

GREATER MADISON SENIOR SOFTBALL RULES (2025)

Generally, our league follows the Official USA Senior Softball Rulebook (2019-20), Official Senior Softball USA Rulebook (2019-20), with notable exceptions, variations and clarifications as provided below.

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. New players who have not registered with a particular team will be assigned to a team via a draft.

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 manager.

D. Rankings. Teams will be assigned game opponents based on the previous year's rankings and year-end team analyses. Teams more than five rankings apart are not likely to ever face each other. The higher ranking teams are presumed to be more skilled or physically capable than those in the lower ranks.

E. 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 SCHEDULE

A. There are no rounds in the Wednesday and Thursday schedules for 2025. Games are scheduled such that all teams within four rankings play each other at least twice and play the teams five rankings apart at least once. But teams six or more rankings apart will probably not face each other. The top four teams and the bottom four teams will play more games against their peer opponents.

B. Remaining schedule. On Wednesday no rainouts will be made up and the last two weeks of the year will be a Challenge game between pairs of evenly matched teams or between teams that never got to play each other because of rainouts. On Thursday the last four weeks are reserved for rainouts first and then Challenge games as needed.

C. Home team. The team listed first is the home team, and occupies 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 line 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 are no commitment lines between 1st & 2nd and 2nd & 3rd base for 2025.

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

D. Outfield line. The “outfield fielder free line” is an arc, with the two endpoints 90 feet from first base and third base.

E. Courtesy runner’s line. The umpire shall establish a “courtesy runner’s line” at least three 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. 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 who will best fill the slot created by the missing rostered player. There are exceptions in that teams #1 and #2 on Wed 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.

C. 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. Substitutes must bat last.

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

E. 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 bat at the bottom of the 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 with unrestricted runs to break the tie with the last batter of the previous inning starting on 2nd base. 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 appropriate 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 **and per established criteria listed on the last page of the schedule packet.** 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. (see 2.B.)**

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, 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 15 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, 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 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. 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 line extending from the front of the 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 encouraged to** touch all bases.

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 may then be called obstruction and the runner is awarded that base.** When attempting to field an errant throw, a 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 to 1st base and he wants to avoid a potential collision if the throw is errant.** He may touch either bag or run wide of the bags if necessary 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. 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 is not permitted.

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.

9. COURTESY RUNNERS

A. Request for courtesy runner. A batter or runner who is injured, sick or otherwise disabled may request a courtesy runner. 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), See Rule 3(E), before a pitch is delivered. Once the pitch is delivered, the batter will be called out if the courtesy runner moves **more than one step before the batter has actually hit the ball, foul or fair**. 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.** A player should not be used as a courtesy runner if his position in the batting order would potentially require him to bat while he is on base. A batter will be declared out if his turn at bat arrives while he is on base as a courtesy runner, but he will remain on base. To avoid this result, another player may be substituted for the courtesy runner before the latter’s turn at bat arrives. 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.