

# Sooner State Softball Association, Inc.

## Division Rules & Regulations

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## **1. RULES GOVERNING THE SOONER STATE SOFTBALL ASSOCIATION**

- 1.1. The governing documents of the Sooner State Softball Association (hereinafter referred to as the SSSA) are the By-laws and the Division Rules and Regulations. League rules must be understood and adhered to by members, coaches/captains, and players. A copy of the Rules and Regulations that are adopted by the Board of Directors (hereinafter referred to as the Board) shall be provided to each team representative prior to the start of league play. USA rules shall apply unless specifically addressed here.
- 1.2. Amendments to the Rules and Regulations will be made pursuant to Article 10 of the SSSA By-laws.

## **2. DIVISIONS OF PLAY**

- 2.1. The SSSA League shall be comprised of divisions as determined by the Board.
- 2.2. Player and Team eligibility to play in a specific division shall be determined based on current IPRIDE Player and Team Rating Guidelines and player eligibility as defined in Section 6.
- 2.3. In order to foster new membership, a Recreational Division may be established within a division that shall not be eligible for the Gay Softball World Series (hereinafter referred to as GSWS). Individual players may be eligible to be picked for GSWS play by a team who has qualified for the GSWS.

## **3. SSSA MEMBERSHIP AND DUES**

- 3.1. Team membership in the SSSA shall require dues as determined by the Board prior to commencement of league play for each season. Team membership dues may be paid by an individual, group, or business sponsor. Divisional declaration must be made upon payment of team dues.
- 3.2. Playing membership shall be defined as follows:
  - 3.2.1. An eligible player as set forth in the SSSA By-laws.
  - 3.2.2. Permitted to participate in all activities of the Association, including voting privileges, excluding voting on Board matters.
- 3.3. Non-Playing membership shall be defined as follows:
  - 3.3.1. Any person other than an eligible player as set forth in the SSSA By-laws.
  - 3.3.2. Permitted to participate fully in all activities of the Association, including voting Privileges, excluding voting on Board matters.
- 3.4. Refunds of membership dues shall not be made by the SSSA after the start of regular season play unless approved by the Board because of extenuating circumstances. No player registration fee will be considered for reimbursement after the 4<sup>th</sup> week of play.

- 3.5. Any person, team, or sponsor who presents a check to SSSA that is not honored by the bank shall be required to pay a thirty dollar (\$30) fee and any dues via certified check or money order before that person or team is allowed to participate in SSSA.
- 3.6. The Board may declare any person or sponsor ineligible for membership in SSSA if such person has any debt to SSSA and has failed to make satisfactory arrangements for repayment of such debt. Any such declaration of ineligibility shall require a majority vote of the Board.
- 3.7. Playing or non-playing members in possession of assets belonging to SSSA shall immediately return such assets to SSSA upon request. The Board shall resolve any problems regarding such assets.

#### **4. TEAM MEMBERSHIP**

- 4.1. Team membership shall be limited to twenty (20) players per roster in all divisions. Team membership shall include up to two (2) non-playing members.
  - 4.1.1. An initial team roster, including player ratings, must be presented to the Board Secretary before the SSSA season begins, by a date set by the Board. The final team roster and player ratings must be presented to the Board Secretary, by a date set by the Board (i.e., the roster lock date).
  - 4.1.2. While revisions are allowed, a revised team roster and player ratings form must be presented to the Board Secretary no later than midnight one (1) week prior to the next scheduled game in order for the revision to be in effect (for example, if the next game to be played is scheduled on Sunday the 15th, the revised roster must be turned in before 11:59pm on Saturday the 7th).
    - 4.1.2.1. No team shall change a player status from non-playing to playing within the same week of play.
  - 4.1.3. A maximum of two (2) non-resident playing members may be included on the roster of any team. In accordance with IPRIDE rules, residency must be established with two (2) of the following: lease of legal residency, utility bill, phone bill, gas bill or other bills to the residence. The Board shall resolve all disputes of non-resident players.
- 4.2. Once online registration has been completed and a player has been accepted to the online roster of a team, a player may not change teams without first being released by their current team. A player may not change teams after the roster lock date. To change teams, a player must inform both coaches and the Board Commissioner of his/her intent. A new registration form must be completed and approved by the SSSA Commissioner before that person is eligible. A player may plead a hardship case to the Board to waive this rule.
  - 4.2.1. After the last game of regular season play, a player's team affiliation is no longer locked and he/she may register with any team the following season.

- 4.3. No player may be added to a team roster after the roster lock date as set by the Board. Cases of hardship may be appealed to the Board.

## **5. INDIVIDUAL REGISTRATION**

- 5.1. Every member must complete the online SSSA registration form. Each member must sign the team's USA Waiver form, which will then be signed by the team coach or captain. It is the coach's or captain's responsibility to submit the team's roster/ratings form, team's USA Waiver form, dues and other documents deemed necessary by the Board to the SSSA Treasurer or Commissioner before members participate in league play.
- 5.2. In any case where this procedure is not followed properly, the coach accepts the sole responsibility for any consequences that may result in terms of liability. The member and the coach in question may face disciplinary action.
- 5.3. Authorization to use names and photographs of SSSA members for promotion of the SSSA by the Board or League is granted with completion of league registration. If a member does not want his/her name or photograph published, he/she must expressly communicate that request to the Board for consideration. SSSA shall not be held liable for the actions taken by any media who does not have SSSA approval.

## **6. PLAYER ELIGIBILITY**

- 6.1. SSSA Rules and Regulations shall govern player eligibility. Violation of these Guidelines will make the player in question ineligible for participation in that particular category of competition.
- 6.2. Season/League Tournament Guidelines:
  - 6.2.1. A player must be duly registered and on only one (1) SSSA team.
  - 6.2.2. A player must be at least eighteen (18) years of age by the date league play commences.
  - 6.2.3. A player must not be on suspension on game day.
  - 6.2.4. Players under twenty-one (21) years of age are not allowed to participate in functions that are hosted at establishments that require a minimum age of twenty-one (21) to enter.
- 6.3. A playing member must have an approved IPride rating on file with the SSSA before he/she is eligible to play.
- 6.4. A player must satisfy all requirements for participation in tournaments as established by IPride.
- 6.5. GSWS Tournament Guidelines:
  - 6.5.1. A player must be duly registered and on only one (1) SSSA team.

- 6.5.2. A player must be at least eighteen (18) years of age by the date league play commences.
- 6.5.3. A player must not be on suspension during the dates of the GSWS.
- 6.5.4. Players under twenty-one (21) years of age are not allowed to participate in functions that are hosted at establishments that require a minimum age of twenty-one (21) to enter.
- 6.5.5. A player must have been present and listed for participation in a minimum of 50% of his/her SSSA teams' regular season schedule as determined by the official SSSA scorebook or scorecard. Cases of hardship may be appealed to the Board.

## **7. SCHEDULES AND STANDINGS**

- 7.1. The SSSA season schedule shall be prepared by the Assistance Commissioner after the deadline to register teams. SSSA team representatives shall be issued a season schedule as soon as it becomes final.
- 7.2. It is the responsibility of the Assistant Commissioner or his/her designee to inform the team representatives as to whether or not fields are playable. It is the team representative's responsibility to inform their players.
- 7.3. Games cancelled shall be rescheduled at the discretion of the Board. The Board shall notify, in writing or via the Internet, the team representative of each team involved in the revised schedule.
- 7.4. In the event of change in weather conditions after a game has started, the umpire may suspend a game until weather conditions improve or cancel a game. USA rules apply for all suspended and/or cancelled games.
- 7.5. The Board shall decide requests for schedule changes. Teams must give a 14-day written notice for a possible schedule change. Schedule changes requested on less than 14-day notice may be considered in extreme circumstances. The Board has the right to deny a schedule change.
- 7.6. If a team leaves the league during the season for any reason, the Board shall determine any adjustments to league schedules and standings.
- 7.7. Team standings shall be kept by the SSSA Board and shall be published regularly.

## **8. LENGTH OF GAME**

- 8.1. A game shall have a time limit, with no new inning starting after the time expires. The time limit for all games shall be determined prior to the start of the season by the Board and announced to all team representatives.
- 8.2. All tie games shall continue, using the USA tiebreaker rule, after the time limit expires or after seven (7) innings have been completed, until a team wins.

- 8.3. The USA rules for "run-rule" shall be used in determining a winning team.
- 8.4. Rule changes related to time limits and scheduling may be implemented by the Board as deemed necessary before and during the season or post season.
- 8.5. If games are delayed for rain or other inclement weather or field issues, the Board may change the format of games in order to complete all games of the day.

## **9. PLAYING RULES**

- 9.1. SSSA Rules and Regulations and an official USA Rulebook shall be at the field during all games to assist in resolving any potential conflicts. It is each coach's responsibility to carry copies of these documents.
- 9.2. All SSSA games shall be officiated by an USA accredited umpire. If such an umpire is not available, any knowledgeable member of the SSSA, mutually agreed to by both captains, having both signed the official scorebook prior to the game, shall be allowed to officiate. No SSSA Player will be allowed to officiate a GSWS qualifying game.
- 9.3. The home plate umpire shall be the official scorekeeper. Prior to the start of each game, the coaches must provide the home plate umpire and the opposing coach with their official line-up, including substitutes and players present but unable to play due to injury. The home team's scorebook shall be the official scorebook. If the home team does not have a scorekeeper, then the visitor's scorebook shall become the official scorebook and the home plate umpire shall note this. The official line-up card shall determine SSSA standings and player participation.
- 9.4. Official Line-up.
  - 9.4.1. A team shall consist of no fewer than seven (7) rostered members of the team scheduled to play.
  - 9.4.2. A team shall not be allowed to start or continue a game with fewer than seven (7) players.
  - 9.4.3. Any D division team, that does not have enough of their roster players to play a game, may pick up no more than 2 D-rated players from other league teams to play the game toward the season record (up to a 10 person line-up). They may also use non-player, but registered and rated, coaches affiliated with any D team as long as that coach's rating is commensurate with D level competition. More than 2 D-rated players or registered and rated coaches may be picked up for game play to commence without forfeiture fines incurred, but the game will count as a loss on the season record.

For example, XYZ Team (a D team) may start with 8 of their own players and pick up 2 more D players for a 10 person line-up. That game will still count toward their season record. However, if XYZ team has 9 of their players on the line-up, they may only pick up 1 more D player (for a total of 10 on the line-up) for the game to count toward their season record.
  - 9.4.4. If any D level team cannot pick up enough D-rated players to play the game in question, that team may pick up no more than 2 C level players or non-player,

but registered and rated, C level coaches, in order to play the game. If a D level team picks up any C-rated players, the game will be recorded as a loss on their record.

- 9.4.5. In the interest of respecting potential safety concerns, a D level team can elect not to play a game against an opposing team who has picked up C-rated players in order to play the game. In this instance, the D level team that elected not to play will not be required to pay a forfeiture fine and the game will still reflect as a win on their season record. (The opposing team that picked up C-rated players will also not be required to pay a forfeiture fee, based on the criteria below.)
  - 9.4.6. Any C division team, that does not have enough players to field a team for a given game, may pick up no more than 2 league affiliated C or D player or registered and rated coach in order to play the game in question (up to a 10 person line-up, as described in the example in 9.4.3).
  - 9.4.7. If any team, following these guidelines, is unable to acquire enough pick up players to play the game in question this will also result in the team paying the game forfeiture fee.
  - 9.4.8. In all situations where pick up players are added to the line-up for the game, the coach of that team must notify and declare player additions and divisional ratings (i.e., C or D level) to the umpire, the opposing team's coach, and a Board member.
  - 9.4.9. Teams that pick up 2 non-rostered players will not be allowed to list rostered players as substitutes for the game.
  - 9.4.10. A team that begins with less than ten (10) players may add up to a tenth (10th) player during the game as long as that player was listed as a potential substitute on the line-up at the start of game play.
  - 9.4.11. A team that plays with seven (7) players shall be penalized with an automatic out in the 8th and 9th spot in the line-up . A team with eight (8) players will receive an automatic out in the 9th spot in the line-up. We have 10 on the field. There is a missing player?
  - 9.4.12. A team that begins play with ten (10) players may end the game with nine (9) players, but the missing player becomes an automatic out in the line-up. (USA Rules apply to starting line-ups with eleven (11) players).
  - 9.4.13. If a team has ten (10) players that are eligible to play, they may not pick up an eleventh (11th) player.
- 9.5. There shall be a ten (10) minute grace period for the first league game of the day only. A team must have enough players to field a team at the designated starting time of their game or the umpire shall call an official forfeit. The ten (10) minute grace period shall count as part of the official game time.
  - 9.6. Uniforms must consist of matching team shirts with numbers on either the front, back and/or sleeves. If a team has more than one uniform shirt, a player may be allowed to

wear either team shirt if approved by the Board. However, players on the same team may not wear identical numbers. If a team carries the same name in multiple divisions of play they must wear different colored uniforms in all GSWS qualifying games or recreational divisions.

9.6.1. The USA Uniform Rule shall be superseded by USA Rules related to blood stained uniforms and open wounds (replacement uniforms will not have to match).

9.6.2. This rule does not apply to pick-up players. Pick-up players may continue to wear the jersey of their team.

9.7. Only SSSA members who have completed the USA Waiver documentation are allowed on the field and in the dugout area.

9.8. Team names shall be approved by the Board and must be unique in each division of play.

9.9. All pitchers are required to wear a metal framed protective face mask.

## **10. FORFEITS**

10.1. A team shall forfeit a game for any of the following:

2.1.1. Failure to have and maintain a minimum of nine (9) players on the field.

2.1.2. Quitting in defiance of an umpire's decision.

2.1.3. Fielding a player who is ineligible on game day.

10.2. Teams will be assessed a \$130 forfeiture deposit prior to the beginning of the season, to be paid in conjunction with league team fees. Teams must maintain a \$130 forfeiture deposit throughout the season. Unused funds from the deposited amount will be returned to teams within two weeks of the conclusion of the season.

10.3. A fine of \$65 (max \$130) shall be assessed in the instance of a forfeit and paid for from the forfeiture deposit collected at the beginning of the season from each team.

10.4. A team may not be considered for the GSWS if fines are not paid.

10.5. A team with three (3) forfeits will be dropped from the league for the remainder of the season. Appeals for reinstatement may be made, in writing, to the Board.

10.6. A team with more than two (2) forfeits shall be declared ineligible for the GSWS.

10.7. Any forfeit due to a ratings protest shall not be assessed a fine, but will affect eligibility for the GSWS as noted in Rule 10.6. Such forfeits shall also not count towards the Rule 10.5 forfeit limit.

10.8. A team may plead a hardship case, in writing, to the Board. The Board reserves the right to waive any of these sanctions.

## 11. PLAYER RATINGS

- 11.1. Coaches are responsible for creating and maintaining a rating for each player on their team roster as set forth by the IPride Player and Team Ratings Guidelines.
  - 11.1.1. Player ratings can no longer be adjusted for a given season after the ratings/roster lock date unless a protest ruling results in such a change.
  - 11.1.2. A player is deemed to have an existing rating if a rating from the current year or the prior two (2) years is on file with the SSSA or IPride.
- 11.2. A player's coach may change an existing rating question for that player from a "No" to a "Yes" (i.e., increase the player's rating) by notifying, in writing, and by submitting a revised player rating form to the Board Ratings Officer and the Board Secretary.
- 11.3. A coach seeking to change a rating question for a player on their roster from a "Yes" to a "No" (i.e., decrease the player's rating) must obtain approval from the Board with a two-thirds majority vote.
- 11.4. Requests for rating reductions (i.e., "Yes" to "No") that involve serious health issues of players may be addressed by the player, directly and confidentially, with the Commissioner.
  - 11.4.1. The Commissioner's recommendation on approval or denial of the change must be presented to the Board in a closed, Executive Board Meeting (without disclosure of confidential information) and approved by the Board with a majority vote.
  - 11.4.2. The determination of whether a player's rating decrease request constitutes a "serious health issue" to be handled under this rule is based on the Commissioner's discretion. If the Commissioner determines the reason presented is not a serious health issue requiring confidentiality, he/she may require the player's coach to bring the rating reduction request to the entire Board for consideration.
- 11.5. The Commissioner or Ratings Officer may propose a change in a rating question for a player from a "No" to a "Yes" after reviewing any evidence that substantiates the change. The Commissioner or the Ratings Officer must submit, in writing, the change and evidence to the Board. This information must also be provided to the impacted player's coach. If the Board approves the rating increase by a majority vote, the rating increase take effect immediately.
  - 11.5.1. The coach and player whose rating has been changed may present his/her case to the Board for reconsideration via an appeal made, in writing, to the Board within five (5) days of the notification of the change. An appeal to the Board will be deemed successful with a two-thirds majority vote.

## 12. PROTESTS

- 12.1. The official SSSA protest must be filed in writing with the Board Commissioner within twenty-four (24) hours after the game in question. It must be accompanied by a protest fee as set forth in Rule 13.3 Rule 12.2. All protest fees shall be retained by the SSSA pending a hearing by the Board.
- 12.2. Protest fees are as follows:
  - 12.2.1. Non-rating protests shall be \$50.
  - 12.2.2. Rating protests shall be \$50 per player plus \$20 per question.
  - 12.2.3. If the protest is upheld, the fees are returned.
  - 12.2.4. If the protest is overruled, all fees are non-refundable.
- 12.3. Any Ratings Protest that results in a ratings increase shall not result in a forfeit unless it moves the player or team to a higher division.
- 12.4. No ratings-related protests are permitted during league post-season play.
- 12.5. The Board shall hear protests according to the following process:
  - 12.5.1. The Commissioner shall call a hearing and notify the representatives of the team(s) involved in the protest or ratings change request at least five (5) days before the meeting as to the date, time, place and reason for the meeting, including allegations.
  - 12.5.2. The Commissioner shall preside and keep professional order during the hearing, but shall not vote, unless there is a tie. In the event the Commissioner cannot preside or attend the hearing, the Assistant Commissioner shall preside.
  - 12.5.3. A representative of the team filing the protest and a representative of the team being protested shall each present their argument. There shall be a maximum of thirty (30) minutes allowed for questions or comments from the Board. The team reps shall then leave the room for a maximum of thirty (30) minutes to allow for discussion by the Board. At the end of the Board discussion, the Board shall then vote by secret ballot to decide whether the game protest is upheld or invalid.
- 12.6. A protest shall be upheld with a two-thirds majority vote in favor of the protest.
- 12.7. Any Board member MUST permit an alternate (if available), designated by the Commissioner, to vote in his or her place or abstain from a vote where a conflict of interest is determined. A conflict of interest is defined as, but not limited to, the following: the player in question is on the same team, a roommate, co-worker, or partner of the Board member.
- 12.8. At the end of the voted tabulation, the Commissioner shall assemble all persons involved and the decision of the Board shall be presented.
- 12.9. An appeal may be made to the Board by submitting new evidence within three (3) days of the Board's ruling.

12.10. All protests for tournaments (including the Gay Softball World Series) will be handled according to the rules of that tournament.

12.10.1. It is the responsibility of the league (via the Ratings Officer and/or committee), the Coach/Manager, and each player to represent a player's IPride ratings accurately.

12.10.2. In the case of a ratings-related protest that is upheld, any fee incurred as a result of the protest will be paid in equal half by team, and the player.

12.10.3. The Board may elect to pay the protest fee upfront. In such cases, the team and player portions of the protest fee will be reimbursed to the SSSA.

### **13. RULE VIOLATIONS**

13.1. There shall be two (2) types of rule violations, Minor and Major. The Board shall determine into which category a situation shall fall based on specific details. The parties involved shall be notified, in writing or by e-mail, of the date the Board will meet to determine what action, if any, shall be taken. The player(s) involved may appear at the Board hearing and present their case for a period not to exceed thirty (30) minutes after which the Board shall be excused to vote in closed session on the issue. All parties involved shall be notified of the Board's decision in writing. The Board's decision is final.

13.1.1. Minor Violations — Penalties may include, but are not limited to reprimand, probation, or suspension not to exceed five (5) games.

13.1.2. Major Violations — Penalties may include, but are not limited to suspension for a period lasting from six (6) games until the end of the season. A year on probation shall accompany any such suspension. Further violations while on probation shall result in prompt expulsion from the SSSA.

13.2. Such actions as spitting, excessive use of profanity, obscene gestures, or throwing of objects shall result in a hearing by the Board. Any such behavior determined to be minor in nature, shall result in one (1) warning by the umpire or Board at the time of the incident. The warning shall be logged in the Official Scorebook for use at the subsequent hearing.

13.2.1. Any further infraction by a player, coach or SSSA member shall result in expulsion from any game or function in question and suspension from the SSSA pending a hearing. Any SSSA member involved in such activity shall be asked to leave the ballpark or facility. Failure to leave, when asked, shall result in expulsion from SSSA.

13.3. Any verbal abuse, fighting, physical abuse, or damage to property involving an umpire, officials, player(s), member(s), or fan (s) by any SSSA member shall result in immediate expulsion from any game in question and immediate suspension from the SSSA pending a hearing. Any SSSA member involved in any such activity shall be asked

to leave the ballpark or facility. Failure to leave, when asked, shall result in expulsion from SSSA.

- 13.4. If a player is deemed ineligible to play because of a rule violation (other than ineligibility associated with ratings issues) the player's team forfeits the game in which the violation occurred and any subsequent games in which the player in question has played prior to the player's hearing and resolution of the violation.

#### **14. SSSA CHAMPIONS AND GSWS REPRESENTATIVES**

- 14.1. Each division of the SSSA shall recognize Open Division League Champions/CoChampions. Co-Champions are teams that finish in a first place tie with the same win/loss record. No tiebreaker shall be used to determine a single champion. All teams must play in their respective division, per IPride ratings.
- 14.2. The winner of the most season games in each division will be declared the SSSA League Champion for that division. In case of a tie, there will be Co-Champions. If there is only one (1) team within a division, that team shall be declared the SSSA League Champion for that division upon the completion of their scheduled games.
- 14.3. In case of a tie between more than 2 teams, all teams shall be considered CoChampions.
- 14.4. Participation of SSSA in the GSWS shall be determined by the guidelines provided each year by SSSA and IPride.
  - 14.4.1. The number of teams SSSA may send to the GSWS is pursuant to the guidelines set forth by IPride.
  - 14.4.2. Each division may send one (1) representative to the GSWS. Any additional berths may be awarded to the division with the highest number of teams. If more than one (1) additional berth is awarded, then each additional berth may be awarded to the division with the next highest number of teams.
  - 14.4.3. The regular season SSSA League Champion for each division may be declared the GSWS representatives. If there are Co-Champions in the regular season, there may be a double elimination play-off between the Co-Champions and the winner shall be declared the GSWS representative for that division.
- 14.5. Any team earning the right to represent SSSA in the GSWS may be required to demonstrate "Financial Ability" and "Player Commitment" to participate, by a deadline set by the Board. Should a team be unable to demonstrate their ability to participate in the GSWS, the next highest team in the standings shall have the opportunity to participate in the GSWS.
  - 14.5.1. "Financial Ability" requirements shall be set by the Board based on the GSWS Host City and any funds that the Board may present to the participant based on the league's financial status.

- 14.5.2. "Player Commitment" requires a minimum of eight (8) players from the season roster in order to attend the GSWS.
- 14.5.3. Failure of any SSSA team to participate in the GSWS after meeting the qualifications and stating their commitment to participate shall result in a financial penalty and probation to be established by the Board.
- 14.5.4. Any IPride fines shall be incurred by the team(s) in violation. Non of the players on the registered roster shall be in SSSA until fines are paid.
- 14.6. Any team earning the right to represent SSSA in the GSWS must satisfy all other requirements for participation as may be established by IPride, including but not limited to:
  - 14.6.1. Teams may add up to four (4) eligible additional players, replacing active players on their roster or filling empty slots, as long as no more than twenty (20) players participate in the GSWS.
  - 14.6.2. The team must meet current IPride player and team rating guidelines.
- 14.7. Should a division not have a team committed to participating in the GSWS, the Board shall determine which division shall receive that division's berth.