

# **2026 SPYBAS Majors Softball League Rules**

## **I. General**

### **A. Ground Rules**

- 1) If lightning is observed, all games must be delayed for 30 minutes after the last visible lighting. All players, coaches, and spectators shall take cover in their vehicles. After 30 minutes, umpires and League Directors will determine if games can resume.
- 2) A ball that hits the protective fencing or netting in foul territory is considered a dead ball, even if subsequently caught by a defensive player.
- 3) The orange “safety” base at first base is considered foul territory. A runner is not considered out if the defensive player touches the orange base instead of the white base.
- 4) Bases are set at 60’ distances

### **B. Equipment/Safety**

- 1) Bats must be softball bats 2 ¼” in diameter.
- 2) Players are encouraged to wear their own batting helmet; All helmets must have a facemask.
- 3) Players must wear rubber cleats or tennis shoes – no metal cleats.
- 4) Any minor, including players, serving as a base coach, batboy or batgirl must wear a helmet while they are on the field.
- 5) Players warming up a pitcher between innings must wear a catcher’s helmet and mask
- 6) Players are not allowed to wear jewelry, including “soft” bands and/or necklaces. Studded earrings are acceptable if covered by a band-aid or similar.
- 7) Pitchers shall not wear any items that may distract the batter. White long sleeve undershirts are not allowed.
- 8) Shirts of all players should be tucked in.

### **C. Coaches/Team Responsibilities**

- 1) No player, coach or fan shall speak disrespectfully or with foul language toward another player, coach, fan or umpire. Doing so may result in disciplinary action by the umpire, and/or SPYBAS.

- 2) Teams are allowed a 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base coach while batting. All other coaches/parent helpers must remain in the dugout or at the mouth of the dugout unless required to pitch per league rules. No defensive coaches allowed on the field except during mound visits, appeals, or injury timeouts.
- 3) Game Setup/Clean Up responsibilities
  - a. Visiting team of 1<sup>st</sup> game: Remove base plugs and install bases.
  - b. Visiting team of last game: Replace base plugs and put away bases. Lock the storage shed when all bases are put away.
  - c. Home team is responsible for identifying scoreboard operator.
  - d. Each team is responsible for cleaning out its own dugout.
- 1) Head coach of the winning team is responsible for reporting the score to the league immediately following their game. Games not reported within 48 hours will be recorded as a tie. Communicate scores to League Director as specified.

**D. Umpires**

- 1) Umpires are to be treated with respect at all times. Failure to comply with this rule can result in ejection from the game and possible dismissal from coaching at the discretion of SPYBAS.
- 2) Any umpire's call which involves judgement, such as, but not limited to:
  - fair or foul,
  - balls and strikes
  - safe or outis FINAL. No coach, player, or spectator shall object to any such judgement decisions. Coaches are required to stay in their dugouts or at their base on judgement calls.
- 3) If there is reasonable doubt that the umpire's decision may conflict with the rules, the coach may appeal the decision and ask that the ruling be reviewed. Such an appeal shall be made only to the umpire who made the protested decision. To make an appeal:
  - a. The coach shall ask for "time out". Coaches from both teams shall then approach the umpire calmly. Discussion of appeal shall only start when both coaches are present with the umpire.
  - b. Coaches must not intimidate the umpire in any manner (e.g., shouting, finger pointing, invading personal space, intimidating language)
  - c. If the umpire chooses, they can consult with the other umpire or league director (if present) prior to making a final ruling.

- d. When the umpire makes the final decision, coaches must accept that decision and make no further protests about the call.

#### **E. Rosters/Lineups**

- 1) Fewer than 7 players present at the beginning of a game will result in a forfeit.
- 2) If a team is below the league allowed number of players in the field, that team may have a player(s) from other league team(s) fill in and play to reach a full complement of fielders per league rules.
  - a. Any replacement players needed are only allowed to play in the outfield and must bat at the end of the rolling batting order for that game. They must wear their own league jersey, so everyone knows the players are from another team and subject to these restrictions.
  - b. If a team utilizes a replacement player to start a game, and later has sufficient team members such that the replacement player chooses to leave, they may do so with no penalty to the team utilizing the replacement player. Players who show up late will be added to the end of the lineup for that particular game if their regular spot in the order has already batted.
- 3) Playing Time
  - a. All rostered players present must bat.
  - b. All rostered players present at the start of the game may only sit one defensive inning for games 3 innings or less, or a maximum of 2 defensive innings for games 4 innings or more.
  - c. No player may play the same defensive position in a game for more than 3 innings, except the pitcher. Each outfield position is considered unique. Free defensive substitution is allowed to accommodate this rule.
  - d. See the Pitching Section for rules regarding pitching requirements and limitations.
- 4) In an effort to get all kids the same number of at bats throughout the season, teams must use a rolling batting order. For example, if the 5<sup>th</sup> batter in the lineup makes the last out in the first game, the 6<sup>th</sup> batter will be the first batter of the next game. The batting order cannot change from game to game, it simply picks up where it left off the previous game.

#### **F. Game Length**

- 1) Umpires and coaches must note the official start time of the game. Umpire is the official timekeeper. It is very important that all games start on time. The same rules apply to all games, meaning the last game of the day cannot extend play simply because there is no game following their game.
- 2) A new inning starts immediately after the 3<sup>rd</sup> out of the previous inning.

- 3) There is a 5 run limit per inning.
- 4) A game is complete if 6 innings have been played and one team has more runs than the other team. If the game is called by the umpire, it will be considered "regulation" if 4 innings have been completed.
- 5) No new inning may begin after 75 minutes. Once the 75-minute time limit has been reached, gameplay will proceed as follows:
  - a. If at the time limit, the home team is batting
    - i. with the lead, the game is over.
    - ii. and tied or behind, the home team will bat until they take the lead, or 3 outs are made. At that point the game will be final, including if the game ends in a tie.
  - b. If at the time limit the away team is batting
    - i. and cannot score enough runs per the league run rule to tie the game or take the lead, the game is immediately over
    - ii. and is either tied, ahead or can score enough runs within the half inning to tie the game or take the lead, the away team will finish their at-bat.
      1. If after their at-bat the away team does not tie or take the lead, the game is over.
      2. If the away team ties the game or takes the lead, the home team will also be permitted to bat until either situation (a.ii) above is met, unless the away team is ahead by more runs than the run limit. In that case, the game is over once the away team's lead exceeds the run limit.
  - c. If the last inning is not completed before 90 minutes, the game will "hard stop" at the 90-minute mark at the score at that time will be final.
- 6) For games tied after the league determined number of regulation innings, but less than the 75-minute time limit, extra inning(s) may be played to break the tie, up until the time limit. Extra inning(s) will have the following stipulations:
  - a. Each team will begin its at-bat with a runner on 2<sup>nd</sup> base. This runner will be the player that immediately precedes the batter in the batting order.
  - b. The team at bat will begin with one out.
  - c. Limits for runs or offensive batters per inning remain in effect (as appropriate).
  - d. For end of game, Item (5) above will be followed once the game reaches the 75 minute time limit.

## II. Batting

### A. General

- 1) On deck batters are allowed. On deck batters must position themselves behind the batter at the plate (1<sup>st</sup> base foul territory for left-handed batters, 3<sup>rd</sup> base foul territory for right-handed batters) regardless of which dugout their team occupies.
- 2) A batter is allowed to step into and over home plate to avoid a wild pitch or a pitch thrown behind them.
- 3) If the batter unintentionally makes contact with any part of the catcher during their swing (catcher's interference), the batter will be awarded 1<sup>st</sup> base. Catchers must maintain ample separation from the batter, both in the interest of safety and to avoid interfering with the batter's swing.
- 4) Similarly, batters must get out of the way of a catcher attempting to field a foul ball, a batted ball, a wild pitch or passed ball as they attempt to make a play. If the umpire determines deliberate interference by the batter, it will be considered a dead ball. Runners attempting to advance will be returned to the base they occupied prior to the last pitch. If the batter interfered with a batted ball in play, they will be called out.

### B. Strikeouts

- 1) There is no attempting to reach first on a dropped 3<sup>rd</sup> strike. Runners already on base may advance if league rules permit stealing/advancing on passed balls/wild pitches.

### C. Hit By Pitch (HBP)

- 1) Any batter that is struck by a pitch must take 1<sup>st</sup> base.
- 2) A ball that hits the ground and then hits the batter is considered an HBP.

### D. Bunting

- 1) Bunting is allowed.
- 2) If a batter is bunting with less than 2 strikes, a foul ball that is caught by the catcher must rise above the batter's head to be considered an out. Otherwise, it will be considered a strike.
- 3) If a batter chooses to bunt with 2 strikes and makes contact with the ball but does not put the ball into fair territory (e.g., a foul ball), the batter will be called out. If the ball is caught by the catcher, the ball is live. If the ball is dropped in foul territory, it will be a dead ball, regardless of how high the ball rises.

### III. Base Running

#### A. General

- 1) Batters must use the orange “safety” base when there is a play or potential play at 1<sup>st</sup> base. If the batter fails to use the orange “safety” base and interferes with a defensive player attempting to make a play at 1<sup>st</sup> base, they will be called “out”. If the ball is hit beyond the infield, the runner may round first base using either base.
- 2) Base runners are to avoid contact and should slide when a play is being made on the runner or the potential exists for such a play. If a player doesn’t slide, the umpire will call the runner out without warning. Excessive contact with no slide may result in the runner being called out and ejection from the game.
- 3) Headfirst sliding is not allowed, and the runner will be called out except when the base runner is diving back to return to a base they already occupied.
- 4) Coaches may substitute a courtesy runner for the projected catcher at any time during the inning. A courtesy runner is required for the catcher once you reach 2 outs. The courtesy runner must be the player that recorded the last out. The projected catcher must use this time to get their gear on and ready for the next inning.
- 5) The “Circle Rule” is in effect. If the pitcher has the ball and is standing within a 4’ radius of the rubber, any base runner that has rounded a base and then stops must make a definitive and immediate move toward one base or the other. A base runner is not allowed to “bait” the pitcher into throwing to one base. Any base runner that violates the circle rule will be called out.

#### B. Leading Off

- 1) There is no leading off. The pitch must leave the pitcher's hand before the base runner is allowed to leave. Base runners that leave early will be warned for the first offense and required to return to the base. If the runner does not advance on the pitch, they must return to the base before the next pitch is thrown.
  - a. A second lead-off violation by the same team will result in the runner being called out.
  - b. If the runner leaves early and the ball is put in play, the play will be allowed to finish and at the conclusion of the play, the runner will either be warned or called out if second infraction.

#### C. Base Stealing, Wild Pitches, & Passed Balls

- 1) Base stealing is allowed.
  - a. Stealing of 2<sup>nd</sup> base and 3<sup>rd</sup> base will be allowed all season.

- b. Stealing home will be allowed 4-6 games into the season at the discretion of the league director.
- 2) Wild pitches and pass balls are live balls and base runners can advance
  - a. The exception is that home is “closed” the first 2 weeks of the season.
- 3) Delayed stealing is not allowed.
- 4) There is no stealing or advancing on wild pitches/passed balls during coach pitch

**D. Overthrows/Advancing**

- 1) Batters and base runners are allowed to attempt to advance on an overthrow.
- 2) If there is an overthrow to 3<sup>rd</sup> base, including on a stolen base attempt, then home is “open”, and the runner may score.
- 3) In the event a live ball (batted or thrown) leaves the field of play (e.g., enters the dugout), the base runners will be given the base to which they were running to at that time plus one additional base.

**DI. Defense**

**A. General**

- 1) Teams can play with 10 players in the field: 6 in the infield (including the pitcher and catcher) and up to 4 in the outfield.
- 2) Outfielders must play on the grass until the ball is hit.
- 3) An infield and outfield warm up ball will be allowed during the first inning only.

**B. Defensive Gameplay**

- 1) Defensive players may not obstruct the base paths unless they have the ball in their possession or are in the process of fielding a hit ball. Base runners may go around a fielder attempting to play a batted ball in the base path.
- 2) There is no infield fly rule.

**DII. Pitching**

**A. General**

- 1) Pitchers pitch from 40 feet with a 12” softball.

- 2) Pitchers may pitch a maximum of 2 of the first 4 innings per game, or 4 innings in a regulation 6 inning game. Player health and safety must be priority for games that reach extra innings.
- 3) Returning pitchers and new pitchers get one minute or a maximum 5 pitch warmup before the start of each inning, whichever is shorter.
- 4) Pitchers are expected to work at a brisk pace.
- 5) Coaches may make 1 mound visit per inning. Only pitcher and catcher may visit with the coach. A second visit may be granted for injury concerns only. Otherwise, a second visit will require a pitching change. Keep mound visits quick.
- 6) Curve balls are not allowed. Pitchers throwing curve balls will receive a warning on the first offense and will be removed on a second offense.

**B. Pitching Motion**

- 1) Pitchers must begin with their push/pivot foot on the mound. The stride foot may begin behind the mound or the pitcher may step back with the stride foot prior to separating their hands during the pitching motion.
- 2) Pitchers are encouraged to have their push/pivot foot maintain contact with the ground through the entire pitching motion until the ball has left their hand.

**C. Walks/Coach Pitch**

- 1) There will be a maximum of 3 walks per inning (excludes HBP). Once the maximum is reached, an offensive coach will pitch to their hitter.
  - a. Coaches must pitch from the rubber. Pitches not thrown from the rubber will be considered “no-pitch”.
  - b. The at-bat continues with the same number of strikes when ball 4 was issued. The umpire will continue to call balls and strikes, even if the batter does not swing.
  - c. Coaches may pitch a maximum of 4 pitches per batter unless the batter reaches 3 swinging strikes first. Batters must swing on the 4<sup>th</sup> pitch or be called out on strikes. A batter will be allowed unlimited foul ball swings on the 4<sup>th</sup> coach pitch.
  - d. There is no stealing or advancing on wild pitches/passed balls during coach pitch.
  - e. There is no HBP during coach pitch.
  - f. There is no bunting during coach pitch.
  - g. The youth pitcher will stand next to the coach pitcher on the first base side for right-handed batters, and on the third base side for left-handed batters.
  - h. If the coach pitcher is hit by a batted ball, the ball will be considered

“live”.

2) Intentional Walks are not allowed

**D. Pitches Hitting the Ground**

1) A pitch that hits the ground is considered a live ball. Runners may advance if permitted by league Base Running rules.

- 2) A pitch that hits the ground:
  - a. And then hits the batter is considered HBP. League rules for HBP shall be followed.
  - b. And the batter swings and misses is considered a strike.
  - c. And the batter swings and hits the ball will be played normally (e.g., base hit, foul ball, etc.).

## **VI. End of Season Tournament**

**The following exceptions to regular season rules exist for the End of Season Tournament**

### **A. Roster/Lineups**

- 1) Coaches will be allowed to reset their batting order for each game in the tournament.
- 2) Replacement players are not allowed in the end of season tournament. Any team with less than the minimum number of team players will be required to forfeit.

### **B. Game Length**

- 1) Game length rules remain the same except in the event of a tie.
- 2) For games tied after 6 innings or for all new innings after the 75-minute limit:
  - a. All new innings begin with the batting team placing a runner on 2<sup>nd</sup> base. This runner will be the player that immediately precedes the batter in the batting order.
  - b. The team at bat will begin with one out.
  - c. Limits for runs or offensive batters per inning remain in effect (as appropriate).
  - d. The game ends when the home team takes the lead, or the visiting team has the lead and records 3 outs in the bottom of the inning.