

Southwest Chicago Men's Baseball League

2026 OFFICIAL RULES

Unless indicated otherwise by these rules, the *Official Baseball Rules* of Major League Baseball shall be the authority used for all Southwest Chicago Men's Baseball League games.

Rule changes for the 2026 season are in bold red text

Any modifications to this year's rule book such as grammar, structure, moving a rule to a more proper section, and re-written and added sentences for better clarification are not actual rule changes and remain in black text. For easier reference, the rules are codified and numbered with a "Table of Contents" and cross-references.

For simplicity's sake, throughout this document the Southwest Chicago Men's Baseball League is referred to as SCMBL or the "League."

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1.00 EQUIPMENT AND UNIFORMS

1.01 BASEBALLS

At the start of every game, both teams must provide two new baseballs to the home plate umpire. The only approved baseballs are those provided by the League.

1.02 BATS

Bats must be wooden and meet the requirements outlined by Major League rules.

Exception: The Executive Board has approved use of the hybrid bat that is comprised of a wooden barrel and a handle partially made of metal.

1.03 HELMETS

All batters, on-deck batters, and baserunners must wear a protective helmet. Catchers must wear a protective helmet when fielding their position. The wearing of helmets by base coaches is optional. All players must wear a protective cup.

1.04 BASEBALL SPIKES

Metal, plastic, and rubber spiked shoes are approved for League games.

Exception: The wearing of metal spikes is prohibited on synthetic baseball fields; only plastic cleats or turf shoes are allowed to be worn on these fields.

1.05 STORING EQUIPMENT

No equipment shall be left lying on the playing field, either in foul or fair territory. All equipment must be kept inside the team's dugout, including gloves, bats, baseballs, and personal bags.

Penalty: Should any loose equipment on the field alter a play, the umpire has the authority to award bases, declare outs, and/or return runners.

1.06 UNIFORMS

Participating players must wear a full baseball uniform, which shall consist of baseball pants, baseball jersey with individual number, and baseball cap or helmet. Uniforms of team members must be essentially the same style and color.

Rule Comment: To meet the full requirements of this rule, teams are permitted a grace period until Mother's Day (**10 May 2026**). However, regardless of any grace period, all participants must be outfitted in an acceptable baseball uniform; i.e., no shorts, sweatpants, or jeans. The umpire determines an "acceptable" uniform.

2.00 STARTING THE GAME

2.01 OFFICIAL TEAM ROSTER

The League maintains a list of every SCMBL team roster. Prior to Opening Day, every team must submit to the League their official roster by **24 April 2026**. The roster must contain every player's full name and jersey number. Teams submitting their roster late are subject to a fine.

- a) To participate in a game, a player must be a member of a SCMBL team's official roster. A player is prohibited from being on the roster of more than one SCMBL team.
- b) There is no limit to the number of players a team may have on their roster. Managers may make additions to their roster by simply notifying the Commissioner's office.

Rule Comment: Managers may add a player to their roster at any time, including just before or during a game. However, the manager must inform the umpire that he is adding a new player to his roster. This may be done at the pre-game conference or when the late-arriving player is first added to the lineup. The umpire will circle the player's name and designate it with the words "new player," thus making the player eligible. The manager should also notify the Commissioner of the roster addition.

2.02 EXCHANGE OF LINEUPS

During the pre-game conference held approximately five minutes before the scheduled game start, both managers shall give their original lineup card (not a carbon copy) to the umpire and an identical copy to the opposing manager. Any subsequent changes and substitutions to the lineup must be made to the umpire, whose lineup card in his possession shall serve as the official lineup.

Penalty: If the lineup cards are not submitted by the required time (or if a team delays the game for any reason), the umpire has the authority to begin calling balls and strikes, whichever adversely affects the team that has not complied with the rule.

Every player listed on the lineup card must not only be eligible to play but must be physically present at the game (Rules 2.10 and 2.11). Umpires shall report all violations of these rules directly to the Commissioner, such as if the manager had listed a player on his lineup card who was not present at the game. Conscientious umpires can ensure that these rules by taking steps such as counting the number of players on the field and in the dugout to determine if the figure matches the number of players listed on the lineup card.

2.03 LINEUP CARDS

Managers should pay particular attention to the rules concerning lineup cards because the cards serve as the means by which the League records “Credited Games” for postseason eligibility (See Rule 8.00).

- a) The names of players listed on the lineup card must be legible and include the player’s full name (first and last name) and their jersey number.
 - It is not necessary to include any player’s fielding position on the lineup card because there is free and unlimited defense substitution.

Rule Comment: Each team has an offensive lineup (batting order), as well as defensive players. The two are independent of one another. Defensive players are not required to play offense. Offensive players are not required to play defense. A player may play either defense or offense—or both.

- b) All players listed on a team’s lineup card must be members of a SCMBL team roster. (See Rule 2.01)

2.04 MINIMUM PARTICIPANTS

Teams must have a minimum of eight defensive players to start, continue, and end a game.

- a) If a team is unable to field at least eight players at any time during the game, the team shall lose by forfeit.

Rule Comment: The visiting team may start the game with only seven players in their batting order, but when the third out occurs and the team is still unable to field at least eight players, it shall lose by forfeit.

- b) Whenever a team has the minimum eight players in their lineup, the ninth slot is an “automatic out” every time the slot comes up during the game (Rule 4.01).

2.05 GAME START GRACE PERIOD

To avoid a forfeit, teams have a 15-minute grace period after the scheduled game start to obtain the required eight defensive players to start the game. The 15-minute grade period applies only when a team has fewer than eight players. As soon as the eighth player arrives, the game shall start immediately.

Note: See Borrowed Players (Rule 2.13) for another way to help avoid a forfeit.

2.06 BATTING ORDER

Managers may use one of two batting order formats:

a) SHARED BATTING ORDER SLOT

The manager may insert two players—but no more than two players—in the same batting slot.

- (1) The number of Shared Batting Slots in the lineup is unlimited, as long as there are at least nine batting slots. A team's lineup may contain more than nine batting slots.
- (2) Offensive substitution is unlimited for the two players sharing a batting slot. For example, one player may bat every time, the two players may alternate plate-appearances, one player may always run for the other, etc.
- (3) The only player who may run for a player sharing a batting slot is the other player sharing the same slot.
 - Therefore, the Courtesy/Pinch-Runner Rules do not apply to players sharing a batting slot (see Rules 4.01, 4.02 below.)

b) CONTINUOUS BATTING ORDER

A manager may choose to have as many batting slots as the number of players available that game with each slot containing one batter. There is no limit to the number of batting slots in a team's lineup.

Rule Comment: Should the manager choose to start the game with a Continuous Batting Order, he is permitted to later switch to the Shared Batting Order format by inserting a late-arriving player in a slot already occupied by another player.

2.07 RESERVES and SUBSTITUTES

All players ***present at the game*** and not in the starting lineup shall be listed by their full name and jersey number in the section marked "Reserves" on the lineup card.

This rule allows managers to enact strategic moves such as pinch-hitters/runners.

- a) To have a player listed as a Reserve on the lineup card, the team must have at least 10 players present and nine batting slots in the lineup.

- b) The manager may insert a Reverse into the lineup at any time the ball is dead.
- c) A Reserve may be inserted into the line-up either:
- i) As a pinch-hitter or pinch-runner for any player not already sharing a batting slot; or
 - ii) Placed in an individual batting slot at the bottom of the order.
- d) A Reserve who enters the lineup as a pinch-hitter/runner will then share the batting slot with the player for whom he has pinch-hit or pinch-ran. He is locked into that batted slot for the remainder of the game.
- The former “reserve” is then subject to the same rules as any other slotted player as if he were always in that batting slot.
- e) Whenever a Reserve first enters the batting lineup, the manager (or the reserve player himself) must notify the umpire where he is being placed in the batting order, as either in his own slot at the bottom of the order or being slotted with another player.
- The manager should also inform the opposing team manager or scorekeeper of the Reserve’s placement in the order.

2.08 UNANNOUNCED and IMPROPER SUBSTITUTES

It is not only proper, but it is a basic courtesy, for a manager to notify the umpire and opposing manager of all changes to his batting order.

a) UNANNOUNCED SUBSTITUTE

If no notification is made when a Reserve first enters the lineup, Major League Rules shall apply. The player is recognized as an “Unannounced Substitute” and, if otherwise legal, there is no penalty.

The Reserve shall be considered as having entered the game offensively when he takes his place in the batter’s box (as a hitter) or is on or near a base (as a runner).

- (1) If an “Unannounced Substitute” enters the game as a batter, he shall be considered to have been placed in the batting slot that follows that of the previous batter, or in his own slot at the bottom of the order.

Example 1: An “Unannounced Substitute” steps into the batter’s box after the player in the #6 batting slot has completed his plate appearance. The player will be considered to have been placed in the #7 slot and is now sharing it with the player already occupying that slot. Therefore, if the #7 slot already contains two players, this would make the substitute improper and will be called out if an appeal is made by an alert opposing manager (Rule 2.07(2) below).

Example 2: An “Unannounced Substitute” enters the batter’s box after the last player in the order has completed his plate appearance. This player is considered to have been placed in his own slot at the bottom of the order and is not sharing a slot with the lead-off batter.

- (2) If an “Unannounced Substitute” enters the game as a runner, he shall be recognized as having been placed in the batting slot occupied by the baserunner being replaced.

b) **IMPROPER SUBSTITUTE (Reserve)**

A Reserve (announced or unannounced) who enters the lineup in a batting slot already occupied by two other players shall be classified as an “Improper Substitute.”

In such instances, the opposing manager has the right to appeal such an infraction. (See Rule 5.00 below for the procedure/penalty to be taken).

2.09 DEFENSIVE SUBSTITUTIONS

There is free and unlimited defensive substitution in all SCMBL games, providing it does not conflict with any League rule or with Major League Rules that apply to the pitcher.

- a) This rule applies to all players, including reserve players.
 - A Reserve, for example, may play the entire game in the field and never be in the batting order.
- b) This rule also applies to players sharing the same batting slot, in that these two players may play different defensive positions at the same time.

2.10 LINEUP CARD VIOLATION

A manager is strictly prohibited from listing any player who is not physically present at the game on his team’s lineup card (even as a “Reserve”). Since lineups cards are the means by which our League records “Credited Games” for postseason

eligibility (Rule 8.00), writing the name of a player who is not present not only violates the principles of good sportsmanship, it is an act of cheating.

Penalty: Any team violating this rule is subject to severe penalty, including game forfeit, fines, suspensions, and possible expulsion, as imposed by the Commissioner.

Rule Comment: The rule is quite clear. Managers are prohibited from writing the name of any player on their lineup card unless said player is actually at the game. Managers must also notify the umpire if any player, including Reserves, are leaving the premises early, so that the umpire may make the notation on the official lineup card. Ignorance of this rule will not lessen said penalties, nor can managers mitigate the offense by stating that he merely wrote a tardy player's name on the lineup because the player "is on his way" or "is in the parking lot." The player must be physically present.

To ensure compliance with this rule, all players are expected to be on the field, in the dugout, or near the dugout during the entire game (particularly during the exchange of lineups), should the umpire or opposing manager request confirmation of a particular player's presence.

The umpire shall report all violations of this rule directly to the Commissioner. Opposing managers should also be diligent in enforcing this League rule by reporting any violation of this rule by the other team to the umpire and Commissioner.

2.11 ELIGIBLE PLAYER

To participate in a SCMBL game, a player must meet the following qualifications:

- a) The player must be at least 18 years of age.
- b) The player must be a member of his team's official roster.

Exception: If the player is a "Borrowed Player" (Rule 2.11), he must be on the official roster of another SCMBL team.

- c) The player must be in good standing with the League (i.e., not serving a suspension, owns fees or fines, etc.)
- d) The player must have his photo identification with him at the game.
- e) To be eligible to play in a postseason game, the player must meet the requirements outlined under Rule 8.00.

2.12 CHALLENGING PLAYER'S ELIBILITY

A team may question a player's eligibility in much the same manner that a team would make any appeal to the umpire (such as batting-out-of-order). The manager simply requests that the umpire check the questioned player's photo ID card.

- a) If a player's identity or age is questioned, the player must produce his photo identification card.
- b) If a challenged player is unable to produce such documentation:
 - (1) The player is ejected and may no longer participate in the game;
 - (2) The player's batting slot becomes an "Automatic Out" (Rule 4.01), unless the slot can be filled by a legal substitute or if the player was sharing the slot with another player.
 - (3) The game will continue. The League will conduct a full investigation and the player and his manager are subject to additional penalties, including fines, suspensions, and forfeit loss.
- c) If the player is able to produce a valid photo ID that confirms the player's age and identity, the game will continue but the challenge must still be reported to the Commissioner's office.

2.13 BORROWED PLAYERS

To prevent a forfeit and/or to avoid an "Automatic Out," a team not having eight or nine players at the start of a game may borrow players from any other SCMBL team roster.

There are, however, restrictions for the use of a Borrowed Player. For full details, see Appendix I at the end of this rule book.

3.00 ENDING THE GAME

3.01 REGULATION GAME

An official regulation game consists of seven complete innings unless:

- a) the home needs none or only part of its half of the seventh inning;
- b) extra innings are necessary because of a tie score; or
- c) the game is shortened by weather, darkness, or the Slaughter Rule.

3.02 SLAUGHTER RULE

The 10-run Slaughter Rule is in effect for all games—including the postseason.

- a) If the visiting team is ahead by 10 or more runs and the home team has completed an equal number of innings with a minimum of five innings played, the visiting team shall be declared the winner.
- b) In the fifth inning or later, the home team is declared the winner the moment it scores 10 or more runs than the visiting team.

3.03 FORFEITED GAME

A Forfeited Game is one in which the umpire declares a forfeit win in favor of one team for violation of certain rules committed by the other team. The violation of which rules that warrant a forfeit are essentially those outlined under Major League Rule 7.03, as well as those outlined in this rule book.

Notes: A Forfeited Game is recognized as a regulation game regardless of the number of innings played. The official score of a Forfeited Game is 7 to 0.

Following a review of the Forfeited Game, the Commissioner has the authority, under special circumstances, to change the game status from a forfeit to a Suspended Game.

3.04 EXTRA-INNING GAMES

If a game is tied after eight complete innings, every subsequent half-inning will begin with a runner on second base until the completion of the game.

- a) The runner placed on second base at the start of each half-inning shall be the player who occupies the batting slot preceding that half-inning's leadoff batter.
- b) All League rules still apply to the runner placed on second base, including the Courtesy Runner Rule; the Pinch-Runner Rule; either player sharing the same slot allowed to run; etc.

3.05 SUSPENDED and TIED GAMES

For Suspended and Tie Games, the SCMBL essentially follows the conditions and procedures as outlined under Major League Rule 7.02.

- a) A Suspended Game is resumed at a later date from the exact point of suspension. It is simply a continuation of the "first" part of the game.

Rule Comment: Both managers and the umpires must ensure that the game situation is properly recorded in both scorebooks of the exact same conditions at the point of interruption (score, inning, proper batter at plate, ball-and-strike

count, etc.) Managers should also take a photo of the lineup cards and retain the original lineup cards for the continuation of the game later.

- b) For Suspended Games, all rules remain the same as if there had been no interruption: Players who were not present at the beginning of the game but are at the “second” portion are recognized as “Late-Arriving Players” (Rule 4.05); players removed during the “first” part of the game may only re-enter in the “second” part under legal substitution rules; etc.

3.06 RESCHEDULED GAMES

The League will work closely with both managers to reschedule all Postponed, Suspended and Tied Games for the earliest and most convenient date for all concerned.

The Commissioner, in his discretion—and subject to field availability, time restraints, and budget concerns—has the authority to not reschedule Postponed, Suspended and Tie Games, particularly if the game does not affect the final standings and the postseason.

3.07 POSTSEASON GAMES

All Postseason Games shall consist of at least seven innings unless the game is shortened because of forfeit or the Slaughter Rule.

Any Postseason Game that is halted before its completion for any reason (other than Forfeit/Slaughter) such as darkness, inclement weather, locust attack, and light failure, shall be declared a Suspended Game.

3.08 POSTGAME LINEUP CARD PROCEDURE

Since the lineup cards are the means by which the League records games for postseason eligibility (Rule 8.00), it is essential that the managers follow the proper procedure to ensure that their players receive proper credit, such as informing the umpire of the presence of a late-arriving player so that the player’s name may be written on the lineup card.

The two lineup cards that are in the umpire’s possession are the official lineup cards. Following the game, it is the umpire’s responsibility to send a photo of both lineup cards to the Commissioner’s Office for proper record keeping. Managers are advised to keep copies of all their lineup cards should the Commissioner need to refer to them later in the season.

4.00 PLAYING THE GAME

4.01 PLAYERS ALLOWED A COURTESY RUNNER

A courtesy runner may only be used in the following five situations:

- a) A team may use a courtesy runner for the catcher at any time.
- b) A team may use a courtesy runner for the pitcher at any time.

Exception: Pitchers/catchers sharing a batting slot with another player are not permitted a Courtesy Runner. (Rule 2.03 above.)

Rule Clarification: A Courtesy Runner may only be used for the pitcher and catcher of record. In other words, the rule does not project to players who will be the catcher or pitcher the following half-inning.

In the first half-inning of any game, there is no “pitcher/catcher of record” because the visiting team has not yet played defense. In this instance, teams are allowed the use of a courtesy runner for their pitcher and/or catcher, but then the player must be used at that position in the bottom of the first inning for at least one batter if a catcher and for at least three batters if the pitcher.

- c) A manager may designate one player on his team—in addition to the pitcher and catcher—as being allowed the use of a courtesy runner.

Rule Comment: The manager must designate this player to the umpire during the pre-game conference when the lineups are first exchanged. The player must be present at the start of the game and listed on the lineup card either in the batting order or as a Reserve. The manager shall identify the player on the lineup card with a circled “CR” after his name. This rule does not apply to players arriving late for a game.

- d) When a batter is hit by a pitch and awarded first base, the offensive manager may use a courtesy runner for that batter-runner.
- e) There is one special instance in which a manager may use a courtesy runner for a player other than four listed above (the catcher, pitcher, the designated “third” player, and a batter hit by a pitch).

If a player who is sharing the same batting slot with another player is removed from the game because of a legitimate injury (as determined by the umpire)—and there are no Reserve players available—the remaining player in that batting slot is permitted a courtesy runner.

NOTE: Managers should be particularly aware of which players are eligible to serve as courtesy runners. Should a manager insert an Improper Runner (Rule 5.03), observant opposing managers may appeal and have an out recorded.

4.02 COURTESY RUNNER RULE

The Courtesy Runner Rule is always optional.

- a) The courtesy runner is always the player who made the last batted out.

Rule Clarifications: The “last batted out” is the player who made the last out before reaching first base. Hence, players caught stealing, out on a force play, or out attempting to stretch a single into a double are ineligible to be a courtesy runner.

In the first inning of the game, managers may not use a courtesy runner until a batted out has been recorded even if the batter is eligible to use one. If a manager does not want his pitcher, catcher, or designated third player to run, he always has the option of having them share a batting slot and have a Reserve run for them.

- b) If the “last batted out” is the pitcher, catcher, or the third player allowed a courtesy runner, the manager may use the player who made the previous “last batted out” to serve as the courtesy runner.
- c) Players sharing a batting slot may run for each other. This allows a player to serve as a courtesy runner for his slotted teammate.

Example: Tinker and Evers are sharing a batting slot. Tinker strikes out. The following batter, Chance, is a catcher who reaches base and wants a courtesy runner. Although Tinker was the player who actually made the “last batted out.” Evers is permitted to run for Chance since Evers is sharing the same batting slot with Tinker.

- d) A Reserve player may never serve as a courtesy player because he has not yet batted and could not have made the “last batted out.” A Reserve, however, may be used as a Pinch-Runner (see Rule 4.03 below).
- e) Players sharing a batting slot may never use a courtesy runner because the only player who may run for him is the player sharing the same slot.

NOTE: Managers should be aware that the courtesy runner might be the “last batted out” of the previous inning. So as not to delay the game, managers should be attentive and have their courtesy runner ready to run as soon as the batter they are replacing reaches base.

4.03 PINCH-RUNNER RULE

This rule allows managers to insert Pinch Runners for players not permitted the use of Courtesy Runners.

The Pinch-Runner may be employed at any time under the following circumstances and restrictions:

- a) Two types of players may be used as a pinch-runner:
 - (1) Players listed as a “Reserve” on the lineup card; and
 - (2) Eligible to serve as a courtesy runner (player who made the “last batted out.”) See Rule 4.02 above.
- b) As outlined under Rule 2.06(d), if a Reserve serves as a pinch-runner, he is locked into the batting slot with the player for whom he pinch-ran.
- c) If there is a Reserve Player available, a player already in the batting order—slotted or otherwise—MAY NOT serve as a pinch-runner.

Rule Comment: In any words, before any “non-Reserve” player is permitted to serve as a pinch-runner, all Reserves must have already been inserted in the lineup.

d) Pinch-Runner Restriction

A player replaced by a pinch-runner who is not a Reserve is prohibited from playing a defensive position the following half-inning.

Rule Comment: This is the major difference between a courtesy runner and pinch-runner. Players who are permitted to use a courtesy runner may play defense the following half-inning.

- e) If a team inserts a pinch-runner (who is not a Reserve) more than once during the same game, the player being replaced by the pinch-runner is removed from the game and is prohibited from any further play.

The replaced player’s batting slot is skipped over whenever it comes up for the remainder of the game. The “Automatic Out” Rule for a player “leaving early” does not apply in this case. (Rule 4.04 below).

The second (and all subsequent) player(s) removed for a pinch-runner is prohibited from further play regardless if he was or was not the first player on the team removed for a pinch-runner.

4.04 AUTOMATIC OUT RULE

An “automatic out” is one in which an out is recorded every time a vacant batting slot comes up in the batting order.

Automatic outs are recorded in two instances:

- a) When a player leaves the game early for any reason (other than a legitimate injury) and the player is not sharing a batting slot with a teammate and there is no Reserve player to replace him, the batting slot becomes an “automatic out” every time it comes up in the order; and
- b) Whenever a team has the minimum eight players, the ninth slot in the lineup is an “automatic out” until a late-arriving player can fill the slot.

Automatic outs are recorded when the ball is dead. When all play is completed involving all existing runners and the batter in the slot preceding the one containing the “automatic out,” the umpire shall call “time”, declare the ball dead, and then record the automatic out.

Rule Clarification: There may be more than one “automatic out” in a team’s lineup and the “automatic out” may be the first, second, or third out of an inning.

4.05 PLAYER ARRIVING LATE

Whenever a player arrives late to a game, the manager shall immediately inform the umpire (and the opposing team) of the player’s presence.

The manager shall inform the umpire where the player’s name will be written on the lineup card. The manager may:

- a) Insert the player in an individual batting slot at the bottom of the order;
- b) Insert the player in any batting slot occupied by another player; or
- c) List the player in the section on the lineup card marked “Reserves”.
 - The umpire will write the late-arriving player’s full name and jersey number (as well as the inning) in the appropriate place in the order, as instructed by the manager, on the official lineup card, assuring that the player receives credit for the game.

4.06 PLAYER LEAVING EARLY

When a player who is listed in the batting order leaves early, there are four instances in which the vacant slot does not become an “automatic out”:

- a) The player is sharing a batting slot with a teammate;
- b) A Reserve player is available to fill the batting slot;

- c) The player suffers a legitimate injury (see Rule 4.07 below); and
- d) The player must leave the game because he was the second player in the game replaced by a non-reserve player (see Rule 4.03e above).

In all other instances, the penalty for a player in the lineup leaving early is an “automatic out” whenever his batting slot comes up during the game. The umpire will note all the players that leave the game early on the official lineup card.

4.07 INJURED PLAYER

Whenever a player is injured and is unable to continue play, the manager must inform both the umpire and opposing manager immediately.

- a) If the injured player leaves his team with only eight players, the lineup shall be compressed with the ninth slot becoming an “automatic out.”
- b) When the removal of an injured player leaves the lineup with more than nine players in eight batting slots (and there are no Reserves available to fill the slot), the two players sharing the same slot will each be given their own slot. The player written first in the slot will have his own batting slot, followed by the second player in his own slot.
 - This will produce nine batting slots with one player in each slot and prevent an “automatic out” in the ninth slot.
- c) If the injured player was sharing a batting slot with a teammate, either the other player shall assume all plate appearances for that batting slot or a “Reserve” may be inserted to share the batting slot.

Note: As stated under Rule (4.01e), if a player sharing a batting slot is injured and there are no Reserves available, the remaining player in the slot is permitted to have a courtesy runner.

- d) If the injured player was the sole occupant of a batting slot and a Reserve player is available, the manager must insert that player into the vacant batting slot.
- e) If the injured player was the sole occupant of a batting slot and there is no Reserve available, the slot is skipped over—but only if permitted by the umpire and the manager had immediately informed the umpire of the injury. If approval is not given, the batting slot becomes an “automatic out” whenever it comes up in the order.

Rule Comment: This injury exemption for the “automatic out” applies to injuries that occur during the game and are reported immediately at the time of injury. This allowance is totally up to the umpire’s judgment. Umpires are instructed to prevent teams from circumventing this rule, such as a manager claiming that a player must leave early because of an “injury” that had occurred innings earlier. This rule prevents the rare but unscrupulous practice of feigning an injury to gain an advantage in a tight game.

Note: Managers are advised to inform the umpire of any injury suffered by one of his players as soon as it occurs, even if the injury might not be serious enough to warrant the removal of the player.

For example, a player is out stealing second base and informs his manager that he has twisted his ankle. The manager would be wise to inform the umpire of the situation. The manager then has until the player’s next at-bat to determine if the player is able to continue play. If the player is unable to play, it is classified as a legitimate injury (because the manager informed the umpire and the player did not play the field after suffering the twisted ankle.)

In this instance, there would be no “automatic out” for that batting slot. Of course, this does not apply if the injured player was sharing a batting slot because the other player in the slot would take over all at-bats; however, it is still a good practice to keep the umpire informed of all player injuries.

f) Injury During Live Ball

As outlined under MLB rules, if a player is injured during a live ball, the umpire shall not call “time” until all playing action is completed. The umpire, however, shall have the authority to call “time” on those rare instances that involve particularly serious injuries when “time” should be called earlier; after which, the umpire will make all rulings concerning the placement of runners. This is strictly a judgment call by the umpire.

4.08 EJECTED AND RESTRICTED PLAYERS

The batting slot formerly occupied by a player who was either ejected or “restricted to the bench” shall be an “automatic out” for the remainder of the game except for the following two situations:

- a) The batting slot is being shared, in which case the remaining player in the slot assumes the plate appearances of the ejected or restricted player; or
- b) A Reserve player is available to fill the vacant slot.

4.09 SUMMARY OF PLAYERS REMOVED FROM LINEUP

Whenever a player in the lineup leaves during the game—with the sole exception of a legitimate injury (Rule 4.07)—one of three situations will occur:

- a) All his plate appearances will be assumed by the teammate sharing the same batting slot;
- b) All his plate appearances become “automatic outs” whenever the batting slot comes up in the order; or
- c) All his plate appearances are taken by a Reserve player(s).

Regardless of the circumstances in which a player in the lineup leaves, if a team is unable to field at least eight players the team shall lose by forfeit.

Rules outlining how the umpire shall record players leaving early or arriving late on the lineup card are listed under the Postseason Eligibility Rule (8.00).

Managers should remind the umpire to record or cross out the player’s name to ensure proper game credit (or non-credit) for the player.

5.00 IMPROPER AND ILLEGAL PLAYERS

Managers should be conscientious that the opposing team has not committed any infractions of the rules, either on purpose or inadvertently. Alert managers can take advantage of negligent opponents by appealing infractions at the proper time.

5.01 IMPROPER PLAYER

An “Improper Player” is a player who is eligible to participate in the game but is being using improperly.

It is the responsibility of the opposing team to appeal such infractions.

As stated under Major League Rules: *“This rule is designed to require constant vigilance by the players and managers of both teams.”*

5.02 IMPROPER BATTER

An “Improper Batter” is a player who fails to bat in his proper turn in the batting order. MLB batting-out-of-order rules shall dictate the appropriate procedure and penalties for such infractions.

5.03 IMPROPER RUNNER

An “Improper Runner” is a player who is being used incorrectly as a Courtesy Runner or Pinch-Runner.

These include a player who did not make the “last batted out” being used as a Courtesy Runner; a non-Reserve player pinch-running when a Reserve is available; a runner being inserted in a batting slot already occupied by two other players; etc.

- a) An appeal of an Improper Runner may be made at any time the runner is on base, or after he has scored if the appeal is made before an ensuing pitch or play.
- b) Upon proper appeal, the Improper Runner shall be called out.
- c) If a *legal* runner advances before the appeal on an Improper Runner is made and it does involve the actions of the Improper Runner (such as a balk, wild pitch, or passed ball), such advance remains legal.

5.04 IMPROPER FIELDER

An “Improper Fielder” is a player who plays a defensive position despite being prohibited from doing so because he had earlier been replaced by a pinch-runner. (See Rule 4.03)

- a) The appeal of an Improper Fielder may be made at any time the player is playing defense during the half-inning in which he is prohibited from doing so.
- b) Upon proper appeal, the Improper Fielder is “restricted to the bench” and may no longer participate in the game. This is not an ejection.
- c) If the appeal is made after the Improper Fielder has participated in a play and before an ensuing play or pitch, the offensive team may take either the result of the play or replay the pitch.
- d) Removal of an Improper Fielder
 - (1) If the removed fielder is sharing a batting slot with a teammate, the other player assumes all plate appearances for that batting slot, unless there is a Reserve available to share the batting slot.
 - (2) If the removed fielder was the sole occupant of a batting slot and a Reserve is available, the manager must insert the Reserve into the vacant slot.

- (3) If the removed fielder was the sole occupant of a batting slot and there is no Reserve available, the batting slot is skipped over and the batting order is compressed.

Note: In this instance, there is no “automatic out” for a player “leaving early” unless the player’s removal results in fewer than eight batting slots. However, the player’s team will be assessed a fine of \$20.

5.05 IMPROPER RESERVE

An “Improper Reserve” is a Reserve—announced or unannounced—who enters the lineup in a batting slot already occupied by two other players.

- a) If a Reserve enters the game (or had earlier entered the lineup) improperly, the opposing manager may appeal **at any time.**
- b) Upon appeal, an Improper Reserve is “restricted to the bench” and may no longer participate in the game. This is not considered an ejection.
- c) Upon appeal, an Improper Reserve shall be declared out if he is at bat or is on base. If the appeal is made after the Improper Reserve has completed his plate appearance, and before an ensuing pitch or play, he shall be called out and any existing runners must return to their bases.
- d) If the Improper Reserve is playing defense when the appeal is made, he is “restricted to the bench” and replaced with a proper fielder. If the appeal is made after the Improper Reserve has participated in a play and before an ensuing play or pitch, the offensive team must take the result of the play or replay the pitch.

5.06 INELIGIBLE PLAYER

An “Ineligible Player” is a player who is ineligible to participate but still enters the game in any capacity.

Ineligible (Illegal) Players include those who have been suspended, banned, are not a member of a SCMBL team roster, or have been ejected or “restricted to the bench” earlier in the game.

When **anybody** (either manager, umpire, scorekeeper, etc.) discovers an ineligible player participating in a game, appropriate action must be taken immediately.

Unlike an “Improper Player,” it does not require an appeal by the opposing manager.

Upon discovery of an illegal player, the following procedure shall be taken:

- a) The Illegal (Ineligible) Player shall be immediately ejected (possibly for the second time that game.)
- b) The game shall then resume. The Commissioner will determine any other penalties, such as forfeit loss and/or suspensions.
- c) **Offensive Player**
If the Illegal Player is discovered during or after his plate appearance, and before an ensuing pitch or play, he shall be declared out immediately and all existing runners return to their original base. Any outs made because of the Illegal Player's action, such as a double play, shall stand.

If the Illegal Player is discovered late (after an ensuing pitch or play), his batting actions shall stand but he shall immediately be declared out if he is on base, as well as being ejected.
- d) **Defensive Player**
If the Illegal Player participates in a play before the discovery is made, and before another play or pitch, the offensive team may take the result of the play or replay the pitch.
- e) If the removed Illegal Player was not sharing a batting slot with a teammate and a Reserve is not available to fill the vacant slot, the slot becomes an "automatic out" every time it comes up in the order.

6.00 TEAM CONDUCT AND RESPONSIBILITIES

When anyone becomes a SCMBL member, he agrees to abide by all League rules and regulations. No League rule shall be circumvented even if a team receives "permission" from the opposing manager to bend, break, or ignore a particular rule. This includes allowing a courtesy runner for a player who is not eligible to have one, extending the grace-period start time; etc.

6.01 CODE OF CONDUCT

Bench jockeying, trash talk, malicious comments, cursing, racial slurs, obscene language, unsportsmanlike conduct, and all acts of intimidation and physical violence are strictly prohibited. This rule applies to all members of the SCMBL community including players, managers, coaches, umpires, and friends, family, and fans attending the game.

6.02 DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

In its mission to provide a safe, family-friendly environment in which to play and enjoy the great game of baseball, the League Commissioner and the Executive Board maintains its authority to levy various degrees of penalties to players and managers who are in violation of the rules.

Since it is impossible to list all acts of misconduct in one document, the League reserves the right to impose any penalty for actions it deems determinantal to the safety, enjoyment, and reputation of the SCHMBL and its members.

6.03 RESTRICTED TO THE BENCH

If the umpire believes that disciplinary action is necessary but that the offense does not warrant ejection from the game, the umpire has the authority to restrict the offender to the bench for the remainder of the game. The “restricted” offender is prohibited from further participation in the game either as a player or base coach.

- a) Unlike an ejection, “restriction to the bench” does not require the offender to leave the area, nor does it involve any additional penalties.
- a) Distinction between offenses warranting either a restriction or an ejection is totally up to the umpire’s discretion.
- b) Should the restricted player or manager exhibit any further acts of misbehavior while on the bench, he shall then be ejected and levied the extended penalties.

6.04 EJECTION

The umpire has the authority to eject any player, manager, or coach who objects to a decision, violates any rule, or displays unsportsmanlike conduct or language.

- a) Anyone ejected will be levied a fine of \$20 and an automatic one-game suspension. The ejected player or manager shall serve his suspension during his team’s next scheduled game. A rainout or cancelled game does not constitute serving the suspension.
- b) The Commissioner has the authority to extend the one-game suspension, dependent on the seriousness of the offense.
- c) Any player or manager ejected from a game must leave the field and immediate area immediately; failure to do so in a reasonable amount of

time (as determined by the umpire) will subject the team to a forfeit and/or additional penalties to the offender.

6.05 SUSPENSION

The wisest course of action is for the manager of a suspended player to tell him not to attend their team's games while he is serving his suspension. However, should a suspended player attend a game, he must comply with the following restrictions:

- a) Suspended players are prohibited from wearing their team uniform, from participating in any of their team's pre-game drills, and may not serve as the team's scorekeeper or coach.
- b) A suspended player may not be in his team's dugout or anywhere in the immediate vicinity. He may not communicate with his team or direct any comments to the opposing team or the umpire. Should the suspended player attend the game, the best seating location is in the outfield.
- c) Any violation of the above will subject the player to further suspension, including for the remainder of the season.

6.06 PROBATION

The Commissioner has the authority to place a player or manager on probation after the offender has served his initial penalty. Any player or manager on probation who is found in violation of a League rule, including those concerning unsportsmanlike conduct, is subject to severe penalties, including suspension for the remainder of the season.

6.07 MANAGER'S RESPONSIBILITY

Managers are expected to be honor-bound and abide by all League rules and regulations. They should serve as a role model for their team and, therefore, shall be held to a higher standard, including matters concerning disciplinary actions. The manager is the only member of his team who may discuss an umpire's ruling.

- a) The manager is the official representative of his team and is responsible for the behavior of his players and the conduct of his team's fans.
- b) If the team manager is not present at a particular game, another person shall serve as interim manager and assume all responsibilities of the position.

6.08 FIELD MAINTENANCE

It is the responsible of every team to perform basic field maintenance. An outline of these duties and responsibilities is given to every manager before the season. All too often, however, teams neglect to perform these tasks that results in the entire League suffering, particularly the two teams playing the following game.

Any team failing to perform their field responsibilities will be disciplined by the League, not the least of which is the negligent team being assessed a fine of \$50.

In the best interest of the league, managers are obligated to notify the Commissioner whenever they discover that another team is not or has not performed their required field maintenance duties.

Other matters concerning field maintenance include:

- a) Players of teams are strictly prohibited from conducting drills and practices by hitting baseballs into fences (plastic and Whiffle balls are allowed.) Any team violating this rule will be assessed a fine of \$50.
- b) There are scheduled times in which teams may use the field and/or the pitching screen for their pre-game batting practice and warm-ups.
 - (1) The field and pitching screen are reserved for the Visiting Team during the 15-minute period between 45 minutes and 30 minutes before the scheduled game time.
 - (2) The field and pitching screen are reserved for the Home Team during the 15-minute period between 30 minutes and 15 minutes before the scheduled game time.
 - (3) The 15-minute period before the schedule game time is reserved for final field maintenance.

Note: Field maintenance, of course, has priority over any pre-game drills. Reserved time for field pre-game warm-ups do not apply when there is no time for any practice, such as between two scheduled games on the week-end.

7.00 SAFETY RULES

To enhance the safety of its players, the League employs rules that prohibit dangerous sliding techniques and collisions, as well as rules that forbid other acts that endanger participants.

7.01 LEGAL SLIDE

A baserunner is never required to slide. Nonetheless, if a runner does elect to slide, the slide must be legal.

- a) Other legal actions the runner might take, other than sliding, is running back to the previous base; “giving himself up” by stopping completely; attempting to move around the fielder to avoid a tag; running out of the basepath on a force play; or taking other legal action to avoid interference with the fielder.
- b) A legal slide can be either feet- or head-first. If a runner slides feet-first, at least one leg and buttock must be on the ground. The runner’s raised foot shall be no higher than the fielder’s knee when the fielder is in a standing position.

7.02 ILLEGAL SLIDE

Illegal slides include those in which the runner uses a rolling, cross-body, or pop-up slide into the fielder that alters the play; those involving slashing or kicking; and sliding into the fielder rather than into the base.

Penalty: Illegal slides are interference plays. The runner shall be called out and a possible double-play may be called. Additionally, if the action is deemed flagrant or malicious, the runner shall be ejected.

7.03 ANTI-COLLISION RULE

Players are prohibited from maliciously or flagrantly crashing or colliding into another player. A player may not take any action that initiates a collision that could have been avoided. Although violations of this rule usually occur at home plate, it applies to all bases.

Violation of the Anti-Collision Rule shall result in:

- a) The offender being called out, regardless if the fielder maintains possession of the ball;
- b) The ball is ruled dead immediately and all other runners return to the last base that they have legally acquired before the violation; and
- c) The offender is ejected from the game and subject to further penalties by the Commissioner.

- Since the Slide/Anti-Collision Rules are so important for player safety and are often misunderstood, extended explanations of these rules can be found at the end of this document. (See Appendix II).

7.04 FIGHT RULE

One of the more disturbing and dangerous events that occur on a baseball field is when several members of both teams engage in a brawl or confrontation. It can result in serious injury and, if observed by park officials, possibly the loss of the playing field. Our League's "Fight Rule" helps prevent such incidents.

- Whenever a confrontation (collision, argument, skirmish, etc.) between two or more players occurs on the playing field (including foul territory and the general premises), all personnel of both teams *MUST* remain at their respective positions on the field. The position of a team member is determined by where the individual is standing at the time of the confrontation (e.g., dugout, on-deck area, coach's box, defensive position, etc.)
- The only game participants who are permitted to approach the scene of the confrontation are the two managers—and then only to restore order—and the umpires.

All other team personnel must remain at their respective positions.

Comment: The manager has the responsibility of maintaining order on the playing field when it involves his players. This rule will assist the manager in meeting this responsibility because he need only be concerned with controlling his player or players actually involved in the confrontation, rather than his entire team rushing to the scene.

Managers of new SCMBL teams should inform their players of our League's "fight rule" to prevent them from immediately running to the scene of a confrontation, which may have been their machismo baseball practice in the past.

- Any participant who disregards this rule and leaves his position and enters or approaches the scene of a confrontation is subject to ejection. If the violator's actions contribute to the conflict itself (either by verbal or physical actions), the player shall be immediately ejected and liable to receive additional penalties as levied by the Commissioner. Of course, the player or players who initiated the confrontation are also at risk of being ejected, fined, and suspended.

- d) It is up to the umpire's judgment whether the offender will be ejected or restricted to the bench, dependent on the seriousness of the player's actions.
- e) Should several members of a team run from their respective positions to the scene of a confrontation, while the other team's players properly remain at their positions, the team violating the rule risks losing the game by forfeit should they be unable to field at least eight players following the ejections and restrictions to the bench.
- f) Should both teams violate this rule and are unable to field at least eight players because of ejections and restrictions, the umpire will declare a double forfeit with both teams receiving a loss.

7.05 ILLEGAL ACT BY FIELDER

A "fake tag" is an illegal action by a defensive player who, without the ball, simulates a tag. It is a dangerous practice that results in runners risking injury by making unnecessary slides.

- a) Fake tags may be ruled as acts of obstruction. If obstruction is the result of a fake tag, under the umpire's judgment, the runner shall be awarded bases as in any other obstruction.
- b) Whenever a fielder fakes a tag, regardless if there is obstruction, the umpire shall issue a team warning and eject the next player on the same team who employs such illegal action.

Note: Fake tags should not be confused with legal "decoys" employed by the defense.

7.06 BATTER AND PITCHER SAFETY

To enhance the safety of players, the League will enforce various rules including:

- a) The umpire has the authority to remove a pitcher from the mound that he determines to be too wild. This is entirely up to the umpire's judgment and is not an ejection. The player may play any other position other than pitcher for the remainder of the game.
- b) The pitcher may not wear white, gray, or ragged sleeves, nor may he wear a batting glove on either hand.
- c) To enhance pitcher safety, any player entering the game as a relief pitcher in the middle of a half-inning is allowed up to 2:15 minutes for his warm-

up pitches. The time limit shall begin as soon as the new pitcher receives the ball. (The umpire has the authority to start the time before he hands the ball to the pitcher if he believes the team is delaying the game.)

8.00 POSTSEASON ELIGIBILITY

To be credited with a “game played” for postseason eligibility, a player’s name must be listed on the official lineup card. Following each game, the umpire will send a photo of both lineup cards to the Commissioner’s Office. (Rule 3.08)

For the convenience of managers, the number of games played by every player that count toward postseason eligibility are posted regularly on the League’s web site.

To be eligible for the postseason, a player must be “credited” with at least 40% of their team’s scheduled regular season games.

Since the **2026** season features a **18-game** regular season schedule, a player’s name must appear on at least **seven (7) games** of his team’s official lineup cards and meet all the requirements for a “credited game” as listed below.

8.01 CREDITED GAMES

- a) A player must be present for **at least three complete innings** to receive credit for the game. (Players on the Injured List are exempt from this minimum requirement; see Rule 8.02 below.)

Note: Lineup cards containing a player’s name followed by an asterisk inserted by the umpire—denoting that the player was not present for the required three innings—will not count toward the player’s credited games.

- b) **Late-Arriving Player**

To ensure that a player receives proper credit for the game, the manager must immediately inform the umpire when a tardy player arrives.

Note: It is the manager’s responsibility to inform the umpire of the arrival of a player. A player will be considered to have arrived when his manager informs the umpire of his arrival and his name is added to the official lineup.

After being informed of the late player’s arrival, the umpire will write the player’s full name and jersey number on the lineup card in the proper spot (i.e., as a reserve, added to the lineup, etc.) and also the inning in which the player arrived.

If the player's name is added after the start of the fifth inning, the umpire will add an asterisk (*) after the name to denote that the player was not present for at least three innings and will not receive a "credited game."

Note: If a late-arriving player arrives after the start of the fifth inning and his name is denoted with an asterisk, but the game extends into extra innings in which the late-arriving player is present for at least three innings, the asterisk will be removed to denote that the player should receive credit. However, it is the manager's responsibility at the end of the game to inform the umpire to remove the asterisk.

c) **Player Leaves Game Early**

The manager must immediately inform the umpire whenever one of his players leaves the game early. If the player has not been present for the required three complete innings, the umpire will mark the player's name with an asterisk (*) to indicate that the player should not receive credit for the game. Managers are expected to be honor-bound to report to the umpire any such players.

d) **Ejected Player**

If a player is ejected from the game, the umpire shall place an asterisk after his name on the lineup card if the player has not been present for at least three complete innings. (A player "restricted to the bench" also receives credit if he remains at the game for at least three innings.)

e) **"Game Credit" for Forfeit**

(1) If a team forfeits a game because it does not have the minimum eight players to start a game, the managers of both teams must still present their lineup cards to the umpire. All players on both teams who are present at the game and are listed on the lineup card shall receive "credit" for the game.

(2) If a player becomes injured during a game resulting in his team losing by forfeit for not having the required eight players, all players on both teams who are present and are listed on the lineup card will be credited for the game regardless if they played at least three complete innings to meet the standard rule requirement.

(3) If a player is ejected, restricted to the bench, or leaves the game early for any reason other than injury, resulting in his team losing for not having the minimum eight players, every other player on both teams who is present and listed on the lineup card will be

credited for the game. However, the ejected/restricted/left-early player receives credit only if he was present for at three innings.

- (4) When a team forfeits a game by notifying the Commissioner beforehand in time to cancel scheduling of the umpires and field use, EVERY player on the current roster of the team that is awarded the forfeit receives credit for the game. However, NO player on the team losing by forfeit receives credit for the game.

8.02 INJURED LIST

Other than a forfeit win, the sole exception for players required to be at the game for at least three innings to receive a “game credit” are players on the Injured List. Certain requirements must be met to receive this exemption.

- a) For a player on the Injured List to receive “credit” for the game, he must meet three conditions:
- (1) He must be present at the game;
 - (2) He must be wearing his game jersey; and
 - (3) He must remain at the game for at least one complete inning.
- b) Prior to the game, the manager shall list the injured player’s full name and jersey number in the section marked “IL” at the bottom of the lineup card. During the exchange of lineups, the manager must point out the injured player’s presence to the umpire and opposing manager.
- c) If a player on the Injured List arrives late to the game, the manager must request the umpire to write the player’s name and number in the IL section and point out the player to ensure he receives proper credit.
- d) Players who suffer a legitimate injury during game action that result in the player leaving early—and he has played at least one complete inning—may be requested by the manager to be moved to the IL section on the lineup call. If permission is granted by the umpire, the player will receive credit for the game.

Note: Teams may not list any player as being on the Injured List for any game in which the team is using a Borrowed Player (Rule 2.12).

9.00 MAJOR LEAGUE RULE DIFFERENCES

As stated at the top of this document, MLB's *Official Baseball Rules* is the authority for all SCMBL games, unless indicated otherwise in this rule book (such as shared batting slots, courtesy runners, etc.)

This first part of this section (9.01) outlines other rule differences. The second part (9.02) features a few MLB rule changes that our League has approved that you may not be aware. And the third part (9.03) details rule changes for the **2026** season.

9.01 MODIFIED MLB RULES

a) Under MLB Rule 6.02c, a player who puts dirt on the ball or “rubs the ball on his glove, person or clothing” shall be ejected and penalized with a lengthy suspension. The Executive Board deemed this too harsh for our League. Under our rules, if a player commits this illegal act, the umpire shall call a “ball,” accompanied by a warning. The next violation shall result in an ejection and fine of \$20; however, the one-game suspension will be waived.

b) Major League Baseball, in recent years, has introduced several “pace of play” rules such as a “pitch clock” and limiting the number of mound visits a team can make. Our Executive Board has determined these rules as being either impractical or unnecessary for the SCMBL.

Nonetheless, our League will continue to enforce the college/high school rule that penalizes batters who step in and out of the box after every pitch. Batters must keep at least one foot in the batter's box their entire at-bat with obvious exceptions such as being granted “time,” taking a swing, or briefly stepping out. Umpires have the authority to call an “automatic strike” when this rule is violated.

c) Our League will enforce the old MLB Rule (5.07c) requiring the pitcher to deliver the pitch within 20 seconds when there are no runners on base. Violation of the rule shall result in a called “ball” by the umpire.

d) Under MLB Rules, if a pitch lodges in a fence or enters dead-ball territory, the ball is declared dead and all runners are awarded one base. Our League employs this rule but with a slight change—all runners are awarded a base *except* the runner on third base, unless the runner was stealing home on the pitch or the batter was attempting a squeeze play.

This rule involves only pitched balls; throws from the field into dead ball territory involving the awarding of bases remains the same as the MLB.

This rule, essentially a field “ground rule,” has been used in our League for several years but it is now being formally added to the rule book.

9.02 RECENT MLB RULE CHANGES

The following are a few relatively new MLB rules that our Executive Board has either adopted in past years that new managers and players may not be aware.

a) Intentional Walk

When issuing an intentional walk, the pitcher is no longer required to deliver any pitches. The defensive manager merely signals to the home plate umpire that he wants to intentionally walk the batter. The umpire then calls the ball dead and awards the batter first base. The “no-pitch” walk may be used at any time during the count.

b) Pitcher Feints Throw to Third Base

A pitcher, while standing on the rubber, is no longer allowed to feint a throw to third base. The penalty is a balk. The Executive Board has approved this rule change for our League.

c) Dugout Catch

A fielder is allowed to lean into a dugout but not enter the dugout to make a catch. If the fielder makes a legal catch and then enters or falls into the dugout, the out is still recorded, the ball is declared dead, and all existing runners are awarded one base. This rule is the same as MLB but is featured here because it particularly applies for fields, such as Oak Lawn, that have walk-in dugouts.

d) Dropped Third Strike

When a batter strikes out and starts walking toward his dugout, not realizing that the third strike was not caught by the catcher, the umpire shall call the batter out after he has walked approximately 9 feet from home plate. Under the old MLB rule, on a dropped third strike, the batter was not ruled out until he entered the dugout.

e) First Base Running Lane

This rule involves a batter running to first base in which a play occurs behind him, such as the catcher fielding a bunt or a dropped third strike. Since 1882, to avoid being called out for interfering with the throw on such plays, batters were required to run in foul territory in a specific three-foot running lane. It was always a controversial rule because first base is in fair territory and the runner was required to run in foul territory. This lane is always marked on MLB fields; not so much on the fields in which our League plays.

Major League Baseball has finally enlarged this “running lane” to include two feet in fair territory in which the batter-runner must run to avoid possible interference.

f) Pitcher who Warms Up is the Pitcher of Record

A pitcher who warms up at the start of an inning on the playing field (including the sidelines and mound) is required to pitch to at least the first batter of the inning one until such batter is put out or reaches base.

9.03 RULE CHANGES FOR 2026 SEASON

In recent years, Major League Baseball has introduced several new rules, including a pitch-clock, restrictions on defensive shifts, and larger bases. The Executive Board has voted down many of these rules because they are either impractical, inapplicable, or unnecessary for our League.

The Executive Board has approved the adoption of the MLB “Disengagement Rule” for the 2026 season.

*** Pitchers are limited to two disengagements from the pitching rubber (pickoff attempts or step-offs) per plate appearance. A third disengagement is permitted but, unless the runner is successfully put out, a balk shall be called.**

*** The limit is reset if the runner(s) advances during the plate appearance.**



APPENDIX I BORROWED PLAYERS

To prevent a forfeit and/or to avoid an “Automatic Out,” a team not having eight or nine players at the start of a game is allowed to borrow players from any other SCMBL team roster (Rule 2.12).

There are, however, several restrictions in the use of a Borrowed Player.

- a) Borrowed players are never permitted for Postseason Games.
- b) The borrowed player must be a League member in good standing, such as not presently serving a suspension.
- c) A team is permitted a maximum of two borrowed players. A team may borrow one or two players from the same team or borrow one player from two different SCMBL teams.
- d) A borrowed player is not allowed to pitch or catch.
- e) Borrowed players must be present at the start of the game and listed in the batting order. Teams may not use a borrowed player for games already in progress.
- f) A team is prohibited from borrowing a player if nine or more of its players are present at the game, including players listed on the IL.
The IL rule may not be used by a team using a borrowed player.
- g) The borrowed player must be listed in the ninth slot in the batting order. If there are two borrowed players, they are placed in the eighth and ninth batting slots.
- h) If a team is using a borrowed player and one of their rostered players arrives late, the late-arriving player must immediately replace the borrowed player in the ninth batter slot and on the field.
- i) If a team is using two borrowed players, the late-arriving player replaces the borrowed player in the eighth batting slot. Should a second player arrive late, he replaces the borrowed player in the ninth batting slot.
- j) Once a borrowed player is replaced in the lineup, he is removed from the game entirely and may not re-enter for any reason, including injury and/or ejection to another player.

Exception: Of course, a borrowed player playing against his own team who is replaced by a late-arriving player returns to his actual team as a Reserve.

k) Borrowed players do not receive a “game credited” for playoff eligibility.

Exception: If a team loans any of its players to the team that they are actually playing, said borrowed player obviously does receive a credited game.

To distinguish a player that is being “borrowed” from another team, the player should wear the uniform of the team for which he is a roster member and not the uniform of the team for which he is playing temporarily.

APPENDIX II DETAILED SAFETY RULES

Since the Slide and Anti-Collision Rules (7.01-7.03) are so important to the safety of players, and are often misunderstood, this section provides additional details concerning these rules, along with instructional and explanatory comments.

BASERUNNER GUIDELINES

There is never a valid reason for a runner to illegally collide with a fielder. Even if a defensive player is illegally blocking the basepath, it does not give the runner the right to smash into the fielder. If a fielder is committing obstruction, the runner must still avoid violent contact and allow the umpire to make the proper ruling.

If a play is developing near or at a base, the runner must make every attempt to make a legal slide to prevent violation of the Anti-Collision Rule (7.03). If a play occurs too far up the line that prevents the runner from executing a slide, he always has other legal options such as running around the fielder, as outlined under Legal Slide (7.01).

FIELDER GUIDELINES

Defensive players, particularly catchers, should be familiar with the rules that concern illegally blocking the plate or base.

Even when a fielder is in “the act of fielding” a thrown ball, he must still provide a “pathway” to the base for the runner. The defensive player is prohibited from blocking the pathway until he has full possession of the ball. However, if the fielder invertedly impedes the runner’s path while making a legitimate attempt to

catch the ball (such as on an errant throw or reacting to the tricky trajectory of the bounce) there is usually no violation, as determined by the umpire.

To avoid violation of the rule, fielders are encouraged to always place themselves in a position that provides a pathway to the runner (such as straddling the plate/base or standing in front of it) while still being in position to tag the runner or block the plate/base after he has secured possession of the ball.

The “pathway rule” has not been changed; however, recently Major League Baseball has made it a “*point of emphasis*” by instructing their umpires to be more rigorous in enforcing the rule. Our League umpires have been instructed to do likewise.

INCIDENTAL CONTACT

A collision does not necessarily mean the runner is in violation of the rules—even if a slide is not executed. There are instances that are described as “incidental contact” and occur when both participants (offense and defense) are performing legal acts, yet a collision occurs. This usually happens when there is an errant throw by an infielder to the first baseman who reaches for the ball and collides with the runner racing to the bag. Both the fielder and runner are performing a legal “baseball move” and are not in violation of the rule.

Additionally, the force of the contact is not the criterion for judging malicious behavior. A hard, clean slide is legal and does not violate the Anti-Collision Rule. It is up to the umpire’s judgment on whether a slide is legal, if the contact is deemed flagrant or malicious, or if the player’s actions violate the basic principles of good sportsmanship and behavior.

EXAMPLES OF ANTI-COLLISION RULINGS

SITUATION ONE—

The catcher is guilty of obstruction by illegally blocking the runner’s path, either intentionally or not.

- a) The runner attempts to slide or run around the obstructing catcher.

Ruling: The runner shall be called safe no matter the result of the play because of the obstruction. If the catcher is also guilty of an unsportsmanlike act, such as raising an elbow or purposely moving into the runner’s path before catching the ball, he is subject to ejection.

- b) The runner racing from third base flagrantly smashes into the catcher.

Ruling: The runner is safe no matter what because of the obstruction, but the runner is immediately ejected for his malicious actions. The infraction by the catcher does not give the runner *carte blanche* to collide into the fielder.

SITUATION TWO—

The fielder has possession of the ball and is about to tag the runner.

- a) The runner lowers his shoulder, smashes into the fielder, and jars the ball loose.

Ruling: The runner is called out, ejected, and is subject to further suspension.

- b) The runner trips and falls directly into the fielder, causing the fielder to drop the ball as he is making the tag.

Ruling: The runner is called out because he did not execute a legal slide and he made forceful contact with the fielder (Rule 7.01); however, in this instance, the runner would most likely not be ejected because he was not guilty of malicious contact.
