

TAVERN SOFTBALL LEAGUE – OFFICIAL RULES –

Note regarding Consumption of alcohol during league games:

- Let it be known that consuming open alcohol in a public place is illegal and each player in the league is responsible for their own actions. If alcohol is consumed at the field, it is to be **concealed in a container other than the original** (ex. Plastic beer glass). The league and its executive **waive all liability for anyone who chooses to break this law.**
- Each team is responsible for cleaning up any mess they leave at a bench. Glasses, cans, bottles of any type are to be disposed of prior to departing the field. **If the league is reported in any way to the city due to a team neglecting this rule, the associated fine will be passed down to the team.**
- If a team has received a fine, they will be suspended from play, and all games will be forfeited until the fine has been paid.

1. Equipment and Setup

- 1.1. The home team of the evening is the home team of the first game. The home team is responsible for setting up the field and providing the bases, matt and cones.
- 1.2. A NEW game ball, a backup ball in good condition, a safety bag, two pylons, bases and a ball/strike mat (measuring 2' x 3') will be provided by the home team. Failure to provide this equipment will subject your team to a \$5 fine for each occurrence/piece of equipment. A new game ball is to be provided by the other team for the second game.
- 1.3. The pylons must be placed 30 feet from 1st, and 3rd bases on the foul line.
- 1.4. Two lines (a home plate line, and a commit line) should be drawn into the field on the outside of the 3rd base line. Both should be in the same direction as the first base line (perpendicular to the 3rd base line). The home plate line must be from the **front corner** of the plate and the commit line must be halfway between 3rd base and home plate.
- 1.5. Metal cleats are not allowed. Soccer cleats (rubber or plastic) are permitted.
- 1.6. Bats must be marked with the **USSSA** and/or the **ASA** certification marks
 - 1.6.1. Team captains or co-captains have the right to inspect the opposing team's bats before, or at any point during, a game.

2. Game Rules

- 2.1. There is no bunting allowed
- 2.2. Teams scoring five runs in an inning will automatically be called out. This rule applies to all but the final inning of a game when there will be no limit on runs scored, (i.e., inning 7 is open).
- 2.3. The pitch shall be "slow pitch", with whip or sling deliveries prohibited. Pitchers shall not stand closer than 40' from home plate and must be positioned on or within 1 foot (left/right) of the pitcher plate and a maximum of 6 feet behind. The pitched ball must travel in an arc that reaches its highest point 6-12 feet above the ground.

- 2.4. Illegal Pitches - will be considered a ball. The umpire shall call an illegal pitch when the ball reaches its maximum arc. Batters are permitted to swing at an illegal pitch at which point it will be deemed a legal pitch and will become playable.
- 2.5. No stealing or leading off allowed.
- 2.6. All games will be seven innings in length unless otherwise agreed upon by both captains prior to the game. Five (5) complete innings constitutes an official game. A fifteen (15) run "Mercy Rule", any time after five (5) complete innings of play, will be implemented. Games will be 7 innings up to the end of July. Beginning August 1, games will move to 5 innings due to decreasing daylight hours.
- 2.7. Regular season games will start at 6 p.m. A team not on the field by 6:15 will forfeit.
- 2.8. Scores must be entered through the website, by each team within 1 week. Failure to do so may result in default.
- 2.9. No less than seven (7) players will constitute any one team in any game. When playing in the field, you must at all times have a minimum of **2 Females**, and a maximum of **7 males** on the field of play. If you cannot field a full team, you may place a non-playing catcher at home plate. Any number of females can make up the necessary players in a contest.
- 2.10. No more than two males may bat consecutively **EXCEPT in one instance in the lineup to allow for the 7 males and 3 females full team line up**. If you only have 2 females playing or more than 7 males, you must rotate your female players in your line up.
- 2.11. All players in the batting order must bat before the first batter hits again, unless that would require more than two males batting consecutively more than the one allowable instance (i.e., a team cannot bat its male batters more often than its female batters).
- 2.12. No intentional walks allowed, to be enforced by the discretion of team captains.
- 2.13. If a batter is walked on 4 straight balls they will advance directly to 2nd base, and the next batter then has the option of taking their at-bat, or taking a walk and advancing to first base automatically.
- 2.14. All teams must use a score sheet and, upon the request of the opposing team/coach, this score sheet may be examined.
- 2.15. Sliding is allowed at 2nd and 3rd bases ONLY.
- 2.16. If the base is moved, there can only be one play on at the bag's original position (at 2nd or 3rd base only). No players are allowed to intentionally move the bag.
- 2.17. When a player advances to first base and overruns the orange part of the safety bag, they should turn to the right when returning to first base if they have no intention of advancing to second base. If the runner turns to the left, they are considered to still be running and may be tagged out. This will be the decision of the umpire.
- 2.18. Players shall be called "out" if they foul on a third strike.
- 2.19. Regarding plays at home plate:
 - 2.19.1. Once a base runner crosses the commitment line, they are not allowed to return to third base, and will be called out if an attempt is made.

- 2.19.2. Tags are not permitted after the runner crosses the commitment line.
- 2.19.3. For a base runner to be called out at home, the catcher (or other player covering the plate) must have possession of the ball and touch home plate before the runner crosses the line with foot on the ground
- 2.19.4. If a base runner crosses OR touches home-plate OR the mat s/he will automatically be called out, unless it is the result of avoiding the catcher - this call will be made at the discretion of the Umpire.
- 2.20. If a ball is thrown out of play while attempting to make a play at a base, all base runners advance one base. If it has been deemed that a ball was thrown out of play intentionally, then the runners will advance two bases.
- 2.21. When a runner replaces an injured hitter, the last female OUT runs for a female; the last male OUT runs for a male. No replacement runner may leave from home plate. The replacement runner must replace the player at the base.
- 2.21.1. Unless an injury occurs on the play, replacement runners may only be allowed to be taken at first base.
- 2.22. Anyone who plays a position in the field must bat and any person who bats must play a position in the field. Players arriving late for a game must be ready to play by the beginning of the 5th inning. Both teams must agree, prior to the game that any players arriving late may play.
- 2.23. A Strike/Ball mat will be used to determine pitches. If the ball (having a legal arc) drops on any part of the mat (including the plate) the pitch will be called a strike; if the ball (having a legal arc) does not drop on the mat/plate the pitch will be called a ball.
- 2.24. When there is a play at first base, the base runner must touch the orange 1/2 of the safety bag. A runner touching the white 1/2 of the bag will be called OUT. Conversely, the fielder covering first base must make contact with the white 1/2 of the base. A fielder touching any part of the orange 1/2 of the base will be deemed not in contact with the base and the runner will be called safe.
 - 2.24.1. Outfielders are not allowed to make a throw directly to 1st base if the ball reaches the outfield and touches the ground before it is fielded. This rule does not apply to the rover or infield positions.
 - 2.24.2. If the batter/runner reaches first base, then chooses to round the base and makes any attempt toward second base, they will then be considered fair game and a play can be made at any base, from any position.
- 2.25. Until the ball is hit, Outfielders must line up at least 30 feet from the baseline, and Infielders must line up outside the baseline. (Note that the Rover is not considered an outfielder)
- 2.26. Scores should be checked after each inning.

3. League Rules

- 3.1. For a player to be eligible for the playoffs, that player must have played in at least 8 regular season games. Teams should maintain their game books in case proof is required of a player's regular season play history.
- 3.2. Full team rosters should be updated on the website and these will be locked as of July 1st, and **all full time players must be 19 years or older**. Teams may have spare players 17 years or older but no player under the age of 19 will be eligible for playoffs.
- 3.3. In the event of a tie in the team standings at the end of the season, the scheduler will break this tie using the following criteria (in order): Head-to-head record, Total wins in the League, Runs for/against between the two teams, Runs for/against during the entire season/overall throughout the League, Flip of a coin between the Team Captains.
- 3.4. If a game is tied after seven (7) innings, the game is considered a tie game and no extra innings will be played under any circumstances.
- 3.5. For games held at the Canada Games Diamond, a home run rule will be in effect. The rule will be that in any one inning at bat, each team may only hit a maximum of two (2) home runs (over the fence). Any home runs after that for the remainder of the inning will be recorded as an out.
- 3.6. **Spares:** Borrowing of male players from other league teams is not permitted.
- 3.7. **Rain-outs:** For all teams scheduled for play on a day where rain occurs, the Captains should call the HRM Field Condition Line, 490-7100 or check their website: <https://www.halifax.ca/recreation/facilities-fields/field-conditions> prior to making any decisions on cancellations. Due to the change in the HRM cancellation policy, the way we determine rain-outs has also changed. If the fields are open for play, regardless of the weather, and unless directed otherwise by the President, teams are expected to arrive at the field ready to play. If upon arrival at the field, both captains deem the field unplayable due to safety reasons, the home team captain must contact the Scheduler and/or the President to let them know of their decision. In the event of a rained-out game the make-up game will be scheduled on the first most convenient date.
- 3.8. **Forfeits:** Teams must provide 5 business days' notice to forfeit a game without penalty. Two (2) forfeits during the regular season may result in disqualification of a team from the league. Entrance fees shall not be refunded in this event. Any forfeit in the playoffs will result in a \$50 fine.
- 3.9. **Rescheduled games:** For teams looking to reschedule within five (5) business days of the game in question, the team will either choose to forfeit or pay a fine of \$40 to cover field cost and the game will be rescheduled at a later date, if time is available to do so. If this happens for games scheduled on lighted fields, the team will choose to forfeit or pay a fine of \$115. No more than three (3) games may be re-scheduled during the season initiated by a single team, without incurring a fine of \$40. During playoffs, no re-scheduling of games will be allowed; unless due to weather.
- 3.10. If a game or incident is in dispute the team representative may contact the President and ask for a ruling. The President will contact all players involved and a decision will be reached. Both teams will be advised of the decision and any penalties. Teams should lodge protests at the time of the occurrence and the opposing team captain/representative must be informed of an official protest being lodged with the President by the end of the game.

3.11. **League Rule: Interference by Outside Parties**

In the event a ball hit to the outfield is interfered with by an outside person—whether a player from another game, a spectator, or any individual not participating in the current game—play will be stopped, and the batter will be awarded at a minimum the base they are heading toward at the time of interference.

If the interference results in a scenario where further progress is in question (for example, a ball that would have clearly resulted in a home run), the league grants the team captains the sole responsibility to discuss the appropriate ruling. Any decision made by the captains regarding such situations, including awarding a home run or additional bases, will be final.

Note: Only team captains are permitted to engage in discussions regarding interference or disputed rulings. All other players, coaches, and spectators are respectfully asked to refrain from participating in the conversation.

This rule is intended to ensure a fair and smooth resolution in the event of outside interference while maintaining the flow and integrity of the game.

Appendix A - Commonly Misunderstood Rules

1. Infield Fly Rule

The infield fly rule applies when there are fewer than two outs, and there is a force play at third base (runners on first and second base, or bases loaded). Under these conditions, if a fly ball is hit into fair territory and the umpire perceives that an infielder using ordinary effort would be able to catch the ball, the umpire will call the batter automatically out. Even if the infielder later drops the ball, it makes no difference. As soon as the umpire makes the call, the batter is out and must leave the field. According to the rule, the umpire is supposed to announce, "Infield fly, if fair." If the ball is almost certainly fair, the umpire will likely yell, "Infield fly, the batter is out!" Umpires also usually raise one arm straight up to signal to everyone that the rule is in effect.

Players and fans sometimes misunderstand the infield fly rule. The infield fly rule is not in effect if there is a runner on first base only or second base only, as the rule-makers assumed fielders would not gain a significant advantage by forcing out the runner rather than the batter; in either case, the net result would be one more out and a runner on first base. Also, an infield fly does not affect base runners other than the batter.

On a caught infield fly, the runners must tag up (retouch their base at the time of pitch) in order to be eligible to advance, as on any catch. If the infield fly falls to fair ground untouched, or is touched and dropped, runners need not tag up. In either case, since the batter is out, the force play on the other runners is removed.

The infield fly rule does not apply to line drives or bunts. Nor does the rule cover all situations where the defense may wish to allow a fly ball to drop uncaught.

For example, if there is just a runner on first base, a quick-thinking infielder might purposely let a pop-up drop to the ground and get the force at second, if it happens that the runner on first is faster afoot than the batter-runner is, or if the batter is loafing on his way to first base. This is only legal if the fielder lets the ball hit the ground untouched, which carries some risk to the fielder as it might bounce away from him.

However, in all situations where the infield fly rule does not apply, a different rule prevents fielders from touching a catchable ball and dropping it intentionally in an attempt to turn a double or triple play.

2. Ball hit off plate

That the ball struck home plate is of no special relevance. The plate is entirely in fair territory and, on a batted ball, it is treated just like any other patch of dirt on the playing field. The plate is the permanent structure on the diamond only. This does not include the mat our league uses for the strike zone.

In fact, a ball could come off the bat, land right on top of the plate and just sit there and that would be a fair ball!

3. Stepping on plate when advancing to 1st base

You cannot step on the plate with any part of your foot while making contact with the ball; but after you hit the ball, it is completely legal.