



Softball Ulster

Bylaws & League Rules (2021)

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
Document Details.....	3
Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations	4
Bylaws	5
1. Introduction to Bylaws	6
2. Recommended Policies	7
3. Teams	8
4. Complaints, Disciplinary Procedures and Appeals.....	9
5. Umpiring.....	11
6. Protests.....	12
7. Individual, Team and Club Conduct	13
8. Drugs in Sport.....	14
9. Fees and Expenses.....	16
10. Scale of Penalties.....	17
League Rules	18
1. Introduction to League Rules	19
2. The Softball Ulster League	20
3. Development Fixtures	22
3. Championship and Tournament Rules.....	23
4. Player Eligibility	24
5. Fees.....	27
6. The Field of Play	28
7. Fixtures	29
8. Modified Rules of Play.....	31
Appendix 1: Official Diamond Layout.....	40
Appendix 2: Summary of Essential Minimum Equipment and Documentation	41

Document Details

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Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

Below is a list of terms and abbreviations used throughout this document:

Term	Description	Abbreviation
Softball Ulster	Regional Council for the sport of softball in the province of Ulster	SU
Softball Ireland	National Governing Body for the sport of softball on the island of Ireland	SI
Organising Body	Refers to the Softball Ulster Council	OB
Club	Single and multi-team playing organisations	-
Team	Any team registered in any Softball Ulster league or competition	
League	Any softball league played in the Ulster region and overseen by Softball Ulster	-
Championship	Any Softball Ulster or Softball Ireland knockout competition (e.g. SINCC).	
Softball Ireland National Club Championship	Annual all-Ireland championship competition	SINCC
Tournament	All official Softball Ulster one- or two-day competitions	-
Game	Any game of softball played in any Softball Ulster league, championship or tournament.	-
Player	Any registered member of Softball Ulster or Softball Ireland who participates in all or part of a league, championship or tournament.	-
Rookie	Refers to any new registered member of Softball Ulster who has not been registered within the last five years	-
Umpire	Any person officiating a game under the regulation of Softball Ulster or Softball Ireland	Ump
Team Contact	The official representative of each team	-
Regions	Refers to the regional associations on the island of Ireland (SL / SU / GS)	-
Under 18	Any player under the age of 18 years	U18
General Data Protection Regulations	Data protection laws within Ireland and the EU	GDPR

Bylaws

1. Introduction to Bylaws

Softball Ulster (SU) is the organising body for the sport of softball in the region of Ulster on the Island of Ireland (Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland). Softball Ulster is recognised by Softball Ireland (SI) as a regional council. These bylaws and league rules are designed to aid the organisation and implementation of the Softball Ulster League, Softball Ulster Development Fixtures, Softball Ulster Tournaments, and any Championships taking place in the Ulster region. **[Updated 2021]**

As of 2020, the original and modified bylaws document has been separated into two distinct sections; the **Bylaws**, covering definitions, governance and league conduct; and the **League Rules**, covering the adjustments to the WBSC Slow Pitch Softball Rules and Regulations document adopted by SU and SI.

In addition to the Bylaws and League Rules in 2021, SU will also continue to follow the SI Return to Play Protocol (RTPP) with regard to health and safety playing softball during the coronavirus pandemic. Information on the RTPP can be found at the COVID-19 Hub on the SI website (viewable at: <http://www.softball.ie/covid-19-hub/>). **[Updated 2021]**

2. Recommended Policies

SU recommends that each club should adopt the following policies as a matter of good practice. If you would like further advice or information on these policies or would like to share any policies that your club currently uses or is considering implementing, then please contact the SU secretary (secretary@softballulster.com)

1. Each club should have a basic constitution outlining the rights, duties and responsibilities of its members.
2. Each club should have a bank account with at least two signatories on the account.
3. Each club should have a basic privacy policy to make them compliant with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). A basic Privacy Policy is available on the SU website (www.softballulster.com) to download and adapt.
4. Each club must adopt and follow the SI Injury Policy. Information on the SI Injury Policy can be found at TBC. **[New 2021] – update in final draft when policy published**
5. Each club should be aware of the SI Safeguarding Policies as players participating in Softball Ireland competitions may be under the age of 18. Information on the Safeguarding Policies can be found at the Safeguarding Hub on the SI website (viewable at: <http://www.softball.ie/safeguarding>). **[New 2021]**
6. SU recognizes that the consumption of alcohol impairs co-ordination and judgement. For insurance reasons, SU strongly recommends that players do not consume alcohol before or during league games or tournaments. Any players consuming alcohol may find themselves excluded from SI insurance coverage and open themselves up to personal liability for injuries or damage caused by playing softball. SU fully supports any umpires or other nominated officials who exclude an individual from play due to alcohol induced incapacity.
7. For safety reasons, members are strongly advised against playing while pregnant.
8. Any player who has concerns about insurance coverage (e.g., in case of pregnancy, disability or otherwise) should satisfy himself or herself, through SI, SU or directly with the insurers, as to whether their needs are met. SI and SU will endeavour, where feasible, to obtain any clarifications or additional cover required with any additional cost to be borne by the player. Insurance consultation can be carried out through SU or directly with SI.
9. For insurances purposes, in order to compete in any SU league, championship or tournament, all players must be registered with SI. SI membership is automatically included with SU membership.

3. Teams

1. To register as a team with SU the team must complete the 'Team Registration Form' and submit this to the SU secretary (secretary@softballulster.com) by the close of registration for the current season. The registration deadline for all teams (regular league and develop teams) is **6pm on Friday 16th April 2021**. **[Updated 2021]**
2. Each team must have paid a team fee by **6pm on Sunday 2nd May 2021**. The team fee will be **£420** per team in 2020. Failure by a team to pay the team fee by the above deadline may result in the team being penalised by an SU ruling. **[Updated 2021]**
3. All the team's business with SU must be through a nominated representative as documented on the 'Team Registration Form.'
4. All teams that have played for **more than one year** in the league are required to have at least **two** qualified umpires (or umpires in training) willing and available to officiate games. Non-compliance with this bylaw may be penalised following an SU ruling.
 - a. A team looking for an exception to the above bylaw should do so in writing to the SU secretary (secretary@softballulster.com) who will table the matter at the following council meeting. Reasons for an exception should be stated for an exception to be granted.
 - b. Once a request for an exception reaches the SU secretary, or once the team has nominated the required number of umpires in writing to the SU secretary, the penalty shall be lifted until SU reviews the request.
 - c. Any team whose umpires are (in the judgement of SU) continuously not available to officiate games may be penalised following an SU ruling.

4. Complaints, Disciplinary Procedures and Appeals

1. Any appeal relating to a disputed game or result must be lodged with the SU secretary in writing (secretary@softballulster.com) within **one week** of the actual incident or in accordance with the tournament or competition rules. In cases where this timeline is not met, the result will stand as reported by the umpire or by either team captain if no umpire was assigned.
2. Any appeal, made under the appropriate article of the SU constitution, relating to an SU decision, which adversely affects a member, must be lodged in writing with the SU secretary (secretary@softballulster.com). This appeal must be made within one week of the member being informed of the decision in writing (email is acceptable) by the SU secretary. In cases where this timeline is not met the decision will stand.
3. Any decisions made in the appeals process are considered final and not subject to further appeal unless the subsequent appeal is considered materially different to the original.
4. Any SU member may lodge a request for disciplinary action to be taken against another member (or members), team (including non-SU registered visiting teams) or umpire for transgressions of these, or other appropriate bylaws, at a game in which they were involved or which they witnessed. [**Updated 2021**]
5. The umpire should be notified of the incident at the time of the event or at the end of the game where the incident occurred.
6. Disciplinary action may also be requested in relation to the behaviour of SU members at other events, including social functions organised by SU or subsidiary bodies, public events attended as SU members or officials, any social media sites or published in any form of printed or electronic media.
7. All requests for disciplinary action are to be made in writing to the SU secretary (secretary@softballulster.com) within **one week** from the initial date of the complaint.
8. All requests for disciplinary action must state the date of the incident, the event where the incident occurred and the reason why disciplinary action is being requested. Evidence, where possible (e.g., photos, screen captures, printed or electronic media etc.) should be provided along with the written complaint.
9. SU will appoint a reporting officer to investigate all allegations.
10. For SU disciplinary matters the reporting officer will be selected from the list of qualified umpires officiating over the SU season.

11. The reporting officer must request statements from the complainant, the accused, and any umpire present, and may also request statements from team captains and any SI or SU representatives or other witnesses present at the time.
12. No later than two weeks from the initial date of the complaint the reporting officer will pass on his/her findings to the SU secretary (secretary@softballulster.com).
13. If the reporting officer finds that an offence has been committed, the officers of SU will, within a week and after taking whatever advice they deem necessary, convene an SU Council meeting to hear the accused person's defence, and if necessary, to impose appropriate penalties. If the accused fails to attend this meeting, then SU will apply the penalties deemed appropriate and will communicate them to the player and team contact within one week of the decision being made.
14. SU will inform the accused's team representative, the accused and the complainant of the outcome.
15. An appeal against a decision to impose disciplinary penalties must be made within one week in writing to the SU Secretary and include the appropriate fee.
16. The appeal committee will be convened by SU within one week and must complete its work within a further two weeks.
17. Reasonable expenses may be paid to members of the appeal committee.
18. SU will keep records of each stage of the disciplinary process including any statements given.
19. SU may take disciplinary action against any SU team, club or player based on recommendations given to them by an umpire.

5. Umpiring

1. SU will schedule umpires to regular league games and will have a chief umpire (chiefumpire@softballulster.com) who, with SU, will deal with all umpire-related queries. **[Updated 2021]**
2. In the event of no umpire being present, both teams should agree on a basis for umpiring the game.
3. In the event of no umpire being present, the home team captain will assume responsibility for reporting of the match result and submitting the match report card to SU.
4. Where two clubs fail to agree on an umpiring arrangement, both team captains should contact SU within 24 hours and report the reason for failure.

6. Protests

1. In order to bring forward a protest, the guidelines outlined in the WBSC rulebook should be followed (Rule 1.2.8 – 1.2.14).
2. Protest outcomes are decided by SU in consultation with the SU chief umpire and communicated to teams as per the WBSC rulebook (Rule 1.2.14).
3. The written protest with the information described in Rule 1.2.13 should be lodged with the SU secretary (secretary@softballulster.com) in writing (email is sufficient) no later than 24 hours from the scheduled start time of the game in question. Teams lodging a protest are strongly advised to consult the WBSC rulebook and these bylaws before officially lodging a protest with the organising body.
4. SU will issue its decision to both teams and the umpire (if applicable) within two weeks of receiving the protest.
5. Protest decisions cannot be appealed.
6. A 'protest fee' will be charged to the club lodging a protest (when the protest is formally lodged with SU) as outlined in these bylaws. This fee will be returned if the protest is successful. See **Bylaw 9 Sec. 2** for details of the protest fee. **[Updated 2021]**
7. Playing a game under protest must be notified to the plate umpire immediately upon reaching that decision. There is no fee for protesting a game or playing the game under protest. If the team playing under protest loses the game, they may choose to lodge the protest officially with SU upon which the protest fee will apply. A team protesting a game with SU should do so in writing, no later than 24 hours from the scheduled starting time of the game being protested, to the SU secretary (secretary@softballulster.com).

7. Individual, Team and Club Conduct

1. The following are reasons for disciplinary action against an individual and/or their club as determined by SU:
 - a. Failure of a team captain, manager or coach, or other team members to intervene within a reasonable time to:
 - i. prevent or discourage misconduct.
 - ii. intervene, within a reasonable time, in any activity or behaviour listed below, where the perpetrator is a bystander who can be related to a specific club or team.
 - b. Ejection from any game.
 - c. Assault either physical or verbal, on a player, umpire or member of the public.
 - d. Coercion or forcing of any participant into inhuman, degrading or illegal activities.
 - e. Conduct likely to damage the good name of softball or Softball Ulster.
2. Destruction of, damage to, or failure to return, SU equipment or intellectual property is a category 1 offence.
3. SU may refuse to renew membership of, grant new membership to, suspend existing membership of, or prevent participation in any SU event of any individual or group involved in an on-going legal dispute with SU or any member of SU.

8. Drugs in Sport

1. The policy of SU is that doping is contrary to the spirit of fair play and all members have a responsibility to ensure that our sport is free of doping. **[New 2021]**
2. No registered player may contravene the relevant anti-doping laws of the following organisations:
 - a. International Olympic Committee (IOC).
 - b. World Anti-Doping Association (WADA).
 - c. World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC).
 - d. World Baseball Softball Confederation Europe (WBSC Europe).
 - e. Olympic Council of Ireland (OCI).
 - f. Sport Ireland
 - g. Sport NI
3. A full breakdown of the anti-doping rules adopted by SU can be accessed via the Sport Ireland website (link: <https://www.sportireland.ie/anti-doping-rules>). **[Updated 2021]**
4. For further information on anti-doping, please refer to the Sport Ireland website (link: <http://www.sportireland.ie/Anti-Doping/Athlete-Zone/>) which will cover such areas as: **[New 2021]**
 - What Happens In A Drug Test?
 - How to check your medications?
 - Prohibited List
 - Supplements & Nutrition
 - Results Management
 - Anti-Doping Rule Violations
5. Players, like all others, have illness or conditions that require them to take particular medications. All athletes should check their prescribed and over the counter medications to see if they are permitted. If the medication you require falls under the World Anti- Doping Agency prohibited list, you may need to apply for a **Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE)**. **[New 2021]**
6. Members in the following categories are liable for testing for illegal substances:
 - a. All SU league players.
7. Testing of SU members may be performed by duly appointed representatives of Sport Ireland at any or all of the following:
 - a. All SU league games.
 - b. All SU tournaments.
 - c. All SI tournaments.
 - d. All SI organised national league games.

8. Infraction of this bylaw will be a category 4 offence at a minimum and penalties will be in line with those applied by other comparable associations and/or national or international anti-doping organisations.

9. Fees and Expenses

1. Appeal fee:
 - a. £50.
 - b. Applies to any player making an appeal to SU.
 - c. If an appeal is upheld, fee will be returned to the player.

2. Protest fee:
 - a. £50.
 - b. Applies to any club making an appeal to SU involving a protest.
 - c. If a protest is upheld, the fee will be returned to the club.

3. In the event of a forfeited game, SU will determine which team will pay any applicable costs as a result.

10. Scale of Penalties

1. Depending on the seriousness of the offence, SU may impose any combination of the penalties within the following ranges for infraction of these bylaws.
2. **Table 1** outlines the category and range of offences within the SU region.

Category of Offence	Range of penalties for individuals
1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Permanent expulsion. 2. Suspension for more than one season. 3. Suspension from Regional Team for more than two years.
2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Suspension for one season. 2. Suspension for more than five games or weeks. 3. Suspension from Regional Team for up to two years.
3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Suspension for less than five games or weeks. 2. Suspension for more than two games or weeks;
4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Suspension for one game or one week. 2. Fine of between £50 & £130;
5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fine of less than £50. 2. Written caution. 3. Community service up to 5 hours.

3. Incurring more than two written cautions for any individual or club in any three-month period is a category 4 offence.

League Rules

1. Introduction to League Rules

SU adopts the current rules and regulations as published by the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) in the 2018 – 2021 Slow Pitch Rulebook. These rules are accessible directly from the SU website (link: <https://softballulster.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/wbcs-slowpitch-rules-2018.pdf>). The league rules that follow will detail amendments to the WBSC rules and regulations that apply to any softball leagues, development fixtures, championships and tournaments played in the Ulster region under SU oversight. **[Updated 2021]**

These league rules will take precedence over WBSC rules and regulations where there is a conflict between the two, unless otherwise stated in these bylaws.

2. The Softball Ulster League

1. The Softball Ulster League will be based on a round-robin type competition with each team playing one another on two occasions.
2. The home team for each league game will be designated according to the schedule as issued by SU.
3. At the end of the season, the team at the top of the standings (after any necessary tiebreakers are applied) will be declared league champion for 2021 and will represent the Ulster Region in the 2021 SINCC tournament (if it is played). **[Updated 2021]**
4. The team finishing last in the league standings (after any necessary tiebreakers are applied) will be awarded the wooden spoon.
5. A week in the SU league will run from Sunday to Saturday. In 2021 Week 1 of the league will commence on **Sunday 2nd May 2021** (Subject to COVID-19 restrictions). **[Updated 2021]**
6. The League fixtures will be played as follows: **[Updated 2021]**
 - a. Sundays at 2pm and Mondays at 7pm (for single games).
 - b. Sunday 1pm and 3pm (for double headers).
 - c. Sunday 12pm, 2pm and 4pm (for triple headers).
7. If any team is expected to travel 40 miles or more to any fixture, the game must be played on a Sunday to facilitate players travelling to and from the game.
 - a. Distances will be calculated using each team's home ground and "Google Maps" (<https://www.google.co.uk/maps>).
 - b. If a team is unable to secure their home ground on any given Sunday (if they normally play on a Monday) then the game may be rescheduled without any forfeit or penalties being incurred by the home team.
8. A points system will determine the league standings.
 - a. 5 Points for a win
 - b. 2 Points for a loss
 - c. 0 Points for a forfeit
9. In the event of a forfeit, the team forfeiting the game will also forfeit the head-to-head record against that opponent.
 - a. An exception would be if both teams start the game as scheduled (or re-scheduled) and one team forfeits due to injury or unforeseen circumstances. In this scenario the head-to-head record will not be forfeited.
 - b. The final decision of the validity of the circumstances and forfeiture of the head-to-head record will rest with SU.

10. If any one team forfeits three or more games during a season they will be penalised and required to withdraw from the league with win/loss records (and points if applicable) of the other teams in the league being adjusted to remove their impact on the standings. A team may be spared this penalty if there are exceptional circumstances, although the final decision will rest with SU.
11. In the event of a team withdrawing or being expelled from the league, all of their fixtures will be removed from the schedule. The win/loss records, and points, of the other teams in the league will be adjusted to remove their impact on the competition.
12. If a tie exists at the end of the regular season, the tiebreaker criteria outlined below will be applied.
13. In the event of teams having equal points at the end of the season, the following criteria will apply to break all ties. These criteria will be applied in order until the tie is broken (in case of more than two teams tied, the criteria will start over after every team involved has been taken out of the tie by any criteria and there are still two or more teams tied):
 - a. Winning percentage.
 - b. Winning percentage of every team involved counting only the head-to-head record of the teams involved.
 - c. Run Difference (counting only tied teams).
 - d. Run Difference (counting all games).
 - e. Runs Scored (against other tied teams only).
 - f. Runs Scored (against all teams).
 - g. If there are more than 2 teams involved at this stage, rank using previous season final standings.
14. The final standings of the 2020 season were as follows: **[Updated 2021]**
 - a. **Belfast Brawlers** 40 Points
 - b. **Belfast Cubs** 31 Points
 - c. Smokin' Aces 28 Points
 - d. **Belfast Sliders** 25 Points
 - e. **Bangor Bucs** 16 Points
15. SU will settle resolution of any circumstances not foreseen here.

3. Development Fixtures

1. Softball Ulster Development Fixtures will be organised friendly games that emphasise the development of individual teams and players, with a focus on teaching rookie players and developing alternative roles for players in existing teams. **[New 2021]**
2. The home team for each league game will be designated according to the schedule as issued by SU. **[New 2021]**
3. No official standings will be presented for Development Fixtures. **[New 2021]**
4. Development Fixtures will run alongside the Softball Ulster Regular League in 2021. **[New 2021]**
5. Teams must be fully paid up and registered with Softball Ulster in order to participate in Development Fixtures, either as a Softball Ulster Regular League Team or a Development Team. **[New 2021]**
6. Development Fixtures will be played as follows: **[New 2021]**
 - a. Sundays at 2pm and Mondays at 7pm (for single games).
 - b. Sunday 1pm and 3pm (for double headers).
 - c. Sunday 12pm, 2pm and 4pm (for triple headers).
7. No forfeits will be applied to Softball Ulster Regular League teams who do not participate in Development Fixtures, however Softball Ulster strongly encourages all teams to avail of the opportunity to aid in the development of their own team, other teams and new teams who may join the league this season. **[New 2021]**
8. Development Fixtures will follow all the rules included within the Softball Ulster League Bylaws, unless otherwise stated. **[New 2021]**

3. Championship and Tournament Rules

1. The structure and any applicable playing rules for any SU championship or tournament will be issued to all competing teams at least two weeks before commencement of each competition.
2. In the event of a gap developing in an SU championship or tournament due to the non-participation of a team, SU may fill the position as appropriate.
3. In the event of a team withdrawing or being expelled from a tournament, all of their fixtures will be removed from the schedule. The win/loss records, and points, of the other teams in the tournament will be adjusted to remove their impact on the competition.
4. SI determines the SINCC rules, regulations and structures. The team representing Ulster in the SINCC tournament will be the outright champion of the SU league.
 - a. If SI determines that (due to team ratios) more than one team from the SU league qualifies for SINCC, then the teams that finished outright second, third etc. (depending on SI decision regarding the number of teams) will also represent Ulster in the tournament.
 - b. If a team declines, or cannot take part in SINCC, then the team following them in the final standings for the league shall take its place.
5. The format of this competition will be chosen by SI and scheduled to follow the completion of the SI regional leagues.
6. Players must be registered with the qualifying club or team before the end of the SU league season and in accordance with these bylaws, to qualify for the SINCC.
7. A player is eligible to represent a club in the SINCC if they meet the following criteria:
 - a. The player is registered with SU.
 - b. The player registered with the qualifying club with at least three games (excluding playoffs) still to be played before the end of the regular SU league. **[Updated 2021]**
 - c. The player has played in at least four league games for the club in the 2021 Season. These appearances may be shared across teams within the club. **[Updated 2021]**

4. Player Eligibility

1. To be eligible to participate in the regular SU league, players must be: **[Updated 2021]**
 - a. Registered with Softball Ulster.
 - b. Registered by 6pm the Friday in advance of any given game.
 - c. Assigned to a primary team participating in the SU league.
2. To be eligible to participate in Development Fixtures, players must be: **[New 2021]**
 - a. Registered with Softball Ulster.
 - b. Registered by 6pm the Friday in advance of any given game.
 - c. Registered to a development team or SU regular league team.
3. To be eligible to participate in any SU tournament, players must be: **[New 2021]**
 - a. Registered with Softball Ulster or Softball Ireland, or
 - b. Has paid the SU visiting member fee by commencement of the tournament.
 - c. Assigned to a club associated with Softball Ulster or Softball Ireland.
4. All players must ensure that they are properly registered with SU before they play in any fixture. Failure to do so could result in each fixture being counted as a forfeit. The appropriate documents must be completed prior to their first fixture and forwarded to the SU secretary (secretary@softballulster.com).
5. To meet insurance requirements, all players must be registered with SU and assigned to a team **by 6pm on Friday 21st May 2021** to be eligible for the start of the regular league. A player registration spreadsheet (to be emailed out by the SU secretary in advance of the deadline) must be completed and emailed only to the SU secretary (secretary@softballulster.com) by the deadline above. A player will not be considered registered unless a full name, date of birth and email address is supplied at time of registration. **[Updated 2021]**
6. During the season all teams may continue registering players up until the final week of play. In order for a player to be eligible to play in a game, they must be registered before 6pm on the Friday before the scheduled game. No exceptions will be made. Registration is accomplished by forwarding an updated copy of the player registration spreadsheet to the SU secretary (secretary@softballulster.com) by the deadline above. Again, a player will not be considered registered unless a full name, date of birth and email address is supplied at time of registration.
7. An umpire or any other SU official is entitled to ask for proof of identity from any player. In the absence of satisfactory proof of identity, the player may be asked for a signature and allowed to play under caution. SU may require the team or player to substantiate this identification at a later date.

8. Impersonation of another member is a category 3 offence by both the player and their team.
9. The lower age limit for participation in the SU league is currently 18 years. Please be aware that under 18 players may accompany teams from other regions (e.g., Leinster, Galway). **[Updated 2021]**.
10. SU do not accept any liability in cases where the player's condition renders them excluded from SI's insurance policy.
11. A player may not permanently transfer teams within the league season without applying to SU for, and being granted, a transfer of registration under the conditions listed below. Player transfer is accomplished by forwarding the appropriate 'Player Transfer Form' found on the SU website (link: <https://softballulster.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/SU-Player-Transfer-Form-2020.docx>) to the SU secretary (secretary@softballulster.com) before 6pm on the Friday before the next scheduled game, provided the following conditions are met: **[Updated 2021]**
 - a. The required fee has been paid (£10 per player in 2021).
 - b. There is no unfair advantage to any third party.
 - c. The player is not subject to any disciplinary penalties or proceedings at the time of requested transfer.
 - d. There are at least three league games (excluding playoffs) still to be played by the destination team.
12. A player may not play for any other team in the SU Regular League (except for their primary team) unless 'borrowed' temporarily to another team using the exemptions below **[Updated 2021]**
 - a. A player may only play in a team other than their primary team as per these bylaws when no other primary player is available for that team and that team can only field seven or eight players.
 - b. A team that can only field seven or eight players in a game may invite up to two players from any other teams in the league to play for that team for that match day (as long as the players in question are properly registered and insured by SI).
 - c. A player may play for any other team in the league under these rules only one match day per season per team.
 - d. Up to two players per team can be borrowed under these rules per game and the gender balance should be maintained:
 - i. In any case of borrowing players, the team requiring the borrowed players should only have seven or eight of their own players available for the game (with a minimum of one female player) and after the substitution the team should have a minimum of three female players and a maximum of nine players in total.

- ii. If a team is using borrowed players from another team for a game, those players must be subbed out of the game upon the arrival of a primary player of the same sex (the plate umpire should grant the arriving player appropriate warm-up time).
13. A player may play for any other team in Development Fixtures, provided they are fully registered with a Softball Ulster Development team or Regular League team in compliance with Bylaws 4.1 and 4.2. **[New 2021]**
14. Players may transfer between teams within the SU clubs under the same rules as for team transfers.

5. Fees

1. SU Team Fee (replaces the separate team and player registration fees in 2020):
 - a. **£420** per team. **[Updated 2021]**
 - b. Applies to all teams registering to participate in the SU league.
 - c. Must be paid to SU by **6pm on Sunday 2nd May 2021**. **[Updated 2021]**
 - d. The penalty for non-payment of the team fee will be the forfeit of every game, retrospective to the first game of the season, played in 2021 until payment is received. **[Updated 2021]**

2. SU Visiting Membership Fee:
 - a. £10 per player.
 - b. Applies to any player who wishes to play in a tournament but is not already registered with SI or SU.
 - c. Must be paid to a member of the SU Council before the end of the tournament attended.
 - d. This is non-refundable if the player later joins an SI or SU team.

3. SU Player Transfer Fee:
 - e. £10 per player.
 - f. Applies to any player who wishes to change team within the SU league during a season. The player will not be considered transferred until SU has received a fully completed 'Player Transfer Form' available on the SU website.
 - g. Must be paid by the receiving team within four weeks of the player transfer.
 - h. This fee will not be applicable until the player has played their first game with their new team.
 - i. The penalty for non-payment of the player registration fee will be the forfeit of every game where the transferred player was included on the team line-up.

4. SU Tournament Fee: **[New 2021]**
 - a. The fees for each tournament will be defined by the Competitions Officer and Treasurer at least 2 weeks in advance of any given tournament.
 - i. A Euro conversion may be offered to teams participating from regions outside of Ulster.
 - b. Applies to all teams registering to participate in an SU tournament.
 - c. Must be paid in advance of the commencement of the tournament.
 - d. The penalty for non-payment will be enforced withdrawal of non-complying teams from the tournament.

6. The Field of Play

1. Every team must ensure that their home ground is suitable and safe to play softball. If there is any doubt about suitability and safety, the club representative should request an inspection by SU or the SU chief umpire. **[Re-Introduced 2021]**
2. To ensure adequate insurance coverage, every team must have adequate permissions to use their home ground for league games and training sessions. Teams must provide written confirmation of authorization to use their home ground to SU if requested to do so by a member of SU, an SU umpire, or the captain of the opposing team. **[Updated 2021]**
3. If a team's home ground is continually unavailable, SU can instruct them to make alternative arrangements. The team in question may be instructed to play all their games away at an alternative venue if alternative arrangements cannot be made. **[Re-Introduced 2021]**
4. Where a field is suspected to be unsafe for play an SU umpire must inspect the pitch before the start of the scheduled game in order to make a determination on whether the game should proceed or be postponed. If an umpire is not assigned to a game, either captain can request that SU make a determination on whether the game should proceed or be postponed. SU reserves the right to assign a neutral representative to make a determination in these situations.

7. Fixtures

1. All fixtures are the property of SU. No team or club may rearrange a fixture without the express consent of SU.
2. The SU Fixture list will be published no later than 4 weeks before the commencement of the regular league. SU retain the right to alter the fixture list during the play of the regular league. **[New 2021]**
3. In the event that a team wishes to rearrange a fixture, they should consult with the opposing team in advance to come to an amicable arrangement, before approaching Softball Ulster to request the change. If an amicable arrangement cannot be found, the team requesting the change may ask SU for exceptional circumstances. **[New 2021]**
4. In exceptional circumstances a team or club may make a written request for the postponement of a game. SU has complete discretion to refuse or grant a postponement. Where granted, SU will reschedule the fixture. All written requests must be submitted to the SU competitions officer (competitions@softballulster.com) no later than 6pm on the Friday before the scheduled game in question is due to be played.
5. Exceptional circumstances leading to SU considering the postponement of a game will include:
 - a. Three or more members of any one team (not club) being selected to represent their country in either slow pitch (SP) or fast pitch (FP) softball. This ruling extends to all tournaments and championships, but not to training sessions or fund-raising events.
 - b. If any team has been selected to represent SI/SU in slow pitch (SP) softball tournaments or championships.
6. Circumstances where SU will not consider postponement of a game will include:
 - a. Commitments to any other sport, including baseball.
 - b. Commitments to other events, such as fund-raising, charity work or employment.
 - c. Lack of transport to or from a game fixture.
7. A game suspended for reasons of light, safety or any other reason determined by an umpire (or agreed by the captains in the absence of an umpire), before the conclusion of a legal game must be advised to the organising body, who will reschedule the fixture. Details of such a suspension must include the position of play (i.e., line-ups, position of runners, next batting position, outs, runs, strikes/balls and score) at the time of suspension. The game will resume from the exact point of the suspension of play and will continue to completion.

8. All postponed or suspended games must be concluded by the end of the week of play following the week when the game was originally scheduled. If both teams are unable to agree on a date, or in exceptional circumstances, SU will set the date of the fixture at its discretion. Failure to play any re-arranged fixture by a date set by the organising body where reasonable notice was given may result in one or both teams forfeiting the game.

8. Modified Rules of Play

In Ulster the rules of play are adopted from the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) **Slow Pitch** Softball Playing Rules. These rules are accessible directly from the SU website (link: <https://softballulster.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/wbsc-slowpitch-rules-2018.pdf>).

The following rule adjustments will apply in the Ulster region and replace the rules as they appear in the WBSC Slow Pitch Softball Playing Rules.

1 THE GAME

DEFINITIONS

1.1.4 HOME AND VISITING TEAM

a) The home team is determined in the SU region by league assignment. The league schedule is emailed out to team contacts prior to the commencement of the regular league.

1.2 REGULATION GAME REQUIREMENTS

1.2.2 FORFEITED GAME

- a) A team fails to appear on the field.
- i. A forfeit is awarded against any team that does not have enough registered players available to begin a game after 15 minutes have elapsed from the designated start time.
 1. A single forfeit applies if only one team is short of players.
 2. A double forfeit applies if both teams are short of players.
 - ii. Any team that does not show for a scheduled league game without notifying SU may be penalized according to an SU ruling.
- b) A team on the field refuses to begin a game for which it is scheduled or assigned at the time scheduled or within a time set for forfeitures by the organization in which the team is playing.
- i. If, at the scheduled time for the start of any game, any of the teams involved has eight or fewer players available, the umpire will concede a 15-minute wait so that the necessary number of players required for commencement of the game can show up. If after the 15-minute wait any (or both) of the teams have less than nine players, the game will be forfeited (or double forfeited).
 - ii. If, at game time or at any point during the 15-minute wait, both teams have nine or more players available, the game should be started immediately.

Failure by any team to start the game when directed to do so by the umpire will forfeit the game.

- h) A team that is unable to continue because of the removal or ejection of any players from the game by the Umpire, voluntary departure of any players or for any other reason. The minimum number of players to continue a game is nine or eleven if playing EH.
 - i. If a player is ejected, a team may continue with a legal replacement in order to avoid a forfeit.
 - ii. A forfeit is not awarded against a team that is unable to continue with the minimum number of players due to an injury that happened during the game where the player was injured.
- k) A team fails to have the minimum required equipment available as set out in these league rules (see Appendix 2).
- l) A team uses a player who is not registered with the team at the start of the game.
- m) A team uses more than two players substituted from any other team.

1.2.3 RUN AHEAD RULE

- a) Will be applied to any game at all tournaments and championships when one team leads another by: twenty (20) runs after four (4) innings; or fifteen (15) runs after five or more (5) innings. The run ahead rule is optional and not compulsory in the Ulster region and may be declined by the losing team. The run ahead rule may be offered to the losing team after each inning provided the aforementioned criteria are still met.

2 PLAYING FIELD AND EQUIPMENT

2.3 THE PLAYING FIELD

2.3.1 PLAYING FIELD REQUIREMENTS

- a) The playing field must have a clear and unobstructed area within the minimum dimensions set out in Appendix 1 (of the WBSC Slow Pitch Softball Playing Rules). Exceptions to these dimensions can be considered if:
 - i. It is a permanent condition of the field.
 - 1. Exception made by SU following the recommendation of the Chief Umpire following a field inspection.
 - ii. It is an unseen temporary condition.

2. Exception made by the Plate Umpire in agreement with both team captains. If an agreement cannot be met the game should be suspended pending a decision from SU over postponement or forfeiture.

b) A warning track is not required on the playing field.

2.3.2 THE OFFICIAL DIAMOND

a) The official diamond layout must comply with the dimensions outlined in Appendix 1 (of the WBSC Slow Pitch Softball Playing Rules). Marking of the field (e.g. foul, one meter and side-lines; coaches, batters and catchers boxes; on-deck circle and bases and home plate) is optional.

c) Bases do not need to be securely fastened into position (e.g. with spiked bases). If spiked bases are used, the spikes should be away from potential running lines:

- i. 1B: spikes should be facing the outfield and foul ball zone.
- ii. 2B: spikes should be facing left field and right field.
- iii. 3B: spikes should be facing foul ball zone and left field.
- iv. Bases can also have a spike hidden under the base (middle of the base).

2.3.3 GROUND OR SPECIAL RULES

Ground or special rules establishing the limits of the playing field may be agreed prior to the start of a game and used whenever backstops, fences, stands, vehicles, spectators or other obstructions are within the prescribed area. The umpire, following consultation with both team captains, will set the ground rules. The ground rules should be recorded in the match report and forwarded to SU.

a) Any obstruction on fair territory less than the minimum fence distances set out in the Distance Table (WBSC Rules Appendix 1) must be clearly marked for the Umpire's information. Any regularly occurring ground rules must be forwarded to SU and will be provided to umpires in advance of games.

b) If using a baseball field the pitcher's mound must not be in the field of play and the mound must be a minimum of 10 feet from the foul ball line on the field of play.

2.4 GAME EQUIPMENT

2.4.1 OFFICIAL BAT

Bats marked "WBSC", "ISF" or "ASA" approved are permitted for use in the SU region. The bats should have one of the following logos clearly visible:



Slow pitch bats may also have the “ASA” slow pitch logo clearly visible:



In addition, the bats used should not be included on the ASA non-approved bat list. Visit http://usa.asasoftball.com/e/build_batlist_w_pics_2000.asp to see a full list of banned bats.

2.4.3 OFFICIAL SOFTBALL

- b) In co-ed play, the following balls will be pitched:
- i. 12” 52/300 ball (all **male** batters and any **female** batter who elects to hit the 52/300 ball instead of the 11” 44/375 or 52/300 ball).
 - ii. 11” 44/375 or 52/300 ball (all female batters only). A team can choose between using the 44/375 or 52/300 specification 11” balls, but 2 balls of the same specification must be supplied to the umpire at the start of the game. Teams cannot mix the two 11” specification balls in a game.

2.5 PLAYERS’ EQUIPMENT

2.5.2 SHOES

- c) No metal soles, heel plates or studs are permitted on shoes.

2.5.3 PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

- e) HELMETS. Each team is required to have a **minimum** of **four adult** helmets available in the dugout for use by players. Helmet use is currently **not** compulsory but **highly recommended** by both SI and SU. If four helmets are not available, the team will automatically forfeit the game due to be played.

2.6 UNIFORMS

2.6.1 PLAYER UNIFORMS

All players on a team shall wear uniforms alike in colour, trim and style. If a team attends a game without a full uniform, the minimum acceptable standard will be shirts of a similar colour. This ruling will be based upon the judgement of the assigned umpire. In the absence of an assigned umpire, both captains must be in agreement. If players need to wear outer garments due to weather conditions (e.g. jacket or waterproofs) then they must not wear colours that are similar to the opposing team.

a) CAPS

- i. Ball caps do not need to be alike and are not mandatory for male or female players. It would be beneficial for the pitcher to wear a ball cap as the brim is designed to protect players from a ball batted directly to the head, but this is not mandatory.
- ii. Caps, visors and headbands are optional for male or female players and can be mixed. If more than one type is worn, they do not need to be alike or of a similar colour to the team uniform. Plastic or hard visors are not allowed.
- iii. Should a defensive player wear an approved helmet, this is not required to be of a similar colour to the team uniform or other players.

b) UNDERSHIRTS

- i. A player may wear an undershirt of any colour, and this does not need to be alike of the same colour as the team uniform. No player may wear ragged, frayed or slit sleeves on exposed undershirts.
- ii. A warming (compression) sleeve may be worn but will be treated in the same manner as a long sleeve undershirt.

c) PANTS/SLIDING PANTS

- i. Sliding pants are not compulsory and do not need to be alike.

d) NUMBERS

- i. Numbers are not a compulsory requirement on team shirts; however, it is encouraged that all teams purchasing new kits in the 2020 season have numbers printed on them. Only whole numbers 01 to 99 must be used.

e) NAMES

- i. Individual names are not a compulsory requirement on team shirts.

DISTRACTING ADORNMENTS.

- i. No exposed items, including jewelry, judged by the umpire to be distracting to opposing players, may be worn or displayed. The Umpire must require the

item to be removed or covered. Medical alert bracelets and/or necklaces, if deemed distracting, must be taped to the body in such a manner that the medical alert information is visible. EXCEPTION: Essential prosthesis.

2.8 EQUIPMENT

The Plate Umpire in each game has the right to remove any and all equipment not meeting rules 2.4 and 2.5. This includes bats and helmets during pre-game inspection or bat testing during a game. Removed equipment shall be kept by the Plate Umpire and returned to their rightful owner after the game is finished.

3 PARTICIPANTS

3.2 LINE UP AND ROSTERS

3.2.1 LINE-UP CARDS

- b) A starting player's name may be on the line-up card if they are not yet present, **provided** they are expected to be present by the commencement of the game.
- c) An eligible roster player may be added to the substitute list at any time during the game.

3.2.2 PLAYERS

- a) Each team must have a minimum of ten (10) players in the line-up at all times where possible but may play with nine (9) players using the shorthanded rule.
- iii. Co-ed: Ten (10) players. Teams may opt to play with six (6) males and four (4) females, five (5) males and five (5) females, or four (4) males and six (6) females.
 - 1. If playing six (6) males and four (4) females, the following set of rules must apply:
 - a. The females must alternate through the top of the batting order (i.e., 1,3,5,7 or 2,4,6,8).
 - b. When fielding there must be at least two females in the outfield and two females in the infield. The pitcher is considered an infield position in this case.
 - c. The catcher must be male. The pitcher may be male or female.
 - d. Any substitute must be of the same gender as the substituted player.
 - e. All teams must finish a game with the gender-split it started with.

- iv. Co-ed with Extra Players (EPs): Twelve (12) players. Teams may opt to play with seven (7) males and five (5) females, six (6) males and six (6) females, or five (5) males and seven (7) females.
 - 1. If playing seven (7) males and five (5) females, the following set of rules must apply:
 - a. The females must alternate through the top of the batting order (i.e., 1,3,5,7,9 or 2,4,6,8,10).
 - b. When fielding there must be at least two females in the outfield and two females in the infield. The pitcher is considered an infield position in this case.
 - c. The catcher must be male. The pitcher may be male or female.
 - d. Any substitute must be of the same gender as the substituted player.
 - e. All teams must finish a game with the gender-split it started with.
 - f. The shorthanded rule may not be applied in this scenario.
- c) A team is eligible to apply the shorthanded rule any play with nine (9) players. A team will not be permitted to play shorthanded with eight (8) or fewer players.
 - i. If playing shorthanded with six (6) males and four (4) females the following set of rules must apply:
 - 1. If the missing player is female, the missing player becomes an automatic out in position 7 or 8.
 - 2. If the missing player is male, the missing player becomes an automatic out in position 9 or 10.
 - ii. If playing shorthanded with five (5) males and five (5) females the following set of rules must apply:
 - 1. The missing player (either male or female) becomes an automatic out in position 9 or 10.
 - iii. A team is not permitted to play shorthanded if there are ten (10) players available in a recognised gender split (i.e., 6/4, 5/5, 4/6).
 - iv. If playing shorthanded and a substitute arrive, the substitute must be inserted immediately into the vacant spot in the lineup.
 - 1. The plate umpire should grant the substitute player adequate time for warm-up.
 - v. If any substitute refuses to enter for any reason that player becomes ineligible for the remainder of the game.
- d) Development League fixtures are exempt from the requirement to play shorthanded with eight (8) or fewer players. **[New 2021]**
- e) Development League fixtures are exempt from the shorthanded rule and may play with nine (9) players without the requirement for an automatic out. **[New 2021]**

3.2.6 ENTERING THE GAME (SUBSTITUTIONS)

- h) A courtesy runner may be permitted to the offensive team (at the discretion of the umpire, who may choose to consult with both captains) to replace an injured runner on the bases after time has been called. The courtesy runner must touch any awarded base(s) or missed base(s) not previously touched. A courtesy runner may take the place of:
- i. A batter-runner who was injured prior to the last play provided they have not attempted to advance past first base.
 - ii. A runner or batter-runner that was injured while running the bases during the last play, at any of the bases.
- i) If a courtesy runner is requested and granted, they must be the player who is furthest in the batting order from the previous batter excluding:
- i. Players of a different gender
 - ii. Players who are currently on base
- If no players meet both of the criteria in rules 3.2.6(j)(i) and 3.2.6(j)(ii), no courtesy runner will be allowed.
- j) If a player acting as a courtesy runner leaves their base for the purpose of going to bat, the runner they replaced will be called out and the courtesy runner may resume their place in the batting order.

3.7 SCORERS

3.7.1 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OFFICIAL SCORER

An official scorer is not required in the SU region. Each team will be responsible for their scores in the absence of an official scorer. If present, the official scorer will have the following responsibilities:

- a) Prepare or cause to be prepared and keep records of a game as provided for in these rules.
- b) Be the sole authority for all scoring decisions involving judgement.
- c) Determine whether a batter's advance to first base is the results of a hit or error.
- d) Not make a scoring decision that is inconsistent or in conflict with these rules or an umpire's decision.

5 BATTING AND BASE RUNNING

5.5 BATTER-RUNNER

5.5.1 THE BATTER BECOMES THE BATTER-RUNNER

- b) [The batter] must advance to and touch first base:
 - i. When four balls are called by the plate umpire and the ball is dead.
 - 1. A female batter-runner is awarded one base without liability to be put out.
 - 2. A male batter-runner is awarded two bases when followed immediately by a female batter. The next batter, a female, will bat. If the next batter is an automatic out (female) the male batter is only awarded one base. The next batter, a male, will bat.

APPENDIX 5: UMPIRES

A. GENERAL INFORMATION FOR UMPIRES

- c) Male and female umpires should wear:
 - 1. A powder blue short-sleeved shirt. The SU badge should be worn on the left sleeve of the shirt.
 - 2. Dark navy-blue socks are recommended but not compulsory.
 - 3. Dark navy-blue trousers (fechheimer style or similar) are recommended but not compulsory.
 - 4. Dark navy-blue cap is recommended, but any other colour is acceptable provided it is not the same colour as either team playing.
 - 5. Dark navy ball bags are recommended but not compulsory (plate umpire only).
 - 6. Dark navy-blue jacket and/or sweater are recommended but not compulsory.
 - 7. Black shoes and belt are recommended but not compulsory.
 - 8. A white t-shirt or undergarment worn under the powder blue shirt is recommended but not compulsory.

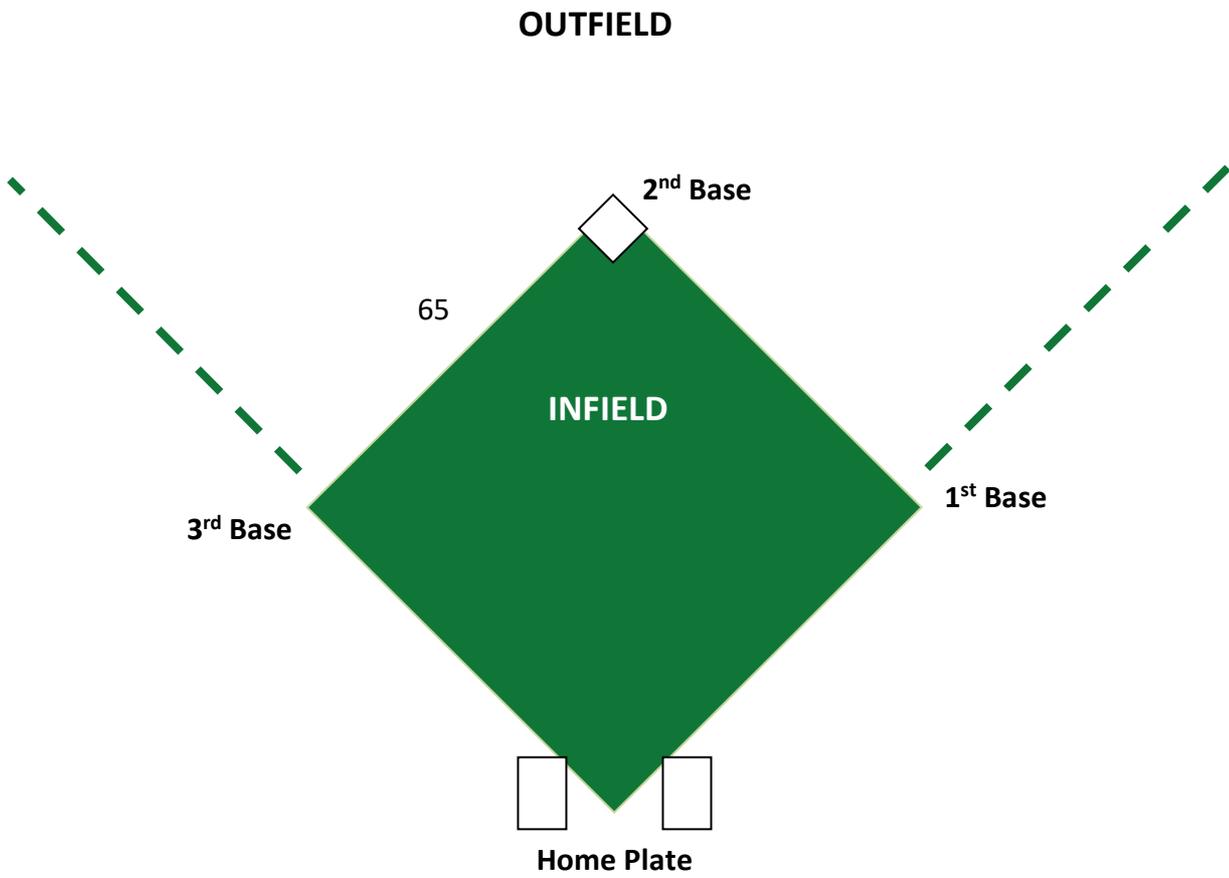
APPENDIX 6: GAME SUMMARY

G. GAME SUMMARY

In Ulster the plate umpire, using the official SU **match report** cards (link: <https://softballulster.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/su-match-report-2018.pdf>), completes the game summary. The completed match report cards must be emailed no later than **one day** immediately following a game to: **[Updated 2021]**

- a) SU Competitions Officer (competitions@softballulster.com)
- b) SU Chief Umpire (chiefumpire@softballulster.com)
- c) SU Secretary (secretary@softballulster.com)
- d) SU Chairperson (chair@softballulster.com)

Appendix 1: Official Diamond Layout



Appendix 2: Summary of Essential Minimum Equipment and Documentation

The following is a summary of the essential minimum equipment requirements and documentation for each SU league game or tournament. Failure to have the items listed below will result in a forfeit being declared.

1. Home Team:
 - a. One full set of softball bases including one dual-coloured safety base at first base, two single bases, a home plate and a pitcher's plate.
 - b. At least one legal softball bat.
 - c. At least ten softball gloves (nine if playing shorthanded).
 - d. At least two legal 12" 52/300 softballs and at least two legal 11" 44/375 or 11" 52/300 softballs.
 - e. A minimum of four adult helmets available for use by players.
 - f. If requested by an umpire or SU official, written confirmation of authorisation to use the home ground.

2. Away Team (or any tournament team):
 - a. At least one legal softball bat.
 - b. At least ten softball gloves (nine if playing shorthanded).
 - c. A minimum of four adult helmets available for use by players.