

MMSL

2007 Rules Book

Category 1: MMSL's Special Rules

The MMSL is a special league and as a result, requires some special rules. Over a course of time we have found these rules better suit our league compared to conventional co-ed softball leagues. It is important that each coach knows the following rules and discusses them with the umpire before each game. It is the responsibility of the coaches to convey these special rules to their players. Coaches should always keep a copy of the MMSL Rules with them in case of a rules discrepancy. If a rule arises not covered by these regulations, both coaches should ask the umpire to waive that rule.

- ❖ Coaches are required to go over these MMSL “special rules” with the umpires before each game. No protests of an umpire’s failure to follow our rules will be upheld if the coaches did not review the rules during the pre-game meeting.
- ❖ The time limit for each game is 65 minutes. A 10-minute grace period is allowed, but must be deducted from the game time. However, you can ask the umpire during the pre-game meeting to waive the time limit for the last game of the day. It is his decision whether to do so but MUST be determined before the game. No time limit in the second game shall be waived if the game has started!
- ❖ The batter starts off with a 1 ball, 1 strike count.
- ❖ Teams can bat 11 players, with 10 in the field, including at least three women, and an extra hitter. Teams must forfeit unless they field at least nine players, including at least two women. Only seven men can play the field. Teams with nine players cannot use the extra hitter and if they have just two women must take an automatic out in the batting order.
- ❖ There is a 12-run slaughter rule (applied after 4 1/2 innings if the home team is ahead, and 5 innings if the visiting team is ahead). If the visiting team reaches the slaughter rule limit in the top of an inning past the fifth inning, the home team must get its at-bat.
- ❖ The MMSL uses the Montgomery County co-ed walk rule. If a male batter walks and is followed in the batting order by a female batter, he shall be awarded second base with all other base runners advanced only to the bases they are **FORCED** to advance as a result of the batter attaining second base. The female batter with less than two outs must bat. If there are two outs, she can either bat or take an automatic walk. The coach or batter must tell the umpire of the decision **BEFORE** the female batter enters the batter’s box. Otherwise, she must bat.

Scenarios for baserunners advancing when a man walks in front of a woman:

- ✓ Runner on first base: He goes to third
 - ✓ Runner on second: He goes to third
 - ✓ Runner on third: He stays put.
 - ✓ Runners on first and second: Runner on second scores, runner on first goes to third.
 - ✓ Runners on second and third: Runner on third scores, runner on second moves to third.
 - ✓ Runners on first and third: Runner on third scores, runner on first moves to third.
 - ✓ Bases loaded: Runners on second and third score, runner on first moves to third.
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- ❖ A game cannot end on the automatic out. In this case, the spot is skipped and the next batter in the order comes up. In addition, if there are two out in any inning and the batter before the automatic out walks, then the automatic out is skipped.
- ❖ There is no limit to the number of home runs a team can hit in one game.
- ❖ There are no ties in the MMSL. If a game is tied after 65 minutes but seven innings have not been played, the teams continue to play until the tie is broken without reverting to one pitch until seven innings are reached.

If a game is tied after seven innings, whether or not the 65-minute time limit has been reached, then the MMSL goes to one pitch, where a strike or foul is an out and a ball is a walk.

- ❖ The home team in each game supplies tie-down bases with a spike. Arrangements may be made with the visiting team to supply bases. The bases must be placed **65 feet apart**. In the event a team does not have tie-down bases, official bases without spikes are permitted but the umpire and all players must be informed the bases are not tied down. No other bases can be used without the permission of the umpire.

NEW IN 2007! → The visiting team (or home team, if the visiting team supplies the other bases), must place an extra base in foul territory adjacent to the first-base bag, tied down if possible. Runners must hit this base rather than the conventional first base on any batted infield ball. A runner who does not use the outside base will be considered to have missed first base and subject to being tagged out.

- ❖ The MMSL does not use the Montgomery County injury substitution rule.
- ❖ If an NSA or Montgomery County rule conflicts with a practice of the MMSL, the MMSL practice takes precedence.

Category 2: Eligibility

Rule 2-A: Players must be employed by the respective teams, although a spouse or domestic partner not employed by the participating media outlet may play as long as the employee also plays. Part-time employees who work a minimum of 22.5 hours a month are permitted to play but their spouses or domestic partners are not.

Spouses or domestic partners of grandfathered players are not allowed to participate.

If the eligibility of a spouse or domestic partner is challenged by an opposing manager or a league official, the person in question must produce satisfactory evidence to the Commissioner before the next doubleheader that he or she is eligible to play. Among the evidence that will be acceptable is proof of marriage, cohabitation, or a formal engagement; or documentation they are responsible for each other's financial welfare. If a person cannot provide such documentation, all games in which he or she participated in will be forfeited and that person and his or her "partner" will be banned from the league.

ADJUSTED IN 2007! → **Rule 2-B:** If a team needs to add players to avoid a forfeit, those players **MUST** be approved by the opposing coach. Illegal players will result in a forfeit. It is strongly recommended that picked-up players be active in the MMSL.

Rule 2-B-I. Players cannot be picked up until the full grace period of 10 minutes has expired.

Rule 2-B-II. A team may pick up the minimum number of players to avoid a forfeit, which means a lineup of nine players with at least two women. The team picking up players **CANNOT** use the extra hitter and **MUST** take an automatic out for the lost spot (10th player) in the order. You may not pick up an extra player as the 10th in the order or bat 11.

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Rule 2-B-III. If a regular player on the team's roster arrives during the game, the picked-up player must be dropped from the lineup.

Rule 2-C: Under special circumstances, a player no longer employed by a media outlet can continue to play for that team. But that player must be "grandfathered" into the league at the preseason meeting in a vote of each league manager. No player can be grandfathered after the season starts. A 75 percent majority of coaches or their designees present at the annual meeting must approve a player for grandfathering after the request is first reviewed by the Commissioner. Only individuals who have previously been employed by the sponsoring team and who have played on that organization's softball team in the MMSL are eligible for grandfathering.

Rule 2-D: Players are required to play for their employing team. On rare instances a player may have the option of playing for more than one team. In that case, the "Ernie Crow Rule" will be implemented. The Crow Rule allows a player to choose the team he prefers to play for, but only if he is given a release by his employing team or exercises his rights under the spouse rule to play on a team with his spouse/domestic partner. In case of a dispute, the Commissioner will have the authority to determine which team a player plays for. However, a team cannot use this clause to prevent a player from continuing to play for a team that he is eligible.

Rule 2-E: The Commissioner reserves the right to determine a player's eligibility. Players must play for their employing team or another team in the league for which they are eligible. They cannot switch teams during the season unless they change jobs, in which case they must inform the Commissioner whether they will stay with their current team or switch to their new employer's team. The following season, however, they must play with their new employer's team unless they are grandfathered or become eligible under the spouse rule.

Category 3: Basic Co-ed Softball Rules

This program is designed to provide fellowship, camaraderie and recreation among media colleagues. Fun and involvement are the basic elements of this league.

Rule 3-A: NSA rules apply. The most important to remember:

- ❖ In an effort to enhance offense, pitches must be between 6 feet and 10 feet in height. The umpire will not call an illegal pitch until after the ball has crossed the plate and landed.
 - ❖ At least 4 1/2 innings must be played to be an official game (if the home team is ahead, and at least five innings if the visiting team is ahead) in case of inclement weather. However, a game is deemed official if the 65 minutes are expired, regardless of whether the game has reached 4 1/2 innings.
 - ❖ A second foul on the third strike is an out.
 - ❖ When a batter enters the batter's box, he/she will have a count of 1 ball, 1 strike. After the batter has reached two strikes, he will be out when he hits a second foul (If the foul ball is caught on the fly, runners may tag and advance at their own risk).
 - ❖ A batter may not touch a base while in possession of a bat; penalty: the batter is out.
 - ❖ If a batter walks in front of the automatic out and there are two out, the automatic out is skipped and the team continues batting until the third out is made.
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Rule 3-B: There is a 12-run rule (see Category 1) for this program. If a team has a 12-run lead after a minimum of 4 1/2 innings or 5 innings if the home team is trailing, the winning team will get the victory.

Rule 3-C: In the case of an injury, the umpire should stop the game clock until the injured player is addressed.

Rule 3-D: This is a co-ed league, and basic NSA co-ed rules apply except where MMSL special rules are designated (see Category 1). A game may be started and/or played with just nine players, two of whom must be women.

When the game is started with just nine players, the 10th position is the vacant spot in the lineup; only nine may play on defense, including a maximum number of seven men; and the extra hitter cannot be used.

Rule 3-D-I: Teams with only two female players must forfeit an out, the 10th position in the field and the extra hitter. A male player **CANNOT** replace the female in the field. Should a third woman or a 10th player arrive after the game is started, they may enter in the vacant spot in the order immediately and take a position in the field.

Rule 3-D-II: Even if the 10th player comes late, you **CANNOT** add an 11th position, the extra hitter, until the next game.

Rule 3-E: The home team is the official scorer, unless deemed otherwise.

Rule 3-F: A team forfeits a game when it fails to have at least nine players, including at least two women, at all times. A team that loses its ninth player to injury can pick up a substitute player from the opponent to avoid a forfeit.

Rule 3-G: Teams participating in back-to-back games must begin the second game of the doubleheader as soon as they have the minimum number of eligible players present unless the 10-minute grace period is necessary.

Rule 3-H: No alcoholic beverages allowed on state park grounds (a Maryland State law).

Rule 3-I: Any player with blood on his clothes, skin or an exposed bleeding injury must leave the game immediately. The umpires will stop the action (does not count against the game clock). The player can return to the game as soon as the blood is no longer exposed and/or a bandage covers a wound. Basic re-entry rules apply in this case. If a team falls beneath the required number of players for the rest of the game because of an injury and cannot obtain a substitute, the game is forfeited.

Rule 3-J: The extra hitter can be a man or woman; however, either sex can be substituted as the extra hitter. A maximum of 11 hitters can be in the lineup and the extra hitter is strictly up to the individual manager.

Rule 3-J-I: Should a team that has started a game with an extra hitter (11 batters) be forced to drop to 10 due to injury or other pressing matters and no substitute is available, an out **MUST** be taken in that slot of the batting order. If the fielder leaves is a woman, leaving just two females in the lineup, the extra hitter must also be dropped, leaving a nine-person order. Playing with these nine players (7 men, 2 women) would cause an out in the missing female's place in the order.

Rule 3-K: A "courtesy" runner is allowed for a player who is incapable of running the bases because of injury once the batter reaches base. This is **NOT** a pinch runner. A coach in need of a courtesy runner **MUST** tell the umpire and opposing coach at the pre-game meeting or as soon as the need arises due to a mid-game injury. The replacement runner must be the person of the same sex who made the last batted out, and may replace the baserunner only when the ball is dead after the batter reaches base. If the person who made the last batted out is incapable of serving as the courtesy runner because of injury or because he/she is currently on base, then the batter of the same sex who made the preceding batted out shall

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serve as the courtesy runner.

Rule 3-K-I: In the event a team has only two women and a courtesy runner is needed for one while the other is batting, the runner must be the male who made the last batted out.

Rule 3-K-II: A baserunner may not DELIBERATELY with force run into a defensive player while stand-

ing. The runner must give up (allow himself to be tagged); retreat to the base he/she last touched; go out of the basepath to avoid collision or slide.

Rule 3-L: The pitcher can make his delivery anywhere from the rubber to a 6-foot-long box to run toward second base. The pitcher must have one foot anywhere within the box before he or she delivers the ball.

Category 4: Equipment

Rule 4-A: The Montgomery County Department of Recreation supplies us with balls before the season, but history shows the stock will run low and teams may need to purchase more. The home team is responsible for supplying a new ball each game. The visiting team is responsible for supplying a well-conditioned backup ball.

Rule 4-B: The official men's ball is a 12-inch ball marked .47 COR or less. The official women's ball is an 11-inch ball with a COR of .50 or less. Illegal use of a ball is not an issue for the Commissioner's Office, nor is it a reason for protesting a game. Illegal use of a ball must be brought to the umpires' attention during the course of the game. He will make a judgment according to NSA rules.

Rule 4-B-I: If a female is thrown and bats the 12-inch men's ball, the batter, upon protest by the batter or her team, has the option of either keeping the result of the at-bat or getting to bat again using the regulation women's ball.

Rule 4-B-II: The female batter has the option to hit the 12-inch men's ball.

ADJUSTED IN 2007! → Rule 4-C: Men must use wood softball bats. Wood baseball bats are not allowed. Women shall use either wood or aluminum softball bats. Wood bats must have a tape or leather wrapping on the handle to insure a solid grip, and aluminum bats must have a rubber or leather grip. Aluminum bats with a rubber handle are illegal. As is the case with illegal balls, an illegal bat is the responsibility of the umpire. The use of the "Chicago" wood bat is prohibited.

According to Rule 3, section 1 of the governing ASA Playing Rules, all aluminum bats must bear an ASA approved certification; or are included on a list of approved bat models published by the ASA national office; or in the solo opinion and discretion of the umpire, were manufactured prior to 1995 and, if tested, would comply with the ASA bat performance standards of 1.20 in effect. (All bats must also have the 1.20 BPR on the bat.)

Check the MMSL website for a list of illegal aluminum bats.

Be aware there are new bats going on the market everyday. If your bat is not on the list, it does not necessarily mean the bat is legal. If you have any questions about a bat, please contact da Commish or visit the equipment section at www.asasoftball.com

Rule 4-D: Each team is required to bring bases and have a First-Aid kit on the bench (see Category 1).

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Category 5: Apparel

Rule 5-A: NSA rules state that all players must wear shoes, jerseys, shirts and caps. Umpires, however, have been known to be flexible on the cap rule, especially in co-ed leagues.

Rule 5-B: No steel cleats allowed, although the opposing coach may grant permission in special circumstances (e.g., a team would have to forfeit the game without that player). A protest of illegal shoes must be handled in the same procedure as an illegal ball. Tennis shoes or all-purpose molded athletic shoes must be worn (no screw-on cleats or steel golf shoes).

Rule 5-C: No jewelry such as watches, necklaces and pendants allowed to be worn during the games. Some umpires even request that large rings be removed.

Rule 5-D: The MMSL does not have a dress code, though it is asked that teams dress properly and present themselves professionally on the field. According to NSA and Montgomery County rules, the umpire can, and will, require a player to tuck in his shirt or wear his cap with the bill in the front.

Category 6: Disciplinary Action

Naturally, sportsmanship is a prerequisite of this league, but the competitive nature of the players often causes tempers to flare. The umpires are the officials of the league and are the judges of the diamond. However, the Commissioner holds all rights to enforce disciplinary action he deems in the best interests of the league.

Rule 6-A: Any player ejected from a game will serve a two-game suspension during his team's next league games, not including the game he was just ejected from. If the player plays during the suspension, the game(s) will be ruled a forfeit. The suspended player cannot be on the field or in the dugout during the suspension. If a player is ejected twice in one season, he is suspended for the remainder of the season and the postseason tournament. The team manager is responsible for the conduct of their team and fans.

Rule 6-B: Anyone who strikes, shoves, pushes, bumps or otherwise physically threatens an official shall be suspended from all Montgomery County Department of Recreation activities for at least one year from the date of that incident.

Rule 6-C: If a player is ejected from a game, no substitute will be allowed for that player. The team must play short-handed. The vacancy in the order resulting from the ejection is an automatic out. If an ejection drops a team below nine players, then that team must forfeit the game.

Rule 6-D: Teams, players and/or coaches that repeatedly violate the MMSL's code of conduct and accepted practices of good sportsmanship will be subject to removal from the league, at the Commissioner's discretion. This code of conduct includes playing non-approved players, running into opposing fielders rather than avoiding contact, cursing opposing players, confrontations with game and league officials and refusing to play by MMSL rules. The commissioner shall warn teams, players and/or coaches before or during a season that they are in danger of being removed from the league.

Category 7: Rain Delays, Postponements and Reporting Scores

Rule 7-A: All postponements must be approved through the Commissioner's Office not the opponent, at least one week in advance. The Commissioner must be notified of the possibility of forfeits at least 48 hours before games. Many times

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an arrangement can be made with the league or opponents to avoid forfeits.

Rule 7-B: In case of rain on the day of the game, either the Commissioner or his designated official will determine the playing conditions between 8:15-8:30 a.m. All official announcements of postponements, delays or other changes of game

status are released ONLY on www.mediasoftball.net. The MMSL does **NOT** use the county weatherline.

Rule 7-C: Both teams must report their scores on the day of the games. Failure to report scores by the winning team may result in a forfeit or double forfeit in the standings. Report scores by e-mail at metromediasoftball@verizon.net or by posting on the GAME REPORTS Blog at mediasoftball.net. The Commish detests having to chase scores. Scores should be posted no later than 6 p.m. on game days.

Category 8: The Commissioner's Turf

Rule 8-A: Should an issue or problem be brought to the Commissioner's attention, his decision (however arbitrary) will be binding.

Rule 8-B: In the case of matters that involve a national or Montgomery County rule, the Commissioner consults with the head of the umpires' association and the softball director for the recreation department. A two-thirds vote is required.

Rule 8-C: The Commissioner holds all rights to refuse commentary or postings on the league's website. The MMSL does not allow anonymous postings. Any messages not signed with the player or coach's full name (and, preferably, adding their team) may be deleted. Print and broadcast media do not publicize anonymous letters and messages, and neither will the MMSL.

Category 9: Umpires

Rule 9-A: The umpires are in charge of the game. While a protest is handled by the Commissioner's Office, the umpires' ruling and opinion will play a major role in the Commish's final decision (see Category 5).

Rule 9-B: If the assigned umpire has not arrived for the start of a game within 10 minutes, the team managers should confer and decide upon one of two options:

- ✓ Chose not to play the game. Rescheduling will be handled by the Commissioner and the recreation department.
 - ✓ Agree to begin the game without an official umpire. If the game is started with out an umpire, it must be completed (if the assigned umpire arrives after the game has begun they should complete the game). Both managers are required to sign the official scorebook and contact the Commissioner and recreation department as proof of agreement. Payment to volunteers or unauthorized umpires is at the risk of the teams and neither the MMSL nor Montgomery County will reimburse such pay.
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Category 10: Protest Procedures

There are two kinds of protests—one over MMSL rules and one over NSA rules. Protests over NSA rules are generally done because of an umpire's decision. Protests over MMSL rules will involve the Commissioner's Office. In either case, the Commissioner will act based on conference with the recreation department and umpires officials on issues dealing more directly with MMSL rules.

Rule 10-A: A team must announce its intention of protest of a game at the point of the alleged infraction.

Rule 10-B: All protests pertaining to the playing of a game shall be submitted strictly in accordance to NSA rules. Failure to present league rules to an umpire at the time of misapplication of that rule will result in a non-protestable decision. This is the manager/coach's responsibility, and further, his/her distinct responsibility to know the full extent of the league and NSA rules.

Rule 10-C: Written protests shall be submitted in accordance with the NSA rules and a non-refundable \$25 protest fee within 48 hours of the game, or the protest will be invalid. This fee applies even in the event of a protest of an MMSL rule. The \$25 fee is non-refundable

Rule 10-D: Any protest decision on rules interpretation by the league Commissioner may be appealed with a \$25 non-refundable fee by either team manager. This appeal shall be acted upon by a three-member appeals panel consisting of the Commissioner, a representative from the county recreation sports department, and a representative of the local umpire's association. If the appeal is upheld, the fee shall be returned.

Category 11: Playoffs

The MMSL has carefully structured a playoff system that is not only fair, but gives teams a chance to win the championship even if they don't capture their division. The skinny:

Who Plays? Each of the six division winners plus six wild-card teams with the best records aside from the division winners will participate in a double-elimination tournament July 14-15, 2007, at Cabin John Regional Park.

Pairings: The teams are bracketed according to seed, which is based on the teams' overall record and any tiebreakers. Winning a division title has no bearing on seed. The team with the best record in the league gets the No. 1 seed.

CLARIFIED IN 2007! → Tiebreakers: If non-division teams have the same record, the tie is broken by head-to-head competition. In the event two teams are tied that did not play each other, division record breaks the tie; if a tie persists, then runs differential breaks the tie.

Division record also serves to break a tie for the division title AND a wild-card berth if two divisional teams have the same record and split their two regular-season games. If the two teams have the same divisional record, runs differential in the two teams' head-to-head games is the next tiebreaker.

Multiple-Team Tiebreakers for Seedings: In case three or more teams are tied with the same overall record, the tied teams' combined records against each other is the first tiebreaker. For example:

Take the tied teams and place them in a cluster and figure out their head-to-head records among each other. Team A might be 5-1 in games against this cluster of four teams.

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Team B might be 4-2.
Team C might be 4-2.
Team D might be 2-4.

Team A would get the higher seed because of its record within the cluster despite losing to one of the other three teams. The tie between Teams B and C advances to their head-to-head competition. If they are from the same division, the tiebreaker for the playoff seeding results from the higher they finished in their division. If they did not play, the tiebreaker is their season's runs differential.

Team D is fourth because of its record in the cluster, despite two victories against teams above them.

So, in this example, Team A would get (say) the fifth seed, Team B sixth, Team C seventh and Team D eighth.

The remaining seeds of the tournament fill out the bracket, or follow similar guidelines in breaking multiple ties.

Home and Away: The team with the highest seed is the home team in each game of the playoffs. The exception is the championship series, where the loser's bracket champion is the home team in the first game. If a second game is necessary, the winner's bracket champion is the home team.

Time Limited Waived: However, 75 minutes are placed for each game and relocations. The umpires are instructed to move games along quickly. Playoff games are conducted under "hurry-up mode," meaning no practice balls during the game, running on and off the field, and having three batters ready at all times.

Extra Innings: Just like the regular season, any game except the two championship games that goes into extra innings will revert to one-pitch national rules (i.e., the batter gets one pitch; if it's a ball he gets a base; if he hits a foul he's out, etc.).

Run Limit Stays: The "slaughter rule" remains, meaning any team with a 12-run lead after at least 4 1/2 innings will be the winner.

Conduct: If ejected, you will serve a two-game suspension (aside from the game you were ejected from), beginning immediately. Suspensions can (and will) carry over to the following year.

Awards: The winner of each division gets a team trophy and individual awards for each player. In the playoffs, team trophies are given to the championship, runnerup and third-place teams. The champions also receive individual awards. ❖