



2022 SSUSA National Rules Committee • Official Minutes  
Sunday – Tuesday, January 8 – 10, 2023  
Sacramento, California – SSUSA National Offices

## **2022 RULES COMMITTEE SESSIONS**

### **MEMBERS PRESENT** (12 total members):

**Donna McGuire** (Chair/MO/Regional UIC), **Terry Hennessy** (CA/C.E.O.), **Fran Dowell** (CA/Executive Director), **Don Brooks** (TX/Director), **K.C. Craig** (UT/UIC), **Dave Dowell** (CA/Director), **Ron Grassi** (WA/Director), **Bill Hill** (CA/Director), **Tim McElroy** (MD/Director), **Doug Robbins** (CA/Director), **Rick Seifman** (AZ/VP Umpires), **Jerry Smith** (CA/Director) – **ALTERNATE: Stephanie Hopkins** (CA/Staff)

**NOTE:** Committee Members Michael Boone (NJ/Director), Gayle Collins (FL/UIC), Felix Mendiola (NV/Director), Otis Rowland (OK/Director) and Don Reddig (CA/Director) were unable to attend.

**SENIOR SOFTBALL USA STAFF:** (non-voting): Jeremy Briggs, Bobby Ellison, Nic Francois, Kim Harge, Sarah Haught, Anthony Hinojosa, George Moreno. **PUBLIC ATTENDING:** Mark Haupt (CO)

### **Sunday, January 8:** Open rules meeting

1. Introductions/announcements
2. Overview of recommendations submitted for the agenda in advance
3. Open floor to additional recommendations from committee members, attendees

### **Monday, January 9:** Rules committee meeting • Voting session

## **Previous Year Tabled Items (from 2021 Sessions)**

**T1. A motion to allow two or three 69-year-olds on 70s teams; motion tabled last year so that SSUSA could confer with SPA on potential rules alignments. (See also Agenda Item 3.)**

**Referred to 2022 Agenda item #3 herein**

**T2. A recommendation to establish a Central Championships to match the Eastern's and Western's; tabled in 2021 for further research.**

**Removed from "Tabled" status are referred back to Staff with instruction to prepare memo for Rules Committee consideration not later than August 31, 2023, for potential 2024 "Central Championships" T.O.C. event**

**INSTRUCTION REFERRAL PASSED 11-0**

# New recommendations (in order received)

## 1. Allow courtesy runners from home (in oldest age groups or for disabled players)

Following extensive discussion, this topic did not receive a formal motion for consideration, or a second for same. Accordingly, fails to make the formal Agenda.

## 2. End commitment line 'follies'

We received multiple suggestions about ending the gamesmanship between base runner and defender that occasionally occurs at/near the commitment line to draw a tag on the "wrong side of the line." Motion was made to amend Rulebook §8.8 to read:

*"A commitment line thirty feet from the scoring line or scoring plate will be used. Once a runner's foot touches the ground on or past this line, the runner is committed to advancing to the scoring line or scoring plate. EFFECT: Tag of a runner by a defensive player will not be allowed **once both of the runner's feet have crossed the commitment line**. If a defender tags a runner after this happens, the runner will be called safe...."*

**MOTION PASSED: 11-0**

## 3. Allow as many as three 69-year-olds on 70+ teams

We received requests from three individuals, all expressing some variation on the number of underage players they would like to have available for rosters of 70+ Men's teams. Following a motion to approve two (2) such underage players, there was extensive discussion. The overriding consensus was that the 70+ age division is of such size that there is no need to prop it up with underage players. Additionally, rosters for 70+ teams were expanded a couple of years ago to 22 maximum players.

**MOTION FAILED: 1-10**

## 4. Revisit 'move up' formula involving top teams at Worlds

Motion to set aside change #4 in motions approved in December 2021 and replace with:

- Teams winning their division of the World Championships in the AA, AAA and Major Divisions will be raised in ratings to the next skill level and will not be eligible for appeal until the team plays at its new rating for one season. Other teams in those divisions will be raised to the next skill level and will be eligible for appeal after competing in three (3) qualifying tournaments:
  - 10 or less teams = None (Champion only moved)
  - 11 to 20 teams = Finalist (two total teams)
  - 21 to 30 teams = Finalist and 3rd Place (three total teams)
  - 31 or more teams = Finalist, 3rd and 4th Place (four total teams)

- Other teams may also be raised depending on overall performance during the year, recommendations from directors and UIC's, and their performance at the World Championships.
- All Skill Rating changes and Appeals decided by the Senior Softball USA Ratings Staff.

**MOTION PASSED: 10-1**

## 5. Altered softball rule

**Motion to amend the altered softball rule so that the penalty (a forfeit) can be issued as soon as a team attempts to put an altered softball into a game. "Into the game" redefined to be either the umpire or the pitcher being in possession of the ball (eliminates the previous requirement that a batter be in the batter's box).**

**MOTION PASSED: 11-0**

## 6. Major Plus player boundaries

**Motion to allow Major Plus teams (aged 40+ through 70+) to have two players from the opposite side of the Mississippi River from their home state without giving an equalizer (and being required to compete as an Open Division team).**

**MOTION PASSED: 6-5 (1 abstaining)**

## 7. Add wording for rosin bag usage

**Our rules allow pitchers to use rosin under the supervision of the umpire. MOTION to require that Rosin Bags must remain on the ground near the pitching area.**

**MOTION PASSED: 11-0**

## 8. Exhibition teams' seeding role

**MOTION: For seeding purposes, proposal to not count runs allowed from pool games involving exhibition teams.**

**MOTION FAILED: 1-8 (2 abstaining)**

## 9. Make safety bag plays safer

**RECOMMENDATION: If a throw or play pulls the fielder into foul territory, allow him to touch the safety base to put out the batter-runner.**

**MOTION to adopt ASA/USA rule: "On any force out attempt from the foul side of first base, the defense and the batter-runner may use either the white or contrasting color portion of the base. On an errant throw pulling the defense off the white portion of the base into foul ground, the defense and the batter-runner can use either the white or contrasting color portion." And separately, the rule says: "When the defensive player**

uses the foul portion of the double base, the batter-runner can run in fair territory when the throw is coming from the foul side of the base, and if hit by the thrown ball, it is not interference. If intentional interference is ruled, the runner is out.”

**MOTION PASSED 11-0**

## 10. Define ‘foul’ language

**Recommendation:** Define “foul language” so that all umpires/directors are on the same page. Following extensive discussion, this topic did not receive a formal motion for consideration, or a second for same. The matter was referred to the U.I.C.’s for implementation in pre-game discussions and in-game management.

## 11. Men’s & Women’s 40+ roster makeup

**Recommendation to address the issue of elite players from other associations (e.g., USSSA “Conference” players) on SSUSA rosters**

1. For the 40+ Masters program, establish roster guidelines restricting the number of elite level players that can participate with a team. Suggest these:
  - i. 40+ AAA (Men) and 40W-AAA and 40W-AA (Women) may not have any players whose name appears on an elite level roster in the current or prior calendar year.
  - ii. 40+ Major Men and 40+ Major Women can have a maximum of three (3) players whose name appears on an elite level roster in the current or prior calendar year.
2. “Elite level” roster defined as players who play Conference USSSA (any class) or 40 Masters B or above with any other nationally recognized associations, such as ASA /USA, GSL, ISA, NSA, One Nation or USSSA.

**MOTION PASSED 11-0**

## 12. Simplify legal bat rules

**Recommendation:** Simplify the language surrounding approved bats and set a firm date for grandfathered bats. **Suggested Change:** As of November 1, 2023, bats must be marked with the SSUSA/NTS logo. Older bats must be marked SSUSA approved (or have SSUSA logo), with 1.21 BPF or less.

**MOTION APPROVED 9-0 (2 abstaining)**

## 13. Clarify mercy rule situation

**Recommendation:** Clarify rule book wording to make clear whether a game can be ended via the mercy rule when the visitors are ahead 15 runs in the top of the fifth or later innings. Following discussion, the committee concluded that the rule language is adequate and, accordingly, there was no motion for consideration required.

## 14. Allow ‘courtesy’ defenders

**Recommendation:** Just like courtesy runners, let anyone that is on the lineup card play defense even if they’re not in the batting order.

**MOTION FAILED 1-10**

## 15. Adjust roster release rule

**Recommendation:** Change Rule 4.2(2) E so that no manager can prevent a player from finishing a season with another team by refusing to “release” the player in retaliation for him playing one tournament with another team. **EFFECT:** This change would have required SSUSA to become involved in arbitrating or dictating a specific result in a “release” dispute between a player and a manager.

Following extensive discussion, including the player who submitted this recommendation being present and participating, the matter did not receive both a motion for consideration and a second for same. Accordingly, it did not make it to the final Agenda.

## 16. Reverse Rule awarding a #2 Seed to East or West for USA Game

**Motion to reverse a prior year Rule awarding no worse than a #2 bracket seed (in brackets of five or more teams) at the World Championship to any team that does not have an opponent from the other side of the country for the USA National game.**

**MOTION FAILS 4-7**

## 17. Conformance of SSUSA policies regarding Transgender Athletes

The landscape of competition by transgender athletes in all sports is evolving rapidly. SSUSA has an obligation to keep current on those requirements. Prior to 2023, SSUSA used the NCAA's transgender athlete eligibility rules, but the NCAA recently changed those rules. It set sport-specific testosterone thresholds, and it turned to national (or international) sport governing bodies to set policy. For softball, the NCAA is following the sport's international federation policy, which means the *World Baseball Softball Confederation's* policy governs.

**Motion to:** [a] Conform the Transgender Athletes rules to those of the NCAA, as referencing the *World Baseball Softball Confederation* and [b] affirm that all costs to determine and certify testosterone levels vest solely with the athlete.

**MOTION PASSED 11-0**

## **18. Phase Out of Underage Players in the 75+ and 80+ Ages**

**Beginning in the 2024 Season, there will be a phase out of allowed underage players in the 75+ and 80+ divisions, as follows:**

### **§13.2(4) • AGE ELIGIBILITY AND GROUPING**

**B. Men's 75+, 80+ and 85+ team roster composition age exceptions:**

- 1. For the 2023 Season, Men's 75+ age division teams may draw up to five underage players, all of whom must be 74-year-olds. For the 2024 Season and beyond, all players must be 75 years old.**
- 2. For the 2023 Season, Men's 80+ age division teams may draw up to seven players aged 78 or 79, including not more than three 78-year-olds. For the 2024 Season, they may draw three 79-year-olds.**

**MOTION Re: 75+ PASSED 10-0 (1 abstaining)**

**MOTION Re: 80+ PASSED 10-0 (1 abstaining)**

**Tuesday, January 10 • Rules committee meetings conclude**

**These Minutes were reviewed by the Committee and formally approved for publication on Friday, January 13, 2023, by a vote of 11-0**

**A motion to request that Donna McGuire serve as Chair for the 2023 National Rules Committee was made and passed by ACCLAMATION.**

**There being no further business before the Committee, a Motion to Adjourn PASSED 11-0**

## **Other Topics Proposed for Consideration**

Each year, there are topics brought to the attention of the Rules Committee for potential Agenda consideration by either public member proposal at the open meetings, prior correspondence received (by email or written letters) from the public, or by Rules Committee members during the sessions. There is committee discussion on all of those issues, but they occasionally fail to make it to official Agenda status due to either the [1] lack of a motion for consideration, [2] lack of a second to a motion for consideration, and/or [3] the request to withdraw an active Agenda item by the sponsor and second.

The Committee is pleased with the “State of the Game” from a rules perspective and we sought to make changes only where they were mandated. The failure to make the Final Agenda of any specific topic proposed to result in change has no bearing on the Committee’s perception of their importance to those who brought them to our attention. Thank you to all who took the time to appear or write. Your contributions are appreciated and were significant and invaluable to the Committee.