

# **NATIONAL LEAGUE RULES**

**--Spring 2026--**

## **A. GENERAL**

1. The National League Committee (NLC) shall consist of a maximum of five (5) members, including the Chairman
2. The National League consists of ratings 7, 8, & 9 (The Central League consists of ratings 4, 5 and 6; the American League consists of ratings 1, 2 & 3).

## **B. ORGANIZATIONS**

1. The League will be composed of players from the Sun City West Softball Club only. The number of players will be determined by the National League Committee. Selection of players to teams will follow National League Committee Guidelines for all sessions.
2. All National League team managers must be approved by the National League Committee.
3. Team Managers are required to have access to a computer and printer, and possess reasonable computer skills, i.e. Send, Receive, and Respond to e-mails or send and receive text messages.

## **C. UNIFORMS**

1. The applicable club furnishes pants, shorts and hats. Articles of uniforms are for league play only and not to be used for non-league/club activities. Team shirts are issued to players for use only during the session and are returned at the conclusion of the session. Alterations are not permitted except temporary "tucks" for fit. All articles of uniform are the property of the club and will be returned by any player who resigns their membership. In support of our sponsors, shirts should be worn so the sponsor's name is clearly visible.
2. All Coaches and Managers must wear their team shirts.
3. In case of cold or inclement weather, protective clothing will be allowed over uniforms
4. Uniforms are provided to identify individuals as teammates. Expressions of individuality are not encouraged and may be prohibited if deemed inappropriate by the NLC.
5. Substitutes who are members of another active team wear their assigned team uniform shirt (for sponsorship purposes); substitutes who have not been assigned a team may wear a personal shirt.
6. Issued hats, pants and shirts are to be worn when a player takes the field.

## **D. GAME RULES**

### **1. GENERAL**

- a. The game clock for each game will start with the first pitch. The clock shall be set at 55 minutes. When the game clock expires, complete the current inning and play one additional inning with 'Unlimited' scoring.
- b. Maximum of 7 innings per game; Minimum of 5 innings.
- c. Teams are limited to four runs per inning except for the 7<sup>th</sup> inning (or last inning as determined by the Clock and announced as such by the Umpires) during which each team may score an unlimited number of runs.

### **2. MERCY RULES**

- a. Twelve-run Rule: If either team is ahead by 12 or more runs at the end of the fifth inning, the game is over.
- b. Ten-Run Rule: If either team is ahead by 10 or more runs at the end of the sixth inning, the game is over.
- c. Three-run Rule (referred to as ‘the flip’): If the visiting team is ahead by 3 or more runs after the last inning has been declared, the home team will clear the bases and continue to bat during the top of the last inning. If the home team does not tie or go ahead, the game is over. If the home team ties or goes ahead, the visiting team will get last at bats.

### 3. TIE GAMES

If the score is tied after the final inning is complete, each team will be credited with ½ win.

### 4. CANCELLED/DELAYED GAMES

Games may be cancelled by the Game Umpire, Field Manager, NL Committee Member, or Softball Board Member, in that order. Games may also be cancelled by RCSCW. If any games are cancelled due to inclement weather or poor field conditions, all succeeding games at the field will also be cancelled. If part of the day’s schedule is completed and the weather closes the field, previously completed games that day will NOT count for record.

## E. PLAYING RULES

### 1. TEAM ORGANIZATION

- a. Each assigned team will consist of a minimum of 11 and a maximum of 12 players (special circumstances may dictate a team with 10 assigned players). When more than 11 players are assigned, all will bat and each player will play a minimum of 3 innings on defense (a minimum of 2 innings if the game is over in inning five), however a player may choose to play less. If a team has 11 roster players substitutes are not allowed unless the team needs a pitcher (i.e. the 12<sup>th</sup> player).
- b. A tardy player who arrives before the team has batted through the batting order once may play. The player will bat at the bottom of the batting order and may play any position. A tardy player that arrives after the entire batting order has batted *will not play*, and any substitute player will continue for the remainder of the game.
- c. If the game is 15 or more minutes late in starting, a non-injured player who leaves a game early for a previously Manager informed scheduled appointment may be substituted for with a like or less rated player.
- d. If a non-injured player leaves the game without his manager’s prior knowledge or with less than a sportsman like attitude, they will not be replaced in the field, and will be declared as a “OUT” whenever they would have come to bat. No substitutions are allowed in this instance. If the player was the pitcher and the team has no one else willing to pitch, their team forfeits the game.
- e. Teams may play with any number of roster players and substitutes as long as the total is at least nine. If a team has 12 players in the line-up and a player leaves the game due to injury, they will not be replaced, however the player’s position in the batting order will be bypassed *with no penalty*, and the team will continue the game with 11 players.

EXCEPTION: If the injured player was the team pitcher and no other team member is able to pitch, the manager may get a pitcher to substitute (Rules E.2.a, E.2.b and E.2.c apply).

f. If a team member unexpectedly fails to show up for their game, managers may select any available player with the same, or lower, rating as the missing player. If the missing player shows up before the batting order has been gone through once, they may assume their fielding position and be listed as batting last (Rule E.1.b).

## 2. SUBSTITUTE PLAYERS

Substitute players are required to be obtained from these sources in the listed order:

FIRST: The published green team player placement pool or sub pool player listed or appended to the roster – these players are ready to play but missed the draft.

SECOND: The regular substitute player list

THIRD: The BYE team. The Manager may call the rated player asking if they can play the position needed.

FOURTH: Any team that has already played that day.

FIFTH: If your team has the first game that day, where no qualified substitute player is available from any of the preceding sources, qualified substitutes may be obtained from teams that play later that day.

a. Players rated as a 7 may only replace a 7; an 8 may replace an 8 or 7; a 9 may replace anyone. If no 9's are available, 8-rated players with OBP under .500 may be used. This rule also applies to pitchers.

c. Substitute pitchers may be obtained the same way as substitute players in accordance with the rules (to further clarify, substitute pitchers must have the same or lower rating than the pitcher they are substituting for). If no other pitcher is available, any pitcher may be used, but the Manager must inform the other team of the situation.

## 3. INJURIES

a. An injured player may be replaced if the injury requires them to leave the game and the team strength drops below 11 players

b. The selected replacement may be a player from the stands (from a prior game if possible), however the replacement player must have the same, or lower, rating than the injured player. The replacement player will assume the injured player's position in the batting order. The manager may move fielders around to accommodate the change.

## 4. MAXIMUM NUMBER OF SUBSTITUTIONS

a. Players may either play on their team or substitute a maximum of four times per week.

b. Players may substitute only once per week (M-F) for the same team.

c. If a player is found to be substituting for the same team twice in one week, that team will play without the substitute and take an 'OUT' whenever that player comes to bat.

## 5. COURTESY RUNNERS

a. Courtesy runners may run for another player once per inning (in addition to themselves)

b. A player may request a courtesy runner once they reach base (players must get to first on their own). Managers may not 'assign' a courtesy runner unless the player requests one.

c. Once a courtesy runner touches the base of the runner they are replacing, they are the courtesy runner – a second courtesy runner may not replace the first courtesy runner.

d. If a courtesy runner is on a base when their turn at bat arrives, they will be removed from the base they occupy and take their turn at bat. The player who was replaced by the courtesy runner will be called OUT at the base the courtesy runner occupied.

- e. A courtesy runner may not run for another courtesy runner (exception: courtesy runner who is injured on a play and still on a base may be replaced with another courtesy runner).
- f. A pitcher who is on base with two outs *must* be replaced with a courtesy runner to allow them to get ready to pitch (exception: if the pitcher has already pitched their final inning, they may remain as a baserunner). If the pitcher is used as a courtesy runner, they are *not* replaced once two outs are recorded.

## 6. BALLS/STRIKES

- a. A legal pitch with an arc between 6 to 12 feet that touches any part of home plate, or is swung at and missed by the batter, is a strike.
- b. A legal pitch that does not meet the above is a ball.
- c. An illegal pitch (arc not between 6 to 12 feet) as called by the umpire, is a ball even if it hits the plate, unless the batter still swings, in which case it's a strike, a hit or foul ball.
- d. A foul ball is a strike. The batter is allowed 'one to waste' in that a foul ball that would be considered the third strike is considered a foul ball only, and the at-bat is allowed to continue. Another foul ball or missed swing after that, is an out.

## 7. BASE RUNNING

- a. There is no infield fly rule in the National League. Runners advance at their own risk.
- b. SCW Softball Club uses the double first base (orange/white). The runner must touch the orange bag and the defensive player the white. If the defensive player is pulled into foul territory, the runner may touch the white bag to avoid collisions.
- c. If a defensive player at First Base is pulled into foul territory as a result of a bad throw, the defensive player may also touch the orange bag to record an out if done prior to the batter/runner reaching first base.
- d. A batter/runner or base runner that is touched by a fair batted ball prior to the ball touching or passing an infielder (other than the pitcher) shall be called out.
- e. Base runners may not slide or dive in the National League
- f. Contact between Players is to be avoided. A base runner must avoid a defensive player fielding the ball and must veer out of the base path to avoid contact (or to allow a throw to another bag in attempt for a double play). A defensive player may not block a runner unless fielding the ball.
- g. A Commitment Line is located between third base and home plate. Once a runner from third crosses the commitment line, they may not return to third. Once past the commitment line, If they run along the foul line and interfere with the catcher, a dead ball will be declared and the runner declared out. A scoring line is placed 8 feet from home plate and base runners from third should cross the scoring line to avoid contact with a defensive player.
- h. Runners that *touch the ground* on or after the scoring line prior to a defensive player touching home plate while holding the ball will be safe at home.
- i. Runners may not be tagged out by the defensive team after crossing the commitment line, they must be put out by a defensive player touching home plate while holding the ball before the runner touches or passes the scoring line.
- j. If the runner touches or crosses home plate, or the batter's box, including the lines, the runner will be out and the ball remains live.

k. Defensive players may not decoy base runners into thinking a play is being made on them to impede progress.

#### 8. PITCHER'S BOX

a. The pitcher must throw the ball from either of the pitching rubbers (or between them)

b. During the first game of the day, to avoid looking directly into the sun the batter may request the pitcher to step three feet to either side of the pitching rubber (batter choice).

#### 9. PITCHING MASK

a. All pitchers must wear a protective mask while pitching. Failure to use a pitching mask forfeits the game.

b. Use of a pitching screen does not negate the pitching mask requirement.

c. Pitchers may use any protective equipment they choose in addition to the face mask, including a pitching screen.

#### 10. PITCHING SCREEN

a. Pitchers may use a pitching screen if they choose to do so. Should the opposing pitcher not wish a screen the team using the screen is responsible to remove the screen from the mound area when not on defense.

b. Pitchers using the screen are required to step behind the screen once they have released the ball. Failure to step behind the screen can be penalized by the umpire declaring a ball no matter where located, even if fouled off. The umpire will warn the pitcher once before declaring a ball.

c. Pitchers with a screen that do not consistently step behind the screen after delivery may have the screen option revoked by the NLC.

d. When the pitching screen is being used, the edge of the screen closest to the pitcher will be aligned with the outside edge of the pitching rubber, forward of the closest rubber to the plate (a minimum of 4 feet and a maximum of 8 feet).

e. A batted ball that hits the pitching screen is a dead ball (no strike against the batter)

f. Balls thrown into the screen by a defensive player are live.

g. Pitchers are defensive players and may field any ball they can. If a pitcher is hit with a batted ball, the ball remains live with no penalty.

#### 11. PROTESTS/APPEALS

a. Only the manager of a team may protest or appeal an umpire call. They may address their appeal to either umpire.

b. Appeals from other players are not allowed.

#### 12. EJECTIONS

a. Only an umpire may eject a player.

b. If the umpire ejects a player, the player must immediately leave the ballfield (including the seating areas).

c. If a player is ejected, the umpire is to file a report of the incident with the NLC who will forward it to the Softball Board for possible disciplinary action.

#### 12. WARM UP PITCHES/INFIELD

a. During the first inning 5 to 6 warm-up pitches are allowed. For the remaining innings 2 warm-up pitches (or less). If a relief pitcher is used, the relief pitcher will be allowed 5 warm-up pitches when entering the game.

b. Infield warm-up is only allowed during the first inning.

#### 13. EQUIPMENT

- a. Only ASA bats, rated 1.20 or less, may be used in the National League. No banned bats may be used.
- b. National League ladies may use a Senior/Tournament bat. They must be marked with colored tape on the handle.

c. When ladies bat, the 11" (small) ball will be used, otherwise the 12" (regular) ball is used

#### 14. BATTING OUT OF ORDER

- a. If a player bats out of order, and the error is discovered during the at-bat, the correct batter assumes the at-bat with no penalty, other than assuming the count of the out-of-order batter.
- b. If an improper batter completes the at-bat the proper batter is called out on appeal and any advancing base runners return. If, however, there is no appeal prior to the first pitch of the next batter, the improper batter is considered proper and was either out or remains on base, as appropriate. If the improper batter is on base when he is scheduled to bat, they will be called out on the base and allowed to bat.

15. CATCHERS – in the NL if a ball is fouled off and the Catcher is successful in catching the ball prior to it hitting the ground, the batter is out, regardless of whether the ball went above the batter's head or not.

#### 16. STEP-OFF RULE

- a. Players may request to set-off of either 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> base to avoid being hit by a batted ball.
- b. Players are to stand on the foul side of the bag though they are considered to be playing in FAIR territory, as if standing on the base.

### **F. PLAYER RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### 1. ABSENTEES

- a. Arrive at the field 30 minutes before scheduled game time to loosen up properly. If you will be late or miss a game, notify your manager well ahead of time.
- b. Players who miss, or will miss, six session games (separately or consecutively) will be reassigned to the placement/substitute pool and a replacement player assigned.

#### 2. MANAGERS

- a. Managers are responsible for all aspects of their team. They draft the team and are responsible for ensuring their players are notified, issuing and returning team shirts, formulating the lineup, assigning defensive positions, ensuring a scorekeeper is provided (if visitors), preparing the field (if home team), and submitting a lineup card to the opposing team manager & two copies to the 'press box' (announcer and official scorer).
- b. Managers are also responsible for contacting substitutes as needed or requesting a replacement from the NLC if necessary.
- c. Managers are responsible for contacting a member of the NLC if they have any issues.
- d. Managers are the only member of their team that can appeal a call to an umpire.

#### 3. UMPIRES

- a. The Chief Umpire will assign umpires. An umpire scheduler may also be called upon to assist.
- b. Umpiring responsibilities take precedence over any request to substitute as a player. It will be the responsibility of an umpire assigned to a game to arrange for their own replacement if, for whatever reason, they will be unavailable to umpire.

- c. Umpires should consult with each other if either Manager enters an appeal.
- d. Coaches and players should NOT attempt to make the calls for Base Runners (Safe or Out), whether the ball is fair or foul, or call time.

#### 4. SCOREKEEPERS

- a. Team managers will assign scorekeepers.
- b. Scorekeeping responsibilities take precedence over any request to substitute as a player. It will be the responsibility of an individual assigned as a scorekeeper to arrange for their own replacement if, for whatever reason, they will be unavailable.

#### 5. FIELD MAINTENANCE

- a. The home team is responsible for preparing the field before the first game and securing the field after the last game (before leaving the field, make sure all the buildings are locked)
- b. The visiting team is responsible for providing the scorekeeper for the following game. The home team of the second game provides the scorekeeper for the first game.
- c. Announcers will be provided by the announcement committee.

#### 6. REGISTRATION

- a. Players are responsible for registering online prior to the draft for any upcoming session
- b. Registration for the Spring Session must be accompanied by dues payment (or dues paid prior to registration). Individuals who do not pay their yearly dues may not register.
- c. Individuals who are rated into the NL through the Green Team must pay their dues prior to being drafted, placed on any sub list, or playing.
- d. Married couples desiring to play together must notify the NL Committee prior to any draft. If granted, once one partner is drafted, the other will be placed on the same team (the team will be required to use an assigned later draft pick for that second individual).
- e. NL members who pay their dues and wish to play will be drafted unless a Doctor's note is received stating they should not play. Rosters or teams will be expanded to accommodate. If this requires some teams to have 10 players, those managers will have first call on placement and/or substitute players with the same rating as the missing player.

#### 7. ALCOHOL/TOBACCO/SEEDS/GUM

- a. Alcoholic beverages may not be consumed while playing, scoring, announcing or umpiring a game.
- b. Alcoholic beverages may not be present in the dug-out
- c. No sunflower seeds, chewing tobacco or gum may be used while playing on Liberty Field

#### 8. SUBSTITUTE AND PLACEMENT POOLS

- a. Substitute players may be placed anywhere in the lineup unless the substitute is replacing an injured player, in which case, they will replace the injured player in the batting order (rule E.3.b).
- b. If two equally rated players desire/agree to share a position, they may ask the NLC to treat them as one for roster and substitution purposes. Players so designated will alternate by inning on defense and by plate appearances on offense.
- c. The sub pool is for players who request to be placed there. They may later be placed on a team if a regular player is lost for the season (or for six games). Players on the sub pool are not required to be placed on a regular team but may sub the entire session.
- d. The Placement Pool is for new players (i.e. from the Green Team) that wish to play but missed the draft, or players returning after missing 5 games and were removed from their former team. Managers may request players from the Placement pool as follows:

1. The manager contacts the NL Committee immediately after the 5<sup>th</sup> absence (bye's and rainouts do not count as a missed game).
2. The NL Chairman or Committee member will arrange for a replacement.
3. In the event more than one Manager needs a replacement, the sequence for replacement will be the game date and time the 5<sup>th</sup> absence occurred. If both are equal, the managers will flip a coin to determine which receive the first replacement player.
4. The NL Chairman or Committee Member will inform the player of their assigned team.

## 9. SAFETY

- a. All players must follow all safety protocol rules as mandated and published by the SCW Softball Club. Additionally, two members of the National League will be assigned to the Softball Board Safety Committee as NL representatives.
- b. For any injuries where blood is drawn, the wound must be covered and not continuing to bleed prior to the player resuming play.
- c. If a player hits his head on the ground while falling, or has the ball hit his head (if even if they are wearing a mask or helmet), they will be evaluated for concussion immediately. Additionally, they are to sit out the remainder of the game to ensure they are OK. Managers may request a substitute player during the remainder of the game.
- d. Violations of these rules may affect a player's ability to participate in future games.

## G. MISCELLANEOUS

### 1. PLAYERS MOVING LEAGUES

- a. NL Players rated as 7 may request to be added to the CL draft during the Spring or Fall Session drafts (this does not guarantee being drafted). They must inform the CL Commissioner, or a member of the CL board, of their intention and will have to go to the CL 'Showcase' prior to the CL draft to be considered.
- b. Players currently in the CL that were not drafted by the CL and choose to play in the NL instead of being on the CL substitute roster will be transferred to the NL, rated as a 7, and drafted.
- c. Players currently in the CL that were drafted by the CL *may not* request a transfer to the NL for personal or personnel issues. The ability of the player determines the league.

### 2. RULE CHANGES

- a. Rule changes will be voted upon by the NL Committee prior to any implementation, and must pass with a majority vote.
- b. All rule changes will be submitted to the Softball Board.