

# **GREATER MADISON SENIOR SOFTBALL RULES and POLICIES**

Generally, our league follows the current Official USA Senior Softball Rulebook with notable exceptions, variations and clarifications as provided below.

*Note that 'blue printing' is new or emphasized rules and policies for this year.*

## **1. PLAYERS AND TEAMS:**

**A.** Player eligibility. A player is eligible to play if he is at least 55 years old by December 31st of the current year, has signed a current Waiver of Liability form and has paid his fees.

**B.** Player Draft. All new players who have not registered with a particular team **prior to the start of indoor practices** will be available for the draft and **must** be assigned to a team via the draft. Managers are not allowed to hand-select individual players from the new players first showing up for indoor practices and who originally applied via their BIO form sent to the Commissioner. However, Managers are still allowed to actively recruit new players during the year if that player hasn't initially sent in a BIO Form as his first contact with GMSS. The Draft is held during the fifth indoor practice session with a snow date being the sixth session. Draft Order is set such that the lowest ranking team who needs players will pick first and in ascending order of rank after that. New player selection is limited to one player for each Draft round, except if two players insist that they want to play on the same team. The Manager who selects that pair will miss his turn at selection in the next round. The number of Draft Rounds will depend on the number of players in the Draft Pool and the needs of the individual team managers.

**C.** Teams. Teams must have at least 12 eligible players on their roster to be viable. There is no maximum limit to the number of players on a team's roster. During the regular season, a team may add new players to its roster, **but a player may not switch teams without the written consent of his current manager.**

**D.** Sportsmanship. All players are expected to exhibit good sportsmanship, to avoid bodily contact with other players, to refrain from using abusive or profane language, and to accept the decisions of the umpire. Only managers may discuss disputed calls with the umpire. The umpire, in his discretion, may eject a player for an egregious violation of this rule.

## **2. LEAGUE SCHEDULES:**

**A.** Rankings. Teams have been assigned a ranking based on the previous year's rankings, game results, and past season's team analyses.

**B.** There will be a six-team upper league and an eight-team lower league on Wednesday. There will be a six-team upper league and a six-team lower league on Thursday. The next new team formed and composed mostly of undrafted free agents will likely play on Thursday; but must be voted in by the Thursday Managers.

**C.** NOTE; this item 'C' has been superseded by item 'E' below. It is included here 'for informational purposes only'. -

*It was proposed that at the end of each round the 'best' one or two teams in the lower league could be **shifted** to the upper league and the 'worst' one or two teams in the upper league could be **shifted** to the lower league. The shifted team(s) would have to take the team number of the team it is replacing in its' new league. This means that game schedules would be changed two or three times a year to accommodate the teams being moved. This changing of team numbers and having*

*only short-term schedules tends to be confusing to the players and makes scheduling for personal events hard or impossible.. So D & E methodology of scheduling shown below will prevail.*

**D.** The result of this shift outlined in “C” above is that the shifted middle-of-the-road teams normally would not get to play each other (even though they are closely ranked). **But the Managers voted to adapt the schedule such that those middle teams could play each other up to two times each.** This adaption happens in “E” below by allowing the potentially affected teams to be scheduled against each other without changing their team number.

**E.** Therefore, to avoid the confusion of the scenario created by ‘C’ above and to allow those middle-of-the-road teams to play each other, a TRANSITION SCHEDULE is incorporated into the league schedule which will allow those middle-of-the-road teams to play each other without having to change team numbers. By this means we can create and print off the schedule for the year with the two to four final weeks reserved for games between teams that were shorted during the year because of rainouts. These final weeks match-ups will be determined by the Commissioner and will be based on results and performance of the teams during the season and won’t reflect any arbitrary rescheduling of rainouts.

**F.** Home team. The team listed first is home team and will occupy the third base bench.

### **3. PLAYING FIELD:**

**A.** Bases. Bases are 60 feet apart. First base has both a white bag in fair territory and an orange bag in foul territory. A “runner’s home plate” is placed in foul territory eight feet from the third base line and even with the front of home plate.

**B.** Commitment lines. There is a “batter’s commitment line” 30 feet from home plate on the first base side and a runner’s commitment line 30 feet from home plate on the third base side. **See Rules 8(G) and 9(B) regarding these lines.** There will be no commitment lines between 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> bases.

**C.** First base will have a line perpendicular to it and extending into foul territory. When a batter/runner touches or crosses that line, he is considered to have touched 1<sup>st</sup> base for purposes of the umpire making an out or safe call. Second base will also have a line extending six feet towards the right outfield at an angle determined by the plane of the side of second base. In touching or crossing of that line, the runner is considered to have touched 2<sup>nd</sup> base for purposes of the umpire making a call.

**D.** Pitcher’s rubber. The rubber is located 45-50 feet from home plate. Depending on pitcher’s ability, he may take up position on or in front of and within 3 feet of the front rubber.

**E.** Fielder-free zone. The “outfield fielder-free line” is an arc, with the two endpoints 90 feet from first base and third base. The Fielder-free zone is the area between that arc and the dirt infield.

**F.** Courtesy runner’s line. The umpire shall establish a “courtesy runner’s line” about **four** feet behind the imaginary extension of the third base line, and positioned so that the runner does not interfere with the batter, catcher or umpire.

### **4. EQUIPMENT:**

**A.** Ball. The ball is the soft-core deBeer Clincher #F12.

**B. Bats.** Only adult softball bats may be used. No youth bats, baseball bats, loaded bats or bats which may separate are permitted.

**C. Shoes.** Metal cleats are not allowed.

### **5. LINEUPS and SUBSTITUTES:**

**A. Minimum number of players.** If a team does not have at least eight rostered players available and ready to play by the scheduled game time, it **may** lose by forfeit. But by **mutual agreement** of the managers, the team without enough players may pick up additional substitutes, the forfeit is canceled, and they would then play an official game.

**B.** If somebody, for physical reasons, can't run or play defense, but wants to bat and use a courtesy runner, he or they may do so even though they would be the 12th (or even 13th) (does not refer to Batting position) player on the Batting Roster.

**C. Substitutes.** To replace rostered players who are either absent or too injured to play the field, a team may add enough substitutes to enable it to play 11 players in the field. Managers will be free to select **almost** any player on the Substitute List or may recruit a needed player elsewhere who will best fill the slot created by the missing rostered player. **There are exceptions in that teams #1 & #2 on Wednesday and #1 & #2 on Thursday may not select a substitute from any #1 or #2 team from either day when they are playing a #3 or lower ranked team. When teams #1 or #2 play each other, there are no restrictions as to whom they may select as a substitute.**

**D. Batting order.** All players who play the field must be in the batting order, but all batters need not play in the field. A fielder who is or becomes too injured or sick to bat (usually because of shoulder problems) may play the field, and after at least one turn at bat, may be deleted from the batting order (but continue to play in the field) without penalty to his team. All substitutes must bat at the end of the batting order.

**E.** If a functional rostered player shows up late, he must take the batting spot of his Substitute and the Sub will be removed unless another opening has occurred.

**F. Fielders.** Fielders may be freely moved around. Substitutes may play any position in the field.

**G. Ejected players.** A team may replace an ejected player in the field, but must take an out whenever it is the ejected player's turn at bat. If the replacement player is a substitute picked up after the game has started, then he must be placed at the bottom of the batting order.

### **6. GAMES:**

**A. Regulation game.** A regulation game is nine innings. However, after 60 minutes the umpire will allow the current inning to finish and then will announce that the next inning is the final inning and the scoring of runs will be unrestricted. If the score is tied after that inning, they will be allowed one more inning (except that **no new inning may start more than 75 minutes after the scheduled game time**) with unrestricted runs to break the tie with the last batter of the previous inning starting on 2<sup>nd</sup> base. [See rule 9.D.](#) A tie after that inning will be recorded as a tie. ([See 6.D. below](#)). When, with the managers' consent, a game is started before its scheduled starting time, the equivalent amount of time is added to the 60 minute limit.

**B. Official game.** Games terminated by inclement weather or the time limit will be official if

at least 5 ½ innings have been played and the home team is ahead, or at least 6 innings have been played and the visiting team is ahead.

**C. Suspended games.** Games terminated before they have become official will be suspended and **may** be resumed at a later date. If less than two innings have been played, the game may be replayed from the start. Both situations above would require an open slot during the season to be rescheduled and would require those teams to play a ‘double-header’. Open slots do exist in the 11:30 time frame and on Field B at Vet Park.

**D. Tie games.** If the game is tied after nine innings or the 60 minute time limit protocol has been activated (see 6.A. above), additional innings will be played until a winner is determined, except that **no new inning may start more than 75 minutes after the scheduled game time.** The NEW inning is considered started when the last out is made in the previous inning. If the game is still tied at this point, the game will be declared a tie. In extra innings, each team begins its turn at bat with its last batter from the prior inning on second base. If the last batter from the previous inning had a courtesy runner **from home plate**, that courtesy runner may start the inning on second base. (see 9.D.)

**E. Maximum runs per inning.** A team may score no more than five runs per inning, but when behind, may score five more runs than are needed to tie the score. This is referred to as the “Tie plus 5” rule. No maximum runs applies in the ninth or final inning, when the umpire announces that only one more inning will be played due to the time limit, or in any extra innings beyond that point.

**F. Mercy rule.** If a team is behind by **12** or more runs after seven innings, the game is over. In this situation the umpire may allow the losing team to bat two or three times in a row.

## **7. PITCHER and BATTER:**

**A. Legal pitch.** For a pitch to be legal, the pitcher must pause while facing the batter, and with his foot on the rubber or in his modified starting position, must deliver the ball in one continuous forward motion, with an arc of between six and twelve feet. During windy conditions, the managers may agree to permit pitches with a flatter arc. If the umpire declares a pitch to be illegal the pitch is a ball, but the illegality is nullified if the batter swings at the pitch.

**B. Strike.** A strike is called when a legal pitch touches the plate or the mat, or when the batter swings at a pitch and fails to hit a fair ball.

**C. Walks and strikeouts.** Three balls results in a walk. Two strikes results in a strikeout.

**D. Intentional walk.** A pitcher may issue an intentional walk by notifying the umpire, without having to throw any pitches.

**E. Illegal hits.** A batter who bunts, chops down on the ball or hits the ball twice (other than during a follow-through swing) shall be declared out, and any runners must return to their bases.

## **8. FIELDERS and RUNNERS: (Also see FAQ Rules for more clarification)**

**A. Positioning of fielders.** A team may play no more than 11 players in the field. Any fielders playing in the outfield grass must be positioned at or behind the “outfield line,” see Rule 3(D), when the pitch is delivered. Such fielders may catch any flyball for an out or field a batted ball in front of the line, but may not throw out the batter running to first base

on any batted ball that has touched the grass. Infielders may, however, go into the outfield grass to field a batted ball and may throw out the batter at first base. Tag-ups are always subject to either a tag or force-out play.

**B. Sliding and baserunning.** A runner is not permitted to slide feet-first. However, a runner may slide head-first to return to a base. A runner who falls down when advancing or returning to a base may crawl or lunge to that base. When a play is being made or will potentially be made on a runner, he is permitted and encouraged to over-run or run wide of a base if necessary to avoid a collision with a fielder.

**C. Tags and force-outs.** Except at home plate, see G below, a fielder may either tag or force out a runner to put that runner out. A runner is forced out when a fielder possessing the ball touches the base before the runner reaches it. In running back to the base he only has to beat the thrown and caught ball there. **He is allowed to overrun the base on the return also with no penalty for not holding the base.** A runner who runs wide of the base is deemed to have reached that base if his foot touches the ground at or beyond the imaginary or real 60' (see Rule 3.C.) line extending from the front of the previous base.

**D. Interference.** A runner will be called out for interference if he collides with a player fielding a thrown or batted ball or one who reasonably expects to make a play on the runner. A runner must run either inside or outside of the base path and/or the base to avoid a collision with a fielder. If the interference is deemed to have prevented another runner or runners from being put out, the umpire will call them out as well. Whenever a collision with a fielder is not imminent, a runner is allowed to touch all bases or at least must step right beside them.

**E. Obstruction.** A fielder may not obstruct a baserunner by being in the basepath or near a base unless the fielder is fielding a thrown or batted ball or he reasonably expects to make a play on the runner. Multiple fielders must refrain from converging on a base to make a play on a runner if by doing so they impede the progress of a runner. **This act of impediment will then be called obstruction and the runner is awarded that base.** When attempting to field an errant throw, the fielder must attempt to avoid a collision with a runner. Fake tags are considered obstruction. The umpire will award an obstructed runner the base or bases he would have safely reached without the obstruction.

**F. Plays at first base.** When a play is being made at first base on the batter/runner, he must usually touch the orange "safety base" in foul territory when advancing to that base. But he may run wide if he thinks there is a possibility of a play at 1<sup>st</sup> base and he wants to avoid a potential collision in case the throw is errant. **A 4' long line perpendicular to 1<sup>st</sup> base line will be limed in. For purposes of being called out or safe, that line will represent a horizontal extension of the front of 1<sup>st</sup> base. This will make it easier for the umpires to make more accurate 'out' or 'safe' calls.** If necessary, he may also touch either bag or run wide of the bags to avoid a collision. A fielder must touch the white base in fair territory or tag the runner to put the runner out. **On an errant throw, the fielder/baseman must not lunge into the runners basepath as that would result in an obstruction call.**

**G. Plays at home.** A runner who touches or crosses the "runner's commitment line" on the third base line, see Rule 3(B), must continue toward the "runner's plate," see Rule 3(A), and cannot return to third base, **even if he left base before a fly ball is caught. The fielding team only has to throw the ball to 3<sup>rd</sup> base to get him out, unless he has already been called**

out for leaving the base too soon. To score a run, a runner must touch the runner's plate and will be called out if he touches home plate. To put out a runner who has touched or crossed the commitment line on the third base line, or who is forced by another runner to advance to the plate, a fielder must touch home plate or the mat while in possession of the ball. A tag-out is not permitted at Home plate.

**H. Runner leaving a base.** A runner will be called out if he leaves a base before the batter **starts to swing at a pitch**. Once the batter starts to swing the bat, the runner is allowed only one step unless batter makes contact with the ball. The mere act of leaning into the pitch does not constitute 'starting to swing'.

## **9. COURTESY RUNNERS:**

**A.** Request for courtesy runner. A batter or runner who is injured, sick or otherwise disabled may request a courtesy runner (CR). A batter who is willing to run to first but feels that further hard running may antagonize a medical condition may request a CR while on base. A player may not request a courtesy runner simply because he is a slow runner and wishes to be replaced by a faster runner. A courtesy runner for either the batter or a runner must report before a pitch is thrown.

**B.** Courtesy runners for the batter. A courtesy runner for the batter must stand behind the "courtesy runner's line" (revised this year to be about 64 feet from 1<sup>st</sup> base). See Rule 3(E), before a pitch is delivered. Once the pitch is delivered, the batter may be called out if the courtesy runner moves more than one step before the batter has actually hit the ball, foul or fair. The Courtesy Runner **position** will be given one warning per game which will occur with the first CR to make the mistake of early movement. But the CR/batter will be called out on subsequent violations by any CR, thus ending that batter's turn at bat. Movement by the CR after the ball hits the base or ground is not subject to a penalty.

A batter who has requested a courtesy runner will be called out if he crosses the batter's commitment line.

**C.** Eligibility to be a courtesy runner. A player may serve as courtesy runner only once in an inning and only three times in a game. **This rule is subject to negotiation by the two opposing managers if one or both teams have a shortage of capable runners.** If a batter is on a base when it is his turn to bat, another C.R. may take his place so that he may bat in his turn. This does cause two C.R.s to be used for one batter, so plan ahead when determining your C.R. rotation.

**D.** Courtesy runners during tie-breakers. Except as provided in Rule 6(D), a team may not use a courtesy runner for the designated runner who begins the inning on second base until the designated runner reaches third base. If the last batter from the previous inning had a courtesy runner from home plate, that courtesy runner may start the inning on second base.