



Bristol Softball Association

The Basic ISF Rules of Softball, 2007

This is a brief outline of the rules of co-ed slow pitch softball as defined by the ISF Official Rules of Softball, including local rulings set out by the **BSA**. Copies of the International Softball Federation rule book may be purchased from the Bristol Umpire-in-Chief or downloaded from <http://www.internationalsoftball.com/rules.html>.

Team captains must make themselves and their team aware of the rules. Adherence to the rules leads to a better game. Do not let the game get out of control, use common sense and enjoy playing.

THE BASICS

Softball is played on a fan shaped field which has a diamond shaped infield with 4 bases (see diagram of "The Softball Diamond"). Two teams, "Home" and "Away", take turns to bat and field through 7 innings, the "Home" team takes the field first.

The pitcher pitches the ball in a gentle arc, underarm to the batter who must hit into fair territory to advance. A batter can be "struck out" by failing to hit 3 good pitches.

A batter who hits a fair ball becomes a batter-runner who should then run to and touch the coloured portion (usually orange) of the 1st base. A batter-runner can be "caught out" by the fielding team or "forced out" by failing to beat the throw by the fielding side to the 1st base fielder who must be touching the white portion of the base. The batter-runner does not have to stop on 1st base but may run through. The only time the batter-runner and 1st baseman may use either base is when a force out attempt is made from the foul side.

After touching 1st base the batter-runner becomes a runner and must use the white portion of 1st base. A runner can be "forced out" by failing to reach the next base before the ball arrives at that base, or runner can be "tagged out" whilst running between bases by a fielder who is holding the ball.

Each time a runner completes a circuit of the four bases, even in one go from the batters box ("Home Run"), one run is scored.

When three players of the batting team are out, their half of the innings is over and it is the fielding teams' turn to bat.

The teams alternate like this through seven innings. The team scoring the most runs at the end of seven innings wins the game. If the match is tied at the end of seven innings extra innings must be played, until a result is established. To assist in getting a result from additional innings the last batter of the previous innings starts on 2nd base. There is no such thing as a tie in a full softball match.

SOME DEFINITIONS

THE STRIKE ZONE

This is an imaginary three-dimensional zone above any part of the home plate between the batters' front knee and back shoulder when they are stood in their "natural batting stance".

STRIKES AND BALLS

All legally pitched deliveries passing through the strike zone are strikes. Any deliveries not passing through the strike zone are called balls, unless the batter swings in which case it counts as a strike. For a pitch to be considered legal it must at the highest point of flight pass above 6 feet from the ground and below 12 feet. If the pitcher delivers 4 balls, the batter is given a free walk to 1st base for females and 2nd base for male batters.

FAIR BALL

A batted ball that goes into fair territory. The batter must advance.

FOUL BALL

Umpire in Chief: Tony Soteriou



A batted ball that goes into foul territory. The ball is dead nobody can advance or is liable to be put out - unless the ball is caught, in which case the batter is out, the ball is live and runners have the option to advance. (see also "tagging up").

DEAD BALL

Any ball which is hit, carried or overthrown into Dead Ball territory.

INFIELD

The area of the field in fair territory from the home plate out to and including the other bases.

OUTFIELD

The area of the field in fair territory beyond 1st, 2nd and 3rd bases, i.e. the area not covered by the infield.

FOUL BALL OR NOT?

A foul ball is determined differently depending on where the ball is hit. If the ball is hit and does not leave the infield, fair or foul is decided by where the ball comes to rest i.e. If the ball first lands fair in the infield and then rolls foul and comes to rest in foul territory, the ball is declared as being foul.

If the ball is hit and leaves the infield, fair or foul is then determined by where the ball is first touched or lands i.e. ball hit into outfield lands in fair territory and then rolls foul, the ball is still considered to be fair.

The exception to these rules is if the ball hits or bounds over 1st or 3rd base it is automatically fair.

FORCE PLAY

Runners are forced to run when batter hits the ball, if the base or bases in front of the batter are consecutively occupied. So for example if there are runners on 1st and 2nd base and the batter hits a fair ball, the runner at 1st is forced by the batter-runner to run to 2nd, forcing the runner on 2nd to run to 3rd. To make an out all the fielder has to do is to touch, say, 3rd base - usually with the foot - whilst holding the ball. The runner is automatically out because it was a "forced situation". Runners may be "tagged out" (touched with the hand or glove holding the ball) between bases as well.

UNFORCED PLAY

Runners are not forced to run if the base behind is not occupied and/or 1st base is not occupied. To get these "loose" runners out the fielders must tag them with the glove or hand which is holding the ball whilst they are between bases. A tag should be considered as a touch and not a thump! (They cannot be forced out). If the ball falls to the ground as the result of the tag, the runner is considered safe because the fielder was not in control of the ball. Faking tags can result in the offending defensive player being ejected from the game. It is dangerous play.

Once runners have passed the base they are forced to run to, (for example a runner starting at 1st, passes 2nd, heading for 3rd), they too must be tagged out. The reason is that there is always a base that the runner could run back to. You cannot get anyone out by throwing the ball at them. Any runner tagged whilst not on base is out, although 1st base can over-run quite safely without liability to be put out (provided no attempt is made to 2nd base) and obviously runners are free to over-run home plate. So it is not sufficient just to reach 2nd and 3rd base. You must stay in contact with it or you may be tagged out.

TAGGING UP

When a batter is caught out any runners on base should have stayed in contact with their base until the ball was caught. If they left before it was caught they must return to that base and "tag up", i.e. re-establish contact with it, before advancing further. A runner failing to return to a base before it's touched by a fielder, holding the ball, is out. The best advice is if the ball is going to be caught stay on your base. Once caught (or dropped) you may try for the next base.

EQUIPMENT

All gloves and balls permitted under the ISF softball rules can be used. Bats on the most current ASA non-approved list are NOT permitted. Baseball bats are not permitted.

The use of gloves by fielders is strongly recommended. Mitts may be used only by the catcher and first baseman.

The ball must be 12 inches in circumference, white or yellow in colour, have red stitching (gold or white stitched balls should not be used) and should be marked ISF-4795 or a ball issued and approved by the BSA for league or tournament use. The umpire must approve the ball before use.

All players on the field of play must wear suitable footwear. Bear feet, sandals etc. are not acceptable. Rubber or plastic studded shoes are recommended. Shoes with metal cleats or studs are not permitted.

Players MUST remove all jewellery and watches – no exceptions. If players refuse to comply, they do not play.

Umpire in Chief: Tony Soteriou



THE GAME

A team must start with 5 male and 5 female players. A team may start or continue a game with 9 players. However, its captain must leave a space in the 10th position of the batting order to represent the missing player. The team will receive an automatic out each time that space comes up in the batting order. A team may submit at the start of the game 6 players of each sex to bat, but only 5 and 5 to field, but a team can not start with 11.

It is the designated "Home" teams' responsibility to provide the bases, and return the bases to storage at the end of the match. The Home team bats second, and therefore takes the field first.

Teams should be ready to start play at 18:30. Any team not ready to play with the minimum number of people by 18:50 will forfeit the match and the points will go to the opposition. In this situation the BSA recommends Captains to arrange a friendly fixture with the players available.

A game consists of seven full innings. If darkness or bad weather prevents the completion of seven innings, as determined by the **BLU** umpiring the match. A game terminated by the umpire during play shall be regulation if five or more complete innings have been played, or if the team second at bat has scored more runs than the other team has scored in five or more innings. The score shall stand.

In the event of lightning, the umpire shall stop the game at the first sight of lightning and all players must return to the clubhouse. If after 15 minutes there's no further lightning then games will resume, If after 30 minutes there's still lightning then games will be abandoned.

If the game is terminated part way through the top of an innings with the Home Team batting, or part way through the bottom of an innings and the team second at bat has scored less runs the score shall revert back to the last complete innings, provided this is still a regulation game, i.e. at least 5 complete innings have been played.

If the game is not a regulation game, it shall be replayed from the beginning. Original lineups may be changed when the game is replayed.

PITCHING

The BSA is a slow pitch league. Fast pitching is not permitted. If the pitch is delivered at an excessive speed in the judgement of the umpire, the umpire shall warn the pitcher and a "no pitch" declared. If the pitcher repeats such an act after being warned, the pitcher shall be removed from the pitcher's position for the remainder of the game.

The pitcher must start with one or both feet in contact with the pitchers plate. Contact with the pitchers plate must be maintained until the pitch is released.

A ball should be pitched with an underarm motion in an arc which reaches a minimum of 6 feet and a maximum of 12 feet from the ground, and pass through the STRIKE ZONE. Pitches which are too low or too high will be declared "ILLEGAL" by the plate umpire, whilst the ball is still in flight. The field umpire may also call "ILLEGAL" balls too if he/she sees an infraction. The batter at this point then has the choice to continue and hit the pitched ball, at which point the illegal pitch call is nullified and play continues as normal, or to leave the pitch and the pitch will then be counted as a ball against the pitcher.

BATTING

The batting order MUST alternate male and female. After the 10th, or 12th, player has batted, it returns to the beginning. The player who was about to bat when the third out was made starts the teams' batting the following innings.

A batter who is out will bat again if his or her turn comes round again in the innings.

Any pitched ball hitting any part of home plate, which has not been swung at, is a "ball".

A batter gets a strike if:

- The batter swings at any pitch and misses the ball.
- The batter does not swing at a pitch that passes through the STRIKE ZONE.
- The batter hits a FOUL BALL.

Three strikes and the batter is out.



A batter will have a ball recorded if he does not swing at a pitch that is outside the strike zone. Four balls allows the batter to "walk". The ball is dead. Any walk to a female batter will result in a 1 base award for the batter and the next batter a male will bat. Any walk to a male batter will result in a 2 base award for the batter and the next batter, a female, will bat. The exception to this is with two outs, the female batter has the option to take a 1 base walk or bat.

A batter who hits the ball into fair territory must attempt to get to 1st base, or further if the batter-runner chooses. The batter will be out if:

- The ball is caught by a fielder on the fly.
- A fielder collects the ball and throws it to the 1st baseman who is touching the white portion of 1st base before the batter-runner gets to the colour portion of the base.
- On becoming a runner is tagged whilst not in contact with a base by any player holding the ball.
- The batter touches the ball in fair territory between the batting area and 1st base before the ball has been touched by a fielder.

BASE RUNNING

A runner must touch each base in the correct order.

A runner who is waiting at a base must keep one foot in contact with the base and may not leave it until the pitched ball has been struck or passes through the STRIKE ZONE. Any player caught leaving the base early will be put out by the umpire after "dead ball" is called.

A runner can overrun 1st base and home plate without penalty. If the runner overruns 2nd or 3rd base then that player can be tagged out.

A runner is not allowed to go more than 1 metre (approximately an outstretched arm of a fielder) out of a base path to avoid being tagged out. Any runner which does will be called out.

A runner may advance on a caught fly ball, but the runner must wait at their base until the ball is caught. If the runner leaves base before the ball is caught, the runner is out if a fielder returns the ball to any player standing on the base the runner left before that runner returns to the base left early. A runner is never forced to run on a caught fly ball.

A runner is forced to run on a non-fly ball if every base behind that runner is already occupied by other runners. The runner is out if any fielder collects the ball at the base ahead of the runner.

If the base behind a runner is not occupied, then that runner is not forced to run and cannot be forced out and must be tagged whilst off a base.

Two runners can never occupy the same base. The second one to arrive there is out if tagged by a fielder with the ball, in an unforced play.

The batter-runner or runner is out if struck by a fair batted ball, if the ball is untouched by a fielder, or has not yet passed a defensive infield player (excluding the pitcher), whilst the runner is in fair territory and off a base. If the ball hits the batter while the batter is in the batters box, the batter is not out and "foul ball" is called.

A runner is awarded 2 bases on an overthrow into dead ball territory. This is awarded from the time the ball is thrown and not when the ball goes "dead".

Base-stealing is not allowed.

A play is over when "time" is called by the umpire.

FIELDING

There must be 2 female players in the outfield, 2 female players in the infield and the catcher must be of the opposite sex to the pitcher.

A fielder should never stand directly on the base. Only when making a play should the fielder have one foot on the corner of the base. At all other times the fielder should be standing well away from the base.

The ball must NEVER be thrown directly at runners or bases. It is dangerous and does not put the runner out.

Fielders must allow base runners clear access to base paths and bases. The runner will automatically be safe if he is OBSTRUCTED.

Umpire in Chief: Tony Soteriou



Ties are in favour of the runner. If the runner arrives at the base at the exact same time as a fielder on that base catches the ball, the runner is safe.

SAFETY

Softball is less dangerous than most games, but still generates a fair number of injuries. A special problem is that the comparative inexperience of many players leaves them particularly vulnerable to being injured by stronger, more experienced players. The following guidelines are intended to help softball players avoid causing injury to:

- The public
- Other players.
- Themselves.

Please act upon them. In the main they represent common sense, but all team captains must take responsibility for the well-being of players and public.

THE PUBLIC

Because of our affiliation to the BSF, we have Public liability insurance cover. This does not, however, mean that we can afford to ignore the risk to passers-by. Do not pitch the ball if there are members of the public in a position where they might be struck by a batted ball. All players, as well as the umpire, have a responsibility to ensure that this is adhered to at all times.

OTHER PLAYERS

If a ball is hit on to the playing area of another pitch, a player chasing the ball should take great care. Players on the other pitch, if possible, should notify the plate umpire and cease play to avoid danger.

Fielders must stay off the bases if they are not attempting to put out a player at the base. This will prevent collisions between runners and fielders. If a runner remains on their feet and crashes into a fielder who is attempting to make a play on the ball, without sliding to the base, the runner will be called out. If the act is determined to be flagrant by the umpire, the offender shall be ejected.

INDIVIDUAL SAFETY

Individuals are at risk in several ways, including being struck by the bat or the ball, colliding with other players. Typically injuries are pulled muscles, bruises, cuts, and broken bones. All players play at their own risk.

There are simple steps that can be taken to avoid injury to yourself.

- Warm up properly.
- Wear a glove.
- When fielding a ground ball, be aware of possibility of an awkward bounce from rough ground. A low bounce will bruise your shins; a high bounce will hit your face. Anticipating the problem will enable you to take avoiding action. **WATCH THE BALL!**
- Players who are not confident of catching or avoiding a fast line drive should not field at shortstop or pitcher. Bad light makes this problem worse for close fielders, and constitutes grounds for stopping the game. **WATCH THE BALL!**
- Players who are waiting to bat should stay alert for the possibility of a foul ball being hit in their direction. **WATCH THE BALL!**
- To avoid being hit by a runner when trying to put out the runner at a base, put just one foot on the base and lean away from the runner's path. Obviously, the path of the ball towards the fielder may necessitate a change of position, but if the base fielder is in the correct positions quickly other fielders can throw to the safe side of the base.
- Call quickly and clearly when attempting to catch a high fly ball. Collisions between two people going for the same ball hurt!
- To avoid cuts and grazes, wear long trousers (e.g. track suit bottoms) and long sleeved shirts.
- The batter must drop the bat, not throw it away.
- If you see foreign objects on the playing field such as glass, empty cans, stones, dog shit, etc., inform the umpire to stop play and remove it from the field of play. Beware of spectators, dogs, rough ground, holes etc.

LOCAL BSA RULINGS



It is the individual responsibility of the umpires of each game to decide whether their match can continue in adverse conditions. Their decision is final and discussion will not be entered into.

The BSA variations to the ISF rules are as follows.

PREGNANT PLAYERS

All team captains who have pregnant players on their side should declare these specific individuals to the Committee as soon as they know. The pregnant player can take no further part in the game.

Any team refusing to remove a pregnant player as requested by the opposition captain will automatically forfeit the game.

Any pregnant player/s who are not declared, then play at their own risk and liability. If any player who is visibly pregnant and has not been declared enters the field of play and starts the match, the match will be declared forfeit and the points awarded to the opposing team.

STARTING PLAYERS

BSA has allowed teams to start with only 9 players (rather than the ISF required 5 male and 5 female players). A team may start or continue a game with 9 players (however an ejected player must be replaced). However, its captain must leave a space in the 10th position of the batting order to represent the missing player.

RINGERS

A ringer is a player rostered to another team or a non-rostered player who is not rostered to your team within 7 days of playing. Only ONE 'ringer' is permitted per team per game and no more than 5 ringers across the season in any division. Please note that any ringers listed as substitutes even if they are not played, still count. Ringers are only allowed to play in certain positions: catcher, pitcher or right-field, all teams are therefore required to supply a team line-up to the umpire at the start of the match clearly indicating any ringers with an '@' and stating the position in which they will be playing.

This is to enable teams to overcome problems with missing players due to unforeseen circumstances. This practice is NOT encouraged. The line-up cards will be compared with the most recent team roster list, to make sure that the rule is not broken, if the rule is broken the team will be deducted penalty points. Please note any incomplete names that cannot be properly checked will be automatically treated as a ringer.

A 1st Division player can NOT play for a 3rd Division team.

COURTESY RUNNERS

Any player on the official line-up sheet, including substitutes, may be used as a courtesy runner. They must be of the same sex as the runner they are replacing

A team can have unlimited courtesy runners. However, a player may be a courtesy runner only ONCE per inning. If a player runs a second time in the same inning he will be called out and removed from the base.

The batter-runner must bat and reach at least 1st base before he can be replaced. The batter-runner can not be a courtesy runner for that inning.

A courtesy runner who is up to bat whilst on a base will be called out and cannot be replaced.

GENERAL RULINGS

Infield fly rule will apply to all divisions.

The 150ft line rule will be enforced to 2nd & 3rd divisions. The penalty for breaching the 150ft line before the ball has passed through the strike zone will be a ground ball double, i.e. 2 base award.

In the event that two teams share the same number of points, their head to heads record will count first and if still tied overall run difference, then number of walkovers and in the event that two teams are still tied at the end of the season, a play-off game will ensue.

PROTESTS

Protests will not be received or considered if they are based solely on a decision involving the accuracy of judgement on the part of an umpire.

There are three types of protest:

- Misinterpretation of a playing rule. Protest must be made before the next pitch or, if on the last play of the game, before the umpires leave the playing field.

Umpire in Chief: Tony Soteriou



- Illegal substitute or re-entry. Must be made while they are in the game and before the umpires leave the playing field.
- Ineligible player. Can be made at any time. Eligibility is the decision of the protest committee.

The captain or the manager of the protesting team must immediately inform the plate umpire that the game is being played under protest. The plate umpire will in turn notify the opposing captain or manager.

To aid in the correct determination of the protest all interested parties should take note of all the information surrounding the protested incident i.e. number of outs, runners on bases etc.

The official written protest must be filed within in 10 days of the protest being made for the protest to be considered.

The written protest should include the following information:

- The date time and place of the game.
- The names of the umpires and scorer (if available).
- The rule and section of the official rules or local rules under which the protest is made.
- The information, details and conditions pertinent to the decision to protest.
- All essential facts involved in the matter protested.

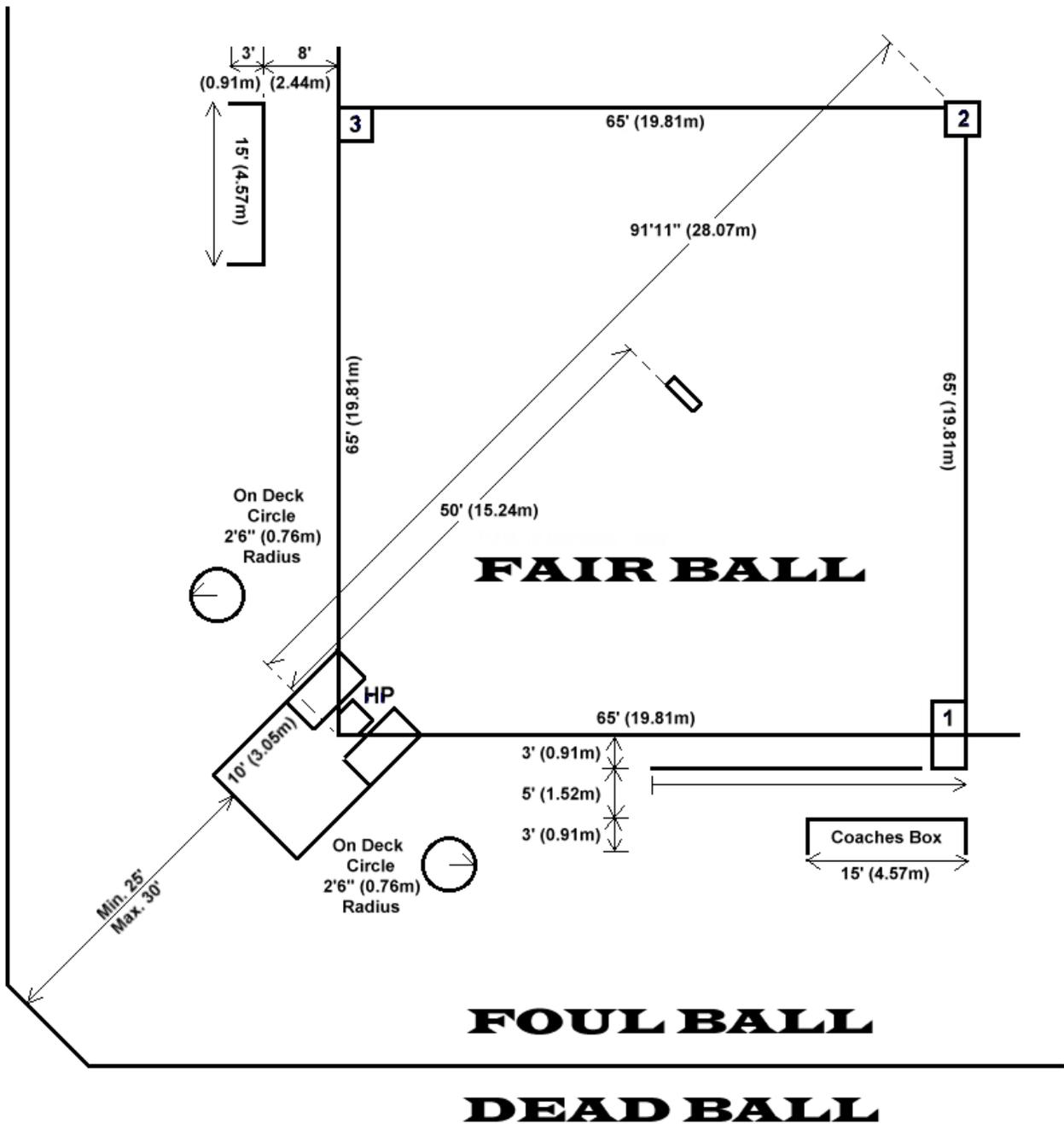
The protest committee, made up of three impartial umpires will then meet to decide the outcome of the filed protest. There will be a £50 charge for each protest filed, and if the committees rules in favour of the offended party the money will be returned, else it will be retained.



THE PLAYING FIELD

The BSA will play its games at Beggars Bush Sports Ground, Bristol (over the Clifton Suspension Bridge) where there will be 4-6 marked-out pitches. These pitches are not to be used for practises.

OFFICIAL DIMENSIONS FOR SLOW PITCH COED SOFTBALL



Umpire in Chief: Tony Soteriou

