

Restricted Bat League (RBL)

Important RBL Playing Rules

The RBL Management Team

Jack Nagle, RBL Commissioner
Wayne Grunewald, RBL Coordinator of Roster and Sub Pool Players
Jack Nagle and Herb Lauer, RBL Co-Chief Umpires
Mike Bernier, RBL Bat Coordinator
Arnie Bott, RBL Uniform Coordinator
Nick Sticco, RBL Webmaster

Fall 2020 Team Co-Managers

Bunnings: Fred King and Nick Sticco
Koufaxes: Gary Coleman and Rick Harris
Mantles: Joe Fiorentino and Dave Thomas
Morgans: Dean Hooker and Darren Ivey
Ripkens: Bruce Carlson and Ernie Joyal
Roses: Ed Falconer and Allen Scheel
Williams: Ron Guba and Jack Manter

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RBL Website

www.softballatthevillages.com

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Softball games in the Restricted Bat League (RBL) are guided by a hierarchy of playing rules. The hierarchy begins with rules and regulations defined by The Villages Recreation Department at the following website:

<http://www.districtgov.org/departments/recreation/images/Recreation%20Softball%20League%20Procedures>

The hierarchy of RBL playing rules then flows as follows:

1. Playing rules defined by Senior Softball USA (SSUSA)
2. Playing rules in the Division III Neighborhood Softball League (N3), which are based largely on Rec 3 playing rules
3. And a small number of playing rules unique to RBL.

In effect, nearly all RBL playing rules are based on SSUSA and Neighborhood 3 (N3) playing rules.

All SSUSA and Neighborhood 3 (N3) playing rules are posted on the N3 website at

www.allprosoftware.net/N3_schedule_website

All RBL playing rules are posted on the RBL website at

www.softballatthevillages.com

Described below are some of the most important RBL playing rules. As noted in the “Table of Contents,” most of these playing rules are the “Same in N3 and RBL” (black type). A small number of them are “**Unique to RBL**” (red type).

Included as well for many of the rules are any relevant SSUSA rules cited in the 2017-18 *Official Senior Softball--USA Rulebook*.

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Important RBL Playing Rules

(Rules in Black Type are the “Same in N3 and RBL”)
(Rules in Red Type are “Unique to RBL”)

(1) Player Notification of an Expected Absence *(Unique to RBL)*

In RBL, players who expect to be absent from a game are expected to notify their manager no later than the Friday before the Tuesday they will be absent. If they learn after Friday that they will be absent, they should notify their manager immediately.

(2) Number of Permitted Player Absences *(Unique to RBL)*

In RBL, players signed a commitment on their RBL application to play 70% of a season’s regular and playoff games. (For instance, during a total season of 14 games, this means that they will not miss any more than 4 games.)

Before a season begins, managers will remind players of this commitment. Managers will then monitor absences and talk with any players who are nearing the maximum number of permitted absences. When a manager feels that a player’s absences are hurting his team and other players, the manager will make a recommendation to the RBL Commissioner and the RBL Coordinator of Roster and Sub Pool Players on whether the player should be allowed to remain on the team’s roster for the rest of the season. The manager, Commissioner, and Coordinator will review the reasons for the excessive absences, and together they will make a decision on the manager’s recommendation and communicate their decision to the player.

If the decision is to drop the player from the team, the manager will rely on either Sub Pool players or an available replacement player to fill out the team’s roster for the rest of the season. In addition, if the player applies to be a roster player during the next RBL season, the action taken this season will be noted on the Draft List for that next season.

(3) Check-In Prior to the Start of a Game *(Same in N3 and RBL)*

In both N3 and RBL, players are expected to check in with their managers 30-45 minutes prior to the start of a game.

(4) Number of Required Roster Players in a Lineup *(Same in N3 and RBL)*

In both N3 and RBL, failure of a team to have at least seven (7) of its regular roster players in its lineup for a game is grounds for a game forfeit and a losing score of 7-0.

(5) Number of Permitted Subs *(Unique to RBL)*

In RBL, the maximum number of subs that can be assigned to a team is four subs. If there are not enough subs to assign four subs, a team can play with 10 players and request the opposing team to supply a catcher.

(6) Preparation of Game Lineups *(Unique to RBL)*

All decisions about a team's batting order and defensive assignments are the exclusive responsibility of a team manager. While the manager may consider the preferences of players, final decisions rest with the manager, and players must abide by those decisions.

All players, including subs, who will need a courtesy runner should be identified on the lineup.

Prior to game time, managers are expected to give a copy of their lineup to both the scorekeepers in the tower and the manager of the opposing team.

(7) Playing Defensively *(Same in N3 and RBL)*

In both N3 and RBL, every player in the lineup must bat when he is scheduled to bat, and he must play defensively for at least three innings. Failure of a team to comply with this rule will result in a game forfeit.

(8) Bats Permitted *(Unique to RBL)*

In RBL, the league's Coordinator of Bats is responsible for examining and approving all bats that can be used in RBL games and for affixing each permitted bat with a "Villages Softball RBL Approved" bat sticker. In addition, prior to the start of a game, umpires are expected to examine all bats that will be used in that game to ensure that they have an RBL-approved bat sticker.

Three kinds of bats **can** be legally used in RBL games:

- (a) Softball bats that are 100% wood
- (b) Single-piece/single-wall softball bats that are 100% aluminum or 100% steel
- (c) Two-piece softball bats that have a composite handle and a single-wall barrel that is 100% aluminum or 100% steel.

In addition, to be a legal bat in RBL, the bat's barrel size must be 2 ¼ inches, and the bat must be ASA, USA, or SSUSA certified and have a 1.20 BPF marking.

Four kinds of bats **cannot** be legally used in RBL games:

- (a) All multi-wall aluminum, steel, or composite bats (e.g., Miken double-wall composite bats)
- (b) All titanium bats
- (c) All 100% composite bats or two-piece bats with a composite barrel
- (d) All bats that have a 1.21 BPF marking.

Because the kind of bats used are a defining feature of the Restricted Bat League, and because the skill level of players ranges across Division 2, 3, and 4 Rec and Neighborhood Leagues, there are explicit penalties for hitting a pitch with an unapproved bat:

- (a) The penalty if a player hits a pitch with a bat that does not have a "Villages Softball RBL Approved" bat sticker is:**

Ejection from the game and an out every time thereafter the player would have batted.

The penalty if a player hits a pitch with a titanium or double-wall aluminum, steel, or composite bat (e.g., a Miken bat) is:

His team's game forfeit and a losing score of 7-0.

(9) Pitcher's Protective Equipment

(Same in N3 and RBL)

In both N3 and RBL, pitchers are required to wear an NOCSAE-approved protective face mask while pitching and to wear it consistent with the manufacturer's intended use of the mask. Pitchers are also permitted to wear any other protective equipment they consider necessary for their safety, including chest, knee, and/or leg protectors.

(10) Pitcher's Use of a Protective Screen

(Same in N3 and RBL)

In both N3 and RBL, the following rules apply when a pitcher chooses to use a protective screen. *(The parenthetical rule clarifications in italics were developed by the Chief Umpires of Rec 3 and N3 in 2016.)*

- (a) The team using the screen is responsible for correct placement and removal of the screen at the end of each half-inning. *(When not in use, the screen must be completely removed from the field, i.e., moved outside the fences.)*
- (b) The screen must directly face home plate within one to three feet in front of the pitcher's rubber that defines the home plate end of the pitcher's box. If a pitcher chooses to use the full depth of the 10-foot pitcher's box, then the screen must be positioned in the one-to-three foot limits of where he chooses to pitch.
- (c) To maximize the pitcher's safety, the screen must be placed to the left of a right-handed pitcher and to the right of a left-handed pitcher. The screen may be positioned anywhere from the outer left side of the pitcher's rubber for a right-handed pitcher to the outer right side of the pitcher's rubber for a left-handed pitcher. These lines are extended to the rear of the pitcher's box if the pitcher chooses to pitch further back in the pitcher's box.
- (d) Any pitch delivered with the screen not in a legal position will be declared an "Illegal Pitch/Ball." If a pitcher refuses to place the screen in the correct position, the umpire will notify the player's manager and remove the pitcher from pitching.
- (e) If a pitcher chooses to use a screen, he must step completely behind the screen by the time each pitched ball reaches the plate. Failure to do so will result in the umpire calling each pitched ball an "Illegal Pitch/Ball."

Further Clarification of Rule (e)

Since a pitcher has chosen to use a pitching screen for his own safety, his failure to step completely behind the screen will advantage the batter as follows:

<i>Batting Situation</i>	<i>Umpire Call</i>
<i>1. The pitch misses the strike mat</i>	
<i>2. The pitch hits the strike mat</i>	<i>The umpire should call an "Illegal</i>

3. The batter swings and misses 4. The batter hits a foul ball.	Pitch/Ball” in all four situations.
The batter hits a fair ball which results in a single, double, triple, or home run.	The umpire should say nothing and let the play continue to its completion as if there was no infraction by the pitcher.
The batter hits a fair ball that results in a ground out, a force out, or a caught line drive or fly ball.	The umpire should call an “Illegal Pitch,” award the batter a “Dead Ball/Single,” and advance all runners one base without any outs recorded.

Again, since the pitcher chose to use the pitching screen for safety reasons and then failed to follow the rules for its use, all advantages flow to the batter.

- (f) Any batted ball striking any portion of the screen will be declared a “Dead Ball/No Pitch.” All rules governing a “Dead Ball/No Pitch” will apply.
- (g) A pitcher cannot field a “hard-driven ball” (umpire judgment) that is hit up the middle. The penalty for doing so will be a “Dead Ball/Single” for the batter, and all runners will advance one base. A pitcher can field “a slow rolling grounder or a pop-up” (umpire judgment) with no penalty.”
- (h) All thrown balls hitting the screen are live, and play continues.

(11) Legal Delivery of a Pitch

(Same in N3 and RBL)

In both N3 and RBL, “the height of a legal pitch must be from 6 to 12 feet above the playing surface.” *(SSUSA Rule 6.3)*

“Before starting the pitch, the pitcher must take a position with at least one foot in contact with the pitcher’s box. The pitcher must come to a full and complete stop with the ball in front of the body. The front of the body must face the batter. This position must be maintained for at least one second before starting the pitch.” *(SSUSA Rule 6.4)*

“Legal delivery” of a pitch requires that:

- (a) “The pitcher must not make any motion to pitch without immediately delivering the ball to the batter.
- (b) The delivery is a continuous motion.
- (c) The pitcher must not use a delivery in which there is a stop or reversal of the pitching motion.
- (d) The pitcher must deliver the ball toward home plate on the first forward pass of the pitching arm past the hip with an underhanded motion.
- (e) The pivot foot must remain in contact with the pitcher’s box until the pitched ball leaves the hand. If a step is taken, it can be forward, backward, or to the side, provided the pivot foot is in contact with the pitcher’s box and the step is simultaneous with the release of the ball.” *(SSUSA Rule 6.6)*

A “quick pitch” is “a pitch made by the pitcher with the obvious attempt to catch the batter unprepared. This would be before the batter takes his desired position in the batter’s box.” “No Pitch” will be declared by the umpire if “the pitcher attempts to ‘quick pitch’ the batter.” (SSUSA Rules 1.56 and 6.13 B)

(12) Beginning Count *(Applies in RBL, But Not in N3)*

In RBL, all batters begin their plate appearance with a count of no balls and no strikes (0 and 0).

(13) Foul Ball on the Third Strike *(Same in N3 and RBL)*

In both N3 and RBL, “upon hitting a foul ball on the third strike, the batter is out.” (SSUSA Rule 7.66)

(14) Out of the Batter’s Box When Hitting the Ball *(Same in N3 and RBL)*

In both N3 and RBL, the batter’s box is not defined by the outside edge of the batting platform, but rather by the lines on the batting platform that define a 3-foot by 7-foot area to which the batter is restricted. The lines are considered to be within the batter’s box. “At least some portion of both feet of the batter must be on the line or within the batter’s box” when he hits the ball fair or foul. (SSUSA Rule 1.5)

A batter will be declared out “when an entire foot is touching the ground completely outside the lines of the batter’s box when he hits a ball fair or foul” or “when any part of a foot is touching the strike mat when he hits a ball fair or foul.” (SSUSA Rules 7.6 C and 7.6 D)

“The batter must have at least some portion of both feet on or inside the lines of the batter’s box at the start of the pitch. A batter who steps out of the batter’s box at any time during the pitch and then hits the ball fair or foul shall be called out. ‘Steps out’ means touching the ground completely outside of the lines of the batter’s box.” (SSUSA Rule 7.3 A)

(15) Bunting, Chopping, or Not Taking a Full Swing *(Same in N3 and RBL)*

In both N3 and RBL, a batter will be called out when he “bunts or chops the ball, or does not take a full swing [i.e., fails to break his wrists] when deliberately hitting a pitched ball.” (SSUSA Rule 7.6 E)

(16) Fair and Foul Batted Balls *(Same in N3 and RBL)*

In both N3 and RBL, “a batted ball shall be judged according to the relative position of the ball and the foul line and not as to whether the fielder is on fair or foul territory at the time he touches the ball. It does not matter whether the ball first touches fair or foul territory, as long as it does not touch anything foreign to the natural ground in foul territory and complies with all other aspects of a fair ball.”

“A fair ball is a legally batted ball that:

- (a) Settles or is touched on or over fair territory between home and first base or between home and third base”

- (b) Hits the ground in fair territory before reaching first or third base and then “bounds over or past first or third base, which is in fair territory, regardless of where the ball hits after going over the base
- (c) While on or over fair territory, touches the person, attached equipment, or clothing of a player or an umpire
- (d) Touches first, second, or third base
- (e) First falls or is touched on or over fair territory beyond first, second, or third base.” (SSUSA Rule 1.22)

“A **foul ball** is a legally batted ball that:

- (a) Settles or is touched on or over foul territory between home and first base or between home and third base”
- (b) Hits the ground in fair territory before reaching first or third base and then “bounds or rolls past first or third base on or over foul territory
- (c) While over foul territory, touches the person, attached equipment, or clothing of a player or an umpire, or is blocked
- (d) First hits the ground or is first touched over foul territory beyond first or third base
- (e) Touches the batter or the bat in the batter’s hand(s) a second time while the batter is within the batter’s box.” (SSUSA Rule 1.28)

Four Important Notes About Calling Fair and Foul Balls:

- (a) *The home plate umpire is in the best position make the call, but he usually has to move from behind home plate to be in that best position.*
- (b) *Foul balls should always be indicated non-verbally and called verbally loudly enough for everyone to hear the call.*
- (c) *Fair balls should be indicated only non-verbally and should never be called verbally.*
- (d) *Once the call is made, umpires must live with the call, regardless of whether it turns out to be correct or incorrect. The call is not subject to appeal, and because of its impact on both runners and fielders, the call should not be changed.*

(17) Running in the Base Path

(Same in N3 and RBL)

In both N3 and RBL, “a base path is an imaginary line that is three feet on either side of a direct line between the bases.” (SSUSA Rule 1.3)

A batter-runner is out “when he runs outside the running lane [between home plate and first base] and, in the umpire’s judgment, interferes with the fielder taking the throw at first base; however, he may run outside the three-foot lane to avoid a fielder attempting to field a batted ball.” (SSUSA Rule 8.3 D) A batter-runner is also out “when he interferes with a fielder attempting to field a batted ball or intentionally interferes [umpire judgment] with a fielder attempting to throw the ball.” (SSUSA Rule 8.3 E)

A base-runner is out if he runs significantly outside a base path to avoid a tag (umpire judgment). He is not out if he runs outside the base path to avoid interfering with a fielder who is catching a batted ball or making a play at a base.

(18) Orange and White Bags at First Base

(Same in N3 and RBL)

In both N3 and RBL, a double bag is used at first base, the double portion of the bag being in foul territory abutting first base. If there is a play on a batter-runner going to first base, the batter-runner must touch only the Orange Bag extending into foul territory. His touch of the White Bag or both bags simultaneously (umpire judgment) will result in being called out, unless, in the umpire's judgment, the batter-runner was avoiding a collision. If there is no play at first base, the batter-runner can touch either bag.

The defending player has only the White Bag in fair territory to make the putout. His touch of only the Orange Bag in foul territory or both bags simultaneously (umpire judgment) during the put-out at first base will not result in an out. After making the put-out at first base, any subsequent touch of the Orange Bag by the defensive player will not result in the batter-runner being called safe.

After the batter-runner becomes a base runner, the defensive player may use either portion of the double bag to record a put-out, and the base runner may use either the White Bag or the Orange Bag or both bags while on first base. The practical effect is that, once the batter-runner becomes solely a base runner, the two bases are "merged" for both offensive and defensive purposes. (*SSUSA Rule 8.4.1*)

(19) Substitute or Courtesy Runners

*(Mostly the Same in N3 and RBL,
Others Unique to RBL)*

(a) In both N3 and RBL, only a player (not a manager) can declare that he will need a courtesy runner, and he is expected to do this prior to the start of a game.

(b) *In RBL, any regular roster player or sub can get a courtesy runner.*

(Unique to RBL)

(c) In both N3 and RBL, prior to the game, managers should identify on their lineup the specific players who will require a courtesy runner, **including any assigned subs for that game.**

(Unique to RBL)

(d) Each time a player who needs a courtesy runner comes to bat, he is expected to tell the home plate umpire that he will need a runner, and this fact should be announced to the opposing team by the umpire and/or scorekeepers.

(e) If a player feels that he needs a runner after the line-up has been turned in and the game has begun, his manager must ask the opposing manager if that change in the lineup is acceptable. If the opposing manager has no objection, the home plate umpire will notify the scorekeepers in the tower of the lineup change, and the player will be allowed to get a runner during the rest of the game. If the opposing manager objects, the player will not be allowed to get a courtesy runner.

(f) A player who needs a courtesy runner has two options each time he comes to bat:

Option 1: He can stop at first base and, after the umpire calls time, he must then get a runner.

Option 2: He can advance to any base beyond first base, including home plate. If he reaches second or third base successfully, he must remain at that base and cannot get a

runner. After he rounds first base, he will be treated as a regular runner, and he advances beyond first base at his own risk.

If he reaches second or third base successfully and then decides he cannot continue to run, he can get a runner at that point, but he must leave the game. If his team will still have 11 or more players, any player on the team eligible to be a courtesy runner can become the substitute runner. If his team will have only 10 players after he leaves the game, his manager can request an "injury sub" who will become the substitute runner.

- (g) Any regular roster player or sub can be a courtesy runner unless he himself needs a runner.
- (h) A courtesy runner can run only once an inning, but he can run multiple times during a game. If a player who has already run once in an inning touches first base with the intent to run a second time that inning, and if the opposing manager notifies the home plate umpire of this fact before the first pitch to the next batter, the batter who needs the runner will be called out and no runner will be needed. If there is no objection before the first pitch to the next batter, the runner who has already run once that inning will be allowed to run a second time and no penalty will be assessed. It is up to managers, not umpires or scorekeepers in the tower, to keep track of runners who run each inning.
- (i) If a courtesy runner is still on base when he is scheduled to bat, he will be called out as a base runner. If that out is the first or second out of the inning, the base runner who has been declared out must take his scheduled turn at bat; if the out is the third out of the inning, he becomes the leadoff batter in the next inning.
- (j) A pitcher who removes protective equipment (other than a mask) before he bats or runs bases must get a courtesy runner when he is on base with two outs. Consistent with other N3 courtesy runner rules, any regular team member who does not himself need a runner and who has not already run that inning can serve as the pitcher's courtesy runner.

(20) Leaving a Base Early

(Same in N3 and RBL)

In both N3 and RBL, if a runner leaves a base "before a pitched ball reaches home plate, is batted, or touches the ground before reaching home plate," the runner should be called out by the umpire, the pitch should be declared "No Pitch/Dead Ball," and all other runners should be returned to the bases they had reached before the pitch. This is an umpire call, not an appeal call. (*SSUSA Rule 6.13 C*)

(21) Runner Hit by a Batted or Thrown Ball

(Same in N3 and RBL)

In both N3 and RBL, "a batter-runner is out when he makes contact with a fair batted ball before reaching first base. The ball is dead, and all other runners shall return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch." (*SSUSA Rule 8.3 F*)

"If a runner is hit by [a fair batted] ball while off base and before it passes an infielder (excluding the pitcher), the ball is dead, and the hit runner is declared out. The batter-runner is awarded first base without liability to be put out." (*SSUSA Rule 8.2 C2*)

If the runner is hit by a batted ball that is first touched by a fielder or by a thrown ball, the runner is not out, and play is live.

(22) **Thrown Ball Enters a Dugout**

(Same in N3 and RBL)

In both N3 and RBL, if a thrown ball goes into the fielding team's dugout because the fielding team failed to close its dugout gate, the ball is dead, time is called, and all runners will be awarded one base.

If the ball goes into the batting team's dugout because the batting team failed to close its dugout gate, the ball is dead, time is called, and all runners must return to the last base they had reached before the ball entered the dugout.

(23) **Fielder Obstruction**

(Same in N3 and RBL)

In both N3 and RBL, bases belong to the runner. Therefore, **Obstruction** will be called on a fielder who impedes the progress of a runner who is legally running in the base paths or to a base if the fielder is not in possession of the ball, he is not fielding a batted ball, or he is not about to receive a thrown ball at the base. An **Obstruction** call requires umpire judgment. When it occurs, the umpire will signal a "Delayed Dead Ball," and when the play is over, the umpire will award the obstructed runner and all other runners affected by the **Obstruction** the base or bases they would have reached if, in the umpire's judgment, there had been no **Obstruction**.

(24) **Runner Interference**

(Same in N3 and RBL)

In both N3 and RBL, runners will be called out for **Interference** with a defensive player if, in the umpire's judgment, the runner physically impeded the defensive player, had deliberate contact with him, or could have reasonably avoided contact and failed to do so. If in the umpire's judgment the runner's **Interference** prevented the defensive player from making a subsequent play, the runner closest to home will also be called out.

If the runner is already out as he approaches the base, or if he sees that he is very likely to be called out, he should "veer off" away from the base and/or defensive player to avoid **Interference**. If the play becomes a "broken play," the runner should run to the base.

If the umpire rules deliberate contact on the part of the defensive player, the runner will be called safe.

(25) **Coach Interference**

(Same in N3 and RBL)

In both N3 and RBL, "when in the umpire's judgment a coach touches and physically assists a runner, a "Delayed Dead Ball" signal will be given and play shall continue. The touched and assisted runner shall be called out, and all other subsequent play will be ruled upon accordingly."
(SSUSA Rule 9.2 V)

(26) **Verbal Interference**

(Same in N3 and RBL)

In both N3 and RBL, offensive and defensive players on the field, coaching at the bases, or in the dugout should avoid **Verbal Interference** during the course of a game. This includes calling balls and strikes, calling batted balls fair or foul, calling runners out or safe, shouting at fielders when running to bases, or any other verbal comments that preempt umpire calls or are designed to interfere or disrupt runners or fielders. At the discretion of umpires, penalties for verbal interference can range from warnings to calling runners out or safe to ejecting players from a game.

(27) **Run Bys** *(Unique to RBL)*

In both N3 and RBL, there are no run bys. In RBL, however, a runner who overruns a base or makes a turn to the next base and then decides to return to the base he passed will be called out if the fielder with the ball tags either the runner or the base before the runner safely returns to the base. For the fielder, therefore, this can be either a tag play or a force play for an out.

(28) **Losing Contact with a Base** *(Unique to RBL)*

A runner sometimes successfully achieves a base, but fails to “hold it.” In RBL, the runner will be called out if a fielder with the ball tags the runner before he successfully regains contact with the base. For the fielder, therefore, this must be a tag play for an out.

(29) **Sliding or Diving into a Base** *(Same in N3 and RBL)*

In both N3 and RBL, a runner will be called out if he slides or dives in an effort to reach any base or home plate. However, runners may slide or dive when returning to a base or to home plate.

(30) **Rundowns** *(Same in N3 and RBL)*

In both N3 and RBL, there are no rundowns. A rundown begins when either a batted ball or a ball thrown by a defensive player making a play on a base runner is fielded ahead of the runner. The runner can continue to advance to the next base, or he can reverse direction (but only once) in an effort to return to the last base he had reached safely. If he reverses direction more than once, he will be called out, unless the ball is overthrown at either base, in which case the runner can try to advance to the next base without first returning to touch the last base he had reached safely.

(31) **The Commitment Line Near Home Plate** *(Same in N3 and RBL)*

In both N3 and RBL, once a runner’s foot touches the ground on or past the commitment line near home plate, the runner must advance to the “runner’s scoring plate.” He cannot return to third base. If he reverses direction and re-crosses the commitment line, he will be called out, and the ball will remain live until time is called. *(SSUSA Rule 1.15)*

(32) **Scoring a Run/Achieving an Out at Home Plate** *(Same in N3 and RBL)*

In both N3 and RBL, to score a run, a runner must use the “runner’s scoring plate” located several feet from the “batting platform” on the third base side of the “batting platform.” If the runner “touches or crosses over any portion of the strike mat or the batter’s box,” he will be called out, and the ball will remain live until time is called. *(SSUSA Rule 8.9.2)*

In both N3 and RBL, to achieve an out at home plate, a defensive player must use the “strike zone mat.” If instead he uses the “runner’s scoring plate,” the runner will be called safe, and the defensive player may be called for **Obstruction**. In addition, once the runner crosses the commitment line, the defensive player must use the “strike zone mat” to achieve an out. He cannot tag the runner. If he does, the runner will be called safe, and the ball will remain live until time is called. *(SSUSA Rule 1.15)*

(33) What Constitutes a Catch

(Same in N3 and RBL)

In both N3 and RBL, a catch is valid when the fielder holds the ball long enough to prove he has complete control of it and that his release of the ball is voluntary and intentional. If a player drops the ball after reaching into his glove to remove it or while in the act of throwing, it is a valid catch. It is not a valid catch if, immediately after fielding the ball, the player falls down or collides with another player, an umpire, or a fence and drops the ball as a result of the fall or collision. “A ball that strikes anything other than a defensive player while it is in flight [e.g., the backstop, a fence, a dugout wall, an overhanging branch] is ruled the same as if it had struck the ground.” *(SSUSA Rule 1.10)*

(34) A Trapped Ball

(Same in N3 and RBL)

In both N3 and RBL, a trapped ball is “a batted fly ball or line drive that hits the ground or a fence prior to being caught” or “a thrown ball to any base for a force out that is caught with the glove over the ball on the ground rather than under the ball. A trapped ball is not a catch.” *(SSUSA Rule 1.63)*

(35) Use of Illegal Equipment by a Fielder

(Same in N3 and RBL)

In both N3 and RBL, “when a fielder intentionally contacts or catches a fair batted or thrown ball with his helmet, cap, mask, protector, pocket, detached glove or any part of his uniform that is detached from its proper place on his person...[all] runners will be entitled to three bases from the time of the pitch if it’s a batted ball or two bases from the time of the throw if it’s a thrown ball, and, in either case, they can advance farther at their own risk.” *(SSUSA Rule 8.4 (10) C)*

(36) Infield Flies

(Same in N3 and RBL)

In both N3 and RBL, “the infield is that portion of the field in fair territory that includes areas normally covered by infielders.” *(SSUSA Rule 1.40)* In both leagues, it is umpire judgment whether this includes areas that are a few feet into the grass beyond the infield.

An infield fly is “a fair fly ball [not including a hard or soft line drive] that can be caught by any fielder [in or near the infield] with ordinary effort [umpire judgment] when first and second bases or first, second, and third bases are occupied with less than two outs. Any fielder can catch an infield fly.

When it becomes apparent that a batted ball will be an infield fly, the umpire shall protect the runners by declaring “Infield Fly—Batter Out” when the ball reaches the highest point. If the ball is near the foul lines, the umpire shall declare “Infield Fly—If Fair.” “If the hit ball becomes a foul ball, it is treated the same as any other foul ball.” *(SSUSA Rule 1.41)*

In an infield fly situation, “the ball is live, and runners may advance at the risk of the ball being caught or [they can] re-touch and advance after a fielder touches the ball.” If the fly ball is caught, the batter is out, there is no force out, and runners must tag up before advancing to the next base. If the fly ball is not caught and it lands in fair territory, the batter is still out and there is still no force out, but runners can advance at their own risk without having to tag up. *(SSUSA Rules 1.41 and 8.3 I)*

Three Important Notes About Calling Infield Flies

- a. *Before a game begins, the game's umpires should decide whether the home plate umpire or either umpire will call infield flies.*
- b. *If an infield fly is called when it is not really an infield fly situation, (for instance, there are already two outs or there are not runners on both first and second base or on first, second, and third base), the umpires must live with the call. The call is not subject to appeal, and because of its impact on both runners and fielders, the call should not be changed.*
- c. *If the umpires fail to call an infield fly when it should have been called and the error is discovered prior to the next pitch, the umpires can still apply the infield fly rule to the prior play. The batter will be out, and all runners will return to the bases they occupied prior to the infield fly. (SSUSA Rule 1.41)*

(37) Intentionally Dropped Fly Balls or Line Drives

(Same in N3 and RBL)

In both N3 and RBL, “when an infielder intentionally drops, or lets drop, a fair fly ball, including a line drive, that can be caught with ordinary effort [umpire judgment] with first base only, or first base and any other base(s) occupied, with less than two outs...the ball is dead, the batter-runner is out, and each runner shall return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch.” (SSUSA Rule 8.3 J)

(38) Ground Rules

(Same in N3 and RBL)

In both N3 and RBL, if “a fair [batted] ball bounces over or rolls under or through a fence or any designated boundary of the playing field” or if “it deflects off a runner or umpire and goes out of play, the ball is dead, and all runners are awarded two bases.” Additional bases can be awarded if, in the umpire’s judgment, the fair ball left the field of play as a result of an intentional act by a defensive player. (SSUSA Rule 8.4 (10) E)

(39) Run Limits Each Inning (Including “catch up”)

(Same in N3 and RBL)

In both N3 and RBL, teams are limited to five runs each inning, except in the seventh or later innings when a team can score an unlimited number of runs. A team behind by more than five runs in any inning prior to the seventh inning can score “5 runs plus 1 run” in an effort to catch up.

All runners on base who are forced to the next base as a result of the hit or walk that enabled the fifth (or sixth) run must touch the next base. Any runner who fails to touch the next required base before leaving the field will be called out, and the fifth (or sixth) run will not be counted.

(40) The Mercy Rule

(Same in N3 and RBL)

In both N3 and RBL, the required run difference for a mercy win is 12 runs (not 15 as it is in Rec 3).

If the visiting team is ahead by 12 or more runs after five complete innings (or after four and a half innings if the home team is ahead by 12 or more runs), the game will be complete.

If the visiting team is ahead by 12 or more runs after its at-bat in the sixth inning, the home team must have a chance to bat in the bottom of the sixth inning before a mercy win can be declared.

(41) Base Runner at the Start of Extra Innings *(Same in N3 and RBL)*

In both N3 and RBL, when the score is tied after seven innings, teams start their at-bat during each extra inning with a runner on second base. That base runner is the last player at bat during the previous inning who did not require a courtesy runner (or the batter prior to him who did not require a courtesy runner).

(42) Playing a Game to Completion *(Same in N3 and RBL)*

In both N3 and RBL, there is no inning limit and no time limit on completing a game. A game is official after completion of five innings (or 4 ½ innings if the home team is ahead).

(43) Appeal Plays *(Same in N3 and RBL)*

In both N3 and RBL, “an appeal play is a play on which an umpire may not make a decision until requested by a manager, coach, or player. The appeal must be made before the next legal or illegal pitch, before an intentional walk, or before the pitcher and all infielders have clearly vacated their normal fielding positions and have left fair territory on their way to the bench or dugout area.”

Only these five situations can be appealed, that is, they require an appeal by a manager, coach, or player before an umpire makes a call:

- (a) A runner misses a base
- (b) A runner who is tagging up on a caught fly ball leaves a base before the ball is first touched by the fielder
- (c) A batter bats out of order
- (d) A runner attempts to advance to second base after making a turn at first base toward second base
- (e) An umpire must decide whether a runner reached home plate safely before or after a third out that did not involve a force play.

(44) Umpire Decisions *(Same in N3 and RBL)*

In both N3 and RBL, the decisions of umpires are final with regard to balls and strikes, fair or foul balls, safe or out runners, caught or dropped balls, interference or obstruction violations, etc.

(45) Grounds for a Game Forfeit *(Some the Same in N3 and RBL, Others Unique to RBL)*

In both N3 and RBL, the following are grounds for a game forfeit and a losing score of 7-0:

- (a) Failure of a team to have at least seven (7) of its regular roster players listed in its lineup for a game

- (b) Use of a double-wall or composite bat (e.g., a Miken bat)

(Unique to RBL)

- (c) Failure of the team's manager to monitor the playing time of team members and ensure that every player in the lineup bats every time he is scheduled to bat and plays defensively for at least three (3) innings
- (d) Failure of a team to resume play after a rain delay if a thunder and lightning storm has passed, 20 minutes have elapsed since the last lightning strike, the fields are still playable, and a decision to resume play has been made by the RBL Commissioner or his designate. *(Unique to RBL)*
- (e) Failure of a player who has been ejected from a game to leave the softball complex immediately after being ejected or subsequent failure of a player who has been suspended to leave the softball complex when he is asked to do so.

(46) Playing a Game Under Protest *(Same in N3 and RBL)*

In both N3 and RBL, games cannot be played under protest

(47) Discipline (Including Ejection) of a Player or Manager *(Same in N3 and RBL)*

In both N3 and RBL, all individuals who participate in softball games are expected to maintain proper decorum, comply with all league rules, regulations, and procedures, and consistently treat team members, team managers, and the league's volunteer umpires with respect.

Any of the following offenses, whether committed before, during, or after a game as players are leaving their dugouts, can result in (a) ejection of a player or manager from the game by the game's home plate (or base) umpire, who may or may not first consult with the player's team manager and/or his fellow umpire, (b) filing of an *Umpire Incident Report Form* if the game is over and ejection is no longer relevant, and/or (c) other disciplinary action by The Villages Recreation Department:

- (a) Badgering a fellow player, manager, or umpire
- (b) Engaging in an extended dispute over an umpire's call
- (c) Verbally abusing a fellow player, manager, or umpire
- (d) Making physical threats upon or fighting with other players or umpires
- (e) Throwing equipment (e.g., a bat or glove) in a display of anger or frustration
- (f) Using excessive profanity on the playing field or in the dugout
- (g) Smoking on the playing field or in the dugout
- (h) Consuming alcoholic beverages prior to or during a game in which the individual is participating as a player, manager, umpire, or scorekeeper.

If a player or manager is ejected from a game or commits a post-game offence, these are the consequences:

- (a) If the game is still being played, the individual must leave the softball complex (not just the field) for the remainder of the game. Failure to do so will require the individual's team to forfeit the game.
- (b) As soon as possible after the individual's ejection or commitment of the post-game offence, the umpire involved is required to file an *Umpire Incident Report Form* with The Villages Recreation Department, the RBL Commissioner, and the individual's team manager.

- (c) As indicated in the *Recreation Softball League Policies & Procedures of The Villages Department of Recreation and Parks* (www.districtgov.org)

Eligibility of players due to violations of the VCCD Recreation code of conduct is the duty of the Recreation Department. A two-game suspension is mandatory for any player or manager ejected from a league game. In the case of any physical contact, the minimum suspension is 1 month. The Recreation Department will determine if further disciplinary action is necessary. The Department has the sole ability to discipline or suspend players from all recreation sponsored leagues.

- (d) If the individual is suspended by the Recreation Department and if he shows up at any scheduled games during his suspension, he must leave the softball complex when asked to do so or his team will be required to forfeit those games.