

USSSA RELEASES 2019 FASTPITCH RULE CHANGES

When USSSA gathered in Temecula, California for its 51st annual convention in November, fastpitch leadership announced several rule changes for the upcoming season. They are effective January 1, 2019 and will be included in the forthcoming online and printed rule book update.

"We work every year to take a close look at our playing rules and apply a progressive approach to their evolution, while not compromising the integrity of the game." said Jami Lobpries, National Director of USSSA Fastpitch. "This year's adjustments clarify the rules for our 8U program, address safety concerns and fine tune some penalties and rule administration."

SUMMARY OF RULE CHANGES:

8U PLAYING RULES – added rules specific for this division.

ADA RULE CLARIFICATION – Added an ADA Rule to clarify the process for making reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities.

ILLEGAL PITCH PENALTY - reduced the penalty to a ball on the batter with no runner advancement, unless forced by ball four.

"We watched closely as the NCAA implemented this rule in 2018 and noted the volume of positive feedback that it received from coaches and officials", says Andy Wisk, USSSA National Fastpitch Committee Chairman. "We feel that it will fit well in our game also, as we can continue to teach young players the proper fundamentals without having a penalty that could have such a profound impact on the outcome of games."

INAPPROPRIATE BATS – changes the violation from hitting the ball to entering the box with such a bat. In all cases, the batter is declared out. If it is merely an illegal bat, the first offense is a team warning. Any subsequent offenses result in the player being restricted to the bench and the coach ejected. If it is an altered or non-approved bat, the player and coach are ejected.

"Safety is our top priority and the adjustments to this rule will help us to minimize the use of altered and / or non-approved bats to better protect our young players in the field", comments Don Briscoe, USSSA's National Rules Coordinator. "While our rules do not require bat checks, we do require coaches to certify that their team is properly equipped. Much like our counterparts in the National High School Federation, we depend on that certification and hold coaches responsible for its accuracy."

TINTED EYE SHIELDS ON BATTING/CATCHING HELMETS - will be prohibited.

UNUSED SUBS WHO ARE NOTED BY THE COACH AS UNABLE TO PARTICIPATE - will be disqualified for the remainder of that game.

RUNS SCORING ON GAME-ENDING DEAD BALL – clarifies that all awarded runs will count in a “walk-off” situation on ground-rule doubles and balls thrown out of play, not just home runs. This addresses potential issues with runs allowed and run differential tiebreakers.

ELIMINATED THE REQUIREMENT FOR PITCHERS TO FACE ONE BATTER - unless they were courtesy run for in the top of the first inning.

EXPANSION OF THE ILLEGAL PLAYER RULES COVERAGE – addresses illegal players who were base runners.

RELOCATED THE DP/FLEX RULE VIOLATION TO THE ILLEGAL PLAYER RULE – this changes the violation of inserting the flex into the offensive lineup for someone other than the DP to an illegal player.

LIBERALIZED THE PITCHER WARMUP RULES - clarifies pitcher may continue to warmup, in excess of 5 pitches, if umpire is still performing administrative duties.

CLARIFICATION ON RUNNERS LEAVING BASES DURING A NON-CHARGED DEFENSIVE CONFERENCE - requires runners to remain in the vicinity of their bases during non-charged defensive meetings.

UNIFORMS – adjusted to allow some flexibility for variances in style due to religion, inclement weather, etc.

USSSA is headquartered in Viera, Florida. USSSA is the world's largest multi-sport organization. Founded in 1968, USSSA has grown to over 4.2 million participants, competing in 14 nationally sanctioned sports including Baseball, Fastpitch, Slow Pitch, Karate, Basketball, Soccer and more! For more information on USSSA and to register your team visit www.ussa.com