

OQSL Rules of Play - 2017

1 Introduction

The OQSL plays by the rules set out by Softball Canada Rules, as updated from time to time and amended herein.

2 Document Precedence

In the event that there is ambiguity or inconsistencies between documents, the following order of precedence in the interpretation of a rule shall prevail:

- 1) OQSL Constitution and By-laws
- 2) OQSL Rules of Play
- 3) Softball Canada Rules

3 Rules

These rules are taken and modified from Slo Pitch Ontario. The unmodified rules can be found here for reference: [Slo Pitch Ontario Handbook](#). These rules highlight the main rules of the game of Softball but are not exhaustive. For complete rules and their interpretation the Softball Canada Rulebook should be consulted. A copy of these rules can be found in in each equipment bag.

3.1 Playing Field

Bases are 65 feet apart in a diamond pattern

Pitching Plate is 50 feet away from home plate

Batter's box is 7 feet by 3 feet on either side of Home Plate. The front line of the box shall be 3 feet in front of a line drawn through the center of home plate.

A Double Base shall be used at first base.

Strike Mat / Home Plate: shall be provided by the League.

A virtual fence will be placed between North and South diamonds at Brantwood Park.

A Safe Line shall be drawn in foul territory starting at the top left-hand corner of home plate perpendicular to the third base line.

A Commitment Line shall be drawn in foul territory 21 feet from the back of home plate and perpendicular to the third base line.

3.2 Equipment

No Uniform is required; however a minimum of matching coloured shirts is encouraged.

Gloves may be worn by any player. Trappers may be worn by the catcher, pitcher and first baseman only. Base coaches shall not wear gloves.

Shoes may not have metal cleats.

No Sandals or open toed shoes (**'finger shoes' not permitted**)

Caps may be worn in any orientation provided it does not provide a safety hazard.

Bats used in league play must bear the ASA 2004 or 2012 logo or the USSSA 1.20 BPF "Thumbprint" stamp and:

- Must not appear on the USSSA illegal bat list: [Link to list](#)
- Must not appear on the ASA illegal bat list: [Link to list](#)

Balls shall be Optic Yellow 12" Worth Hot-Dot

Helmets/head protection may be worn by any player provided it is worn properly

3.3 Team

The team shall consist of a minimum of ten players.

All participants in the game must be on the batting order.

If more than ten players are on the batting order, any ten may play defense on an inning by inning basis.

All participants must play a defensive position at least one inning per game unless accessibility allowances have been approved by the executive and/or the umpire.

If a player is unable to continue in the game, reducing the team to 9 players and no legal substitute is available when the player is due up to bat, they are declared out and play continues with the next batter in the batting order. If, with 2 out, the batter before the missing player is walked (intentional or unintentional), the automatic out is waived and the next batter will bat. *Exception: This entire rule shall not apply to a player who has left the game under the blood/injury rule*

A team must have a minimum of 9 players to start and to continue the game. If a team has less than 9 players the game is forfeited.

A team may add player(s) to the bottom of the batting order. This must be done at the top of an inning. *Exception: A team playing short handed may add a tenth player at any time play is stopped.*

Short Handed Rule: Teams may start a game with a minimum of nine players. However, an out shall be declared when the tenth position in the line-up is scheduled to bat. A tenth player may be added to the tenth position any time before the end of the game. Any team that starts a game with ten or more players may drop to the minimum of nine players to finish the game. All vacant spot(s) in the line-up will be declared an out every time that line-up position is due to bat.

Any player that leaves the game for any reason may not return to the game. If a player is ejected from the game for any reason leaving the team with less than nine players, the ejected player's team must have a substitute available to replace the ejected player or that team will forfeit the game. *Exception:* A player, who has left the game under the blood/Injury rule, may return.

3.4 Blood/Injury Rule

Any participant (player, coach or umpire) who is bleeding or has blood on his uniform may not participate until the bleeding is controlled and his soiled uniform changed. If the cleanup and/or uniform change can be accomplished quickly, play would be suspended until the participant is ready to play. If this cannot be done quickly, the player is removed from the game and replaced by another player on the roster.

Any player who is injured on the field and is unable to continue the inning shall be removed from the game and replaced by another player on the roster.

If a player is removed due to blood or injury, their place in the batting order is simply missed and there is no penalty.

3.5 Courtesy Runner

A team may use unlimited courtesy runners per game.

The courtesy runner must be the player that was last retired or, if no players have been retired, the bottom of the batting order.

The courtesy runner must be announced to the home plate umpire before he takes his place on the base.

If the courtesy runner is due up to bat the batter is ruled out but remains on base as the courtesy runner and the next batter in the lineup comes to bat.

A player may ask for a courtesy runner at any base, **including home plate.**

If a player asks for a courtesy runner, that player must continue to use a courtesy runner for the rest of the game.

3.6 Starting the Game

Home team will be determined via the posted schedule. The Home team shall bat second. A maximum five minute grace period (delay) from the official start time will be allowed if a team does not have enough players to start on time.

3.7 Game Duration

A game consists of seven innings or ninety minutes.

The game ends if:

- a) The team batting second has scored more runs in six innings than the other team has scored in seven innings or
- b) The team batting second has scored more runs before the third out in the last half of the seventh inning than the other team has scored in seven innings.

A tied game will continue with extra innings using standard tie-breaking rules until one side has scored more runs at the end of a completed inning, or until the team batting second scores more in their half inning before their third out.

No new inning may start after 80 minutes.

The umpire may stop play prior to the time limit for safety reasons (inclement weather, loss of light, etc.). A game stopped by the umpire will be considered complete if five innings (four and one half innings if the second batting team is leading) have been completed.

3.8 Mercy Rule

During regular league play a team may score no more than eight runs in an inning.

The Mercy rule shall not apply to the last inning of the game.

A game shall not be declared due to a score differential

3.9 Forfeits

A game shall be declared a forfeit if a team fails to field the required number of players prior to or during the game, refuses to continue the game after a suspension of play, intentionally tries to delay or hasten the game, or intentionally violates a rule of the game after being warned by the umpire.

A forfeit shall be declared if a player, ejected from the game by an umpire, does not leave the park when directed to do so.

When a player is ejected and must leave the ball park, that player must move far enough away so that they may not be seen or heard by the participants of the game and may not participate with the game in any manner.

3.10 Profanity

Any team member openly using profanity during a game shall be warned by the umpire. Persistent profanity may result in the player being ejected from the game.

3.11 Jewellery

It is strongly recommended that no jewellery of any type be worn in any League play. ***If worn, each player is solely responsible for any injury/damage that may be caused by this jewellery.***

The umpire may have any player remove any jewellery or equipment that is deemed dangerous.

3.12 Scoring

A run is scored when a player safely touches, in order first base, second base, third base and places their foot on the ground completely past the Safe Line.

A runner may not score ahead of a preceding runner who has not been retired.

A runner may not score if the last out of an inning is a force out or a preceding runner declared out.

A run in excess of the mercy rule while the mercy rule applies shall not score.

The score of a game that is stopped early shall be the score at the end of the last full inning.

The score of a forfeited game shall be 7-0 in favour of the team not at fault.

3.13 Home Run Rule

A limit of one over the fence home run per inning will be used during league play.

A batter hitting a ball over the fence in a game in excess of the limit shall be ruled out.

Any ball touched by a defensive player which then goes over the fence in fair territory shall be a four base award and not considered a home run.

If a batter is ruled out because of the excessive home run rule, the ball is dead, no runs may score and all runners must return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch.

Walk Off Home Run: On any fair-batted ball hit over the fence (touched or untouched) for a home run, the batter and all runners are credited with a score. The batter and any runners may go directly to their team area.

3.14 Pitching

At the beginning of each half-inning or when a pitcher relieves another, not more than two minutes may be used to deliver not more than three warm up pitches to the catcher or other teammate.

Infield and outfield practice balls shall not be allowed after the third inning

Before each pitch, the pitcher must stand with one foot (pivot) on the pitching plate, facing the batter with the ball held in one hand. This position must be maintained for 1 - 5 seconds.

The delivery starts when the pitcher makes any motion of his windup after the required pause. A step may be taken in any direction simultaneous with the release of the pitch provided the pivot foot remains in contact with the pitching plate until the pitch is released.

The pitcher must deliver the ball in a continuous, underhand motion on the first forward swing of the pitching arm past the hip.

The pitch must have a minimum arc of 6 feet from the ground. The maximum allowable arc is 12 feet from the ground.

Any infraction of these rules shall be deemed an illegal pitch. The batter has the option of taking the pitch as an automatic ball or swinging at the pitch. If the pitch is swung at, the pitch becomes legal.

The ball is dead after a strike or ball is called. (Runners may not advance.)

3.15 Batting

Players must bat in the order listed on the batting order.

If a player's turn at bat has not ended when their team's half-inning ends, that player returns as the first to bat in the next half-inning.

The batter must take their position within the batter's box within 30 seconds of being called to bat.

A strike is declared when a legally pitched ball makes contact with the mat, or any pitched ball is swung at and missed by the batter, or a batted ball is ruled foul.

A ball is declared when a legally pitched ball lands outside the strike mat and is not swung at by the batter or when an illegally pitched ball that the batter does not swing at is thrown.

The strike count will start at 0 strikes, 0 balls.

A batted ball that is considered by the umpire to be a bunt or a chop shall be called out.

- A bunt is defined as a tapped ball not swung at but met with the bat.
- A chopped ball is a batted ball intentionally directed downward so that the ball bounces high into the air.

Batted balls are ruled fair (batter and runners may advance) or foul (a strike) by the umpire.

An illegally batted ball occurs when the batter has a foot placed completely outside of the batters box when the bat contacts the ball.

3.16 Running

The batter may proceed around the bases:

- when a player hits a fair ball;
- after four balls;
- after interference by the catcher.

On the batter's first attempts to reach first base, they may overrun the base and safely return to the base provided they touched the orange portion of the Double Base and do not try to advance to second base. ***The direction in which the batter-runner turns to return to first base does not matter.***

On the batter's first attempt to reach first base and a play is made at first, the batter-runner must use the orange portion of the Double Base. Once the batter has safely reached first base, the batter-runner must use the white portion. The defensive player always uses the white portion.

A runner may run the bases:

- when a fair ball is caught;
- when a caught fly ball is first touched;
- when the ball is overthrown and remains in play.

A runner is advanced (awarded base):

- when a fair batted ball goes out of play (2 bases awarded from the time of the pitch);
- when a thrown (2 bases) or batted ball (3 bases) is contacted by a thrown glove (awarded from from the time of the pitch);
- if forced when the batter is awarded a base on balls;
- when a live ball is carried or dropped out of play (1 base awarded from the time the ball became dead);
- when the ball is overthrown and goes out of play (two bases awarded from the time of the throw);
- when a defensive player obstructs the runner as he progresses around the base path; The umpire will award the placement he felt the runner would have made had there been no obstruction.

All awarded bases are from the last base legally touched and must be touched in the proper order.

A runner must return to the base:

- when the pitcher is ready to pitch. (If he is not in contact with the base, he is declared out for a leadoff);
- when a foul ball is hit;
- when the batter or another runner interferes with the defensive team (unless forced by the batter being awarded first base);
- when the ball is batted illegally;
- when a fly ball is caught. He may advance when the ball is first touched by a fielder;
- during a live ball, a runner may return to touch a base unless he has
 - left the field of play,

- a succeeding runner has scored, or
- the runner has crossed the Commitment line.

The runner must proceed in reverse order touching all intervening bases;

- during a dead ball, a runner may return to touch a base.

3.17 Dismissals

A **batter** is out. The **ball is dead** and no runners may advance if the batter:

- The batter has three strikes (a third strike foul is considered a strike);
- The batter illegally bats the ball;
- The batter bunts or chops downward on a pitch;
- a fielder deliberately drops a fly ball with at least a runner on first base and less than two out;
- the batter enters the batter's box with an illegal or altered bat;
- the batter, before reaching first base, retreats towards home plate to avoid a tag;
- the batter hits an over the fence homerun in excess of the team limit;

A **batter** is out. The **ball is alive** and runners may advance if:

- the batter's fly ball (fair or foul) is legally caught;
- on a fair ball not caught on the fly, the ball is held by a fielder while touching first base before the batter touches first base;
- the batter hits an infield fly with less than two out and runners on first and second or first, second and third.

A **runner** is out, and the **ball is dead** if:

- on a pitched ball, the runner leaves the base before the ball has made contact with batters bat;
- the runner fails to return to the runners base following a halt in play;
- while off the base, the runner is hit by a fair batted ball before it has passed an infielder and no other fielder is in a position to make a play;
- **the runner deliberately runs into a fielder who has the ball and is waiting to tag the runner;**
- **the runner interferes with an attempt to field a ball or with a thrown ball;**

A **runner** is out, and the **ball is alive** if:

- the runner runs more than 3 feet outside the established basepath to avoid a tag;
- on a force out, the fielder, while holding the ball, touches the base before the runner;
- after crossing the Commitment Line, the fielder holds the ball while touching home plate prior to the runner crossing the Safe line. **NOTE: The Strike mat is NOT part of home plate!**
- while off his base, the runner is **touched with the ball** held by a fielder;
- the runner overtakes a preceding runner;
- the runner slides toward a base;
- a teammate physically assists the runner.

- if the runner touches home plate whether or not a play is being made. **Note: A runner is not out if the plate is touched in an attempt to avoid a collision**

A runner **is not out** if:

- The runner is touched by a fielder who does not have or does not maintain control of the ball;
- The runner runs outside the baseline to avoid interfering with a fielder fielding a ball;
- The runner is unintentionally hit by a batted ball while on a base;
- The runner is unintentionally hit by a batted ball while off a base, if no fielder has a chance to field the ball.

3.18 Disputes

Any disputes that arise on the field must be raised by the acting team captain on the field, and discussed between captains and umpire.

Players who persistently heckle the umpire or other players will be warned and may be subject to ejection from the game.

4 Explanations and Definitions

Basepath - An imaginary line from the runner to the base to which he is advancing.

Catch - A catch is not completed until the fielder securely holds the ball in his hand or his glove (which is properly worn on his hand) long enough to prove he has control of the ball and any release of the ball is voluntary or intentional. If the ball has hit anything other than the fielder or another fielder, it cannot be a caught fly ball.

Commitment Line - A line in foul territory drawn 21 feet from the back of home plate and perpendicular to the third base line. When a runner crosses this line by touching the ground beyond the line but does not reach home plate, he shall be called out when the ball is legally held by a defensive player in contact with home plate. Note: The Strike mat is NOT part of home plate. Runners, who have not crossed the line or who cross the line but must tag up on a caught fly ball, may return to third base.

Fair Ball - A batted ball that is touched while on or above fair ground, stops on fair territory within the infield, contacts a base, bounces over first or third base, or first lands on fair ground beyond the infield.

Foul Ball - A batted ball that is not fair.

Inbounds - The ball or a player is in bounds until they touch the ground or an object that is outside the designated playing area.

Infield Fly Rule – Many people find this rule confusing, but it is an important one. The infield fly rule only applies in the specific situation where there is less than two outs in the inning AND there is a force play at both second and third base (i.e. there is a runner on first and second base, or first second and third base) AND the batter hits a FAIR fly ball in the infield (which is an indefinite area, the umpire has

discretion on what constitutes the infield for the purposes of this rule – typically anywhere on the dirt though). If this happens, the umpire will(should) call “INFIELD FLY, BATTER IS OUT IF THE BALL IS FAIR”. And what happens is exactly that. The batter is automatically out regardless of whether the ball is caught or it hits the ground. ***The important thing to note is – If you are a runner on base when you hear the umpire call this, you no longer have to advance to the next base – i.e. the force plays are removed. THE BALL IS STILL LIVE!*** Make sure that you get back to your base so that you are not tagged out. You **CAN** advance at risk of being put out, but except in some very specific situations, you would be ill advised to.

Interference - An offensive team player may not do anything to confuse, distract or hinder a fielder making a play.

Obstruction - A defensive player may not hinder or restrict a runner from progressing from base to base unless fielding a batted ball, holding the ball, or about to catch the ball.

Safe Line - A line drawn in foul territory starting at the top left-hand corner of home plate perpendicular to the third base line. A runner attempting to reach home must do so by touching the ground in foul territory on or beyond the Safe line. The runner is out if he touches home plate whether or not a play is being made. A runner is not out if the plate is touched in an attempt to avoid a collision