



SSUSA 2025-26 National Rules Committee

Official Minutes

December 3 - 4, 2025

Rancho Cordova, California

MEMBERS PRESENT • Donna McGuire (MO/Chair/Regional U.I.C.) • Terry Hennessy (CA/SSUSA C.E.O.) • Fran Dowell (CA/SSUSA Executive Director) • Michael Boone (NJ) • Don Brooks (TX) • Gayle Collins (FL) • Mike Dembicki (MI) • Dave Dowell (CA) • Mike Hula (NV) • Butch Jones (WA) • Jeff Kimoto (HI) • Tim McElroy (MD/V.P.) • Linda Weber (KS) **ALTERNATE** • Ron Grassi (WA) **ABSENT** • Rick Seifman (AZ/V.P.) • Jerry Smith (CA)

PUBLIC ATTENDEES • Robyn Bushey (SSUSA Office) • Tommy Bussey (CA/U.I.C./Director) • Curtie Davis (SSUSA Office) • Bobby Ellison (SSUSA Office) • Nic Francois (SSUSA Office) • Anthony Hinojosa (SSUSA Office) • Stephanie Hopkins (SSUSA Office) • Katheryn Jones (WA/Director) • Tiffany Peck (SSUSA Office) • Shelby Roberson (SSUSA Office) • Deanna Sesso (SSUSA Office)

RULES COMMITTEE OPEN PUBLIC SESSION - DECEMBER 3, 2025

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 40 [1] correspondence items received from the membership via email, written correspondence and [2] public attendee topics for consideration submitted during this session.
- **MEETING SESSION ADJOURNED 2:18 PM PST**

WORKING & VOTING SESSION #1 • DECEMBER 3, 2025 • 2:30 PM PST

• **PROPOSAL TO ELIMINATE OUT OF REGION PLAYERS** – Beginning with the 2027 Season, for Men's 40+ through 60+ teams rated AA, AAA and Major, the two (2) currently allowed "out of region" players would be phased out. All players must be from the home state and bordering state(s) or must have a current year valid snowbird card. • **FAILED 3-9-0**

• **PROPOSED INCREASE IN HOME RUN LIMITS** – Proposal to modify HR limits to new levels of M+=10; M=8, AAA=6 and AA=2 • **FAILED 1-11-0**

§13.3(1)A. • NUMBER OF QUALIFIERS REQUIRED – Proposal that "new teams" must play in two qualifiers before entering the Easterns, Westerns or World Championships. • **PASSED: 9-3-0**

- A. A team must compete in at least one SSWC qualifier to be invited to the Eastern or Western Nationals or World Championships. NOTE: A "new" team in their first SSUSA season must compete in two such SSWC qualifiers prior to entering those Championship events.

• **PROPOSED PHASE-OUT OF “CHIP” PLAYERS** – Proposal to phase out “Chip” players, beginning in 2027, for all ages at Major, AAA and AA ratings. • **FAILED 0-12-0**

§4.2(1)B. • PROHIBIT SPECIFIC “CHIPS” – Proposal to prohibit a player who has received a personal rating history write down from being a “chip” on a lower rated team for the current season • **PASSED 10-1-1**

- B. A re-rated player may NOT be on the roster of a lower rated team as an out-of-rating exemption player for the remainder of the current season. **EXAMPLE: Player “A” was re-rated from 65-Major+ to 65-Major this season. He may NOT join a 65-AAA team as an out-of-rating player during the current season.**

§8.5 • COURTESY RUNNERS FROM HOME FOR 85+ DIVISION – A 1-year pilot program was proposed for the 85+ age division to evaluate its feasibility for potential long-term rule book inclusion. Staff to develop specific rules and regulations regarding runner’s starting point, how far he may advance and exposure to be retired at first base on an outfield hit. Other courtesy runner rules would apply. • **PASSED: 12-0-0**

§11.3 • SSWC ALL TOURNAMENT PLAYERS – Proposal to eliminate fourth place All Tournament awards at the World Championships and reallocate the 14 Senior Softball National Hall of Fame points to 1st Place (6), Finalist (5) and Third Place (3) players in each. • **PASSED: 8-4-0**

The top **three** teams in the World Championships each pick All Tournament players. The All Tournament players names are recorded and used in consideration of National Hall of Fame nominations:

First: **Six** Second: **Five** Third: **Three**

§3.4(4) • ALTERED EQUIPMENT – Proposal to eliminate the two-layer limit on tape that is used to wrap a bat handle. • **PASSED: 9-1-2**

A bat or ball is considered altered when the physical characteristics of a legal softball bat or ball have been changed (**EXAMPLE: chilling softballs or heating bats.**). Replacing the handle of a metal bat with a wooden or other type handle, inserting material inside the bat or painting a bat...

§5.7B.4. • WHITE BASE “OUT” ISSUE – Proposal to add sub-part 4. to this rule to clarify that when an orange/white base violation occurs, it is regarded as a force out (no run scores if it is the third out of the half-inning at bat). • **PASSED: 12-0-0**

- B. No run shall be scored if the third out of the half-inning is the result of:

4. A violation of the safety base rule for a close play at first base. (See §8.4(1)) That final out is deemed to be a force out.

§13.1(1) • DIVISIONS OF THE SSWC – Proposal to essentially restructure the Men’s 40+ Masters division into four (4) rating levels (introducing a new “AA” division) effective from 02/01/27. Additional provisions included limitations on how many USSSA “Conference” players would be allowed in various rating levels. Also noted that “new” 40-Masters men’s teams enter at AAA rating. (See **§13.1(1)G.**) • **PASSED: 12-0-0**

- B. Major division – Comprised of teams that compete to determine the World Champion, Major division. A Major team is one with the potential of becoming World Champions in the Major division and is too strong to compete in the AAA division. Major division teams:
3. A Major team roster shall not have more than three players with a team affiliation rating history during the two previous tournament seasons greater than Major, **including USSSA Conference players rated “C” or above. NOTE: The SSUSA Roster/Eligibility department decides how many players who have been granted approval for a personal rating history downgrade to Major in the current or previous season are also included in this limit. The 2026 season determination: two.**

[Secretary’s NOTE: Similar provisions were enacted for AAA and AA divisions of play.]

- G. The rating of a “new” team is determined by the rating(s) of the teams from which the players came. A team with all new players begins as AAA if no other relevant information is available. If there is a question, the team is assigned initially to a higher rating.

§6.2 • (INCORRECT) PITCH COUNT ISSUE – Procedure to ratify (deem correct) an error if it is not restated prior to the next pitch. New **NOTE:** added to provision. • **PASSED: 12-0-0**

Batters are allowed 3 balls and/or 2 strikes. All batters start with a 1 1 ball/strike count. There will be one "waste foul" available to a batter after there are two strikes in the count. **NOTE: If an incorrect pitch count is communicated through an umpire's error, it may be corrected prior to the next pitch. Thereafter, the previous communicated pitch count is deemed to be accurate, and the result of any subsequent pitch call or play shall stand.**

• **MEETING SESSION ADJOURNED 4:55 PM**

WORKING & VOTING SESSION #2 • DECEMBER 4, 2025 • 10:05 AM PST

§5.10(4) • DUGOUT CONDUCT – Proposal restricting dugout and playing field presence to authorized team personnel only, all who must appear on the team roster and sign the team waiver form • **PASSED: 12-0-0**

Coaches, players, substitutes or other bench personnel shall not be outside the designated bench/dugout area except when the rule allows or when justified by an umpire. **Only team personnel can be in the dugout or on the playing field. All team personnel must appear on the team's roster and have signed the waiver form.** EFFECT: The first offense is a team warning...

§3.7D. • MASKS, HELMETS, SHIN-GUARDS – Pitcher's protective gear, such as headgear, must have a matte, non-reflective finish if it distracts the batter, or be mitigated through alternative means, such as non-reflective tape. • **PASSED: 12-0-0**

- D. If a pitcher's equipment, such as headgear, distracts the batter, the umpire or director can require it to be removed or corrected.

§13.4(2)B. • U.S. NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS – The 2024 rules modification to delete the phrase “*For divisions of five or more teams only,*” was reinstated for awarding the #1 and #2 bracket seeds based only on the seeding game results rather than the USA National Championship game result. • **PASSED: 11-0-1**

§13.1(4)E. • AGE/DIVISION ELIGIBILITY FOLLOWING AN UPWARD RATING CHANGE – After a team's upward rating adjustment, the team may not request to play in a younger age division at a lower rating level than their current rating in their native age group during that Season. • **PASSED: 12-0-0**

- E. Following an upward re-rating move, teams age 50+ through 75+ may not request to play in a younger age division at a lower rating level than their current new rating in their native age group during the current season. **EXAMPLE: A 55-Major team re-rated to 55-Major+ may not request to play “down” as a 50-Major team for that season.**

§13.1(1)C.4. • DIVISIONS OF THE SSWC – The provision that formerly addressed adding new recreational players to 40-Masters AAA teams was repealed due to the creation of the 40-AA Division • **PASSED: 12-0-0**

§13.1(1)D.4. • DIVISIONS OF THE SSWC – The provision that addressed adding new players to 40-Masters AAA teams was modified to apply to all AA rated teams at ages 50+ and older • **PASSED: 12-0-0**

- D. AA division – Comprised of teams that play in Senior Softball Tournament Championships qualifiers and do not place high enough to be invited to the AAA division, do not have the potential to become World Champions in the AAA division, and are not too strong to compete in the AA division. AA division teams:

4. **AA teams in age divisions 50+ and older may add recreational players with no tournament history as AA-rated players following SSUSA staff approval of those players.**

• **TEAM REGIONS OF SSWC** – A proposal was made to remove the State of Washington from the merged state/region known as Western Canada • **FAILED: 1-10-1**

§3.11 (New) • VIDEO TECHNOLOGY – Due to advances in video technology and the affordable cost of such equipment, more and more teams are deploying those devices. A proposal was made to prohibit use of video broadcasting or recording devices, including still cameras, within the confines of the playing field. **EXCEPTION:** Personnel approved by SSUSA to use such equipment on the field • **PASSED: 12-0-0**

Video or still photography equipment is not permitted within the field of play, except for use by official tournament photographers or others who receive SSUSA permission to photograph or record the game. **EFFECT:** The use of recording devices to challenge or appeal a call on the field is prohibited. **NOTE:** Tournament officials reserve the right to determine the number and physical location of devices in order to maintain optimal viewing conditions for directors and spectators.

TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS

§8.8 • COMMITMENT LINE – The third sentence of this section was amended for clarity and accuracy:

...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. The runner may be tagged out until both feet have touched or crossed the line. **EFFECT...**"

§8.9(1) • FORCE SITUATION AT HOME (New Title) – The section was re-titled and amended for clarity and accuracy:

Retiring a base runner at home becomes a force out situation once the runner has touched/crossed the commitment line. The defensive player must have possession of the ball while touching any portion of the strike mat before the runner gets a foot down on or down past the scoring line or down on the scoring plate.

COMMITTEE 2025 SESSIONS ADJOURNMENT

• **CHAIRWOMAN RETENTION** – In recognition of another exemplary year by Donna McGuire at the helm of the SSUSA National Rules Committee, there was a motion to formally request that she fulfill the same role for the 2026 sessions. • **PASSED BY ACCLAMATION**

• **2025 NATIONAL RULES COMMITTEE SESSIONS ADJOURNED**

Prepared this 4th Day of December, 2025

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Dowell

DAVE DOWELL

Recording Secretary

(Rev. 12/16/25)

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 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. Proposal to retain two allowed out-of-region players – Moot when conflicting proposal failed
 2. Proposal to change AAA home run limit to three plus “one-up” system
 3. General request to raise all HR limits to unstated higher numbers because “it will be more fun”
 4. Three separate proposals to allow pitching screens for [1] 85+, [2] 70+ and [3] ALL age divisions
 5. Proposal to allow courtesy runners from home to first base for 80+ age division
 6. Proposal to ban trans-gender players from Women’s division teams
 7. Proposal for a generalized relaxation of rules for the purpose of making player movement between multiple teams more flexible and less restrictive
 8. Proposal to eliminate “one to waste” courtesy foul under the “1-1” starting pitch count
 9. Proposal to allow one Designated Hitter (“DH”) for a defender in each game
 10. Proposal to revisit (and relax) rating move-up criteria for teams who do not win major events
 11. Proposal to add a Women’ 35+ age division
 12. Proposal to tweak the commitment line rule gamesmanship issue (technical change implemented)
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