



Swindon Softball League Rules

(Version 3.6; May 2022)

The Swindon Softball League will employ the rules described in the current '*Official Rules of Softball*' as published by the International Softball Federation (ISF) in all cases excepting those described below. Where the definitions and rules described below contradict with the rules published by the ISF, those described below will take precedence.

Note: Where "*Purpose of Rule*" appears in the text below, this is to inform decision making regarding future iterations of the Swindon Softball League Rules. It is advised that these pieces of text remain in this document and are updated as appropriate, for future use.

Definitions

Active Player – A player fielded by a team that occupies a position on the field during that team's fielding innings.

Extra Hitter – A player who does not occupy a position on the field during their team's fielding innings but does occupy a place in the same team's Batting Order.

Batting Order – The fixed order in which players appear at-bat during a batting innings. A Batting Order is fixed for the duration of a single Match.

Captain – The individual who is responsible for the organisation of a League Team, as recognised by the Committee. A Captain may appoint a representative nominee to undertake the responsibilities of the Captain during Match Day.

Committee – The Swindon Softball League Committee as elected at the most recent Swindon Softball League Annual General Meeting.

League Points – The points a team earns due to the result of a Match that, accumulatively, are the primary determination for the team's position in the league table.

Match – A game of softball that is scheduled as part of the competitive league season.

Infield Perimeter – An arcing line, with a 50-yard radius centred at Home Plate, which joins both Foul Lines. The Infield Perimeter is usually demarcated with plastic sports marker-cones.

Ringer – A player is classed as a Ringer for the duration of a Match in which they compete as a member of a team they are not rostered with.

Roster – A team's Roster is a list of its member players as recognised by the Committee.

Scratch Team – A team participating in the upper division whose Roster automatically includes any players not rostered with teams in the upper division. The Scratch Team cannot win the division.

1. Rosters

- 1.1 An un-rostered player shall be considered rostered by the first team they are fielded by during a Match (except the Scratch Team) unless the Committee is notified prior to the Match or through the Website Player Statistics Sheet.
- 1.2 A player may transfer to the Roster of another team during the competitive league season only by the mutual agreement of both team Captains and the Committee.
- 1.3 A player may only transfer once per competitive league season.
- 1.4 Refer to the *Swindon Softball League: Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy* for requirements regarding rostered players under the age of eighteen.
- 1.5 For the purposes of Match Play a player will be considered to be the gender they choose to be (it must be either male or female due to the constraints of creating a legal Batting Order). The Committee is aware that this policy is open to exploitation, but we trust our players to respect this rule in the spirit that it is given.

2. Player Numbers: All Divisions

- 2.1 A team must consist of at least eight Active Players to compete in a Match. A team unable to field at least eight Active Players for a Match will forfeit as a result.
- 2.2 A team must consist of at least two female Active Players to compete in a Match. A team unable to field at least two female Active Players for a Match will forfeit as a result.
- 2.3 A team that fields only two female Active Players for a Match may only field nine Active Players in total. The tenth position in the team's Batting Order will consist of an automatic out, representing the third female batter.
- 2.4 Teams must declare the ratio of their female-to-male Active Players prior to Match start. *(Purpose of Rule: To allow the opposition Captain time to consider the best use of their available players, with regard to the "Handicaps" described below.)*
- 2.5 A team may not field female Extra Hitters if they have fewer than five female Active Players.

3. Handicaps: Upper Division

- 3.1 A team that fields 1 more female Active Player than their opponent may have a runner begin each of their batting innings on Second Base.
- 3.2 A team that fields 2 more female Active Players than their opponent may have a runner begin each of their batting innings on Third Base.
- 3.3 When calculating the difference in female Active Players for the handicaps stated in 3.1 and 3.2 above, the number of female Active Players for a single team is capped at five. This is not to say that a team may not field more than five female Active Players. A team fielding 6/7/8/9/10 No. female Active Players will be considered to be fielding five for the purpose of calculating handicaps. *(Purpose of Rule: The aim of the handicaps is to encourage balanced teams of equal female and male player numbers, i.e., 5:5. The handicaps are not intended to instigate a competition to field the most female players.)*
- 3.4 The runner that begins on-base, as described in 3.1 and 3.2 above must be the last at-bat batter from the team's previous batting innings. The runner must be in place prior to the first pitch of the current batting innings, or the opportunity is lost. Getting the runner in-place prior to the first pitch is the responsibility of the batting team alone.

4. Handicaps: Lower Division

- 4.1 All teams in the lower division may only score up to 6 Runs per batting inning, plus any additional Runs scored during the at-bat in which the sixth Run is scored. Once 6 Runs have been scored and 'time' has been called, 'side-away' shall be called by the Umpire.
- 4.2 A team that fields 1 less female Active Player than their opponent may only score up to 5 Runs per batting inning, plus any additional Runs scored during the at-bat in which the fifth Run is scored. Once 5 Runs have been scored and 'time' has been called, 'side-away' shall be called by the Umpire.
- 4.3 A team that fields 2 less female Active Players than their opponent may only score up to 4 Runs per batting inning, plus any additional Runs scored during the at-bat in which the fourth Run is scored. Once 4 Runs have been scored and 'time' has been called, 'side-away' shall be called by the Umpire.
- 4.4 Clauses 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 do not apply during the final innings of a Match.
- 4.5 There is no 'mercy rule' for Matches in the lower division.

5. Ringers: Upper Division

- 5.1 A team may field a maximum of three Ringers at any one time during a Match.
- 5.2 A Ringer may occupy any position in a team's Batting Order, provided they adhere to the female/male restrictions to Batting Order described in Section 7.
- 5.3 Ringers must occupy one of the following positions during a team's fielding innings: Catcher, Right-Field and Pitcher.
- 5.4 A Ringer may occupy the Centre-Right position during a team's fielding innings, instead of Pitcher, if:
- 5.4.1 The Catcher and Right-Field positions are already occupied by Ringers; or
 - 5.4.2 It is not possible to place a Ringer at Catcher without contravening the required male-to-female ratio at Pitcher and Catcher – see 8.2.
- 5.5 If a team has three Ringers all of whom are the same gender as the Pitcher, they shall occupy the positions of Right-Field, Centre-Right and Third-Base.
- 5.6 Ringers shall be indicated on the Website Player Statistics Sheet.

6. Ringers: Lower Division

- 6.1 A team may field a maximum of five Ringers at any one time during a Match. These will consist of a maximum of three players who are rostered with upper division teams.
- 6.2 A Ringer may occupy any position in a team's Batting Order, provided they adhere to the female/male restrictions to Batting Order described in Section 7.
- 6.3 Ringers may play any position during a team's fielding innings. *(Purpose of Rule: This is to allow players who are still relatively new, and may play for upper division teams, to practice a different position in the lower division.)*
- 6.4 Ringers shall be indicated on the Website Player Statistics Sheet.

7. Batting Innings

- 7.1 A team's Batting Order must have female players as evenly spaced as practicable.
- 7.2 Male batters shall be awarded two bases as a result of four 'balls' only when followed by a female batter. In all other circumstances, a batter is awarded one base as a result of four 'balls'.

8. Fielding Innings: Upper Division

- 8.1 No player occupying an outfield position may be positioned between the Infield Perimeter and Home Plate when the batter makes contact with a pitched ball.
- 8.2 The ratio of male to female players shall be as follows: Pitcher/Catcher: 1:1; Infield: 2:2; Outfield: 2:2.
- 8.3 In the event that a team has fewer than five female Active Players, they should divide the female Active Players they do have as evenly as practicable between the three areas of Pitcher/Catcher, Infield and Outfield.

9. Fielding Innings: Lower Division

- 9.1 No player occupying an outfield position may be positioned between the Infield Perimeter and Home Plate when the batter makes contact with a pitched ball.
- 9.2 Male and female players are free to play in any position. *(Purpose of Rule: To maximise opportunities for players to play and learn the positions they favour whilst learning the game.)*

10. Substitutions

- 10.1 In the event of a player being unable to continue playing a Match due to injury, any player of the same sex, on the same team's substitute bench, shall be allowed to take the place of the injured player. *(Purpose of Rule: This is in variance to ISF rules that prohibit a substitute replacing multiple players, or the same player multiple times, within the same Match.)*
- 10.2 Extra Hitters may swap into a fielding position at any time outside of live play provided they replace a player of the same gender. For the purposes of player numbers (refer to Section 2), the player leaving the fielding position becomes the Extra Hitter (though their place in the Batting Order does not change).

11. Match Postponement

- 11.1 Teams may not postpone a Match without the consent of the Committee. Being unable to field a team of eight Active Players will not be considered a valid circumstance for consent.
- 11.2 A Match may be postponed due to unsuitable weather conditions. This determination will be made by the Committee prior to 16:00 as described in 11.3, or by the Match Umpire as described in 11.4.
- 11.3 In the event that a Match is postponed due to unsuitable weather conditions, the affected teams shall be notified by 16:00 at the latest. If notification has not occurred by 16:00, the Match will be regarded as taking place as scheduled and the relevant teams will be expected to have a legal team present at Match start.
- 11.4 The Match Umpire may postpone the Match for which they are responsible if weather conditions create what they consider to be an unsafe playing environment.
- 11.5 Postponed Matches shall be rescheduled by the home team, with the agreement of the opposition team and the Committee.
- 11.6 A postponed Match that remains un-played at the end of the final week of the competitive league season shall be considered a Tie/Draw.

12. Umpires

- 12.1 Teams will be expected to supply at least one Umpire to each Match identified in the league schedule or to organise a suitable nominated alternative. (Contact the Committee and/or Chief Umpire for assistance in finding alternatives)
- 12.2 Each failure to supply at least one Umpire to a Match for which they are liable as described in the league schedule will result in that team losing one League Point.
- 12.3 Umpires (including nominated alternatives) are required to be competent and to make decisions without bias. Umpires who do not meet this standard may not officiate a Match.
- 12.4 The Committee reserves the right to determine an Umpire's adherence to 12.3 (described above) based on Match performance.
- 12.5 Everyone in attendance at League Events should be mindful that they are representing the Swindon Softball League, and that their conduct should reflect that. All players, umpires, coaches, and spectators must be treated respectfully. This is inclusive of the notion that 'the Umpire's decision is final'. The Chief and Match Umpires may issue warnings to individuals or groups for inappropriate conduct. Match Umpires may issue ejections and the Committee may implement League Suspensions if such warnings are not heeded.

13. League Points

- 13.1 The following League Points shall be awarded:
 - Three League Points for a Match Win.
 - Two League Points for a Match Tie/Draw.
 - One League Point for a Match Loss.
 - Zero League Points for a Forfeit.
- 13.2 The following criteria shall be applied (in the order stated below) to determine the league placement of teams of equal League Points:
 - 13.2.1 Head-to-Head – The team with the higher win percentage in the Matches played against the other team tied in League Points. If teams are still tied, refer to 13.2.2.
 - 13.2.2 Runs Conceded – The team with fewest shall be placed highest. If teams are still tied, refer to 13.2.3.
 - 13.2.3 Run Difference – The team with the higher Run Difference from all Matches played so far in the current competitive league season shall be ranked highest.
 - 13.2.4 If teams are still tied, the appropriate team Captains shall compete in a best-of-five 'Rock, Paper, Scissors' game to determine their team's final league placement.
- 13.3 Instead of the final criteria described in 13.2.4, both teams, in agreement with the Committee, may agree to organise a playoff match between the two teams to determine the winner. In this circumstance the two teams would be responsible for the scheduling of the match and the employment of a neutral Umpire.

14. Match Day

- 14.1 The Home Team shall be responsible for setting-up the diamond prior to Match Start and putting all associated League equipment back into its storage location after a Match has finished.
- 14.2 Each team will be supplied with a set of game balls prior to the start of the competitive league season. Each team will be responsible for providing at least 2 male (12") and 2 female (11") balls to be used during their own fielding innings. These balls must meet the

ASA Ball Standard Specification of 300lbs and .52COR and be shown to the Match Umpire for approval prior to Match Play commencing.

- 14.3 Matches must start by 18:45. A team unable to field a legal team for a Match starting at 18:45 shall forfeit as a result, at the Umpire's discretion.

15. Post-Match

- 15.1 The Umpire must confirm the final score of the Match with the two team Captains immediately following Match End and report the final score and Match MVPs to the Committee the same day.
- 15.2 Each team Captain shall provide a digital file of their team's completed Website Player Statistics Sheet to the Committee within 48hrs of Match End. The Sheet can be found on the League website.
- 15.3 We ask that the Away Team for each Match provide a written commentary of said Match to the Committee, suitable for use on the League website. It is in the interest of all members of the Swindon Softball League that the League Website is current and interesting to read. The team should contact the Committee if they have difficulties responding to this request.

