

# **NSPAA SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL**



## **RULES**

**Ages: 4A to 19U**

# North Saint Paul Athletic Association (NSPAA)

## Slow Pitch Softball Rules

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*The NSPAA Softball Program adheres to the  
USSSA standard rules unless indicated otherwise.*

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## **Rule 1: NSPAA Slow Pitch Softball Program Field Dimensions.**

The NSPAA Softball Program field dimensions are:

<b>LEAGUE</b>	<b>PITCHING</b>	<b>BASE PATH</b>
<b>Pony League</b>	N/A	50'
<b>Filly League</b>	35'	50'
<b>Minor League</b>	43'	60'
<b>Junior League</b>	50'	65'
<b>Senior League</b>	50'	65'
<b>Tournament Team</b>	Tournament Rules	Tournament Rules

## **Rule 2: Equipment.**

- A. All exposed jewelry or items that are judged to be hazardous or potentially dangerous may not be worn during the games.
- B. Batting helmets are mandatory in the Pony, Filly, Minor, Junior, and Senior leagues and should be worn by the on-deck batter, current batter, and base runners. Each athlete must provide their own batting helmet.
- C. Mouth guards and face masks are encouraged in the Minor, Junior, and Senior leagues.
- D. Leather or canvas athletic shoes with soft or hard rubber cleats are strongly recommended for all leagues. Metal cleats are prohibited. All players must wear closed toed shoes.
- E. Official Bat
1. The bat shall comply with USSSA official bat rules. Pony league is exempt.
  2. Baseball bats and Double Wall softball bats are not acceptable.
  3. Teams must coordinate the use of a bat that is not supplied by NSPAA Slow Pitch Softball with the League Director or Equipment Director.
  4. Teams caught using a banned bat will be subject to the following penalties:
    - a. The bat will be removed from play.
    - b. Batter:
      - i. First time offenders will be called out.
      - ii. Second time offenders will be called out and ejected from the game.
- F. Official Ball
1. The ball shall comply with USSSA official ball rules with the following inclusions:

- a. The 10” USSSA soft core ball or equivalent will be used for the Pony league.
  - b. The 11” USSSA soft core ball or equivalent will be used for the Filly league.
  - c. The 11” USSSA solid core ball or equivalent will be used for the Minor, Junior, and Senior leagues.
- G. Catchers must wear the catcher’s helmet and chest protector provided by the NSPAA. Any athlete not complying with the necessary equipment will be removed from the game. (If the equipment is defective or an incorrect size, notify the league director and the equipment will be replaced.)
- H. The NSPAA will provide league specific “coach equipment bags” to every head coach of a NSPAA softball team. Equipment bags will be issued to head coaches before their team’s first practice. It will be the head coach’s responsibility to maintain their equipment. Should a coach need to repair or replace any equipment issued by the NSPAA they must contact their specific league director. Equipment that a coach chooses to add to their team equipment bag is not the responsibility of the NSPAA to maintain, repair or replace.

### **Rule 3: Definitions.**

- A. Definitions included in this section are the most commonly misunderstood definitions. For a complete listing of softball definitions and terms, refer to the USSSA Slow Pitch Rule 3.
1. Infield Fly is a fair batted ball (not a line drive) that can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort. The batter is out when the batter hits an infield fly, with runners on first and second, or on first, second, and third bases with less than two outs.
- EFFECT. Rule 3.A.1: A fly ball to the outfield just beyond the infield playing surface may be called an infield fly if, in the judgment of the umpire, an infielder with ordinary effort can make a play on the ball.
- B. Interference is an act where players or others interfere with a player’s opportunities. There are three types of interference:
1. Offensive Interference: When a player interferes with, impedes, or confuses a defensive player while the defensive player is attempting to make a play. This can occur by either physical or vocal actions.
  2. Spectator Interference: Occurs when a person not engaged in the game touches a live batted or thrown ball which could prevent a blocked ball to occur, or when a person not engaged in the game physically interferes with a player’s opportunities.
  3. Umpire Interference: Occurs when a fair batted ball strikes the Umpire on fair ground before passing a fielder other than the Pitcher.

- C. Obstruction.
  - 1. Obstruction is the act of a fielder while not in possession of the ball, or in the act of fielding a batted ball, or taking a proper position to receive a thrown ball (thrown ball must already be in flight) which impedes the progress of a runner who is legally running the bases.
  - 2. Obstruction is the act of a fielder which impedes the Batter from striking at a pitched ball.
  - 3. Obstruction does not have to be intentional and may be vocal.

#### **Rule 4: The Game.**

- A. The Home Team is the team listed second on the regular season game schedule.
- B. The League Director or Umpire Director is responsible for furnishing game balls.
- C. A regulation game will consist of 7 innings, unless otherwise listed below.
  - 1. Time Limits
    - a. For the Pony and Filly Leagues, no new inning will begin after 55 minutes or 5 innings whichever occurs first. The umpire will keep the official game time and make all time decisions.
    - b. For the Minor League, Junior, and Senior Leagues, no new inning will begin after 55 minutes or 7 innings whichever occurs first. The Umpire will keep the official game time and make all time decisions.
  - 2. A game that is tied at the end of 7 innings or after time has expired shall be continued by playing one additional inning. (Pony and Filly leagues only during year end tournament.)
    - a. The last out of the previous inning will start at second base with 1 out.
    - b. The team that scores the most runs during the additional inning will be declared the winner.
  - 3. A game that is tied after the additional inning will end in a tie.
- D. A game called by the Umpire, which can not be resumed within 30 minutes, may be regulation if 4 or more innings (3 or more innings for the Pony and Filly leagues) have been played, or if the home team is leading after 3 ½ innings (2 ½ innings for the Pony and Filly Leagues).
  - 1. The Run Rule awards a win to a team that has a 20 run lead after 3 complete innings or 2 ½ innings if the home team is ahead, or a 15 run lead after 4 complete innings or 3 ½ innings if the home team is ahead, or a 10 run lead after 5 complete innings or 4 ½ innings if the home team is ahead.
  - 2. Failure to appear or take the field for your scheduled game will result in forfeiture.

3. "Bat boys" and "Bat Girls" are not allowed for their own safety.
- E. The end of the season standings will be determined by the team with the best win/loss record for the season. If there is a tie, then the following guideline will be used:
1. Head-to-head competition.
  2. Runs Against.
  3. Runs For.
  4. Coin Flip.
- F. Field Fitness
1. Prior to the start of a game, the Facilities Director, League Director or Board Member shall decide the fitness of the fields.
  2. After the game has started, the Umpire and League Director or Board Member shall collaborate in judging the fitness of the grounds, or the intensity of the weather, for continuing play.
  3. Suspended games will be resumed under the conditions that prevailed prior to the interruption that caused the suspended game.
  4. A suspended game which cannot be resumed after 30 minutes and is not a regulation game will be rescheduled and started as a new game.
  5. In an attempt to preserve the infield playing surface, teams will warm up in the outfield grass or the infield foul territory. Pitchers taking warm-up tosses and their catchers are the only exception to this rule.
  6. Each team is responsible for keeping the bench area clean.

### **Rule 5: Coaches.**

- A. Coaches must adhere to all rules set forth by NSPAA Slow Pitch Softball and USSSA Softball. Offenders will be subject to the penalties outlined in the NSPAA Policy and Procedures.
- B. One coach (head or assistant) and the umpires are to meet 5 minutes before each game to review ground rules.
- C. Umpires are not responsible for enforcing the player positioning rules in any league. If an infraction occurs, coaches must request a "time out" from the umpire and correct the infraction immediately.
- D. Coaches will be limited to 3 adult individuals who have successfully completed NSPAA SPSB certification prior to taking the field. A list of these individuals will be recorded with the league director.

These certified coaches will be the only individuals serving the team as 1<sup>st</sup> base, 3<sup>rd</sup> base, and bench coach. (Pony league is exempt).

E. A substitute coach is an adult (not an athlete) who has been asked to fill in for an absent coach due to extraordinary circumstances (i.e., funeral). This is not intended for a vacation or work event. These individuals are subject to a successful background check and concussion certification and **must** be approved by the league director in advance of an assistant coach's absence.

E. No game will be rescheduled due to a missing coach. These games will be recorded as a forfeit.

F. Coaches will limit their positions to the dugout or bench area UNLESS there is a pitching or defensive player change.

### **Rule 6: Players and Substitutes.**

A. All players must be registered with the NSPAA.

B. NSPAA league players may participate on a NSPAA Tournament Team and a NSPAA League Team during any given softball season.

C. To participate in a game, a player must be able to play defense and offense.

D. All players must participate equally. – See E for consequences if this IS NOT followed.

1. Players on the bench in the first inning must be inserted into the game in the second inning.

2. No player will sit twice until every player on the team has sat once.

E. Consequences for NOT playing your athletes equally during the season.

1. First Offense: Warning – Opposing coach ask coach politely to switch out athletes who haven't sat.

2. Second Offense: Board member called and let them know that they need to sit the athletes who haven't sat – even if it means to play shorthanded.

3. Third Offense: Board member called and the team forfeits the game.

F. Injuries that result in the removal of the player from play until the injury is treated. Play continues once the player is removed from the field. The player should be reinserted in the game as soon as the minor injury has been treated.

G. A team shall consist of at least ten players, whose positions shall be designated as: (1) Pitcher, (2) Catcher, (3) 1<sup>st</sup> Base, (4) 2<sup>nd</sup> Base, (5) 3<sup>rd</sup> Base, (6) Short Stop, (7) Left Field, (8) Center Field, (9) Right Field, and (10) Short Fielder (usually Left Center Field).

1. Other than the Pitcher and Catcher, players in the field may be stationed anywhere they choose in fair territory as each pitch is made with the exception of the Pony League.
2. A team must have a minimum of 8 players to begin a game. Failure to meet the minimum will result in rescheduling of the game.
3. Teams may use substitute players from the NSPAA league directly below their own league to fill shortages. Exceptions listed below.
  - a. The Filly League must use players within their league to fill their roster.
  - b. Substitute players are not allowed in the Pony League.
4. Substitute players are athletes that take the place of a team's regular roster athletes and may only be used when the absences prevent the team from filling the 10 fielding positions listed above.
5. Managing Substitute Players
  - a. Teams may use up to 3 substitute players to bring the game day roster up to 10 athletes.
  - b. Substitute players are restricted to the four outfield positions.
  - c. Substitute players must bat last in the batting order.
  - d. Substitute players will be retained and allowed to play with the unexpected arrival of a team's regular roster athlete.

EFFECT.Rule.6.F.3-5. The intent of this rule is to ensure that a team does not have to play shorthanded during the course of a game when the team knows that absences will reduce the game time roster to less than 10 athletes. It is not intended to serve as a vehicle to supplement a team's roster in the event that a team may become shorthanded during the course of a game. A team cannot ask an athlete to be a substitute if the team expects to have 10 or more regular roster players at the start of its regular scheduled game time.

### **Rule 7: Pitching Rule.**

- A. The pitch count is 3 balls/2 strikes with 1 courtesy foul for all leagues with the exception of the Pony and Filly Leagues. The pitch count for Pony league is 5 pitches and see Filly section for specific pitching rules.
- B. Pitchers must pitch to every batter. If a pitcher intentionally walks a batter, the batter will be awarded second base on any subsequent walks, intentional or unintentional, for the remainder of the game.



C. Preliminary to pitching, the pitcher shall take a position with the pivot foot (push off foot) firmly on the ground and in contact with the pitcher's plate (rubber). The pivot foot must be in contact with the pitcher's plate when the pitched ball is released.

D. The other foot (free foot) has no restrictions on position and may be placed on, in front of, to the rear of, or to the side of the pitcher's plate. After taking the initial position, the pitcher may take more than one step with the free foot, in any direction of her choice, provided that it is taken prior to, simultaneously with, or during the actions of delivering the pitched ball.

E. After the release of the pitch, there are no restrictions on the pitcher's subsequent movements, or the fielding positions she may assume as a defensive player. The ball must be pitched underhand at slow speed.

F. The pitched ball must arc at least 3 feet after leaving the pitcher's hand and before it passes any part of home plate.

G. The pitched ball shall not rise higher than 10 feet above the ground.

H. One infield face mask will be provided to each team in the Filly, Minor, and Junior leagues. It is required for the pitchers in the Filly and Minor league to wear the face mask while pitching. It is recommended, but not required, for the pitchers in the Junior league to wear the face mask while pitching.

### **Rule 8: Batting Rule.**

A. Swinging bats outside of the fenced field area is prohibited.

B. Throwing the bat is prohibited. One warning will be given per team. A second infraction will result in the batter being called out.

C. The Batting Order

1. Coaches must bat their full roster of players.

2. Vacancies in the batting order for teams playing with fewer than 10 players as a result of injury or player absence (excused or unexcused) are not recorded as outs.

3. Coaches must inform the opposing coach and umpire of any player limitations during the pre-game meeting or at the time the limitation occurs. Courtesy runners are allowed and will be the last recorded out.

## **Rule 9: Base Running Rule.**

- A. The Safety Base (the 15" x 30" white and orange base) is used at first base for all leagues. The safety base should be positioned such that the white portion is located where first base would normally be (in fair territory) and the colored portion (orange) should be in foul territory.
- B. When there is a play at first, the base runner must use the orange base allowing the fielder use of the white base. Failure to use the orange base will result in the base runner being called out.
- C. Base runners may not lead off or leave the base prior to contact with the batted ball. A team warning will be issued at the first offense. After the team warning, the base runner will be called out.
- D. Courtesy runners will be inserted at first base only: therefore, the batter must stop at first base and wait until time has been called by the umpires. The other base runners may advance at their own risk.

## **Rule 10: Umpires.**

### **A. Pony, Filly, and Minor Leagues.**

Regular Season games and year-end tournament games are officiated by NSPAA youth umpires. Youth umpires will complete an application for umpiring. All applicants will be under the direction of the Youth Umpire Director. Criteria will be established by the Youth Umpire Director. All candidates will be asked to be at least 14 years of age.

### **B. Junior and Senior Leagues.**

Regular Season games and year-end tournament games are officiated by USSSA Certified Umpires.

## **Rule 11: League Specific Rules.**

### **A. NSPAA Pony League Rules**

1. An inning is defined as that portion of a game within which teams alternate on defense and offense, and each team is allowed 3 outs or bats through the line-up during its time at bat.
2. If one team has a larger roster than their opponent, the opponent will be allowed to bat through their line-up plus the difference in the roster size.

EFFECT. Rule 11.A.2.: One team has 13 players, and the opponent has 11 players. The opponent could potentially bat through their line-up plus repeat 2 batters to equal 13 players stepping up to the plate.

3. A coach or team designee will pitch to their team. If the pitching coach is hit by the ball, all players will return to their original position and the at bat will resume.

4. There are no ball or strike calls in the Pony league. Each player will receive 5 opportunities to hit the ball. If the batter has not hit the ball into the field of play after 5 pitches, the player will have two attempts/swings to hit the ball from a tee. The tee will only be used for the first half of the season. Beginning with the 6<sup>th</sup> game, the tee will NOT be used. If the batter does not get a hit after 5 pitches, then the batter will return to the bench and no out will be recorded.
5. The Infield Fly rule is not in effect.
6. Base runners hit by a batted ball are not out. All runners will return to their original base, and the batter will resume their at bat.
7. On an overthrown ball, the base runners may not advance.
8. If the run difference is 13 runs or greater, the base runners may only advance one base at a time.
9. On a ball hit into the outfield, time will be called when the fielder picks up the ball. The runners will be awarded one base from the last base touch gauged by the lead runner.
10. Coaches are required to develop each player's infield and outfield abilities. To this end, no player will play the same position more than 1 inning during a game. In addition, players must play 1 infield position and 1 outfield position within the first 3 innings.
11. When the ball is hit, fielders must be in their designated defensive position.
  - a. Infielders must be within 5 feet of their designated base or position.
  - b. Outfielders must be at least 15 feet beyond the base path. The outfield will be considered the grass area or the area behind a chalk line drawn on the field to designate the outfield area. The outfielder may throw the ball to an infielder at any base to make a force out. However, the outfielder cannot run and touch the base to make the out.
  - c. Pitchers must be within 5 feet of the pitching plate or center of the infield diamond.
12. Substitutions between position players are not allowed in the Pony League.
13. A head coach or their assistant may be in the outfield during their outfield innings. You may have up to 2 adults in the outfield. They are allowed to remain in the field during the entire inning. Their purpose to help direct player positioning and provide verbal defense skills. They cannot interfere with a live ball or physically make contact with the athlete.
14. A head coach or their assistant must remain within 10 feet of the designated bench.
15. Base coaches may not touch the base runner in an attempt to advance the player to next base or prevent the player from advancing to the next base. Making contact with a base runner is

interference. For the first violation, all base runners must return to the last base touched. After the first violation, all base runners must return to the last base touched, and the player contacted will be called out.

16. Colored cones will be placed in the outfield designating outfield positions. It is considered part of the field. Cones will be used for the entire season and year end tournament. Should a ball hit a cone, play will not stop but be considered part of the playing field.

17. Defensive lineup MUST be available for the opposing team to look at if requested.

## **B. NSPAA Filly League Rules**

1. An inning is defined as that portion of a game within which teams alternate on defense and offense, and each team is allowed 3 outs or bats through the line-up during its time at bat.

2. If one team has a larger roster than their opponent, the opponent will be allowed to bat through their line-up plus the difference in the roster size.

EFFECT. Rule 11.B.2.: One team has 13 players, and the opponent has 11 players. The opponent could potentially bat through their line-up plus repeat 2 batters to equal 13 players stepping up to the plate.

3. Pitching Rules.

a. For the first four weeks of the season: The coach will pitch for the first two innings of each game. Each batter will receive 6 opportunities to hit the ball, plus 1 courtesy foul. If the batter has not hit the ball into the field of play after 6 pitches, the batter will return to the bench and no out will be recorded. After the first 2 innings of the first four weeks the athlete will pitch 3 pitches to the batter. If the batter doesn't get a hit, the coach will pitch 3 pitches to the batter. The batter may be struck out, but cannot walk. If the batter does not get a hit and does not strike out, she will sit down and no out is recorded.

b. BEGINNING WITH THE 5<sup>TH</sup> WEEK OF THE SEASON, the athlete will pitch 3 pitches to the batter. If the batter doesn't get a hit, the coach will pitch 3 pitches to the batter. The batter may be struck out, but cannot walk. If the batter does not get a hit and does not strike out, she will sit down and no out is recorded.

c. A ball striking any portion of the carpet or home plate will be called a strike; unless, the pitch does not satisfy the pitching limitations.

d. Pitcher Substitution.

1. Pitchers may pitch two full innings and be used in relief for one inning during a game.

2. A relief pitcher must be a player on the field of play. A player may not be brought off the team bench to replace a struggling pitcher.
  - e. One infield face mask will be provided to each team in the Filly league. It is required for the pitchers in the Filly league to wear the face mask while pitching.
4. The Infield Fly rule **is not** in effect.
5. Base runners hit by a batted ball are **not** out. All runners will return to their original base, and the batter will resume their at bat.
6. On an overthrown ball, the base runners **may not** advance.
7. If the run difference is 13 runs or greater, the base runners may only advance one base at a time.
8. The Umpire will call time when the ball has been returned to the infield (crosses the base path). Control **does not** need to be established by an infielder.
9. Coaches are required to develop each player's infield and outfield abilities. To this end, no player will play the same position more than 1 inning during a game. In addition, players must play 1 infield position and 1 outfield position within the first 3 innings.
10. When the ball is hit, fielders **must** be in their designated defensive position.
  - a. Infielders must be within 5 feet of their designated base or position.
  - b. Outfielders must be at least 15 feet beyond the base path.
  - c. Pitchers must pitch from the pitching plate.
11. Substitutions between position players are not allowed.
12. Coaches and Assistant Coaches must remain in the dugout when their team is on the field in a defensive position.
13. Base coaches may not touch the base runner in an attempt to advance the player to next base or prevent the player from advancing to the next base. Making contact with a base runner is interference. For the first violation, all base runners must return to the last base touched. After the first violation, all base runners must return to the last base touched, and the player touched will be called out.
14. When time is called the runners will be awarded one base from the last base touched gauged by the lead runner.
15. Umpires overhearing a coach instructing an athlete to avoid swinging the bat will be subject to the following sanctions:
  - a. First Offense: team warning.

b. After the First Offense: a strike will be issued to the batter. If the batter already has one strike, the batter will be called out.

16. Defensive line-up MUST be provided to the opposing team before the game begins. If the line-up rules aren't followed the coach will be subject to the following sanctions:

a. First Offense: Warning – Ask opposing coach politely to correct errors.

b. Second Offense: Board member called and time is stopped and board member helps the coach fix the line-up.

c. Third Offense: Board member called and the offending team will forfeit the game.

### **C. NSPAA Minor League Rules**

1. An inning is defined as that portion of a game within which teams alternate on defense and offense, and each team is allowed 3 outs.

2. Pitching Rule

a. The pitcher will pitch to a carpet positioned behind home plate.

b. A ball striking any portion of the carpet will be called a strike; unless, the pitch does not satisfy the pitching limitations

c. Intentional walks are not allowed in the Minor League.

3. Pitcher Substitution

a. Pitchers may pitch three full innings and be used in relief for one inning during a game.

b. A relief pitcher must be a player on the field of play. A player may not be brought off the team bench to replace a struggling pitcher.

c. One infield face mask will be provided to each team in the Minor league. It is required for the pitchers in the Minor league to wear the face mask while pitching.

4. With the exception of pitcher, substitutions between position players are not allowed.

5. On an overthrown ball that goes out of play, runners are allowed the base they are going to plus one extra base.

EFFECT. Rule 11.C.5.: If a runner is going to second base when the ball goes out of play; the runner will continue to second base and be awarded third base as a result of the overthrow. If the runner is returning to first base when the ball goes out of play, the runner will continue to first base and be awarded second base as a result of the overthrow.

6. The Umpire will call time when an infielder has control of the ball in the infield (inside the base path).

7. Coaches are required to develop each player's infield, outfield, and pitching skills. To this end, no player will play the same position for more than 2 innings with the exception of the pitcher. In addition, each player must play 1 infield position and 1 outfield position in the first 4 innings.
8. Umpires overhearing a coach instructing an athlete to avoid swinging the bat will be subject to the following sanctions:
  - a. First Offense: team warning.
  - b. After the First Offense: a strike will be issued to the batter. If the batter already has one strike, the batter will be called out.
9. Base runners hit by a batted ball are out (following the USSSA rule).
10. Coaches and Assistant Coaches must remain in the dugout while their team is on the field in a defensive position.
11. Defensive line-up **MUST** be provided to the opposing team before the game begins. If the line-up rules aren't followed the coach will be subject to the following sanctions:
  - a. First Offense: Warning – Ask opposing coach politely to correct errors.
  - b. Second Offense: Board member to be called and time is stopped and board member helps the coach fix the line-up.
  - c. Third Offense: Board member to be called and the offending team will forfeit the game.

**D. NSPAA Junior League Rules.**

1. Coaches may bring in a relief pitcher at any time during the game from any player on the field of play. A player may not be brought off the team bench to replace a struggling pitcher.
2. Unlimited substitutions may be made between position players on the field of play. A player may not be brought off the team bench to replace a struggling player.
3. Bench players may be used as substitutes for injured players.
4. One infield face mask will be provided to each team in the Junior league. It is recommended, but not required, for the pitchers in the Junior league to wear the face mask while pitching.
5. Coaches and Assistant Coaches must remain in the dugout while their team is on the field in a defensive position.

**E. NSPAA Senior League Rules.**

If the Senior League is playing in North St. Paul, they will follow the same league rules as stated above for the Junior League. If the Senior League is playing in a surrounding City (i.e., Oakdale or White Bear Lake), the Senior league will follow the rules set forth by that City.

**Rule 12: Concussion**

For any athlete suspected of sustaining a head concussion, the head coach or a member of the athlete's coaching team shall suggest to have the athlete seek medical attention to have the injury assessed. In such circumstances, the athlete will not be able to participate in any practice or game until the athlete has been cleared by a medical professional and a written note is provided to the coach.

Adopted: January, 2016