

Some important differences between USA Softball fast pitch rules and

High School (national federation) rules.

- 1) We do not read any sportsmanship statement prior to USA Softball games.
- 2) We **MUST** check equipment prior at every game in USA Softball. It is not checked by umpires in HS games but **we must check ALL helmets and ALL bats.**
- 3) Holding the bat in the strike zone on a bunt attempt is nothing in USA Softball. Just call the pitch a ball or a strike. In HS games, umpires are to consider holding the bat in the bunt position as an attempt, and it will be called a strike. We will **NOT** do that in USA games.
- 4) Pitcher's feet in **HS** rules : she can have either 1 OR 2 feet on the rubber prior to the pitch.
Pitcher's feet in **USA** rules states that 2 feet must be on the rubber prior to the pitch.
BUT,
our local leagues use the HS rule as regards pitching, so we will apply the HS rule, not the USA pitching rule regarding the pitcher's feet. All other aspects are the same for fast pitch pitching in both USA and HS such as delivering the ball after a full STOP on the rubber, not wearing anything on the pitching hand or arm, the hand should not go to her mouth and then directly to the ball without wiping off her hand on her uniform first, hopping into the air on delivery (crow hop, leaping) - all of these things are **ILLEGAL** in both HS and USA games. They should be called illegal pitches.
- 5) An illegal pitch in HS is now a simply a ball on the batter. In USA Softball, it is still a ball on the batter **and** all runners advance one base.
- 6) In USA games, the base umpire will call ALL pick offs at all bases. This is not true in HS games.
- 7) Ask for help on a checked swing in all USA games we do. Ask your partner whether he or she is in the A or the B position (near first or second bases.) You can ask your partner for help if needed on a lefty batter when your partner is in the C position (near the SS.) It is different in HS mechanics, but we will use USA mechanics in 2 man games.
- 8) Courtesy runners can only be used for the pitcher and/or the catcher in HS fast pitch games and in USA games. However, the local leagues often put rules into their local league by-laws that allow courtesy runners for anyone in the line up. If the 2 coaches agree that this is their league rule, let them have their 2 or 3 courtesy runners per team, per game, whether in youth games OR in adult games. Make the score keepers from the teams keep track of this. Since we are not often given line up cards, we will not keep track of courtesy runners. That is the team score keeper's job, not ours.
- 9) The DP/Flex rule is not used in rec games in the spring and rarely used in summer travel games either, because the volunteer coaches do not understand the DP/Flex rule

so they don't make use of it. You may see it in higher level play tournaments. If you want a copy of a good cheat sheet for the DP/Flex rules and possible uses, email me and I'll send it to you. The rule only exists in fast pitch youth play - NOT in adult slow pitch or adult modified pitch leagues.

- 10) In HS rules, the catcher OR the coach may tell the plate umpire that they are intentionally walking the batter. No pitches need to be thrown. They can choose to walk her **before** her at bat **OR** at any time **during** her at bat (with any count at all.) This is NOT the rule in USA Softball. The 4 pitches must be thrown to intentionally walk a batter in **fast pitch** games in USA rules. It is a live ball on each of those pitches in USA games, so runners MAY try to steal if they wish. In **slow pitch** games, the defense just tells the plate umpire they are walking the batter and the batter goes directly to first base. No pitches are thrown in slow pitch on an intentional walk. Dead ball.
- 11) Both umpires have jurisdiction in fast pitch play to call illegal pitches in both USA games and HS games. The base umpire usually has the best view of a pitcher leaping or crow hopping off the rubber. The base umpire would then shout "illegal pitch". Put left arm out sideways and wait for the result of the play. If the batter takes the pitch it is a ball on her and in HS everyone on the base(s) stays put. In USA games, it's a ball on the batter **and** everyone on base(s) advances one base. If the batter hits the illegal pitch and gets to first base and all other runners advance at least one base, the illegal pitch call can be ignored. The umpire must shout this call loudly so the batter and others can hear it.
- 12) A pitcher going to the dirt with her pitching hand is ok. No rule violation. She has to wipe her hand off if she goes to her mouth.

There are some other differences between the HS and USA rules, of course, but these are the main ones you should face when working the various games, tournaments and playoffs in our local leagues here in the Bergen County area.