



Softball Study Guide



History

Softball originated in Chicago on Thanksgiving Day, 1887. A group of about twenty young men had gathered in the gymnasium of the Farragut Boat Club in order to hear the outcome of the Harvard-Yale football game. After Yale's victory was announced, a man picked up a stray boxing glove and threw it at someone, who hit it with a pole. George Hancock was the inventor. He tied the boxing glove so that it resembled a ball, chalked out a diamond on the floor (smaller dimensions than those of a baseball field in order to fit the gym), and broke off a broom handle to serve as a bat. He shouted "Let's play ball!" It was considered a perfect way for baseball players to practice during winter months. In the early days, because the ball was soft they didn't feel the need to use gloves.

A fireman, Lewis Rober, played a very big role in developing the game. He needed something to keep his Minneapolis firemen busy while waiting for fire calls. He marked a field in a lot next to the fire station. The smaller field and softer ball used in the game of softball made meant more offense and action in the field than baseball. Rober decided to limit games to seven innings because this allowed games to be completed in an hour while being active and competitive. Contests between different firehouses began to draw as many as 3,000 spectators. By 1913, the game was officially adopted by the Minneapolis Park Board and was played in parks and on playgrounds all over the city.

Rober's game was known as Kitten Ball until 1925, when the Minneapolis Park Board changed it to Diamond Ball, one of a half dozen names used during this time for softball. Nicknames for softball include: Kitten ball, army ball, mush ball, indoor-outdoor, recreation ball, and playground ball. The name softball didn't come about until 1926 when Walter Hakanson, a Denver YMCA official and a former ASA president and commissioner, suggested it to the International Joint Rules Committee. Hakanson had come up with the name in 1926, but the committee didn't include the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) until 1934. Efforts to organize softball on a national basis didn't materialize until 1933, when Leo Fischer and Michael J. Pauley, a Chicago Sporting goods salesman, conceived the idea of organizing thousands of local softball teams in America into cohesive state organizations, and state organizations into a national organization.

Rules were standardized by 1923, but the name softball was not officially adopted until 1932. In 1933 during the depression the world championships were held. Governed by the Amateur Softball Association of America (ASA), the first champions for both the women and the men were from Chicago.



Prior to World War II, public interest in softball grew so much that teams are organized into leagues all over the country. Because of its great appeal to Americans of all ages, and because little equipment is needed and any ordinary playground is adequate, this game has become the first choice of all recreation playgrounds. There exists only one set of official rules, but modifications have produced many types of games and leagues, such as fast pitch and slow pitch; leagues for men's teams, women's teams, and

combined teams; games using the regulation-sized softball and games using a much larger ball; rules forbidding the use of gloves; and many other interesting variations.

The Game

The batting side (offense) attempts to score runs by making a circuit of four bases while the fielding team (defense) attempts to dismiss them. The major differences from baseball are:

- Softball is played by men and women
- The softball field of play is smaller – Baseball bases are 90 feet apart while softball bases are 60 feet apart; the distance between the pitcher's mound and home plate is 60'6" in baseball and 43 feet in softball
- The softball is larger than a baseball – 12 inch circumference vs. 9 inch
- A softball game lasts only seven innings while baseball lasts 9 innings
- Softball pitching is underhand
- Softball player's may not steal or step off the base while pitcher has the ball in hand.

As in baseball, the visiting team bats first, the home team takes the field, there are 3 outs each at bat, and 9 fielding positions. North Carolina high school girls play fast pitch (9 players)

A variation of softball is slow-pitch softball. This game is generally a more active one because the ball must be pitched more slowly and with an arch allowing the ball to be hit much more frequently. In slow-pitch softball, teams have 10 players. The extra player is called a short fielder. Bunting and stealing bases are not permitted in slow pitch.

A strike is called (1) for each legally pitched ball, (2) for each pitched ball missed by the batter, (3) for each foul tip---the batter is out if the tip is on the third strike (4) for each pitched ball struck at and missed that touches any part of the batter, and (5) for hitting a batter positioned in the strike zone. The strike zone extends horizontally from black edge to black edge of the plate and vertically from the knees to under the arm pits.



A ball is called for a pitched ball that does not enter the strike zone.

The batter is out under the following circumstances:

1. On three strikes
2. When the ball is bunted or chopped downward
3. When a fly ball is legally caught
4. On an infield fly rule
5. When the batter interferes with the catcher
6. Intentional interference puts a runner out plus the batter who hit the ball.

A fair ball is one that: (1) lands in the fair territory -between first and third bases, (2) lands on any one of the bases with the exception of home base, or (3) falls on fair ground beyond first or third base.

The batter is out immediately when an infield fly is hit with base runners on first and second, or first, second, and third with less than two outs. This is called the infield-fly rule.

Field and Player Position

Infielders = Pitcher, catcher, 1st baseman, 2nd baseman, 3rd baseman, and shortstop.
Outfielders = Right fielder, Left fielder and Center fielder (right center and left center in slow pitch)

Scoring

When a player goes completely around the bases, a run is scored. If the defensive team strikes out a batter, catches a fly ball, throws a batted ball to a base before the batter reaches it, or tags a runner before he/she reaches a base, that player is considered out and does not have the opportunity to score a run.

Base Running Rules

1. All bases must be touched in order.
2. If two base runners occupy the same base, the last player on the base can be tagged out.
3. The base runner is out if he/she passes another runner.
4. The base runner is out if he/she is hit by a batted ball. All other base runners have to return to the base occupied prior to the pitch, unless forced to the next base.
5. A runner can only overrun 1st base and home plate.

Terms

Assist – Each player who handles the ball, after it leaves the bat, up to the player who makes the putout, is credited with an assist.

Ball – A ball pitched outside the strike zone that the batter does not attempt to hit.

Base on Balls - (a walk) - Four pitches thrown out of the strike zone.

Batting order - Order in which players on a team must bat.

Clean-up batter – Usually bats 4th in the line-up, the strongest hitter.

Count - The number of balls and strikes on the batter.

Designated Hitter (DH) – A player that is inserted into the batting line-up for someone that cannot bat.

Double - A hit that permits the batter to reach second base. **Triple** - A hit that permits the batter to reach third base.

Double Play - Two offensive players are put out in one play.

Error - A mistake, fumble of ball or wild throw, by the defensive team which allows a base runner to advance.

Fair Ball - A batted ball that hits first or third base line, is touched by a fielder within the baselines, or bounces within the baseline past first or third.

Fielder's choice – The fielder chooses to retire a base runner, rather than the batter.

Force out - When a fielder has possession of the ball at a base where the base runner was forced to run does not need to tag the runner.

Foul Ball - A ball that first touches an object or player outside of the foul line. It is considered a strike on the batter, if the batter has less than a two strike count.

Foul tip – A batted ball that goes from the bat, not higher than the batter head, to the catcher's hand and is legally caught.

Full count – A count of three balls and two strikes.

Grand Slam - Bases are loaded when batter hits a home run.

Hit – A ball that is hit in such a way that the batter or the preceding base runners are not put-out by a good defensive play.

Home run – a batter rounds all bases and scores a run off his/her hit.

Inning - The portion of the game within which the teams alternate to the field and at bat. Each team gets three outs only!

Lead-off Batter - First batter in batting order.

Line Drive - A hard hit ball that travels with little arc, parallel to the ground.

Put-out – Credited to the fielder who last handles the ball on a play that retires a base runner.

RBI – Run batted in: the batter is credited with hitting in the base runner.

Sacrifice fly – when the batter hits a fly to the outfield permitting base runners to advance after tagging up following the catch; sacrifice himself to advance the runners.

Single - A hit that permits the batter to reach first base.

Stealing - Act of base runner attempting to advance to the next base during a pitch- not allowed in slow pitch.

Strike – A swing and a miss, or a ball pitched with the strike zone that the batter does not attempt to hit.

Strike Zone - that space over any part of home plate between the batters arm pits and the top of the knees.

Tag-up – With less than 2 outs, runners on base have to go back and tag up at the base before they can run on a caught fly ball

