul beyond 1st and 3rd base
  D. Touches someone or something in foul territory
  E. Touches batter or bat while batter is in box

- **Dead Ball Area:** The dead ball area will be marked 10 feet from the foul line. Any ball that crosses this line shall become dead once it has made contact with the ground.

- **Balls Over the Fence:** The batting team is responsible for retrieving all balls hit out of the playing area.

- **Timing:** A regulation game consists of seven (7) innings or a fifty (50) minute time limit, whichever is reached first. Teams need not play seven full innings if:
  A. the home team scores more runs in six and one-half innings; or
  B. the home team scores more runs before the third out in the last half of the seventh inning

- **Time Limit:** No inning shall start after the time limit has expired unless the game is tied. The next inning begins when the third out is recorded.

- **Forfeits:** Game time is forfeit time. If a team has one less than the minimum number required to play, they will be extended a five minute grace period. During the grace period, the game clock will run and play will begin once the opposing team has met the minimum requirements.

- **Mercy Rule:** The game will be over if a team is winning by 20 or more runs at the completion of the third inning. The game will be over if a team is winning by 15 or more runs at the completion of the fourth inning. The game will be over if a team is winning by 10 or more runs at the completion of the fifth or sixth inning.

- **Overtime:** If the game is tied at the end of regulation during the regular season, the game will result in a tie.

- **Playoff Ties:** If the game is tied at the end of seven innings or after time expires, the teams will continue to play under the International Tie-Breaker Rule until one team has scored more runs after a completed inning.

- **International Tie-Breaker:** At the start of the extra inning the last batter/runner that was recorded out will go to second base. The rules will not change other than the runner at second.

- **Substitutions:** A substitute may take the place of any player in the batting order of the team.

- **Re-Entry Rule:** All starting players may withdraw and reenter a game once, but they must occupy the same batting position in which they started the game.

- **Inclement Weather:** In the event of inclement weather cancellation, any game that has completed the fifth inning will be considered an official game and will not be rescheduled.

**SCORING**

- **Runs:** A team scores one run each time a runner touches first base, second base, third base, and home plate in succession. A team does not score a run if the third out of an inning results from any of the following situations:
  A. A force-out
  B. A runner is put out by a tag or a live ball appeal before the lead runner touches home plate.
  C. A preceding runner is declared out on an appeal play.

**PITCHING AND DEFENSE**

- **Pitcher's Plate:** The pitcher must begin with both feet firmly on the ground and with one or both feet touching the pitcher’s plate. The pitcher’s pivot foot must stay in contact with the pitcher’s plate throughout the delivery.

- **Starting a Pitch:** After assuming the pitching position, the pitcher must hold the ball in front of the body with one or both hands for at least 1 second before initiating the pitching motion. After making any motion to pitch, the pitcher must immediately deliver the ball to the batter.
• Delivery: The pitcher must use a definite underhand motion in delivering the pitch. In delivering the pitch, the pitcher may not stop or reverse the pitching motion. The pitcher must perform the delivery in a continuous motion.

• Illegal Delivery: The pitcher may not pitch the ball through the legs or behind the back. The pitcher cannot deliver the pitch from the glove.

• Pitch Arc: The pitcher must deliver the ball with a perceptible arc. The ball must reach a height of at least 6 feet from the ground and cannot exceed a height of 12 feet from the ground. The umpire will call an illegal pitch if the height is outside of the required zone.

• Quick Pitch: The pitcher may not quickly pitch the ball if the batter has not taken a position in the batter’s box or is off balance following the previous pitch. If the pitcher uses a quick pitch, the umpire awards the batter a ball.

• Warm-Up Pitches: The starting pitcher or a substitute pitcher may throw five warm-up pitches in the first inning that he or she pitches. Every subsequent inning, the pitcher may use no more than one minute to throw warm-up pitches.

BATTING AND BASERUNNING
• Batter’s Box: The batter must stay inside of the painted batter’s box during the swing. The batter cannot step on the plate during the swing.

• Bunting and Chopping: The batter may not bunt or chop the pitch. The batter will be called out on any bunt or chop.

• Strike Zone: The strike zone is an imaginary box over the plate from the batter’s chest to the top of the batter’s knees. Any pitch that hits the plate will be called a ball.

• Balls and Strikes: Each batter starts an at-bat with one ball and one strike. The batter is awarded first base if they reach four balls. The batter will be called out if they reach three strikes.

• Foul Balls: After reaching two strikes, the batter is allowed one foul ball. One the second foul ball after the second strike, the foul ball will be considered strike three and the batter is called out.

• Base Running: Runners must stay in contact with the base until the ball has been contacted. Runners leaving the base early will be called out.

• Base Path: The base path is the line between the two bases that the runner establishes when there is not a defensive player attempting to make a play on that runner. A runner is allowed to be within three feet of either side of their base bath when a defensive player attempts to make a play. A runner more than three feet outside of the established base path will be called out.

• Touching Bases: Runners must contact each base on the field in the correct order.

• Awarding Bases: If a ball is thrown into dead ball territory, all runners are awarded two bases from the last base reached at the time of the throw.

• Fly Balls: Runners must be in contact at some point after a ball is caught in the air before advancing. If not in contact with the base after the catch, the runner is liable to be called out.

• Sliding: Only feet-first sliding is allowed. Runners sliding head first will be called out.

• Courtesy Runners: Courtesy runners are available for players that are injured during play. The player last recorded out must run for the injured player.

OUTS
• Three Outs: An inning ends once a team reaches three outs in that inning.

• Strike Out: Once the batter has reached three strikes, an out will be recorded.

• Force Out: Anytime a runner is forced to a base, the play will be considered a force play. The player will be forced out if the defensive player with the ball touches the base before the batter/runner.
• **Tagged Out:** A batter/runner is tagged out if they are tagged with the ball while they are not contacting a base. The defense may also tag out a runner standing on a base if the runner is forced to another base.

• **Fly Out:** The batter is called out if a batted ball is caught by the defense without the ball contacting the ground.

• **Infield Fly Rule:** The batter is called out on a fair fly ball that can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort when runners occupy first and second base and there are less than two outs.

**APPEALS**

• **Umpire Appeals:** The following are plays that a team may appeal by asking an umpire to review the play:
  A. A defensive player not in contact with the bag on a force play
  B. Team batting out of order

• **Base Appeals:** The following are plays that a team may appeal by contacting the base in question after the play:
  A. Runner failing to contact the bases in the correct order
  B. Runner failing to tag up on a caught fly ball

**CO-REC MODIFICATIONS**

• **Number of Players:** The game shall be played between two teams of 10 field players each. Eight players, at least 4 men and 4 women, are required to start the game.

• **Extra Hitters:** Each team may have two extra hitters in the lineup that do not play in the field. The extra hitters must be of opposite sex.

• **Batting Order:** Players in the batting order must alternate sex. If a team has players of the same sex bat consecutively, an out will take taken in between the two players.

• **Four Balls:** A man that reaches four balls while batting will be awarded seconded base. The woman that succeeds him in the lineup has the option of being awarded first base or taking an at-bat.

• **Restraining Line:** Teams must have six players in front of the 200-foot arc when a woman is batting.

**PROTESTS**

• Protests must be made during the game immediately after the play in question has ended. Protests will only occur when there is a rules interpretation in question. No Protests will be made on judgment calls made by the officials. Eligibility Protests may be made after the game as long as the protest is in compliance with the Policies and Procedures of The University of Alabama Intramural Sports Department.

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