

## Rules for Qualifying Tournaments and the Texas State Tournament

Unless otherwise noted herein, the rules for all Texas Zone or State Tournaments will be in accordance with the USSSA National rules first, then the Official Major League Baseball Rules as published by the Sporting News.

### Texas USSSA Playing Rules

#### Appeals

- A. There are two types of appeals, a **live ball** appeal and a **dead ball** appeal.
- B. The defense may appeal during a **live ball** immediately following the play and before the next pitch (legal or illegal), granting an intentional base on balls, or before the next play or attempted play. If the offensive team initiates a play before the next pitch (legal or illegal), the defensive team does not lose the right to appeal. A defensive player may make a **live ball** appeal with the ball in his possession by tagging the runner or touching the base that was missed or left too early.
- C. A coach or any defensive player with or without the ball may make a **dead ball** appeal by verbally stating that the runner missed the base or left the base too early.
- D. All appeals must be made 1) before the next pitch (legal or illegal); 2) at the end of an inning, before the pitcher and all infielders have left fair territory; 3) before and intentional base on balls is granted; or 4) on the last play of the game, before the umpires leave the fenced area of the playing field.

#### Coach Pitch

- A. Each batter will be allowed five (5) pitches. If a batter hits a foul ball on the fifth pitch, he will be allowed to continue batting until he does not make contact with the ball, puts the ball in play.
- B. A fair batter ball hitting a coach pitcher will be declared a foul ball if the umpire rules that the coach pitcher's contact with the ball was unintentional. If in the umpire's judgment a coach pitcher intentionally makes contact with a batted ball, the batter will be out and no runner can advance.

- C. Play shall be stopped and the ball ruled dead when returned to the infield. The umpire shall determine the position of the runners when the ball becomes dead.
- D. All teams must roster bat for all games and use (10) defensive players.
- E. The catcher shall be located in the catcher's box, no more than four (4) feet behind home plate.
- F. There will be no: 1) Base on Balls 2) Base Awards for Hit By Pitcher 3) Infield Fly Rule 4) Base Stealing 5) Bunting (players must take a full swing).
- G. Runners may not leave their bases until the pitched ball crosses the front edge of home plate. A runner who leaves early will be declared out and the pitch will be called a no pitch.
- H. A coach pitcher is prohibited from coaching while in the pitching position either physically or verbally.
- I. Courtesy runners are allowed for the catcher only.

### **Designated Hitter**

- A. The designated hitter rules below apply to ages 15-18. There is no designated hitter in ages 14U and below.
- B. A hitter may be designated (not mandatory) for any one starting player and all subsequent substitutes for that player.
- C. A starting defensive player cannot be listed as the designated hitter in the starting lineup.
- D. Failure to declare a designated hitter prior to the game precludes the use of the designated hitter during the game.
- E. The role of the designated hitter is terminated for the remainder of the game when: 1) The defensive player or any previous defensive player for whom the designated hitter subsequently bats, pinch-hits or pinch-runs for the designated hitter or 2) The designated hitter or any previous designated hitter assumes a defensive position.

## **Protests**

- A.** If a team protests, they must notify the home plat umpire and the umpire will beckon the tournament director to the field to address the protest. The game clock will not be stopped for the protest.

## **Rosters**

- A.** Rosters must be online in the USSSA computer before any team plays in a sanctioned USSSA event. Rosters are public information that can be accessed by any director, coach or parent. The success of the USSSA roster system depends on the accountability of many. To that extent, the following rule has been implemented beginning with 2006 USSSA events:

"Your opponent's roster is available at the USSSA team website for your review. Please verify the legality of your opponent's game roster before you take the field. Commencement of play designates your acceptance of your opponent's roster and game results will not be changed. Any coach guilty of fraud in regards to a roster will immediately be suspended from play and reported to the USSSA State Director."

Therefore, regarding rosters, the only protestable offense after a game begins is the use of a player that does not appear on a roster at all.

## **Sportsmanship**

- A.** The umpires will handle UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT if the unsportsmanlike conduct is on the field of play. If an umpire has a problem with a fan or parent outside of the field, the umpire should go to the manager of the team that the problem is with and have the manager handle the situation. If the manager fails to handle the situation then the umpire will eject the manager from the game. The manager then has the option of handling the situation himself or getting a facility director to handle the situation.

## **Game Lengths**

- A.** All 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12 year old games will be six innings of play. All 13,14,15,16,17 & 18 year old games will be seven innings of play.

## **Pitching Limits**

- A.** All age groups that are scheduled for six (6) innings, a pitcher may not pitch more than eighteen (18) outs in any given day. All age groups that are scheduled for seven (7) innings, a pitcher may not pitch more than twenty-one (21) outs in any given day.
- B.** For all age groups, a pitcher may not pitch more than twenty-seven (27) outs in a week (Monday thru Sunday) or a specific tournament no matter if it is a three, four or five game guarantee.
- C.** A second trip to the same pitcher in the same inning will cause the pitcher's automatic removal from the mound (not the game).
- D.** When a pitcher takes his position at the beginning of each inning, or when he relieves another pitcher, he shall be permitted to pitch not to exceed eight (8) preparatory pitches to his catcher during which play shall be suspended.

## **Roster Batting**

- A.** If a team is batting the entire roster, and a member is unable to continue due to injury or illness, the team will not be penalized when it is the missing players turn to bat. His batting spot will be skipped over without penalty.
- B.** If a team is roster batting (nine or more players) and a player on the original lineup card arrives before the entire lineup has been batted, he may be added to the end of the batting order provided he is announced to both the plate umpire and the opposing team when he arrives to the field. Once announced, he will be placed at the end of the batting order.
- C.** Players who arrive late for the start of the game shall be added to the team batting order at the end of the lineup and bat when this position comes up. Players who must leave before the end of the game may do so. Their position in the batting order will be ignored for the rest of the game and no out will be charged unless the batting order fall below nine players.
- D.** If roster batting, any time the batting order is reduced by an ejection, an automatic out shall be declared in that batting order position.

## **Run Rules**

- A.** All games, including tournament championship games, will be played with a run rule in effect.
- B.** The run rule for all games will be as follows: 15 runs after 3 innings, 10 runs after 4 innings and 8 runs after five innings.
- C.** In ages 5,6,7 & 8-year-old games, teams will be limited to seven (7) runs per inning.
- D.** In ages 5,6,7 & 8-year-old games, mathematical elimination will apply.

## **Safety Rules**

- A.** While on offense, only the batter and the on deck batter shall be outside of the dugout fence.
- B.** A bat boy/girl may leave the dugout to retrieve a bat after all playing action is completed.
- C.** All bat boys/girls must have a helmet with two earflaps when not in the dugout.
- D.** While on defense, there shall be no equipment outside the dugout; this includes the on deck circle.
- E.** Catchers are required to wear helmets that protect both ears and the back of the head. Either throat protector or mask protecting the throat must be worn. Skullcaps are not permitted. Catchers are also required to wear a protective cup.
- F.** A player participating in a USSSA sanctioned game shall not wear jewelry. PENALTY: The umpire shall ask the player to remove the jewelry. Play shall not be resumed until the jewelry is removed or the player is replaced. This is not an ejection or an out. Medical alert bracelets or necklaces are not considered jewelry. If worn, they must be taped to the body so as to remain visible.
- G.** Shoes with metal cleats may not be worn by players that are playing as a twelve (12) year old or younger.
- H.** The use of cell phones is prohibited on the playing field by players, coaches or umpires.

- I. If the runner from third base is running toward home plate attempting to steal or is participating in a squeeze play, the following apply: 1) The batter has two options take the pitch or attempt to bunt the pitch. PENALTY – Failure to do so will result in the following: 1) The batter is called out 2) All runners return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch 3) The third base coach is ejected. NOTE: With the bases loaded, three balls and two strikes on the batter, coaches please have your runner on third start running towards the third base dugout and not sprinting towards home plate. UMPIRES: In this situation, please be aware that this is not a steal play or squeeze play if the batter swings the bat. Do not enforce the penalty with this circumstance.
- J. No Slashing  
For 12U and under, on the first offense, if a batter squares to bunt and then swings at the pitch (slashing), with or without runners on base, the batter is out, the runners go back to their bases, and the third-base coach is given a warning. On the second offense, the batter is out, the runners go back to their bases, and the third-base coach is ejected.

### **Slide Rule**

- A. A legal slide can be either feet first or head first. If a runner slides feet first, at least one leg and buttock shall be on the ground. If a runner slides he must slide within the reach of the base with either a hand or a foot without going past the base.
- B. On a force play if the runner slides, it must be on the ground in a direct line between the two bases, stopping at the base. The runner may slide or run in a direction away from the fielder to avoid making contact or altering the play of the fielder. PENALTY – An illegal slide causes both the runner and the batter-runner to be called out and all other runners to return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch.
- C. No player shall initiate malicious contact. The question of what is malicious is umpire judgment. PENALTY – The player initiating malicious contact shall be removed from the game. NOTE: There can be a collision where both players go head over heels and not be malicious contact. The key for malicious contact is "intent", umpires need to ask themselves when making the call, "Did the runner deliberately or intentionally run into the fielder to break up the play or cause harm to the fielder?" If your answer is yes, then you have malicious contact, if your answer is no, then it is a clean play and you have nothing. Umpire's need to be careful when making this call as to not eject a player if the intent is not there. Keep in mind that the younger ages are just learning the game and sometimes there will be contact by the runner not sliding and running into the catcher. Remember the key word is "INTENT".

- D. Runners are never required to slide, but if a runner elects to slide the slide must be legal.
- E. To prevent contact, if the fielder has the ball or his receiving of the ball is imminent the runner has the following choices: 1) Slide 2) Give Up 3) Go Around or 4) Go Back If contact results due to the runner failing to do one of the above, the runner shall be declared out and ejected from the game.
- F. If a defensive player is obstructing the runner (judgment call by the umpire), contact by the runner is not illegal unless malicious.

### **Speed Up Rules**

- A. At anytime with time remaining on the clock, the team at bat may use courtesy runners for both the pitcher and/or catcher of record. Running for the incoming pitcher and catcher is not permitted. Once time has expired, courtesy runners will not be permitted. The same runner may not run for both the pitcher and the catcher in the same half inning. A courtesy runner will be designated as a player not in the batting order or if roster batting, the last out (not necessarily the last batted out). Courtesy runners are mandatory for the catcher with two outs provided time has not expired. Courtesy runners for the catcher are optional before two are out.
- B. The defensive team may give an intentional base on balls by having its catcher or coach request the umpire to award the batter first base. This may be done before pitching to the batter or on any ball and strike count. It is a dead ball when an intentional base on balls is being awarded, no runners can be put out or advance. An intentional base on balls is only in effect for ages nine (9) and above. There will be no intentional base on balls for coach pitch or tee ball games.
- C. The batter must keep at least one foot in the batter's box throughout his time at bat with the following exceptions: 1) The batter swings at the pitch 2) The batter is forced out of the box by the pitch 3) The batter attempts a drag bunt 4) The pitcher or catcher makes a play or attempted play at any base 5) The pitcher leaves the dirt area of the pitching mound 6) The plate umpire calls time 7) The catcher does not catch a pitched ball. If the batter leaves the batters box and one of the above exceptions does not apply, the umpire may call an automatic strike if he determines leaving the batters box delayed the game. The batters box is defined in the rulebook even if it is not marked on the field and all batters box restrictions still apply.
- D. There will be no infield warm up between games in tournament play.

## **Starting A Game**

- A.** Teams can start a game with eight (8) players provided they take an out for the 9<sup>th</sup> player. If a team has not taken the field ten (10) minutes after the scheduled start time of a game, the game will be declared a forfeit. Teams must have a minimum of eight (8) players to start a game. Anything less than eight, the game will be declared a suspended game and will not be rescheduled. The suspended game will then be ruled a forfeit by the tournament director. Umpires have no authority to forfeit a game only tournament directors have that authority.
- B.** Teams having eight (8) players to start a game will automatically be the visiting team.
- C.** If a teams' ninth player arrives late to the game, the manger of that team must make an announcement at the plate conference before the game begins and advise both the plate umpire and the opposing team that he has a player that will be arriving late. When the player arrives, he will be announced to both the plate umpire and the opposing team and be placed in the ninth spot in the batting order. The game will resume as if he was there at the start of the game.
- D.** If batting nine players a team drops below nine eligible players due to an ejection, an automatic out shall be declared in that batting order position, providing there is no eligible substitute.
- E.** Teams will flip for home team in pool play games. In the elimination rounds of tournaments, the higher seeded team will be the home team.

## **Substitutions**

- A.** A team may bat nine, with or without a designated hitter or the entire roster.
- B.** If a team is batting the entire roster, there is free substitution on defense, except for the pitcher.
- C.** If a team is batting nine players, any of the starters may be withdrawn and reentered one time, including a player who is the designated hitter, provided such player returns to the lineup in the same batting position in which he left.

## Suspended Games

- A. If a game is called due to weather or other hazardous conditions, it will be ruled an official game provided 3 ½ innings have been completed if the home team is ahead or four innings if the home team is behind.
- B. All games stopped by an umpire for weather or other reasons before the game is declared official shall be a suspended game.

## Tournament Refunds

- A. Tournament refunds will be rewarded for every guaranteed game not played in a tournament. A refund equal the registration fee divided by the number of guaranteed games, less an administration fee of no more than \$50.00, will be refunded if a team gets less than it's number of guaranteed games. Teams that pull out of a tournament before scheduling will receive a full refund. Teams that pull out after the tournament schedule has been posted, will receive back all remaining funds after any teams have been paid back for guaranteed games not received due to the team not playing in the tournament, less an administration fee of no more than \$50.00.

## Teams

- A. Each team is required to have an online roster at [www.ussa.com](http://www.ussa.com) before they can be scheduled for any USSSA tournament event.

## Time Limits

- A. Below is a guide for tournament directors for how much time needs to be allowed between games:

If your game time is...	You should start games every...
1:15 or less	One hour and thirty minutes
1:20 to 1:30	One hour and forty-five minutes
1:30 to 1:45	Two hours
1:50 to 2:00	Two hours and fifteen minutes
2:05 to 2:15	Two hours and thirty minutes

- B. Innings that start within the time limit will be completed. The umpire shall announce, if the home team is batting and winning, "Time has expired, ball game". If the visiting team is batting and behind in the score and time expires, the umpire shall announce, " Time has expired, we will complete the inning".

- C.** If the teams are ready and want to start early, the time will start on the catcher's throw down. If the game is starting late, the clock will start on the umpire's announcement of start at the completion of the pre-game conference. No umpire shall ever start the clock without making an announcement to both teams.
- D.** If a game is tied after the regulation number of innings and time still remains, the game will continue one extra inning to determine a winner. If the game is still tied after one extra inning, the game ends in a tie, even if additional time remains.
- E.** An inning is deemed to begin at the moment the third out is made in the previous inning.
- F.** The umpires are the sole judge of time as long as there is no official game clock.
- G.** The umpire shall not stop the clock unless there is a serious injury or a weather delay that stops the game. The umpires on the field will determine a serious injury and the decision to stop the clock is of umpire judgment.

### **Tournament Game Cards**

- A.** Umpires are responsible for keeping track of the score by innings, number of out recorded per pitcher and listing the final score. Umpires are to print legibly so that there is no question of the above information.
- B.** After the game, umpires are to take the game card immediately to the tournament director. Managers will have thirty (30) minutes to sign the card after their game ends to verify the final score and pitching records at the tournament director's table. Failure to sign the card within the allotted time means that you are in agreement with the contents on the card as scribed by the umpire.
- C.** Umpires are instructed to leave the field immediately after the game and not to approach managers to sign game cards.

## **Tournament Reporting and Seeding**

**A.** Teams will be seeded for pool play using USSSA points.

**B.** Teams will be seeded for elimination play using the following criteria:

- 1) Won-Loss
- 2) Least Runs Allowed
- 3) Run Differential (Using + - 8 runs max. per game)
- 4) USSSA Points
- 5) Coin Flip

**C.** Place settings will be determined by:

- 1) Highest Round Advanced to.
- 2) Winner-Loser
- 3) Won-Loss
- 4) Head to Head
- 5) Least Runs Allowed
- 6) Run Differential (Using + - 8 runs max. per game)
- 7) USSSA Points
- 8) Tie