

Rules, Decisions and Clarifications for Michiana Senior Softball League's Senior Division

Last update 4/12/2024

Items in **Blue** are noteworthy changes from last season or to add clarification.

Game Basics

- Batters start with 1-1 count
- Foul ball after 2 strikes = batter OUT
- 5 run max per inning for batting team.
- Batter is OUT if catcher catches any foul tipped ball.
- Game = 7 innings. (Mercy rule: 15 after 5 innings; 10 after 6)
- Extra innings: 8th inning and onward commences with a runner on 2nd base.
- Substitute Runners:
 - Batters who reach base safely can request a pinch runner.
 - The pinch runner opportunity ends when the next batter takes first pitch.
 - Can be any team member.
 - The next offensive player to touch the base after batter/runner steps away is committed as the runner.
 - If the substitute runner is still on base when it's their turn to bat, it is an automatic OUT.
- Time limit: The ump has the authority to declare no new inning will begin once the game reaches 60 minutes.
 - To avoid wasting game time we recommend quick on, quick off; Quickly clear the dropped bat; On-deck and in-the-hole batters ready to go; Courtesy runners ready when batter steps up; Relieved batter/runner should get off the field quickly.

Age Eligibility

“Age” is defined as how old a player will become ANYTIME during the current season's calendar year. In other words, it does not matter if the player's birthday falls before, during or after the season's play. (Current year – Year of Birth = Age)

Age Minimums:

- Junior Division: 52 or older
- Senior Division: 62 or older (Exception: those <62 may participate as a Seniors player if health conditions warrant doing so for player safety. Determination will be made by the commissioners.
- Women (Both Divisions): (TBD)

Bats

- Senior Division: Any bat is permitted provided it does not exceed a 1.21 BPF rating (Bat Performance Factor).
- Junior Division:
 - 61 and under can use single wall, double wall or wood bat.
 - 62 and older may use the above or composite (cannot exceed 1.21 BPF.)

Batting line-up –

BEFORE game begins:

- Guiding principles
 - Teams shall bat all attending, able-bodied team members.
 - Managers shall discuss, and agree upon, any exceptions for a player dealing with an injury or other physical limitation.
- If only 10 team members show-up by game time, and all 10 play the field, the line-up of 10 is permitted. The team may optionally add an eligible sub before the game commences to make 11. Late arrivals get added to the bottom of the line-up as discussed below.
- If only 9 team members show-up by game time, the team should try to acquire one or two subs before the game commences. However, if none are available the game may proceed according to the following conditions:
 - All 9 must play the field & bat.
 - Automatic OUT: A 'virtual' 10th batter will be added to the bottom of the batting order. Each time this 'virtual 10th batter' comes up in the order an automatic OUT is applied. **The batting team must alert the OUT to both defense and umpire(s)** each time it comes up in the order.
- A team of 8 or less must forfeit.

AFTER game has begun:

- Non-team member subs are prohibited.
- Any late arrival team members shall be added to the bottom of the batting lineup.
- In the event a player can no longer bat (for injury or other reason such as leaving the game) the following shall apply:
 - During innings 1 – 4, the team shall inform the other manager and the line-up may simply skip over that vacated slot.
 - Beginning with the 5th inning, if a player cannot bat, an OUT is applied when the player's slot comes up in the line-up.
 - Exception: medical workers, first-responders, or any other exception discussed by managers prior to the game.
- (Senior Division only) A Senior team beginning a game with 9 or 10 players will be permitted to add eligible subs until the end of the 3rd inning to make 11. *(Spirit: Work commitments make it more challenging to arrive for a senior division's earlier start time.)*

Bodily Protection

- Players participate at their own risk.
- Wearable PPE is encouraged per the desired degree of protection.
- Senior Division: A safety net for pitchers shall be permitted according to the following stipulations:
 - Pitcher cannot be the first defensive touch on a batted ball. If the pitcher is the first to touch a batted ball then the batter is granted an automatic single; runners advance one base. Once a batted ball is touched by another defensive player the pitcher may engage in the play..

- If a defensive play results in the ball making contact with the net it remains a live ball. Runners can advance at their own risk (similar to a ball hitting an umpire in fair territory or careening off the backstop during a throw to home).
 - A batted ball first hitting any part of the net, its frame, or components constitutes a dead ball/do over. (That is, no ball or strike is called on the batter. Runners return to their original base.)
 - If a team opts to use a net the opposing team is NOT required to use one.
- Instead of a net, if a pitcher (or any other player for that matter) uses wearable PPE instead then none of the above stipulations apply and the pitcher may engage in normal play of any batted ball.
- The league does not provide protective safety equipment. Use of protective equipment remains at the discretion of each player.

Decorum – *Spirit: Respect for umpires, players, the facility, and fans.*

- Managers are accountable for the behavior of their team.
- If a player uses offensive language, the umpire can call the next batter out.
- Severe cursing can result not only in next batter out, but also ejection of the offender.
- If a team member is unable to come off the bench to sub for the ejected player an automatic out is incurred when the ejected player's spot comes up in the batting order for the duration of the game.
- Angrily throwing a bat on the field may be considered grounds for warning and/or ejection at umpire's discretion

Infield Positioning

- At least two infielders and not more than 3 must be on the dirt on each side of 2nd base bag. Loading up one side for pull hitters is prohibited.

Pitch height (arc).

- The ball must be pitched as a slow-pitch with a minimum arc of at least 6 feet from the ground and must not reach a height of more than 12 feet at its highest point from the ground.

Player Fees

- **Anyone on a team's rostered prior to game 1 who does not pay his/her player fee by team's third game cannot play in the third game and shall be removed from the roster.**

Portable Fence

Ground rule double applies when a fair ball:

- Goes through the fence (mesh or gaps).
- Bounces over the fence.
- A fair ball rolls from fair to foul territory and goes beyond the fence line.

First Base (safe/out) – Spirit: Player safety (We use a twin-bag first base.)

- Batter/runner going for a single must use the right side (orange safety) base. Failure to do so can result in an automatic OUT. (Exception: For an outfield hit with no likely play attempt at first base the batter/runner may round the regular bag as one normally would.)
- Umpire’s discretion applies in event of any unusual situation.
- Defense shall use the white base when attempting a force out at first. (Exception: If an errant throw takes the 1st baseman to the right-side bag it is a legal defensive play.)
- **Senior Division only** - Batter/Runner cannot be thrown out at 1st base by an outfielder
 - The batter/runner going for a single cannot be thrown out at first from the outfield by an outfielder regardless of how the ball ended up getting to and touching the outfield grass.
 - Any batted ball first touched by an infielder that ends up in the outfield grass constitutes a normal live ball play and the batter/runner CAN be thrown out at first base.
 - If an infielder (including the Middle) intentionally sets up in the outfield grass to serve as an extra outfielder or short outfielder they are considered an ‘outfielder’ according to the spirit of this rule.

SCORING

- Running HOME to score a run - Spirit: Player safety (Avoid collisions near home plate.)
 - Runner going from 3rd to home must use the scoring line, not home plate. If runner touches home plate it’s an automatic OUT and no run counted.
 - To score, runner’s foot must touch the ground on or beyond the scoring line before catcher touches home plate (with ball in control).
 - If the line becomes hard to discern during a game, all players should work with the ump to make sure the line is obvious.
 - A commitment line exists between 3rd base and home. This constitutes a point of no return for the runner. Once a runner crosses the commitment line:
 - The runner cannot return to third base
 - The runner cannot be tagged out by the defensive player (the defense must touch Home Plate).
- Home Run Limits (Over the fence homers)
 - Individual: max of 2/game
 - Team (all players combined): max of 4/game
 - After the max limit:
 - Automatic dead-ball Single.
 - Runners advance one base regardless of forced or not.

Shirts & Hats (Matching shirts/hats not mandatory)

- Matching shirts or hats are not mandatory.
- Bill of hat must face forward (Exception: unless it hampers wearing a mask.)

SUBS - *Spirit: For days when a team unexpectedly comes up short of 11 players. For situations known in advance managers have access to the league's sub list and/or a team having a bye week.*

- Opposing manager shall be made aware when a sub is used.
- Limit: 1 or 2 permitted/team/game – whichever is needed to reach a line-up of 11.
- Must be age appropriate.
 - League member preferred; However, a non-league member may sub based upon:
 - Non-tournament games only
 - Limit: 2 times in a season
 - MSSL must have a signed waiver. – no waiver = no play!
 - *Spirit: inviting a friend to participate in a game might promote interest to join the league next season.*
- All subs must bat and field.
 - Subs must be placed at the bottom of the batting order
 - Positions:
 - If 1 sub used, sub must play RF
 - If 2 subs: RF and Catcher
 - If 3 subs: RF, Catcher, RCF
 - Exception: (Senior Division Only) If a team lacks a pitcher, and both managers agree, then a sub may pitch. (*Spirit: Player safety*)