**Official Guide and Playing Rules for 2021.**

The following rules replace and/or supersede any rules printed

prior to this date for the

**HUFF-N-PUFFERS SENIOR SOFTBALL LEAGUE.**

All competition will be conducted in accordance

with rules set forth in this official guide and in the

new edition USA (formerly named ASA) Softball Playing Rules.

Any suggestions, proposed changes, or revisions to our

rules must be submitted in writing during regular

meetings or at a Governing Board meeting.

**2021 RULES COMMITTEE**

JERRY BACHER, CHAIRMAN

KEN DIPPONG ED KUSTRA

TOM ZIGMAN JIM LEONARD RICK DEMETER

LARRY KEATING, Umpire-In-Chief

**RULE 1 Playing Field**

1.1 Commitment Line

A three (3) foot Commitment Line shall be marked perpendicular to the foul line halfway (35 feet) between 3rd base and home plate. No tags allowed on runners past the commitment line.

1.2 No Restraining Line (for 2021)

\*\*(Please note: this rule is for 2019 and was left in place if Divisions wish to reinstate it for 2021).

A three (3) foot line fifteen (15) feet from home plate on the first base line will be set as the Restraining Line. If there is a substitute runner for the batter and the batter crosses that line the play will not stop, it will be treated as a delayed call. If the runner for the batter makes it to 1st base, he will be called out at the end of the play.

1.3 Scoring Plate

There will be a rubber scoring plate set to the same distance from 3rd base as the wooden Strike Zone Board is, but eight (8) feet to the right of the 3rd base line. Runners from 3rd must touch the rubber plate before a defensive player catches a throw from the field to the strike zone board for the effort to be scored as a run.

1.4 Strike Zone

A Strike Zone Board will be used with the front of the board centered on and in line with the front of the field home plate. The board will be twenty two (22) inches wide and thirty four (34) inches long. The board will lay on and completely cover home plate.

1.5 Double bag – First Base

An additional base shall abut 1st base. The additional base will be in foul territory.

1.6 Pitcher’s Safety Screen

A pitcher’s safety screen will be used in all divisions. The placement of the pitcher’s screen will be on the glove side of the pitcher, to the middle of the pitching rubber, from three (3) feet up to six (6) feet in front of the pitching rubber.

**RULE 2 Attire**

2.1 Metal Cleats

Metal cleats are not permitted.

2.2 Protective Clothing

Protective equipment and cool weather clothing is allowed.

2.3 Home vs Visitors

The home team will wear white shirts and use the 1st base bench and right field for pre-game practice. The visiting team will wear red shirts and use the 3rd base bench and left field for pre-game practice.

2.4 Uniform Requirements

Players, managers and coaches must be in proper uniform. Pants or shorts must be dark blue or black in color, stripes and logos are permitted. Hats, shirts, pants and shorts approved by Huff-n-Puffers will only be permitted. Pants of any style may be worn under the shorts. Players not in proper uniform will not be permitted to play. This rule will be enforced by MANAGER’S and UMPIRE’S.

**RULE 3 Equipment**

3.1 Shared Equipment

All equipment will be shared by both teams unless privately owned.

3.2 Softball Specifications

Home teams will furnish game balls supplied by the league. These balls will be determined in all particulars from time to time by the

Governing Board and the Governing Board can in its discretion choose a different ball for each division of the league.

3.3 Equipment Required

The Commitment Line, Scoring Plate, Strike Zone Board, Pitching Screen and the Double Bag at first base shall be used at all scheduled and playoff games.

3.4 Illegal or Altered Bats

Anyone using an illegal or altered bat (shaved, rolled, etc.) as defined by the USA Rules will be subject to ejection from the game and further punishment as determined by the Governing Board.

**RULE 4 Players**

4.1 Divisions I

Division I teams will field a maximum of twelve (12) defensive players.

4.2 Division II

If Division II draft results in fourteen (14) players per team, Division II teams will field a maximum of twelve (12) defensive players. If they are able to draft fifteen (15) players per team, the teams will field a maximum of thirteen (13) players per team.

4.3 Division III

Division III teams will field a maximum of thirteen (13) players per team.

4.4 All Divisions

All teams must have nine (9) players from its own roster to start a game.

4.5 Substitute Players

Substitute players may be added for a total of twelve (12) for divisions that field a maximum of twelve (12) players. Substitute players may be used as follows: A “B” or lower may replace a “B” player. A “C” or lower may replace a “C” player. A “D” or lower may replace a “D” player. An “E” may replace an“E” player. Any player may replace an “A” except another “A” player. Substitute players in these divisions will be for the positions of Catcher, Right Field, or 1st base. If Division II is fielding a maximum of thirteen (13) players, substitute players may be added for a total of thirteen (13) players. Substitute players may be used as follows: A “B” or lower may replace a “B” player. A “C” or lower may replace a “C” player. A “D” or lower may replace a “D” player. An “E” may replace an“E” player. Any player may replace an “A” except another “A” player. Substitute players in these divisions will be for the positions of Catcher, Right

Field, or 1st base. Division III substitute players can play anywhere. Division III teams may replace an A for A, B for B, etc. for a total to equal the opposition (13 vs 13). Players from Divisions II/III can be asked to be a sub player in Divisions I/II regardless of their ranking.

4.6 Batting Order

Substitute players must bat at the bottom of the order.

4.7 Roster List

Each Manager will have a roster list of all teams in their division.

4.8 Forfeit

A team must be ready to play ten (10) minutes after the scheduled starting time or suffer a forfeit. Game starting times are 9:00 A.M. for the first game and 10:45 A.M. for the second game. Field conditions may warrant changes in starting time. No early starts, unless both managers agree.

**RULE 5 Draft**

5.1 Division Managers

Managers in each division will decide how they want to draft players on draft day, either by (COP) Carry Over Player from the previous

season, or 1,2,3,4 – 4,3,2,1, or any other method the managers choose until all players are drafted.

5.2 Drafting Managers

Managers will not be drafted; they will be assigned to the team they are drafting and managing.

**RULE 6 Batting**

6.1 All Divisions/Strike Count

Each batter will start with a one (1) ball and one (1) strike count.

6.2 All Divisions/Number of fouls

Two (2) fouls after two (2) strikes is an out.

**RULE 7 Pitching**

7.1 Legal Pitch

A legal pitch is a minimum of six (6) feet from the ground and a maximum of twelve (12) from the ground. Striking any portion of Strike Zone Board, will be a strike. The pitcher must have one foot touching the rubber when delivering the pitched ball.

7.2 Pitcher’s Safety Screen

See sub-rule 1.6 for details governing the placement of the Pitcher’s Safety Screen. A batter’s first batted ball hitting the screen, if not touched by a defensive player prior to hitting the screen will be ruled a dead ball and is not playable. A thrown ball hitting the screen is a live ball and is playable. A batter will be allowed to hit the Pitcher’s Safety Screen one time (1) in each at bat with no change in the existing count and a dead ball call by the umpire. Subsequent hits against the screen will be called strikes.

**RULE 8 Base Running**

8.1 Substitute Runners

Divisions I and II - Allow runners for a batter from home plate. The Substitute Runner can only run to 2nd base and must stop there. If the ball is hit over the fence, then it’s a home run. A Batter Runner will stand behind a line drawn from the back corner on the lefthanders side of home plate perpendicular (right angle) to the screen or the WHITE & RED MARKER hanging on the fence. The distance shall be no less than eight (8) feet from the back of home plate. The criteria used for substitute runners for the batter will be injured or hurt (NOT SLOW). All runners running for the batter or a pinch runner will be the player making the last out. If the player making the last out is not able to run, then the player making the

next-to-last out will be the runner. Once a runner is on base he will continue to run until he scores or he is out. If the runner is on base when it is his turn to bat, a replacement may be put in for him and there is no out recorded. If a runner is needed at the beginning of a game with no outs recorded, the managers must agree on a runner or it defaults to the last batter in the lineup. Division III can have as many runners the batter at any base he safely reached before they choose the runner. If the runner is on base when it is his turn to bat, a replacement may be put in for him and there is no out recorded.

8.2 Commitment Line

Sliding or diving into a base is permitted. A base runner may be out at home plate in a non-force situation without a tag: If the runner has crossed the Commitment Line, the defensive player must have possession of the ball while touching the Strike Zone Board before the runner has touched the Scoring Plate. The runner will be called out if he touches or crosses the Strike Zone Board. No tags are allowed on runners that have crossed the Commitment Line by a defensive player. Once a runner (or any part of his body) touches the ground on, or beyond the Commitment Line, the runner may not return to third base. A violation of the rule will result in the runner being called out.

8.3 Scoring Plate

To score, a base runner must touch the Scoring Plate before a defensive player in possession of the ball touches the Strike Zone Board.

8.4 Physical Contact

A runner shall not be called out for contact with a defensive player not in contact with the Strike Zone Board, unless, in the umpire’s judgment, the runner deliberately hit or could reasonably have expected to minimize or avoid the contact under the circumstances and failed to do so.

8.5 1st . Base-Double Base

If there is a play on a batter going to 1st base, the first baseman must touch the white bag of the double bag in fair territory and the batter (runner) must tag the orange base in foul territory. The 1st baseman can tag a runner before he touches 1st base for an out. To avoid a collision, a fielder or a runner may use the other base. Runners who fail to step on the orange base are liable to be called out if a defensive player appeals before the runner returns to the base.

**RULE 9 Scoring**

9.1 Scorekeeping

Scorekeepers on the opposing teams must agree on the score of the game at the end of each half inning. All teams should keep score.

**RULE 10 The Game**

10.1 Required Innings

All players who are physically able to play must play in each game. Divisions I and II, all players must play at least four (4) innings on defense unless physically unable to play, or you are the Designated Hitter and the opposing manager is to be notified. Only two (2) runners are allowed for Divisions I and II because of an injury or physical disability to have a designated runner (DR) starting from home plate. A player removed because of an injury will not be an automatic out. Opposing managers must be notified of any player physically unable to participate before the game and if any changes occur during the game, the opposing manager must be notified immediately. In Division III it will be three (3) innings, and teams will be allowed as many runners as needed due to injury or physical disability as agreed to by the Managers before the game.

10.2 Line Up Cards

The managers of each team will exchange lineup cards (if requested prior to the start of the game) listing the offensive players in the order in which they will bat.

10.3 Regular Season Schedule

A round robin schedule will be used during regular season play.

10.4 Rain Out Games

Rain-out-games will be re-scheduled as to the time and day by the Umpire-in-Chief with the approval of the managers involved. Games in play that are called because of rain before they are a complete game shall be made up at a later date as a complete new game beginning at the first inning. A complete game in Divisions I and II is a minimum of five (5) innings or four and one half (4½) innings if the home team is ahead. In Division III a complete game is four (4) innings or three-and-a-half (3 ½) if the home team is ahead.

10.5 Field Conditions

Field conditions for the playing of games shall be determined initially by the Parma Service Department. After a game starts, the umpire(s) working the game will make the decision if the game can continue.

10.6 Tie Breakers

A game that is tied at the end of regulation time (after seven (7) innings for Division III, nine (9) innings for Divisions I and II shall be played until one of the teams out scores the other in extra innings.

10.7 Innings Played and Mercy Rule

Division III will play seven (7) inning games with five (5) innings or four-and-a-half (4 ½) innings if the home team is ahead. This rule does not apply to post season tournament or tie-breaking playoff games. Divisions I and II will play nine (9) inning games. A fifteen (15) run “Mercy” rule will be in effect for Divisions I and II after seven (7) innings, or six and one-half (6½) innings if the home team is ahead, and after five (5) innings or four and one-half innings if the home team is ahead, thus ending the game. This rule does not apply to post season tournaments or tie-breaking play-off games. A one (1) ball and one (1) strike count will be in effect on each batter.

10.8 Run Limit

All games played will have a five (5) run limit per inning for all but the last designated inning. The game umpire shall determine the last inning based on time restraints and shall inform both team managers before the start of the last designated inning.

10.9 Infield Practice

Infield practice between each inning will be allowed by the umpire only if time restraints allow it.

10.10 Designated Hitter

You may have one (1) and only one (1) designated hitter on each team (optional), if he is able, he must run for himself. If you have fifteen or fourteen (15/14) players, you field thirteen (13) in Division III, twelve (12) players in Divisions I and II. DH does not play in the field. Your lineup card will have fifteen or fourteen (15/14) players. If you have thirteen (13) players, DH does not play in the field and you cannot pick up a player. Your lineup card will have thirteen (13) players. If you have twelve (12) players, DH does not play in the field, now you can pick up a sub player and your lineup card will have thirteen (13) players. The DH can be a different player for any game, but you cannot change the DH during the game and they cannot play in the field even if your roster falls below thirteen (13) players. Divisions I and II will be fielding twelve (12) players and follow the same rule.

**RULE 11 Dead Ball**

11.1 Ball in Play

If a ball leaves the playing field, such as going under a fence, the player will not touch the ball, but will raise both hands as a signal to the umpire. The umpire will then come to the location and make a decision. Failure to follow the procedure will result in the ball being ruled in play.

**RULE 12 Umpires**

12.1 Umpires

The Umpire-in-Chief will be in charge of all umpires and will be a member of the Rules Committee. His duties will include: 1. Establish a list of qualified umpires. 2. Assign an umpire(s) to each scheduled game. 3. Scheduling of make-up games.

**RULE 13 Protests**

13.1 When to Make a Protest

The notification of intent to protest must be made immediately before the next legal or illegal pitch or before both teams have left the playing field after the final out. Ineligible player protest can be

made at any time. All protests shall be presented to any member of the Rules Committee before the next scheduled game from the team submitting the protests must be submitted in writing and presented to any member of the Rules Committee before the next scheduled game from the team submitting the protest.

13.2 Protest Ruling

The Rules Committee will rule on all protests as soon as possible after the date of receipt of the written protest.

**RULE 14 Deadlines**

14.1 For rosters

The deadline for trading players with the consent of both managers and player’s involved is May 15th. Division Directors will designate where new players will be placed. There is NO deadline for new players entering the League.

14.2 Membership Deadline

The deadline for filing for an application for league membership shall be determined by the Governing Board.

**RULE 15 Playoffs**

15.1 Adding Players for Playoffs

Playoff and championship games must be played without adding any players from other teams.

15.2 In the event of a tie for the first half championship, the winner will be decided the first time the two (2) teams involved play each other in the second half. This game will also count in the second half standings.Divisions I and II will have a first and second half. All divisions: home team will be determined by a coin toss.

15.3 Divisions I and II Playoffs

If at the end of the season, first and second half champions cannot play due to weather or city commitments, the team with the best overall record will be declared the champions. Division I/II will play a split season with a best of three (3) game play-off at the end of the season. A one-game (1) playoff will decide the winner of each half in the event of a tie. Home team will be determined by a coin toss. A double elimination tournament may be held at the end of the regular season for all teams interested. In the playoff or tournament games, a player cannot be a substitute unless his team has been eliminated.

15.4 Division III Playoffs

Division III will play a full season and will have teams chosen by managers to play a double elimination tournament.

**RULE 16 Player evaluations**

16.1 Evaluations

All new ballplayers applying for the Huff-N-Puffers will be invited to the annual evaluations of new ballplayers before the draft. The evaluators will be the current and/or new managers. All managers will evaluate all ball players. The managers will determine what division the ballplayers should be placed. If the ballplayer wants to go to division I, he can enter division I draft and if not selected he will be put in the division II draft. They will be evaluated on hitting, fielding, throwing and running, then given a grade of A,B,C,D, or E. This information will then be available for the drafts.

16.2   Changing Divisions

A player in division I or II that is rated an A or B  may not request to move to a lower division without the approval of the Governing Board.  Only players rated a C or below may move of their own choosing to a lower division. If, however, an A or a B player has NOT been drafted back into the division of last year’s play, he will be moving into a lower division.

**RULE 17 Rule Changes**

17.1 Rule Changes

Rule changes will only be considered before each season begins. If you have a rule change that you would like to submit, you must put it in writing, sign it, and get it to the Rules Chairman. You can also give it to your manager, any officer, or any member of the Governing Board and they will submit it to the Rules Chairman.

**RULE 18 Points of Emphasis**

18.1 Unresolvable Disagreements

Unresolvable disagreements between a player and manager regarding his team assignment will be resolved by the Governing Board.

18.2 Injured Players

All injured players must have a Doctor’s release to return to an active team roster. 18.3 Refusal to Play

A player refusing to play on a team drafting him will be suspended.

18.4 Conduct

Conduct not considered in the best interest of the Huff-N-Puffers will be subject to disciplinary action. Fighting between players will result in removal from the game with a three (3) game suspension (the following three (3) games) for the first offense. The second offense will result in suspension for the season. Fighting in the parking lot or near the playing area is part of this directive. Profanity will not be tolerated on or off the fields: players will be ejected from the game and be suspended for the next game. A second offense can result in suspension for the season. (REMEMBER, LADIES AND CHILDREN ARE IN THE STANDS).

18.5 Avoiding Collisions

A runner must make every effort to avoid colliding with opposing players while running the bases or sliding or diving. If, in the Umpires judgment the runner fails to avoid a collision with a defensive player involved in the play, the ball will be declared dead and that runner called out. If, in the judgment of the Umpire the collision is considered malicious (bowling over, throwing elbows, etc.) by either the runner or defensive player, the ball will be declared dead and the offending individual will be ejected from the game and suspended for an additional game for the first offense. A second offense will be cause for suspension for the remainder of the season.

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