

MARYVALE SOFTBALL ASSOCIATION

SQUIRT DIVISION RULES (2019)

VERSION 1

Players Aged 10 to 13, Birth Years 2005 to 2008

GENERAL

The Canadian Amateur Softball Association (Softball Canada) 2015/16 Official Guide and Rule Book shall govern and apply to all games. If there is a conflict between Softball Canada's rule book and Maryvale Softball Associations (MSA) rules below, the MSA rules shall govern.

The following are only a fraction of the rules contained in Softball Canada's rule book. These rules govern how we play the game of softball. As a coach it is recommended that you obtain a copy of this book to better understand the game, as well as understand what the Umpire is calling and why. Books are available at most sporting goods stores or at Softball Canada's Provincial Office Website (Softball Ontario) www.softballontario.ca

DEFINITIONS

APPEAL PLAY: An appeal play is a play upon which an Umpire cannot make a decision until requested by a manager, coach or player of the defensive team. The appeal must be made before the next pitch. If it is made at the end of an inning, it must be made before all of the defensive players have left fair territory.

Some cases when an appeal can and should be made are as follows:

- Leaving base before a fly ball is caught.
- When a base runner fails to touch a base.
- When a base runner fails to touch home plate.
- Batting out of order.

BASE ON BALLS: Another term commonly known as a 'walk', awarded to a Batter when four pitches are judged to be 'Balls' by the Umpire.

BASE PATH: An imaginary line, three feet either side of a direct line between the bases.

INFIELD FLY: An infield fly is a fair ball (not including a line drive or attempted bunt) which can be caught by anyone in the infield, including an outfielder who positions themselves on the grass border of the infield, when first and second, or first, second, and third bases are occupied before there are two out. Runners may advance under the same rules as any fly ball. With the exception of the batter being called out, all the standard rules of softball apply in this situation.

THREE FOOT LINE: The three foot line is an area three feet wide on the foul side of first base. If, in the Umpire's opinion, the base runner did not use this area to run to first and is hit by the ball or obstructs or interferes with the defensive player playing the ball, the base runner is out and any advance bases are nullified, unless the throw is from the foul side of the first base line.

INTERFERENCE: Interference is the act of an offensive player or team member who impedes, hinders, or confuses a defensive player while they are attempting to execute a play.

NO NEW INNING WILL START AFTER THE SOUNDING OF THE AIR HORN, BUT ANY INNING IN PROGRESS AFTER THE SOUNDING OF THE AIR HORN WILL CONTINUE IF LIGHT CONDITIONS PERMIT. 3 BLASTS OF THE AIR HORN MEANS GAME IS OVER.

Rulings as to light, weather, and field conditions shall be made by the Park Monitor, and their decision shall be final and binding on both sides.

The home team is responsible for:

- Occupying third base bench.
- Laying out bases to the proper distance.
- Supplying a playable game ball.
- Returning the bases to the clubhouse immediately upon game completion.

The visiting team is responsible for:

- Occupying first base bench.
- Supplying a playable second game ball.

Seven (7) registered players needed to field a team. Anything less will result in a default. Games must be completed with 6 players (in case of injury). You may borrow registered players only.

- A coach will not be allowed to restrict one of their players who are practicing from being borrowed.
- If a player is “borrowed”, he/she must play as a regular player.
- If a player leaves due to illness or injury and are not expected to return they are removed from the lineup for the remainder of the game. Once the coach removes the player from the line-up they cannot return to play.
- If a player leaves due to illness or injury and is expected to return they are called as “out” when it is their turn to bat (this allows a player that might be cut to have the required first aid provided, and allow them to return to the game).

When a team is playing offence (batting), the coach may stand by 1st or 3rd base to coach runners only. When a team is playing defense (in the field), no coaches are allowed in the playing field.

Time cannot be called and/or yelled out by a coach, manager, or player. It can only be requested by asking the Umpire for time. The Umpire will call time if and when he/she feels it is appropriate. Time cannot be called until the umpire feels the play is dead. Exception player not wearing a helmet being hit in the head by the ball will be called a DEAD BALL IMMEDIATELY.

Any undue delay arising out of continuous time being called, delay in fielding a team, between innings, etc.; if in the umpire’s judgment is deliberate, may result in the forfeiture of the game.

“Bat around” applies. Each player will bat in order whether playing on the field or not. Any player can be added to the bottom of the batting order at any time during the game without penalty.

No player shall sit for a second inning until all other players have sat at least once.

All players must remain on the bench except for the batter and the players in the “on deck circle”.

Any injury must be recorded on the back of your score sheet and signed by the umpire on the back, and given to the convener.

Coaches are encouraged to play all players as equally as possible over the course of the season.

Each player must play an infield and outfield position in a game unless safety is an issue.

If by the end of the 4th inning there is a run differential of 15, the game is over and there will be no open inning.

If the game is tied when the hard stop time is reached, the game shall be scored as a tie.

REPLACEMENT RUNNER

A coach may use a courtesy runner for the back catcher to allow the back catcher to suit up for the next half inning.

When the team on offence has two out and the player designated to be the back catcher the next half inning is on base, the coach is allowed to substitute the last recorded out of the inning in that player's place as a base runner.

The designated back catcher must then suit up for the next half inning.

PITCHING REGULATIONS

The Pitcher will not exceed the age of 9.
(No coaches are allowed to pitch)

No pitcher shall pitch more than two (2) innings in a row and maximum three (3) innings in one game.

Pitchers may be changed at any time during an inning. The pitcher can only be changed between batters. An exception can be made if the pitcher is injured during the at bat. If a pitcher walks four (4) consecutive batters, they **MUST** be switched for another pitcher. If a pitcher is switched during an inning, both the pitcher being removed and the new pitcher are charged with an inning pitched.

Pitchers must wear a helmet with facemask.

BATTING

Batter cannot run on a dropped third strike.

A thrown bat after hitting or attempting to hit the ball will result in a warning to the offending player and their entire team. On re-occurrence of any player of the same team, that player will be called out.

BATTER-RUNNER AND RUNNER

All batter/base runners, and on deck batters must wear a helmet while on the playing field and until past the screen. Deliberate removal of the helmet by an offensive player will result in the player being called out.

No stealing until the ball crosses the plate.

When a player is awarded a base on balls (a walk) the ball is still live/in play. Any runner not forced to advance may nevertheless attempt to advance at their own risk. Because the ball is live when a walk occurs, runners forced to advance one base may attempt to advance beyond one base at their own risk. The batter-runner may attempt to advance beyond first base at his own risk. Once the batter-runner has stopped at a base or the Umpire has called time, the play stops and if runners leave the base they are out on a lead-off.

Stealing Home: A runner must be legally batted home, walked home, or if a play is made to try and retire a base runner, he/she may steal home. In the case of bases loaded and the batter is walked, the third base runner is then advanced home. A base runner is NOT allowed to steal home on a missed ball by the catcher on the pitch, or on a throwback to the pitcher.

Should a base runner attempt to steal 3rd base and the offensive team overthrows 3rd base, the base runner may attempt to advance home at their own risk.

For other rules on overthrows, see below section Misunderstood Rules, point 3.

If there is a runner on 3rd base and the batter-runner hits the ball, the runner at 3rd base may attempt to advance home at their own risk. Example, if the batter hits the ball to a defensive player who then throws to 1st base for an out, the runner at 3rd can attempt to run home but they can also be thrown out at home plate.

UMPIRES

The umpire(s) are the representatives for the league and have the power and authority to make decisions based on the rules and in the interest of safety.

There shall be no appeal from any decision of an umpire on the grounds that he/she made an error.

No decision shall be reversed by an umpire unless he/she is convinced it is in violation of the rules.

Use of profanity may mean instant removal of a Coach, or player from the game, or a spectator from the park by the umpire.

The umpire can eject any coach, player, parent or spectator from the playing field at their discretion at any point during the gameplay.

Coaches or players ejected from a game will be suspended from the following game as well.

PROTESTS

There shall be no protests, the umpire's decision shall be binding (even if they erred).

SCORING

Game sheets are provided by MSA and are available at the Snack Bar prior to each game.

Three (3) innings completed shall constitute a game, or two and a half (2 ½) innings if home team is winning.

Five (5) runs or three (3) outs complete an inning. Last called inning is open. If the home team is winning in the bottom of the last inning, they do not bat the last inning.

Games cancelled prior to 3 complete innings will be considered a tie.

Seven (7) registered players needed to field a team. Anything less will result in a default. Games must be completed with 6 players (in case of injury). You may borrow registered players only.

Game sheets must be turned in to the Snack Bar or Convenor by the winning team immediately following the game. **POINTS MAY NOT BE AWARDED IF GAME SHEET IS NOT HANDED IN.**

In case of a tie in the standings at the end of regular season play, the winner will be the team with the best record in head to head games. If a tie still exists, a sudden death playoff will be played and will be the last scheduled game of the regular season to determine the league winner.

MISUNDERSTOOD RULES

These ten rules have been selected as rules about which there are many common misconceptions. These misconceptions then lead to many forms of verbal abuse whether it be heckling from spectators, coaches and/or players, etc. who misunderstand (or don't agree with) the rule.

1. Left hand turn from first.

A runner forfeits his/her exemption from liability to be put out if, after overrunning first base, he/she makes an attempt to run to second base.

The key to this rule is to continue to second base. There must be at least an attempt towards second base.

It does not matter which direction the batter-runner turns after reaching first base if they are coming back to first base without attempting to advance to second base.

2. Check swing.

If it is the plate umpire's judgement that the batter made an attempt to swing at the ball (but not a full swing), the plate umpire shall call the pitched ball a strike. This call is NOT to be appealed to the base umpire - use the guiding principle that the plate umpire does not call it a strike unless he/she saw the attempted swing - therefore no need for an appeal of what the plate umpire saw.

However, if the batter attempted to swing at the ball but the plate umpire did not see the attempt (perhaps blocked out by the catcher) then a ball shall be called. With this call, the plate umpire does have the opportunity to check with his/her base umpire(s) with or without a request from the defensive team. The plate umpire may make the request on their own or may choose to make the request when requested to do so by the defensive team. The key to the base umpire is that they shall only answer a check swing request made by the plate umpire - they do not respond to a request made directly to them by a defensive player.

Should the base umpire see the attempt that the plate umpire did not see, they shall respond by calling "yes" and the call shall be changed from ball to strike.

3. Award of bases on overthrow.

The common misconception with this rule is the old rule of "one plus one," a rule that was changed long ago. The correct ruling is that when a thrown ball goes out of play (beyond the established boundary lines of the playing field)

- All runners, including the batter-runner shall be awarded one base from the last base legally touched based on their position at the time that the thrown ball left the fielder's hand.
- If there are two runners between the same bases, the award is based on the position of the lead runner.

Keys to remember with this rule:

- The award is based on their position at the time the throw was made, not at the time that the ball went out of play (watch for that very long overthrow from the outfield).
- The award is one base from the last base legally touched, if a runner is returning to first base to tag up on a fly ball, they will still be awarded one base which is second base as the last base that they had legally touched was first base.
- The proper mechanics for this situation are to call "Dead Ball" as soon as the ball goes out of play then award the bases accordingly. Your award should be swift and decisive.
- With multiple runners or a long overthrow, if you have any doubt consult with your fellow Umpire(s) immediately before the award and get it right the first time.

4. Batted ball hitting home plate, first base, second base or third base.

Home Plate

- A batted ball remains alive and in play when it strikes home plate: This is a common misconception, many, many years ago when a batted ball struck home plate it was declared a dead ball.
- In the event that a batted ball comes to rest on home plate, it shall be ruled a fair ball and the plate umpire shall signal accordingly.
- Remember, the fair/foul lines come to the back point of home plate so the plate is completely in fair territory.

First or Third Base

- When properly installed, first and third base are positioned on the diamond completely in fair territory. A smart Umpire looks around between pitches to ensure this is always true.
- Once a batted ball strikes first or third base without having been first touched by a player, the batted ball shall be ruled a fair ball regardless of where the ball ends up.
- Once the ball touches first or third base it does not have to pass the base, touching the base is all that is required to make it a fair ball.
- The plate umpire should signal fair ball immediately once the batted ball strikes the base

Second Base

- Once a batted ball strikes second base without having been first touched by a player, the batted ball shall be ruled a fair ball.

5. Batter stepping on home plate or mat or directly in front of home plate or mat.

Stepping on Home Plate or Mat

- The batter is out if any part of their foot is touching home plate or touching the mat when the bat contacts the ball.
- The ball is dead and runners may not advance on the play.

Stepping directly in front of Home Plate or Mat

- The batter is out if their foot is completely outside the lines of the batter's box and touching the ground when the bat contacts the ball, therefore if the batter's foot is completely in front of home plate their foot is obviously completely outside the lines of the batter's box.
- The batter is out if their foot is completely in front or behind the mat touching the ground when the bat contacts the ball.
- The ball is dead and runners may not advance on the play.

Points of Emphasis:

- There is no penalty unless the batter makes contact with the ball.
- The position of the foot must be judged at the time the bat makes contact with the ball, if the foot is in the air and then comes down on the ground after the ball is hit, there is no penalty.
- With the exception of the foot touching home plate or touching the mat, the foot must be completely outside the lines of the batter's box, touching any part of the lines is acceptable as the lines are part of the box.
- The same penalty applies whether the batted ball is fair or foul, "Dead Ball" is called as soon as the batter makes contact with the ball.

6. Fair ball bouncing out of play or off a defensive player.

When a fair ball bounces out of play, including if it deflects off a defensive player, the umpire shall declare "Dead Ball" as soon as the ball goes out of play.

- All runners shall be awarded two bases.
- The award is based on their position at the time of the pitch, not at the time that the ball went out of play. The award is the same regardless of where the ball actually goes out of play.

- Be prepared that this rule could actually end up bringing runners backwards. A long rolling ground ball goes out of play and the batter is already past second base, the batter goes back to second base. Same play, runner starting at first base is already past third base and on their way to score when the batted ball goes out of play, the runner is returned to third base.

7. Infield Fly.

Requirements for an Infield Fly:

- Runners on first and second base or first, second and third base.
- Less than 2 out.
- Not a bunt.
- Not a line drive.
- Can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort this includes the, pitcher, catcher or any outfielder positioned in the infield.

What should the umpire do?

- In an infield fly situation, prior to the first pitch of the at bat, the umpires should give the infield fly signal to each other. When it becomes apparent that a batted ball is an infield fly (typically when the ball reaches its' highest point and is just on its' way down) the plate umpire shall declare "INFIELD FLY, IF FAIR - THE BATTER IS OUT".

Once an Infield Fly is declared:

- If the hit becomes a foul ball, no penalty, treat like any other foul ball.
- If the hit remains a fair ball.
- The batter is out regardless of whether the ball is caught or not.
- The ball remains alive.
- The runners may advance at their own risk.
- If the fly ball is caught, they must tag up.
- If the fly ball is not caught, they can choose to advance but as the batter has already been declared out there is no force play.

8. Lead-off (Pitcher's Circle).

The Pitcher's Circle is the area within an 8 foot radius of the pitcher's plate, the lines are considered within the circle.

The common misconception is that if the ball is thrown back to the pitcher and he/she has it in his/her position in the pitcher's circle before the batter-runner reaches first base that the batter-runner must stop at first base.

Even though the ball may be in the pitcher's possession in the pitcher's circle, the batter-runner may:

- Continue past first base.
- Is entitled to run toward second base, as long as he/she does not stop at first base.
- Once the runner makes a stop, he/she must immediately proceed to the next base or return to his/her base unless the pitcher makes a play (including a fake throw) on the runner or another runner.

If the runner stops and simply stands there off the base while the pitcher has possession of the ball in the pitcher's circle and no play is made - "DEAD BALL - RUNNER IS OUT - LEAD-OFF".

If the runner stops and then makes a move in more than one direction immediately after the stop while the pitcher has possession of the ball in the pitcher's circle and no play is made "DEAD BALL - RUNNER IS OUT - LEAD-OFF".

Points of Emphasis:

- The pitcher cannot force the first stop by a runner merely by having possession of the ball in the pitcher's circle. Put another way, the runner is allowed one stop, as soon as he/she stops he/she must make a decision immediately to either advance or return.
- A play on the runner (including a fake throw) nullifies any penalty, put another way, every fake throw allows the runner one more stop.

9. Difference between Interference/Obstruction

Interference:

- Typically an act by an offensive player.
- Also possible to have umpire interference and spectator interference.
- Results in "Dead Ball" being called (exception - umpire interference).
- Results in an out if by an offensive player.
- Common misconception - catcher's interference is actually catcher's obstruction.

Obstruction:

- Is an act by a defensive player.
- Results in a delayed dead ball.
- Award is determined at the end of the play (exception, if the obstructed runner is called out).
- An obstruction call does not entitle the obstructed runner to keep attempting to advance until played upon.

These two rules require:

- An immediate call when either interference or obstruction occurs, do not hesitate, these are not the type of calls to be made after the fact.
- A decisive call.

Contact does not always mean interference or obstruction occurred. There is such a thing as incidental contact, 2 players both unsure of where to go and contact is made. Softball Canada Rule 8.10(c) states that the runner is not out when more than one fielder attempts to field a batted ball and the runner comes in contact with the one who, in the umpire's judgment, was not entitled to field the ball.

TIP - when contact occurs and in the umpire's judgment that neither interference nor obstruction occurred, make a "SAFE" signal with no verbal call - shows that you saw it and you made your decision that no call was necessary.

10. Double Base.

The Double Base is used at first base with the orange portion in foul territory and the white portion in fair territory. Referring to 4. above, a batted ball striking the white/fair portion is declared a fair ball, a batted ball striking the orange/foul portion is declared a foul ball, a batted ball striking the centre of the double base is declared a fair ball as it therefore hits a portion of the white/fair portion of the base.

The defensive player (typically the first baseman) must use only the white/fair portion of the base at all times (see Exception below).

The offensive player must use only the orange/foul portion of the base on his/her first attempt at first base when a play is being made on him/her. This includes when the batter-runner runs on a dropped third strike (see Exception below).

On a ball hit to the outfield with no play being made at first base, the offensive player may touch either portion of the base on his/her first attempt at first base.

Once an offensive player has touched the orange/foul portion of the base on his/her first attempt at first base, he/she must then use the white/fair portion of the base:

- When returning to the base after overrunning first base.
- When taking his/her position prior to the next pitch.
- When tagging up on a fly ball.

Points of Emphasis:

- The defensive player, when he/she is required to use the white/fair portion, provided any portion of his/her foot is touching any portion of the white/fair portion of the base, he/she is considered to be in contact with the base.
- The offensive player, when he/she is required to use the orange/foul portion, provided any portion of his/her foot is touching any portion of the orange/foul portion of the base, he/she is considered to be in contact with the base.
- Once the offensive player has made his/her first attempt at first base, for simplicity sake the orange/foul portion of the base no longer exists for him/her.

Exception

- On any live ball play made from first base foul territory, the batter-runner and the defensive player may use either base. When the defensive player uses the foul portion of the double base, the batter-runner can run in fair territory and if hit by a throw from the foul side of first base, it would not be interference (unless it is an intentional act like throwing up their arms etc.).
- Allowing the first baseman to use the orange bag when a ball comes from first base side of foul territory may avoid collisions. It should be clear the runner or the fielder can use either base on a ball fielded on the foul side of first base. Both the runner and fielder could be touching the same base. If the fielder uses the orange base in this situation and the runner makes contact with the fielder it is interference on the runner. If both players use the white portion and the fielder causes the runner to hold up or change direction it is obstruction on the fielder.