



SSUSA 2023-24 National Rules Committee

Official Minutes

December 6 - 7, 2023

Fort Myers (Estero), Florida

MEMBERS PRESENT • Donna McGuire (MO/Chair/Director/Regional U.I.C.) • Terry Hennessy (CA/SSUSA C.E.O.) • Fran Dowell (CA/SSUSA Executive Director) • Michael Boone (NJ/Director) • Don Brooks (TX/Director) • Gayle Collins (FL/Director/U.I.C.) • Dave Dowell (CA/Director) • Ron Grassi (WA/Director) • Bill Hill (CA/Director) • Butch Jones (WA/Director) • Tim McElroy (MD/VP/Director) • Doug Robbins (CA/Director) • Jerry Smith (CA/Director)

PUBLIC ATTENDEES • Nancy Allen (IN/Director) • Mike Dembicki (MI/Director) • Nic Francois (SSUSA Office) • Stephanie Hopkins (SSUSA Office) • Brian Pryor (WA/Director) • Linda Weber (MO/Director)

RULES COMMITTEE OPEN PUBLIC SESSION - December 6, 2023

GENERAL ITEMS –

- Welcome remarks from Committee Chair Donna McGuire and Agenda overview.
- Self-introductions by Committee Members and the public membership attending.

NEW BUSINESS –

- General discussion and review of approximately 29 [1] correspondence items received from the membership via email, written correspondence and [2] public attendee topics for consideration submitted during this session.

RULES COMMITTEE WORKING & VOTING SESSION – December 7, 2023

§1.5 • BATTERS BOX and §7.3 • BATTING POSITION – There were multiple proposals presented by both public and committee membership regarding changes to the batters box and batter position rules. For the sake of consistency across all venues where SSUSA plays, the committee adopted, generally, the USSSA Rule 1, section 5, as follows:

“The batter must take an initial position with his back foot no further forward than a line defining the front edge of home plate. The batter will be called out if he hits the ball when the back foot is completely further forward than the line defining the front edge of home plate. NOTE: All other illegally batted ball infractions regarding the side and rear lines of the batter’s box, along with stepping on home plate, remain in effect.”

• **PASSED: 12-0-0**

§1.21 • EQUALIZER – Multiple proposals were considered and acted upon, including:

- Allow 80+ teams (only) a 12th Defender in double-equalizer situation • **PASSED: 9-1-1**
- Use equalizer runs in Bracket play only (not in seeding games) • **FAILED: 1-10-0**

§3.4(6) • PENALTY FOR USING AN ALTERED BAT OR SOFTBALL – Section was amended as follows:

- A. Penalty for using an altered bat – If a bat is suspected of being altered to enhance performance, a tournament official will determine if the bat will be allowed to be used in play or will request that it be voluntarily surrendered by the owner for inspection. If the player refuses to immediately surrender the bat to tournament officials, the player will be suspended for ~~ten years life, the manager for one year~~, and the team will forfeit all games played in the current tournament. If the player voluntarily surrenders the bat and it is found to be altered to enhance performance, the player will be suspended for ~~five ten years and the manager for one year~~. **TEAM SANCTIONS: If the player refuses to surrender the bat, or if the bat is found to be altered to enhance performance, the team will forfeit all previously earned current season Tournament of Champions bids and is declared ineligible to participate in the current season SSUSA World Championships and Tournament of Champions.** The bat, if surrendered by the owner, will be held and forwarded for testing through the National SSUSA office at the conclusion of the tournament... • **PASSED: 11-1-0**

§3.8 • UNIFORMS • Request to amend allowable uniform numbers to include punctuation (2.4) and symbols (7½) have been made to the SSUSA office recently. Section was amended in part as follows:

- B. Numbers – An Arabic **whole** number of contrasting colors at least 5" (15.24 cm) high must be worn on uniforms. **Symbols and/or fractions are not permitted.** No players on the same team may wear identical numbers. (Numbers 3 and 03 are examples of identical numbers.) ... • **PASSED: 12-0-0**

§4.2(2) • ADDING / RELEASING ROSTER PLAYERS – Proposal to allow teams from Hawaii to be able to add and release players to their roster two times per season • **FAILED: 1-11-0**

§4.4 and §4.5 • SHORT-HANDED RULE and A.D.A. RULE – Proposal to allow a pure designated hitter (DH) for the pitcher in age groups of 70+ and more senior. Intent is to maintain time management efficiency for pitchers removing and replacing protective gear. • **FAILED: 3-9-0**

§5.1 B. • GAME TIME – Proposed rule change to shorten the amount of time that a team must be ready to play from 30 minutes to 15 minutes before game time and add a forfeit provision for non-compliance with that time limit. Current rule does not have the forfeit provision • **FAILED: 0-12-0**

§5.2 • HOME TEAM – Proposal that the choice of whether to be HOME or VISITOR in the Championship Game (only) is vested with the undefeated team

Home team will be decided by the flip of a coin before every game. The team designated as home team shall bat last in the inning. **EXCEPTION: The unbeaten bracket team in a Championship game may decide whether it will be the home or visitor team, unless there is an equalizer involved.** **NOTE:** A team giving an equalizer shall be designated as the home team. (See §1.31) • **PASSED: 6-5-0**

§6.2 • PITCH COUNT – Proposal to change the starting 1-1 pitch count to exclude the “waste foul”. • **FAILED: 0-11-1**

§13.2(4) B. • AGE ELIGIBILITY AND GROUPING – Amended subpart “B” (for men) and subpart “C” (for women), as follows: • **PASSED: 7-5-0 (men)** • **PASSED: 12-0-0 (women)**

- B.. Men's **70+**, **75+**, **80+** and **85+** team roster composition age exceptions:
1. **Men's 70+ age division teams may draw up to three underage players all of whom must be 69 years old.**
 2. Men's 75+ age division teams may draw up to five underage players, all of whom must be 74 year olds. ~~Starting with the 2024 season, all players must be at least 75 years old.~~
 3. Men's 80+ age division teams may draw up to seven players aged 78 or 79, including not more than three 78 year olds. ~~Starting with the 2024 season, teams may draw up to three 79-year-olds only.~~
 4. Men's 85+ age division teams may draw up to ten players aged 83 or 84, including not more than five 83 year olds
- C. 3. The women's 40-Masters division is comprised of **four** rating levels: **Major-Plus**, Major, AAA and AA. The women's 50+ **and 55+** senior divisions **are** comprised of two rating levels: Major and AAA. The women's senior divisions aged **55+ 60+** and older are open, un-rated divisions.

§13.4(1) • EASTERN & WESTERN NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Teams qualifying in Official SSWC qualifiers may be invited to compete in the Eastern National Championships or the Western National Championships, depending on which side of the Mississippi River the team's region falls.



A. East /West Nationals eligibility - All women's divisions and the Major-Plus, Major, AAA and AA men's divisions in these age groups: 40+ Masters, 50+, 55+, 60+, 65+, 70+, 75+, 80+ and 85+.

B. East/West Nationals format - Teams qualifying from official SSUSA regions east of the Mississippi River may be invited to the Eastern National Championships. Teams qualifying from official SSUSA regions west of the Mississippi River may be invited to the Western National Championships. The format is a 5-game modified double elimination tournament.

C. **Exception - Teams from the 17 states comprising the central geographic region of the United States proximate to the Mississippi River (AL, AR, IA, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MN, MO, MS, ND, NE, OK, SD, TN & WI) may choose to be invited to either the Eastern OR the Western National Championships, but not both.**

Proposal to relax the accessibility for teams in the 17 Midwest states to elect to go to either the Eastern or Western National Championships and not be subject to the rigid fixed boundary of the Mississippi River. They would be eligible to represent either the East or the West in the USA National Game should they win:

• **PASSED: 11-1-0**

§15.5(2) • FORFEIT IN TOURNAMENT CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Teams must play in the tournament championship game to earn and receive awards, including any berth to the Tournament of Champions or other invitational game or event. If a team declines to play, it will be assessed a forfeit loss and will not be declared a champion. **NOTE:** At the end of the championship game, the participants may, by mutual consent AND with the tournament director's approval, decline to play the "if needed" game. • **PASSED: 11-0-0**

§15.6 • UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT – Proposal to expand the language of this section to encompass ejections after a game has ended and provide for potential extra games to be missed by the player

After any game in which a player has been ejected for unsportsmanlike conduct, as defined in the Code of Ethics, the umpire will discuss the ejection with the field director, who will determine whether the player is to only be ejected from the game, **from multiple games**, or from the remainder of the tournament. **Player conduct after, or between, games is subject to this provision.** If the player is ejected for the remainder of the tournament, the field director will make a report and recommendation to the SSUSA board.... • **PASSED: 12-0-0**

§16 • INTERNATIONAL CO-ED PROVISIONS

§16.4 D. • CO-ED COURTESY RUNNERS – A Courtesy Runner may enter the game only for a runner of the same gender. • **PASSED: 12-0-0**

§16.2 • CO-ED DEFENSIVE RULES –

- F. A female batter-runner may not be thrown out at first base ~~if the~~ **on an initial throw by an outfielder**. PENALTY: Batter-runner will be awarded ~~third~~ **first** base. • **PASSED: 11-1-0**

§16.3 • CO-ED DEFENSIVE RULES

- E. In a tournament where bats are provided by SSUSA, all players must use the provided bats. • **PASSED: 12-0-0**

• **LIMIT OUTFIELDER PUT OUTS IN 85+ DIVISION** – Proposal that, if the ball is cleanly hit through the infield, no batter or runner can be forced out at 1st or 2nd base in the 85+ division. • **FAILED: 0-10-1**

• **TECHNICAL CORRECTION – §4.2(2) • ADDING & RELEASING PLAYERS TO QUALIFIED ROSTERS**

SSUSA will continue allowing teams to add a limited number of players to a Qualifying Roster. Players to be added must be the same age (or older) and same skill level (or lower) as that of the team. No higher skill level players can be added.

Here are the new roster maximums for adding players to "Qualifying Rosters" for the Eastern and Western National Championships, World Championships and the Tournament of Champions:

- Men and Women 40+ Masters Divisions: 15 players
- Men 50+ through 60+ Divisions: 15 players
- Women 50+ and 55+ Senior Divisions: 16 players
- Men 65+ through 75+ Divisions: 16 players
- Men 80+ and 85+ Divisions: Lenient with player additions.

Added players must be released if they are already on another team's roster in that age division.

• **CHAIRWOMAN RETENTION** – In recognition of the fine performance (again) by the chair, Donna McGuire was nominated to remain in that leadership position for another year. Despite her gracious attempt to persuade us otherwise: • **PASSED: BY ACCLAMATION**

• **2023 NATIONAL RULES COMMITTEE SESSION ADJOURNED**

EXHIBIT “A” • Other Topics Proposed for Consideration

The following topics were 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 course of the sessions. There was committee discussion on all of these issues, but they failed to make it to Official Agenda status due to either the lack of a motion for consideration, lack of a second to a motion for consideration, and/or 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 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 were significant and invaluable to the Committee.

The following non-agenda items are presented in the chronological order they were discussed during the Sessions.

1. Apply equalizer runs in innings #1-5 instead of innings #2-6
2. Apply equalizer runs in innings #3-7 instead of innings #2-6
3. Use higher rated team’s home run limit in equalizer games
4. Ignore equalizer runs in seeding calculations
5. Adopt “Las Vegas Time Rule” for determining the end of an inning and start of the next inning
6. Adopt SPA rule regarding the process to protest of the legality of an opponent’s bat
7. Allow Major players to return to their former team twice per Season if released by a Major+ team
8. Add two more teams to expand to a 4-team mini-tournament for the USA National Championship at the World Championships
9. In an open inning, if a team bats around, a player must run for himself after his second at-bat.
10. Proposal to strengthen penalties for forfeiting games in tournaments, thus disrupting the integrity of the event. (Already covered by §15.4 • EARLY WITHDRAWAL FROM TOURNAMENT)

Prepared this 8th Day of December, 2023 –

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Dowell

DAVE DOWELL
Recording Secretary