

## Rules and Guidelines for the San Francisco Architects|Engineers|Contractors Softball League Amended September 28, 2011 for the 2012 Season

This is an informal league; safety and camaraderie are more important criteria than winning, so a few rules and guidelines are used during games.

The following rules apply to every team and every game, unless exceptions are specifically agreed upon by both captains before the game begins. New rules and edits effective for the 2012 season are in red:

- **Basic Softball rules apply:** (1) no leading-off; (2) no stealing bases; (3) games are 7 innings (unless foreshortened by darkness—see “Last Inning” below); (4) when the final out of an inning is a force out at any base, a run cannot score on that play; when the final out of an inning is a non-force at any base, a run may score provided that the runner touches home *before* the final out is made; (5) home/visitor team is indicated on the posted schedule, but a coin toss can be used if captains don't have access to the schedule at the start of the game.
- **Sliding and Over-Running Bases:** In the interest of safety, sliding is not allowed in this league. A runner who slides is automatically out. Overrunning every base (without a turn toward the next base) is allowed to avoid injury. If a runner turns toward the next base, a tag out can be made.
- **Extra Base on Overthrow:** Only one extra base per runner is allowed when a ball is overthrown into foul territory.
- **Run Limits:** Each team is limited to 7 runs per inning except in the last inning, in which unlimited runs may score (see last inning below).
- **Last Inning:** About 15 minutes after sunset, captains should agree that the next complete inning is the last inning (and the run limits are lifted).
- **Forfeits:** If a team has at least 7 players by the time the bottom of the first inning begins, the game can count even with loaned players if agreeable by both team captains. Otherwise the game goes on record as a forfeit unless captains agree otherwise at the beginning of the game. **Any team calling off a regularly scheduled or playoff game will be charged with a forfeit, and the score will be recorded 7-0 according to ASA rules (1 run per inning) for purposes of run-differential rankings.**

**Women Players and Batting Order:** At least two women must play in the field at all times and must be evenly distributed in the lineup—**no more than 5 men can bat consecutively between spots in the lineup designated for women batters (lineups of 9-12 batters must have at least 2 women batter spots, lineups of 13-18 batters must have at least 3 women batter spots, etc).** When a team can only field one woman, that team is limited to 9 fielders and the woman player can bat twice in the batting order; if she is already on base or unwilling to bat a second time, the team will be charged with an automatic out for that spot in the batting order. Teams fielding no women automatically forfeit the game but are encouraged to play an exhibition game with 9 fielders

and an out every fifth batter (unless the captains agree on alternative rules before the exhibition game). Teams must stay true to the batting order established at the beginning of the game (except to add team members to the end of the order who arrive late or to scratch team members who leave the game early). These rules regarding women players are applied the same as the forfeit rule above—the women players must be in the game by the time the bottom of the first inning begins. Captains are encouraged to show each other their batting order when they discuss ground rules at the beginning of the game to avoid any misunderstandings. Example batting line-ups are as follows:

- **Outfielder Positions:** Regardless of who is at bat, outfielders are to remain 30 feet behind the first-to-third bases until the ball is hit. Cones should be set up along the foul lines 30 feet behind first and third bases to establish the setback. Rovers are exempt from this rule only if the team uses the rover fielding position throughout the game.
- **Fair/Foul Call:** The catcher calls fair or foul balls. Cones set up along the foul lines help avoid uncertainty. Hit balls must go 10 feet into fair territory (to the grass on regulation fields) or will be deemed foul; catcher will call such balls fair or foul.
- **Safe/Out Call:** First Base Coach declares plays at first and home safe or out; Third Base Coach declares plays at third and second safe or out. These coaches should invoke the help of the other base coach as necessary.
- **Force at Home:** Unless otherwise agreed prior to the start of the game, an automatic force rule is always applied at home plate in the interest of safety. Double bases are to be set up at home plate with runners crossing the outside base and fielders touching the inside base. Regardless of whether the runner was forced to run to home plate or not, if a fielder possesses the ball and contacts the inside base before the runner reaches the outside base, the runner is out. Runners can be tagged out before reaching the base, however, by the catcher (or another fielder) who is pulled off the base. A runner who commits to scoring by reaching the halfway point between third and home cannot return to third (no “pickle” after the halfway point); first base coach makes the call as to whether the runner crossed the halfway point.
- **Avoiding Collisions at Bases:** Similarly, the use of a double base is also encouraged at first base to avoid collisions, with runners stepping on the outside base and the fielder tagging the inside base. In the interest of avoiding collisions at bases, captains are encouraged to coach their inexperienced infielders to stand out of the runner’s path by tagging their base to the side with a toe on the base. When such coaching is unsuccessful and a fielder is standing squarely on 2nd or 3rd base (or 1st when a double base is not used), the runner may be called safe by running to the side of the base to avoid a collision with the fielder.
- **Courtesy Runner:** Each team is allowed to have a courtesy runner for no more than two batters who have suffered a slight injury or who have such chronic conditions as “bad knees.” The courtesy runner **should always be the player who made the last out, regardless of gender**, and must stand outside

the base path in line with 3<sup>rd</sup> and home facing away from the field, taking off running when the bat makes contact with the ball.

- **Pitching:** Because this league is non-competitive in nature and does not rely on umpires or called strikes/balls, players need to be respectful of standard softball pitching and speed-of-game. Captains should make every attempt to field pitchers who are skilled at delivering consistently good pitches and who have the experience to react to line drives in order to adequately protect themselves. The pitching position by nature is dangerous and requires reflexes developed from experience. Pitchers are expected to deliver a standard softball slow pitch (underhand, above the batter's head, below 12-foot, with the ball landing on the plate or within 1-foot behind the back of the plate). **A strike zone mat, provided by the League Administrator, should always be placed behind home plate to provide a target for pitchers and a reminder to batters of would-be strikes.** Captains are allowed to request a new pitcher once each game when the starting pitcher is consistently delivering substandard pitches, and the other captain is strongly urged to change pitchers. At the same time, batters are expected to swing at reasonable pitches rather than waiting for the "perfect pitch."
- **Regulation Softballs:** Teams should always use .44cor softballs, or gold dot (depending on brand). The league strongly encourages the use of bright yellow balls for better visibility beginning 30 minutes before sundown.
- **Regulation Bats:** For the safety of infielders (particularly pitchers) and to provide a level playing field between men and women batters, bats used by men players in this League must be made entirely of wood and have a manufacturer-applied stamp containing the word "Softball." The stamp may state "Official Softball," "ASA Softball," "Slow Pitch Softball," "Chicago Style Softball," etc. The key word is "Softball" and not "Baseball" (baseball bats are not permitted). Wood bats need not be "certified"—see Q1 at the following site: [http://downloads.asasoftball.com/about/pdf/03\\_Updated\\_FAQs.pdf](http://downloads.asasoftball.com/about/pdf/03_Updated_FAQs.pdf)  
ASA Rule 3.1.B states that a bat must be marked as "Official Softball" and sections C-F explain what constitutes an "Official Softball" bat:  
C. **Length And Weight.** The official bat shall not be more than 34 inches long, nor exceed 38.0 ounces in weight.  
D. **Diameter.** The official bat shall not be more than 2.250 inches in diameter at its largest part, which includes any tolerance for expansion of the bat.  
E. **Shape.** The official bat shall be round within 0.050 inches in diameter, and the bat handle must be round or oblong and may be angular.  
F. **Surface.** The official bat shall be smooth with a maximum surface roughness of 250 microinches. It shall be free of burrs and visible cracks, and shall not have exposed rivets, pins, rough or sharp edges or any form of exterior fastener that would present a hazard.

To prevent catchers, pitchers, and fans from getting hurt by flying bats, all bats should have some form of grip applied to the handle, whether tape, pine tar, etc. The use of a metal bat by a male player constitutes an automatic out. Wood softball bats may be purchased at such retailers as Big-5 or at such online sources as <http://www.justbats.com/default.aspx?s=Wood%20Softball>

Women players in this League may use any fast-pitch or slow-pitch bat of their choosing not currently banned by the San Francisco Softball League <http://www.sfsoftball.com/league-info-rules/illegal-bats/>.

- **Bases:** Each team should bring their own bases to every game to ensure that the game can proceed with enough bases. Bases should be the sturdy, heavy, flat rubber variety or carpet samples with rubber backing. Bases that tend to move around easily are not encouraged.

#### **Other guidelines generally apply:**

- **Pitch Limits:** Captains may agree to invoke a 10-pitch limit per batter to speed the game.
- **Start Time:** Teams should make every effort to begin games at 6:30 p.m. (particularly playoff games) as listed on the posted schedule. Our permits from SF Rec and Park are for game times beginning at 6:30 (some fields have other events scheduled until 6:30) and ending at 7:30. Rec and Park gives field priority to Youth Leagues and leagues sanctioned by Rec and Park.
- **Helmets:** Teams are encouraged to provide helmets for players who feel safer wearing them while batting and running bases, especially players who have been hit by an errant ball and might otherwise not play. Teams with players who prefer wearing helmets might consider providing them for every player as a show of support.

#### **Playoff Guidelines:**

- An informal playoff tournament is generally scheduled the last two Wednesday and Thursday evenings in August. Two tiers are scheduled—Competitive and Non-Competitive. The Competitive tier is restricted to teams scheduled to play approximately 65% of the available weeks of play during the regular season (the specific number is listed at the beginning of the season) and are ranked in the top 12 of participating teams based on the “games back” summary, with no more than 6 games back\*. Teams are asked at the beginning of the season if they will likely wish to participate, and then are asked to confirm their participation in the last weeks of the regular season.
- The Competitive tier is generally scheduled as a standard ASA single-elimination bracket, **with the teams losing in the first two rounds playing one out-of-bracket consolation game**. Seeding for the Competitive tier will be based on results through the last game of the regular season. Captains who signed up their teams for the playoffs must make sure their players are prepared to play both Wednesday and Thursday nights during both weeks of the playoffs (with the possibility of the first Wednesday off if their team is seeded with a bye).

- The Non-Competitive tier is generally scheduled as a round-robin tournament with each team playing two games, balanced based on results through the last game of the regular season. The winner of this tournament will be determined based on win-loss record followed by run differential in the tournament.
- Teams are urged to start playoff games promptly at 6:30 with at least 7 players, and declare the last inning of play no later than 7:30 in order to prevent problems of darkness.
- \*The League Commissioner may exercise some latitude in the seeding of teams in the two tiers in order to balance the schedule.