
**HOUSTON WOMEN'S SOFTBALL LEAGUE
2024 OPERATING RULES**

1.00 SECTION ONE - League Structure

- 1.01** The Houston Women's Softball League (HWSL) will have at least two distinct seasons of play – Spring and Fall. If team count allows and if desired by membership, HWSL will host a Summer league in addition to Spring and Fall. In addition to regular season play, there are two (2) tournaments known as The Memorial Tournaments.
- 1.02** Membership will approve the structure of division play. If possible, there will be two distinct divisions. Fall season will consist of one division unless otherwise voted upon and approved at the August Managers' meeting.
- 1.03** Divisional play and schedules shall be directed by the Board of Officers (BOO) according to the wishes of the membership.
- A.** Scheduled dates for Spring season play will be presented to the Membership and approved by the Membership at the annual meeting. Scheduled games will be finalized at the managers' meeting. Special consideration for Spring league play must be presented in writing to the BOO prior to the Annual meeting and will be approved as appropriate at the Annual meeting. The BOO will review for approval all other submitted written individual requests through the remainder of the season. Any other conflicts in the schedule will be resolved by the teams involved within the approved schedule of league play.
- B.** Scheduled dates for Fall season play will be presented to the Membership and approved by the Membership at the managers' meeting. Scheduled games will be finalized prior to the 1st week of play. Special consideration for Fall league play must be presented in writing to the BOO prior to the managers' meeting and will be approved as appropriate at the August council meeting. The BOO will review for approval all other submitted written individual requests through the remainder of the season. Any other conflicts in the schedule will be resolved by the teams involved within the approved schedule of league play.
- 1.04** In both the Spring and Fall seasons, league or Division winners will be determined based on the win-loss record of league play for each season. League play is defined herein as all games played excluding tournament play. A monetary value of \$225 will be awarded to the first place team in each division, given to the coach no less than 2 weeks after the last game of the season to be used for team purposes.
- 1.05** The Fall league will begin no later than the weekend following Labor Day in September and end no later than the first weekend in November, including all make-up games.
- 1.06** Insufficient Funds. If the league receives an uncollectible check from a league member, the league member is responsible for collection within a two-week period from notification in

writing to the member and coach or the team member will not be eligible to play as per Section 3.02.

2.00 SECTION TWO – Ground Rules

2.01 The league will provide game balls for all season games, tournaments, and playoffs. The Commissioner of the league will declare the official game ball.

2.02 The HWSL has adopted a uniform code which differs from the Amateur Softball Association (USA) requirements. It is the preference of HWSL that all players wear an official jersey with a number; however, it is not a requirement. Similar shirts with numbers are acceptable. Sleeves may be taped with approval from the umpires officiating the game. No steel cleats are allowed. Teams participating in the ASANA World Series must meet ASANA uniform code requirements.

2.03 For division play, the home team is the last team listed on the schedule and will take the third base dugout. The home team maintains the official score on all games and is responsible for providing official results to the UIC and/or the Officer of the Day (OOD). Games will be seven (7) innings or fifty (50) minutes in length but will finish the inning in progress. The run rule of Fifteen (15) by the 3rd inning, twelve (12) by the 4th inning and ten (10) by the 5th inning is in effect unless otherwise approved.

2.04 Tie Breaker Procedures for League Games. Where there is a tie at the end of regulation play during the regular season, the International Tie Breaker (ITB) rule shall apply for a maximum of 2 innings and will govern the breaking of that tie. Pitch count will move to 1 pitch only. If the game is still tied after these two innings, the game is pronounced official and recorded as a ½ win and a ½ loss. The ITB is defined as follows:

If at the end of regulation play, the score for both teams is tied, additional whole innings will be played until the tie is broken. In each of the additional innings, the last player at bat during the previous inning will begin the next inning as a runner on second base.

2.05 For each season, ties for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place will be broken using the run differential in head to head games between the tied teams.

2.06 Protests may only concern rule interpretations. Oral notification of protest must be given to the plate umpire. Written notification of the protest and a \$10 protest fee must be given to the OOD as soon as possible after oral notification (above) but not later than at the end of the day's league play. Protest fee(s) will be refunded if protest is upheld. Tournament protests will be resolved at the time of the protest by the OOD (who possesses an USA rule book) and two (2) USA umpires. All other protest will be handled as soon as possible following that day's league play. The office receiving the protest must contact all other Board members, the UIC and any other team and/or person involved in the protest. The BOO and the UIC must meet prior to the next scheduled day of play for the protest hearing. Any members directly involved in the protest who wish to challenge the BOO's decision may do so by notifying the BOO within

twenty-four (24) hours of its decision. The challenge must be in writing, specifically stating the objections. The BOO will call a special meeting of Council to have Council rule on the BOO's decision. The person/team bringing the matter to Council must provide all Council members with copies of the objections(s). Members involved in the protest and the BOO members are ineligible to vote on the protest at Council. The decision of the Council is final. Any team who has a protest upheld may appeal to Council to have the game involved replayed, provided that the change in ruling could change the outcome of the already-played game.

- 2.07** No member of the league, while at the field or during any league activity, will engage in behavior which may be deemed as offensive. Violation of this rule may result in expulsion from the league, being banned from the field, or forfeiture of a game. All teams are responsible for approaching unruly fans in an attempt to control their behavior.
- 2.08** All teams must abide by park district rules. Teams are responsible for cleaning their own area. Pets are not allowed in or attached to the dugouts or attached to any fencing adjacent to the field. All dogs must be leashed.
- 2.09** During regulation play, a team may start a game with eight (8), nine (9), ten (10), eleven (11), or twelve (12) players, as follows:
- A. Eight Players: If beginning a game with eight players, the team must be charged with an out each time the 9th batter position would come up to bat. If the 9th player arrives late, said player may be allowed to enter the game and will be added to the 9th position in the batting order. No out will be charged if the 9th player arrives before the 1st plate appearance of the 9th position in the line up. If playing with eight players and a player is lost due to injury, etc., the game will be recorded as a forfeit.
 - B. Nine Players: If beginning a game with nine players, no penalty will be charged. If the 10th player arrives late, said player may be allowed to enter the game and will be added to the 10th position in the batting order. If playing with nine players and a player is lost due to injury, etc., the team must continue the game conforming to the eight-player rule and be charged with an out each time the injured player's position would come up to bat.
 - C. Ten Players: If beginning a game with ten players and an 11th player arrives late, said 11th player would be eligible to enter the game as a substitute and/or added to the batting order as an EP or DH (up to 12 players only). If playing with ten players and a player is lost due to injury, etc., no penalty will be charged when that player's turn to bat comes up. If an additional player is lost due to injury, etc., the team must continue the game conforming to the eight-player rule and be charged with an out each time the injured player's (the 9th player's) position would come up to bat.
 - D. Eleven Players: If beginning a game with eleven players, additional players may be added at any point and should be included at the bottom of the line-up. Late arriving players may be added to the lineup as substitutes and/or added to the batting order as an EP or DH (up to 12 players only).

- E. Twelve Players: If beginning a game with twelve players, the game must end with twelve players. If playing with twelve players and a player is lost due to injury, etc., the player's spot in the lineup will be recorded as an out. Late arriving players may be added to the lineup as substitutes.

2.10 During regulation play, "SPECIAL SUBSTITUTE" players may be used as follows:

- A. If a team is short handed during a regular season game, but has at least 6 of its own legally rostered players on its line-up, then it is permissible to use up to:
 - 1. In the Spring, Summer and Fall, up to THREE legally rostered players from another HWSL team in the same or lower classification, with only one player from an upper level team for a lower level team. If more than one upper level player is picked up on a lower level team, the lower level team will be considered an upper level team for that game.
 - 2. In the Spring, Summer and Fall, pick up players can play in any position, but must bat last in the line-up.
 - 3. A team can add only enough substitute players from other HWSL teams to make ten (10) total in its line-up. In other words, substitute players cannot be used when their inclusion causes the line-up to total eleven or more players.
 - 4. If an original team member arrives after the start of the game, then she must immediately replace the substitute player.
 - 5. Players may not play on more than one team in the same game or at the same time, or play against their own team.
 - 6. Under no circumstances will teams be allowed to use substitute players for playoffs.
 - 7. A 'Try-out' of \$20 will be allowed for any pick-up that is not currently an active member of HWSL with the exception of a playoff game, tournament or last week of play. The 'Try-out' fee is only allowed once and any subsequent weeks played by the player will need to be as an HWSL member. If the 'Try-out' player becomes an HWSL member during that season, the \$20 will be applied to their player fee.

2.11 During regulation play, COURTESY RUNNERS (CRs) may be used as follows:

- A. ONE CR will be allowed per inning for any player that use of one is requested.
- B. The player who needs the CR must make it safely to first base AND time must be called BEFORE the CR may take her place.
- C. The CR can be any player.

- D. If a player's CR is on base when the CR's next time at bat occurs, then an out will be recorded at that time for the CR's batting position.
- 2.12 Over the fence homeruns shall be limited to three per team per game for the 'upper division'. Additional balls hit over the fence shall constitute an out. All over the fence homeruns in the 'lower division' will be counted on a "1 & 1 Up" rule. As such, if Team A hits an over the fence homerun, Team B must hit an over the fence homerun before a member of Team A can hit another. If Team A hits a second over the fence homerun before Team B has hit one, the over the fence homerun shall constitute an out.
- 2.13 Forfeits: A forfeit will be defined as a team that cannot field enough players by the start of their game. Teams must begin with a minimum of 8 players to avoid a forfeit.
- A. The team that is not able to field a team, as required above, and sends their notice of forfeit to the BOO and the other managers BEFORE 5pm on Friday, before the game of play, there will be no financial penalty enforced. The opposing team will be the recorded winner with a score of 7-0.
- B. The team that is not able to field a team, as required above, and sends their notice of forfeit to the BOO and the other managers AFTER 5pm on Friday, before the game of play, a penalty of \$55 will be enforced to be paid before the forfeiting team will be allowed to take the field on the next day of play. The opposing team will be the recorded winner with a score of 7-0.
- C. The team that is not able to field a team, as required above, at the start time of their game will forfeit their game and will be charged a penalty fee of \$55. The UIC may give a ten (10) minute grace period, at their discretion. This fee must be paid before the forfeiting team will be allowed to take the field on the next day of play. The opposing team will be the recorded winner with a score of 7-0.

3.00 SECTION THREE – Roster Information

- 3.01 HWSL conforms to the rules of USA in regards to eligible rostered players for Women's softball. Every team must roster all players and non players. All people listed on any roster must be a member of HWSL, and be 18 years of age. Team rosters are unlimited in the number of players listed; however, during the Spring season, teams will be limited to actually playing only 18 players per game. All rostered people must have valid Texas I.D. available during league play. Any league member may be a roster player in one division and a roster non-player in another division. Only each team's softball personnel are allowed in the dugout during the games.
- 3.02 In the Spring season, team fees, rosters, membership forms, and membership fees are due and should be paid and turned in before the first team game of the season. In the Fall season, team fees, rosters, membership forms, and membership fees are due and should be paid before the first team game of the season. If the membership fee is paid in Spring, the membership fee is not due in the Fall, as the Spring Fee covers the calendar year. Only new playing/non-playing members will pay the fall membership fee.

Dues will be as follows:

<u>Spring Season</u>		<u>Fall Season</u>	
Early Bird/Team Fees:	\$450/\$500	Early Bird/Team Fees:	\$350
EarlyBird/Membership Fee:	\$60/\$65	Membership Fee:	\$35

Those teams or team members that have not met the financial responsibilities for membership into the league will not be eligible to play in the league until such fees are paid in full.

- 3.03** Roster changes must be made prior to the start of the game by the team making the roster change. Membership forms, dues paid and proof of eligibility must be submitted to the OOD prior to any new individual playing in a game. Acceptance will not be given until the team making the changes(s) has completed all necessary paperwork, such as dues paid, membership forms and proof of eligibility, and has personally transmitted the same to the OOD. In the Spring, players may not change teams during the last three (3) weeks of the scheduled play. In the Fall, players may not change teams during the last two weeks of scheduled play. Any challenge of conformity to this rule must be handled as a protest prior to completion of said game as per Section 2.06 of these rules.

- 3.04** Roster changes involving non players may be made at any time during either season. Temporary changes may be made by notify the OOD and the opposing coach of the change, in each other's presence, prior to the start of the game. Permanent changes may be made by notifying all other teams of the change. This is accomplished by providing the OOD with the new roster.

- 3.05** It is clearly understood that where these Operating Rules or Procedures require submission of monies or data, nothing is final until the proper OOD verifies to all parties concerned that all the necessary steps have been completed.

- 3.06** NON-PLAYING MEMBERS: Individuals are encouraged to be members of HWSL. Non-Playing members may be added at any time during the year by registering with a team and paying a player fee of \$25. If a non-playing member decides they want to become a playing member, their \$10 try-out fee (See Rule 2.10.A.7) will be included in their \$25 fee. If they play more than 1 weekend, they will need to pay an additional \$30 to become a playing member.

- 3.07** MANNER OF ACTING: The act of a majority of the officers present at a meeting at which a quorum is present shall be the act of the BOO, unless the act of a greater number is required by these Procedures.

- 3.08** SUSPENSION: All members will conduct themselves professionally and courteously both on and off the field, including all HWSL-related events. Should any member be involved in fighting or abusive behavior on or off the field at an HWSL game or event or at another softball game or gathering, that member risks immediate suspension from the HWSL. At the earliest practicable date following the incident, but no more than 14 days following the incident, the Board shall convene to determine the length of the suspension and report said suspension, if

any, to the member at issue. Suspensions will be for a specific limited time period (temporary suspension) or may be for an indefinite period (permanent suspension). In the case of a temporary suspension, a penalty fee of \$50.00 will be charged to the suspended member and must be paid before returning to the HWSL as a member in good standing. All permanent suspensions will be recorded on the “Banned For Life” list kept by the HWSL. In addition, a second infraction under this Rule will result in permanent expulsion from the HWSL and entry on the “Banned For Life” list kept by the HWSL.

4.00 SECTION FOUR – Appealing a Board Decision on Non-Game Issues

4.01 Any violation of these rules may be protested by any member of HWSL. The BOO must meet within a one-week period for a hearing with the person and/or team accused of said violation. The person and/or team determined guilty by a violation may appeal the decision, penalty, or both to the Council. If there is an objection to the ruling, further action may be done in writing and given to an officer of the league within forty-eight (48) hours of the decision of the violation. When an objection is brought to Council, each member of Council must be provided with a copy of the written objection.

4.02 Any interpretation of these rules may be protested by any member of HWSL. The BOO must meet within a one-week period with the person and/or team protesting the interpretation. If the person and/or team is not satisfied with Board’s interpretation, the interpretation may be appealed to the Council for a final decision. If there is an objection to the ruling, further action may be requested in writing and given to an officer of the league within forty-eight (48) hours of the interpretation. When an appeal is brought to Council, each member of Council must be provided with a copy of the written objection.

5.00 SECTION FIVE – Officers of the Day (OOD)

5.01 The BOO will assign a person to be OOD on each day of league play. The OOD will maintain order, record official game results and enforce these Operating Rules. She/He will have a copy of all official rosters on hand and will settle all questions of eligibility as the question pertains to rosters. The OOD and the umpires have the authority to call games due to weather and darkness with the ultimate responsibility lying with the OOD.

6.00 SECTION SIX – Umpires

6.01 A head umpire or Umpire-in-Chief (UIC) will be appointed by the BOO and approved by the membership at the annual meeting. Such umpire will organize and oversee the umpiring crew. In the event the UIC is unable to organize or oversee the umpiring crew, the UIC along with the BOO will appoint an interim head umpire. No umpire may call more than seven (7) games per league per day.

6.02 If there are any problems with an umpire, any umpire or league member should contact the UIC and a Board member to resolve any discrepancies before the following week of play. If there are any problems with the UIC, any umpire or league member should contact the

Commissioner to resolve any discrepancies. (OBJECTIVE: Umpires should not be released in the middle of the season without due process.) The Board's decision will be final.

6.03 The HWSL is affiliated with USA. The current USA rule book will be reference for all rules of play. USA brackets will be used for all tournaments. It is clearly understood that upon being appointed as UIC for HWSL, the USA rulings and rule book will be enforced, except as otherwise written by these rules or as modified by ASANA periodically.

7.00 SECTION SEVEN – All Stars

7.01 An All-Star team will consist of up to eighteen (18) players and two (2) coaches from each division if possible. The coaches will be determined by a vote of the league coaches from their own division, limited to two (2) votes per team to be given to the All-Star Committee. Each team, or its coaches, will pick three (3) players and one (1) alternate from their team to represent them on the All-Star team(s). The number of players that can be selected from any one team to make up the All-Star team(s) will be determined by the All-Star Committee.

7.02 If a player or coach has been selected to the All-Star tournament team(s) and knows within 48 hours of a conflicting interest, notification should be given to the Commissioner or the All-Star coaches so that a replacement may be found.

7.03 When possible, All-Star games will be played in alternative locations, rotating between Houston and another city (i.e., Dallas, Austin, etc.). When All-Star games are played in another city, HWSL will pay for hotel expenses for all official Houston representatives. When All-Star games are played in Houston, HWSL will be responsible for all expenses as approved by the All-Star Committee, Council and the BOO. In the event All-Star games cannot be arranged with another city, Council will approve an alternate tournament.

8.00 SECTION EIGHT –Amateur Sports Alliance of North America (ASANA)

8.01 The HWSL is a participant in ASANA (USA). Any HWSL team may participate in the ASANA World Series if they meet the World Series qualifications.

8.02 In special circumstances, players requesting qualification for ASANA World Series and who did not qualify in the Spring season, must present Spring membership fee and have played in 8 games during the qualifying year to the BOO before the ASANA roster deadline. BOO will consider the request and determine by a majority of its members the qualification status.

8.03 ASANA World Series Tournament fees are the responsibility of the teams participating in the World Series tournament. All or a portion of said fee may be reimbursed at the tournament with a limit set forth in the current year's budget and approved each year by membership at the annual meeting.

8.04 The HWSL may send up to two (2) representatives to the ASANA meetings to represent Houston. If the Commissioner is unable to perform the duties of ASANA representative, the ASANA representative may be elected by Council s or appointed according Section 4.07 of

the HWSL Procedures. Transportation and hotel expenses for one (1) representative to the ASANA meetings will be covered by the league with a limit set forth in the current year's budget and approved each year by membership at the annual meeting. The ASANA representative may request reimbursement of additional expenses for hotel, airfare and transportation and the annual meeting with proper receipts. Approval of the request will be determined by a majority vote of the membership in attendance.

- 8.05** Should an HWSL team incur a team fine or penalty by ASANA at the World Series due to a loss of a player classification protest, an emergency meeting of the board and membership should be called to determine how the fee should be paid (if by league or the individual team).