

# ***INFORMATION FOR YOUTH GAMES***

## **General Umpiring**

**Umpire Uniforms:** Heather gray slacks are part of your uniform, but not slate gray twill or khaki slacks (possibly Dockers). Dockers or their equivalent are unacceptable. Umpires found out of uniform are subject to a fine of half their game fee. On game day, your pants should be cleaned and pressed with a crease in the legs. Shoes are cleaned and shined.

Shirts will have the CASO logo, are to be clean, and worn completely tucked in your pants just like the players. Check it regularly while on the field to make sure it has not come out resulting in a sloppy look. When on the field, do not drop your pants to tuck in the shirt, finish dressing, or possibly correct a “wardrobe malfunction.” Please, discreetly handle this in the parking lot.

Hats worn on the field will have the CASO logo. The cap is worn with the bill facing forward. Do not wear your cap backward.

The plate umpire wears a single gray or navy blue ball bag on the hip, preferably the right hip. Ball bags should not be worn so that they bounce off your buttocks or your groin. Although not prohibited, wearing two ball bags is not encouraged.

Make a professional appearance when you arrive on the field and during the entire game.

**Umpire Assignments and Conduct:** Check for revised assignments at least once on assigned game day. If a game is cancelled on game day, an attempt will be made to notify you personally. You should confirm other cancellations via Arbiter, or use the contact information provided in the weekly report if you have not heard anything.

Avoid physical contact with players. If a handshake is appropriate such as during introductions, that is okay. The plate umpire should not physically contact the catcher at any time.

Do not initiate or participate in conversations about the internal workings of CASO. Your schedule will be terminated, and you will be suspended indefinitely.

Always have a cell phone with you. If you perceive a threat to your safety, stop the game, call 911, and inform the coaches the game will not resume until you are completely satisfied that the situation has been resolved.

**Arrival Time:** Be at the complex no later than 30 minutes before game time, and be on the field 15 minutes before game time. You may be delayed due to traffic or completion of high school or middle school games. The commissioners for the various leagues know this could happen. If you are excessively late, do not report to the field for 15 minutes of game time. Just abandon the game completely and let the CASO commissioner know.

**Parking:** Prior to the game, you should use the Googlemap available in Arbiter to locate the complex, assess parking, and know how to get to the field.

**Coach Request to Discuss a Call:** When a coach wants to discuss a call made on the field, time must be requested and be granted before the coach can approach the umpire. Once you have heard the question, explain to the coach what you saw, what the rule was, and how you applied it.

Tell them if they have a question about the interpretation or application of the rule, they can talk to their commissioner about asking Joe Holonich for an interpretation. They may also protest the ruling as permitted in the contract.

If a coach is approaching you with a rules book or video in hand, politely stop the coach before he reaches you, and explain that bringing a rules book or video on the field to an umpire is an immediate ejection. It is considered showing up the umpire by saying you don't know the rules. If they continue to come and bring you the rules book, eject them and notify Joe Holonich so he can report it to the league commissioner.

### **Field, Attire, and Equipment**

**Jewelry:** Jewelry is now permitted unless the umpire determines it is a distraction or increases a risk to players. The State Rule's Interpreter, Al Palmer, provided guidance that umpires should rarely find jewelry distracting or increasing a risk. "Let them play."

**Temporary Bases:** Two spikes must be used with floating bases. Hollywood bases may be used. Double first base is allowed (encouraged) but not required.

**Softballs:** Softballs are optic yellow and not NCAA or slow-pitch balls. For 10U, the ball is 11 inches. For 12U and above, the ball is 12 inches. The rules book lists the cor as .47.

**Bats:** Besides the technical specifications in Rule 1-5-1,2, a legal bat must be labeled with the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) approved certification, either 2000 or 2004, or the new USA certification and not be on the non-approved USA bat list. Old bats are not "grandfathered." The USA website has additional information. Do not permit bats without the proper certification to be used in games.

Watch for slow pitch and baseball bats. Slow pitch bats have an ASA and USA symbol, but they are not the one authorized in the rules book. Often parents playing slow pitch will give their old bat to their daughters or big brother's old baseball bat.

These are the symbols for approved bats.



These are marked on softball bats but are slow-pitch bats and unacceptable.



The consortium rules only require an illegal bat to be removed. There is no out or ejection.

**Helmets:** Each batter, base runner, and youth base coach must wear a NOCSAE-approved helmet with a classic, caged face protector, whenever they are outside the dugout and the ball is live. The catcher must wear head protection and a protective mask with throat protector. The

catcher's helmet and mask combination shall be NOCSAE certified and the catcher's helmet shall have ear flaps.

Helmets must fit properly. If a player is wearing religious headwear or braided hair, the helmet must fit such that the ear flaps cover the ears, and the face protector fully covers the face.

You should confirm that any base coach not wearing a helmet is over 18 years of age. At times this will be obvious as a mom or dad will be coaching. Other times, younger coaches in their early 20's may look under 18. Politely ask them if they are 18 or older.

Uniform or Equipment Violation: If a player has a uniform or equipment violation, e.g. the ear flaps of a helmet are not covering the ears and the face protector is leaving part of her face exposed, do not tell them what to do. Merely tell them they cannot play until they are legal. Let the coaches tell them what to do. You just say she cannot play until the situation is made legal.

### **Game Management**

Rules: The rules are established in the National Federation of High Schools rules book as supplemented by the individual league rules. Several league-specific rule clarifications are given later.

Rules for the different leagues are posted on the [Information and Links page](#) of the [CASO website](#). The applicable rules for your game will be identified in the weekly spreadsheet provided to umpires. You should make sure you are familiar with the rules. Still, at the pregame conference you should ask the two coaches to review the rules with you so the three of you are aligned. Considerations like uncaught third strike or whether to call an illegal pitch should be discussed so there is alignment.

### **Game Times**

Start of Game Clock: Game clocks should start at game time. If the coaches are not ready, explain to them that under the contract, the game clock starts at the scheduled game time. If this is the case, then the pregame conference will be conducted with the clock running.

The game clock does not stop for any delay, weather, injury, or other.

Wait Time: If a game is delayed beyond the scheduled time, the umpire shall start the game clock at the scheduled time. If teams are not ready to play, for example due to not having the minimum number of players, the CASO umpire can leave the field at game time but may choose, highly recommended, to leave no later than 15 minutes beyond the scheduled start of the game. The umpire shall start the timer at the scheduled game time so if the game eventually starts, the time limit has begun.

Postponements: For postponements where CASO was not notified at least two hours prior to game time, the umpire arrives at the complex, and the field is playable, the time limit will be from the scheduled game time and not the postponed game time.

Game Time Limits: Games have no new inning after 90 minutes and drop dead at 105 minutes. This means at 90 minutes the losing team gets to finish its bat. If at 90 minutes the home team is ahead and at bat, the game is complete. When the third out of a full inning happens, the new inning begins. If there is still time remaining in the 90 minutes, no matter how little, a new inning has begun. You should play that inning to completion or to the 105-minute drop dead limit.

**NOTE:** Do not use your watch or cell phone to time the game. You need to have a timer, preferably one with dual clocks for 90 and 105 minutes. Hang the timer on the back stop where both coaches can see it if they have a question about the remaining time. This will avoid any inconsistencies between when they started the game clock on their watch and you on your watch. Having a timer fully visible eliminates that.

Weather Delay: For each lightning strike or thunderclap, teams must abandon the field for 30 minutes. The 30-minute interval starts anew with each lightning strike or thunderclap. If there is less than 30 minutes when a lightning strike or thunderclap occurs, the game is complete.

At Olney Boys and Girls Club, there is a thunder alarm. That alarm sounds when lightning is within 10 miles of the complex. The game cannot resume until the alarm sounds all clear.

The onus of removing a team or individual from an athletic site in the event of lightning activity is on the coach supervising the activity. The safety of all team members rests with that coach.

Ejection Notification: If you eject a coach, parent, or player, please provide the details to Joe Holonich that day or evening. Please get the player's number, and if possible, the name of any person ejected. Please provide enough information so that a report of the incident can be filed with the commissioner. Do not tell any coach or player how long a coach or player will be barred from coaching or playing softball during the season.

Under our contract an ejection is the minimum of that and the next game. However, depending on the circumstances, the ejection could be up to one year from the date of the occurrence. Not giving an ejection length provides maximum flexibility in dealing with the league commissioner.

### **Rules Clarifications**

The clarifications discussed here apply only to consortium games except for the minimum number of players. The Central Maryland League is also included there.

Players: The minimum number of players to start a game is listed in the applicable rules. For convenience, they are repeated here.

**Central Maryland League:** A minimum of eight players is needed. A team may borrow a player to avoid a forfeit.

**Consortium:** A minimum of seven players are needed to start a game. Borrowing a player to meet the minimum is permitted under the consortium rules. If players are borrowed both teams must start the game by having seven players each.

10U Headfirst Slide: All slides at the 10U level must be feet first. If a player slides headfirst, a team warning is given and the next player on that team that slides headfirst is out. There is no ejection. This is an illegal slide by the definition in the consortium rules for 10U.

Leaving Base Early, Pitched Ball: For the 10U Division, the umpire will give a warning for a player leaving a base early on a steal. After that team warning, the umpire may call out players for leaving a base early before the ball leaves the pitcher's hand. Normal rules apply to the 13U Division. Unless the runner has left first or third base extremely early, you will probably only see that at second base.

Overthrown Ball: If an overthrown ball to first base remains in play, the batter-runner advancing to first base or any runner initially on first base who has not yet reached second base may only advance to second base. If the runner advances to third base, she is liable to be put out. Give

the defense a short time to make a play on her. If no play is made, declare time, and return the runner to second base.

For a thrown ball that goes out of play whether the throw is to first base or another base, the applicable rule for awarding bases will apply with the following exceptions. Any runner on second base at the time of the throw will only be awarded third base unless forced to advance home because of awarded bases to a trailing runner. Any runner on third base will not be awarded home on a throw out of play unless forced home because of awarded bases to a trailing runner.

Let's look at some examples.

A batter-runner is advancing to first base. The ball is overthrown and remains in play. The runner can advance to second base with the liability to be put out. If the runner continues to third base, once she arrives, wait a short time to allow the defense to make a play on her. If they do, she is out. If no play is made, call time and return the runner to second base.

A runner is on first base and leaves on contact. The fly ball is caught. As the runner is retreating to first base the ball is overthrown and goes out of play. The ball is declared dead, and the runner is awarded third base.

As the batter-runner is advancing to first base, the ball is overthrown and goes out of play. The ball is declared dead, and the batter-runner is awarded second base.

There is a lone runner who has passed second base and heading to third base. The throw to third goes out of play. The ball is declared dead, and the runner can only be awarded third base per the rule as written in the consortium rules.

With runners on first and second base, a fly ball is caught, and a throw is made to first base to attempt a double play. The overthrow goes out of play, and the ball declared dead. After a proper tag, the runner on first base is awarded third base, two bases from the time of the throw. This forces the runner on second base home.

#### Base Runner on or Advancing to Third Base

A base runner on third base or advancing to third base may not go home unless forced to do so by a trailing runner. If the runner does go home, she is liable to be put out. Give the defense some time to make a play. If no play to put out the runner is attempted, declare time and return the runner to third base.

## **Pre-Game Conference**

- A. The pre-game conference should start five minutes before game time or earlier if both coaches are ready. It should take only a few minutes to complete.

Make sure no warmups are conducted anywhere on the field during the pregame conference. This is a safety concern. Everybody has their back to the field and there is a worry a stray throw could hit and injury somebody. Warmups are permitted outside the out of play boundary of the field.

If you are working a cash game collect the fees. This just ensures coaches do not make an honest mistake and forget to pay you at the end of the game while folks are in a hurry to leave.

- B. Stand at the tip of the plate facing the field to conduct the pregame conference. Coaches may continue warming up and not come to the pregame conference unless called. You may have to announce “coaches and captains” when you are ready to conduct the pregame conference.
- C. Have the coaches and captains, if present, introduce themselves. Introduce yourself with your first name only.
- D. Establish the ground rules for out of play area and any unique field situations that could result in a dead ball.
- E. Have the coaches state any rules particular to that league such as ending an inning on four or five runs, batter hit by a pitch that bounces, infield fly and dropped third strike, etc. You should have read the league rules in advance, but this will help ensure you and the coaches are aligned on the rules.
- F. If the weather looks threatening or thunder showers are predicted, cover the thunder/lighting rule.
- G. Have both coaches confirm all players and equipment meet NFHS requirements.
- H. Start the clock when the pre-game conference is complete. If the teams are not ready at game time, politely tell them that the clock starts at game time and continues to run. In this situation, the pre-game conference is conducted with the clock running.