THE VILLAGES REC DIVISION IV SOUTH RULES

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INTRODUCTION

The Villages District Recreation Department's (VDRD) softball program is designed to offer recreational play in an organized and structured format to residents of The Villages. The VDRD regulations govern the playing conditions and competitive activities at the softball complexes.

The Villages Division 4 South (D4S) Softball Rules are based on the current edition of the Senior Softball-USA Rulebook (SSUSA). The D4S rules are amended by the D4S Board of Directors (Board) and govern seasonal play. All participants are required to abide by these rules. In case of a discrepancy between D4S Softball Rules and SSUSA rules, D4S rules will have precedence.

Participants are reminded that softball is a game to be enjoyed. Exercise, fellowship, and friendly competition are the goals. Negative comments about fellow players, opponents, or umpires are not in keeping with the spirit of the sport. Disagreements between managers and players should be expressed with respect and consideration by both parties and no one should be disparaged or criticized in public view.

Participants can access online copies of the D4S Rules and D4S Procedures via the Recreation Division 4 webpage link: div4south.com. The SSUSA rules are available at the Senior Softball USA webpage link: www.seniorsoftball.com

Please have fun, be safe and healthy, and enjoy your time on the field with your friends and teammates.

John Calise

D4S Commissioner

DISCLAIMER: The Board (or any Director individually as long as that Director is not playing in that particular game) has the right to amend these rules for the best interest of the league at any time.

SECTION 1 - THE PLAYING FIELD

1.1 – FIELD MARKINGS

The following highlights the standard playing field markings and the uncommon field markings encountered in D4S softball:

A. Pitcher's Box. The Pitcher's Box is a 2' x 10' rectangular area starting from the front of the Pitcher's Plate (rubber), extending back 10'. The Pitcher's Plate is 50' from home plate.

B. Pitcher's Safety Screen. Pitchers may (optionally) use a recreation department supplied safety screen to protect themselves from line drives hit towards the pitcher's box.

C. Catcher's Box. The catcher's box is an 8½' x 10' area directly behind the batter's box to which the catcher is restricted until the pitched ball is batted or strikes the ground.

D. Home Plate. Home plate is a 17" x 3' rectangular plate that includes a traditionally shaped home plate, plus a rear extension known as the strike zone plate. Together they shall be identified singularly in this document as Home Plate. Legal pitches striking any portion of Home Plate shall be strikes. The defensive team may use any portion of Home Plate for all plays at home.

E. Batter's Box. Batters' boxes are located on both sides of Home Plate starting 5" from the closest edge of Home Plate and extending out to the margins of the green mat to include the metal framing strips. Batter's boxes are each 4' x 7'.

F. Scoring Plate. The scoring plate is a standard-looking home plate located in foul territory on the third base side. One run shall be scored each time a runner touches the scoring plate. A chalk line (the "Scoring Line") shall be drawn from the tip of the scoring plate towards the fence on the third base side and parallel with the front edge of the scoring plate. A runner from third base may either touch the scoring plate or cross the Scoring Line to score a run.

G. Runner's Commitment Line. A commitment line is marked across and perpendicular to the third base foul line. It is located 20' from the back corner of the scoring plate. Once a runner crosses this line, he must continue to run to the scoring plate.

H. Bases.

1. The bases are set 65' apart and measure 15" square with the exception of first base.
2. First base is a double base (white and orange) and measures 15"x 30". A double base is used at first base for safety reasons. (See also SECTIONS 3.4 - Double Base at First Base (Safety Base) and 7.3 - Batter-Runner Reaching First Base)

I. Running Lane. A 3'x 30' running lane is marked in foul territory parallel to the first base foul line and ends at the rear of the double bag. Batter-runners are expected to run inside the running lane.

J. Coach's Box. The coach's box is located in foul territory on both the first and third base sides. One coach from the batting team is permitted in each box to direct the players of his team.

K. On-Deck Circle. An on-deck circle is placed in foul territory on both the first and third base sides. The on-deck batter and the following batter (in-the-hole) may stand within and in the vicinity of the circle to warm-up and be ready to move to the batter's boxes for their turn at bat.

L. Outfield Fence Distance. All fence distances are 300' from Home Plate.

1.2 – GAME EQUIPMENT

A. Shoes. Only athletic shoes with plastic/rubber cleats or sneakers are allowed. No metal cleats are permitted.

B. Gloves. Gloves may be used by any player.

C. Uniforms. Team members are expected to wear hats and shirts of similar color and style. Exceptions shall be made for replacement players who join the team during the season.

1. Shirts shall have the team name and/or logo on the front and the player's name and number on the back. Sleeveless shirts are prohibited unless part of the design of the uniform.
2. Headwear is mandatory. Ball caps are recommended but visors, batting helmets, full brim hats and hats with added material designed to protect the player from injury or sun exposure are acceptable at the Manager AND Board's discretion. EXCEPTION: Headwear is not required when wearing a face mask.

D. Personal Protection Equipment. Wearing personal protection equipment, e.g., face masks, shin guards, knee pads, heart/chest protectors, batting helmets, elbow pads, knee braces, and athletic supports with cups, is permitted as long as the equipment does enhance the player's performance or hinder other players' performance at the discretion of an umpire or Board member. **It is mandatory that ALL pitchers wear a protective face mask.**

E. Official Softball Bats.

1. A bat is deemed official and legal for D4S play if it meets the provisions detailed in SSUSA Rules, Section 3.4, OFFICIAL BATS. It is each player's responsibility to ensure his bat is legal.
2. Altered bats are prohibited. A bat is considered altered when the physical characteristics of a legal bat have been changed. Altered bats will be removed from play by the umpire. Attempted use of such a bat will result in a player's ejection. Altering includes but is not limited to:

- (a) Changing the surface or interior of the bat or its end cap.
- (b) Adding excessive tape.
- (c) Inserting anything into the bat per se.

3. Damaged bats (includes worn bats) are illegal for use and will be removed from the game. A bat is considered damaged when:

- (a) It has loose knobs or end caps that are not caused by altering.
- (b) There is surface damage, beyond normal wear and tear, especially to key graphics.
- (c) Visible cracking or other deformities are evident.
- (d) A foreign substance, to include mud, is on the bat especially if it covers a key graphic.

F. Official Softball. A 12" yellow optic ball with a coefficient of reflectivity rating of 0.44 and a compression rating of no more than 375 psi furnished by VDRD shall be used.

SECTION 2 - CANCELLATIONS

2.1 – BY THE REC DEPARTMENT

A. Prior to commencement of play for the day, the VDRD reserves the right to cancel or delay the game any time the field conditions, or weather conditions are deemed unsafe. The VDRD will notify a D4S Board Representative when these cancellations occur. The Villages radio stations (WVLG: 640 AM; 102.7 and 104.5 FM) will announce game cancellations or delays after the 7:00 AM news. Managers/players should not call the VDRD or the radio station for cancellation or playing updates.

2.2 – BY THE UMPIRES

A. Once a game has started, umpires may temporarily suspend or stop play due to inclement weather conditions such as rain, thunderstorm, fog, darkness, wind, or for on-field injuries. If suspended play exceeds or is expected to exceed 30 minutes, the game will be stopped. The Board will ultimately decide if games will be stopped and/or will be re-played.

B. Umpires must suspend game play once they hear thunder or see lightning. Participants will immediately evacuate to universally acceptable safe locations. Games may resume once 20 minutes have passed since the game was suspended. If there is a second occurrence of lightning or thunder during the delay, the game shall be terminated.

C. Any game scheduled to start after a terminated game may also be terminated.

D. A terminated game shall be official at any time terminated after the losing team has completed its full turn (three outs recorded or maximum 5 or 6 runs scored) at bat in the fifth inning. The games may be rescheduled at the time of when they were left off. If they cannot be rescheduled, the games will not count in the standing, but the players statistics will.

2.4 – BY THE BOARD

A member (or members) of the Board shall determine safe playing conditions to include temperature, humidity, wind speed and sun intensity in order to require shade/rest breaks in the play or cancellation of play for the day.

SECTION 3 - GROUND AND SPECIAL RULES

3.1 – PITCHERS' SAFETY SCREEN (The Board highly recommends the use of the screen for safety purposes)

A. The team utilizing the screen is responsible for its placement and removal. When in use, the screen shall be placed parallel to and not more than 36" in front of the pitching rubber so that a portion of the screen is not more than 2" from a line directly between home plate and the edge of the pitching rubber on the pitcher's glove hand side.

B. A batted ball hitting the screen is a dead ball. No strikes are imposed and the count remains the same.

C. A thrown ball hitting the screen is a live ball, the batter-runner and base runner(s) may advance at their own risk.

D. The umpires shall determine where the screen is stored between innings when only one team uses the screen. If the screen is stored in foul territory on the playing field, any thrown ball striking it will remain live.

3.2 - FAIR BATTED OR THROWN BALL LEAVING THE LIMITS OF THE PLAYING FIELD (PLAYABLE TERRITORY)

A. Fair Batted Ball. A fair batted ball that goes under or bounces over the outfield fence or that bounces or rolls through an outfield gate is a ground rule double. The ball is dead, and all existing runners will advance two bases based on their position at the time of the pitch. Additional bases may be awarded if in the umpires' judgment, a fair ball left the playing field as a result of an intentional act by a defensive player.

B. Thrown Ball. A ball that is thrown and goes beyond playable territory, including inside the dugout, is a dead ball. The batter-runner and all runners shall be awarded the base they were running to plus one more. The award is based on the position of the runners at the time of the throw.

3.3 - EQUIPMENT HANGING FROM THE DUGOUT SCREEN

Bats, masks, and gloves attached to the dugout screen or resting on the dugout ledge are considered to be part of the playing field and a thrown ball striking the equipment is a live ball and batters may advance at their own risk.

3.4 - DOUBLE BASE AT FIRST BASE (SAFETY BASE)

The double Safety Base (white and orange) base is positioned with the white portion located in fair territory and the orange portion in foul territory. Any batted ball striking the white portion, or the white and orange portions simultaneously, is a fair ball. Any ball striking only the orange portion is a foul ball. (See also SECTION 7.3 - Batter-Runner Reaching First Base)

SECTION 4 – SCORING

4.1 - KEEPING SCORE

D4S softball employs volunteer score keepers to help the Umpire in Chief (UIC) record the score, track courtesy runner's eligibility to run, and to compile and report game statistics. The UIC is responsible for resolving disputes in the score.

4.2 - REGULATION GAME

A. A regulation game consists of seven innings. EXCEPTIONS:

1. Weather shortened games stopped after four and one-half innings with the home team ahead or after five innings with the visiting team ahead are regulation. (See 2.2.D).
2. An extra-inning game stopped due to weather after the top half of an inning with the visiting team ahead is not a regulation game. The teams will finish the game at a later date agreeable to the managers involved.
3. A game stopped because of the Mercy Rule. (see 4.4 B)

B. A game that is tied at the end of seven innings shall continue with additional innings until one side has scored more runs than the other at the end of a complete inning. Beginning with the eighth inning until the game is complete, a tie-breaker rule is in effect:

1. Each team at bat will place a runner on second base to begin each succeeding inning. The base runner is the last batter from the previous inning whose turn at bat was completed.
2. A courtesy runner may be used. The courtesy runner rule as defined in SECTION 7.7 - Courtesy Runners applies to all extra innings.

4.3 - SCORING RUNS

A. A run is scored when a base runner from third touches the scoring plate prior to the ball being caught by a defensive player while touching Home Plate. One run shall be scored when the runner touches the scoring plate, after legally touching all bases in proper order.

B. The runner shall be called out and no run shall be scored if he first touches any portion of the batter's box before touching the scoring plate. The ball remains live.

C. Once a runner from third touches or crosses the commitment line he:

1. Cannot return to third base.
2. Must continue towards the scoring plate.
3. Can no longer be tagged out by the defensive player. The defensive player must touch Home Plate to record an out. The ball remains live.

4.4 - RUN LIMITS

A. Five Run Rule. Teams are limited to scoring 5 runs per half inning.

EXCEPTIONS:

1. When a team is behind by six or more runs, it may score six runs.

2. Teams may score an unlimited number of runs in the 7th inning and in extra innings.

3. An over the fence home run scores all runner(s) and the batter regardless of the score. The batter is credited with a home run and is required to run to first base only.

B. Mercy Rule. The mercy rule is invoked and the game shall end if one team is behind by 15 or more runs after completing its bat in the 5th or a later inning.

C. Flip-Flop Rule. When the visiting team leads by 10 or more runs after six complete innings, the home team shall "flip-flop" and become the visiting team, and the original visiting team will become the home team to start the 7th inning. The change in designation will remain in effect until the game is completed and all rules and procedures governing seventh and subsequent inning play remain in effect.

SECTION 5 - PITCHING

5.1 - HOME PLATE

Legal pitches striking any portion of Home Plate are strikes.

5.2 – CATCHER'S BOX

The catcher must remain within the boundary of the catcher's box until the pitched ball is batted or touches the ground.

5.3 - PITCH COUNT

Batters start with a 0-0 ball/strike count and are allowed 4 balls or 3 strikes.

5.4 - THE ARC

A legal pitch arcs six to twelve feet above the playing surface.

5.5 – THE PITCH

A. Each pitcher may take additional warm-up pitches at the umpire's discretion until the umpire determines the time to "play ball".

B. Before starting the pitching motion, the pitcher must take a position with at least one foot in contact with the pitcher's box.

C. The pitcher must come to a complete stop with the ball in front of his body. His front must face the batter and he must hold this position for at least one second before starting the pitch.

D. The pivot foot must be established and remain in contact with the pitcher's box until the pitched ball leaves the hand. If one step is taken, it can be forward, backward, or to the side provided the pivot foot is in contact with the pitcher's box and the step is simultaneous with the release of the ball.

E. The delivery of the pitch and follow-through is a continuous, non-distracting motion.

F. A pitcher choosing to use a safety screen shall immediately and completely (including the glove) move their torso behind the screen after delivering the pitch. Failure to move behind the screen will result in an illegal pitch.

G. Once the pitcher gets completely behind the screen, he is considered a fielder and may come out from behind the screen to field the ball.

H. Any batted ball that is fielded by the pitcher without having first fully retreated behind the screen is a dead ball hit for the batter. All forced runners on base will advance one base, while other runners will remain at their base.

5.6 - PENALTY FOR ILLEGAL PITCHES

Any infraction of rule 5.4-5.5 is an illegal pitch and a ball shall be called on the pitch. If a batter swings at any illegal pitch, the results of the play stand.

5.7 - NO PITCH DECLARED

No pitch shall be declared when a pitcher delivers a pitch:

A. During suspension of play.

B. Before runners have retouched base(s) after a foul ball.

C. When the ball slips from the pitcher's hand during his backswing motion.

D. When the pitcher delivers a quick pitch (a quick pitch is a quick return of the ball to the catcher before the batter has taken his position or when he is off balance.)

E. When the batter does not have both feet on the green mat at the start of the pitch

F. When a batter is granted time out prior to the release of a pitch.

G. When the catcher is not in or does not stay in the catcher's box until the ball is batted or strikes the ground.

SECTION 6 – BATTING

6.1 - BATTING ORDER

A. The batting order of each team must be on the score sheet/line-up card and must be delivered before the game by the manager to the official Scorer and the opposing team manager.

B. The batting order must be followed throughout the game unless;

1. An injured player is replaced by a substitute. When this occurs, the substitute shall take the place of the removed player in the batting order.

2. An injured player leaves the game and is not replaced by a substitute. When this occurs, the place of the injured player shall be omitted from the batting order without penalty to the team making the omission.

C. The first batter in each inning shall be the batter whose name follows that of the last player who completed a turn at bat in the preceding inning.

6.2 - BATTING OUT OF ORDER

A. Batting out-of-order is an appeal play. Appeals may be made by the manager of the defensive team, an umpire, or a scorekeeper.

B. The appeal may be made after the batter receives one pitch or is intentionally walked.

C. If the error is discovered before the batter puts the ball into play or is walked, the correct batter may take his place and legally assume any balls and strikes.

D. If the error is discovered after the incorrect batter puts the ball into play or is walked, then:

1. All base runners shall return to the bases they occupied before the ball was hit or walk issued;
2. The batter who should have batted shall be called “out;” and
3. The next batter for that team shall be the player whose name in the batting order follows that of the player called “out” for failing to bat.

6.3 - THE ON-DECK BATTER AND FOLLOWING BATTER

The on-deck batter and the batter in-the-hole may:

A. stand in or near the on-deck circle while awaiting their turn at bat.

B. loosen up with no more than two official softball bats, an approved warm-up bat, a combination of the two, or a single softball bat with a bat ring.

C. leave the on-deck circle:

1. When one becomes the batter
2. To avoid possible interference with a defensive player.
3. To remove a bat discarded by the batter-runner in order to avoid potential injury. This action must be taken without interfering with any defensive player.

6.4 - BATTING POSITION

A. The batter must take his position in the batter’s box within 10 seconds after the umpire has declared “Play Ball”.

B. The batter must have both feet touching or within some portion of the batter's box prior to the start of the pitch.

C. The batter may leave the batter’s box:

1. When the ball is hit fair or foul.
2. If “time” has been called.
3. If the momentum of the swing or attempted swing carries the batter out of the batter’s box without putting the ball in fair play.

6.5 - A STRIKE IS CALLED BY THE UMPIRE

A. When a legally pitched ball strikes Home Plate before touching the ground whether the batter swings or not.

B. When a legally or illegally pitched ball is swung at and missed by the batter. NOTE: A batter is not legally permitted to swing at a pitched ball that hits the ground.

C. For each foul tip or foul ball. The batter is out if it is the third strike.

D. When any part of the batter's person, bat or clothing is hit with his own-batted ball (foul ball) when he is in the batter's box.

E. When the batter fails to enter the batter's box within 10 seconds after the umpire calls “PLAY BALL.” The umpire shall call and signal a strike; a pitch does not need to be thrown. Additional strikes shall be called at 10 second intervals.

6.6 - A BALL IS CALLED BY THE UMPIRE

A. For each legally pitched ball not swung at that does not strike Home Plate.

B. When the ball touches the ground before reaching Home Plate.

C. When an illegally pitched ball is not swung at.

D. For each excessive warm-up pitch.

6.7 - THE BATTER IS OUT

A. When the pitched ball is swung at and missed for the third strike.

B. When the legally pitched ball strikes Home Plate for the third strike.

C. When the batter hits a foul tip or foul ball for the third strike.

D. When any part of the batter's person, bat or clothing is hit with his own fair batted ball when he leaves the batter's box in fair territory. If the batter drops the bat and the ball rolls against the bat over fair territory, and in the umpire’s judgment, there was no intention to interfere with the course of the ball, the ball shall be ruled fair or foul depending on where it comes to rest or is first touched by a fielder.

E. When a batter enters the batter's box with an altered bat or is discovered to be using one. NOTE: The batter is also ejected from the game.

F. When a batter’s foot is completely outside the lines of the batter's box and touching the ground, or any part of a foot is touching Home Plate when he hits the ball fair or foul.

G. When the batter bunts, takes less than a full swing or chops the ball downward, and the ball is hit into fair play.

H. When the batter intentionally hinders the catcher from making a play while standing within the batter's box.

I. When the batter recklessly discards his bat and it endangers any player or the umpire, play continues until time is called and both the player throwing the bat and his team are issued a “team warning”. Following a second offense by any player of the same team, the ball is dead, the batter is out, and all runners return to previously held bases. Following a third infraction by the same team, the ball is dead, the batter is out, and all runners return to previously held bases and the batter is ejected.

J. The first time a batter recklessly discards his bat during play and it contacts any player or the umpire, the ball is dead, the batter is out, and all players must return to their previously held bases. Depending upon the severity of the contact the umpires may eject the player.

K. When a player is a no-show for a game and his manager has failed to remove his name from the official lineup before the game starts. An out will be recorded every time he is due to bat (See also The Villages Rec Division IV Procedures).

L. When the batter has been ejected from the game he will not be replaced by a sub and every time he is due to bat, an out will be recorded. (See also The Villages Rec Division IV South Procedures).

SECTION 7 - BATTER-RUNNER AND RUNNER

7.1 - THE BATTER BECOMES THE BATTER-RUNNER

A batter becomes a batter-runner:

A. When he hits a pitched ball and has liability to be put out.

B. When four pitched balls have been called by the umpire.

7.2 – BATTER-RUNNER IS OUT

A. When after hitting a fair ball he is legally put out prior to reaching any base.

B. When after a fly ball is hit, the ball is caught by a fielder before it touches the ground, any object or person other than a defensive player.

C. When after hitting a fair ball, and while the ball is live, he holds his bat and touches or runs beyond first base. EFFECT: The batter-runner is out and the ball remains live; runner(s) may advance at their own risk. If this action results in the third out of an inning, no runs will score.

D. When he fails to advance to first base and enters his team area after a batted fair ball, a base on balls, or catcher obstruction. (See 7.7I Courtesy Runners)

E. When he runs outside the running lane and, in the umpire's judgment, interferes with the fielder taking the throw at first base. He may run outside the three-foot lane to avoid a fielder attempting to field a batted ball.

F. When he interferes with a fielder attempting to field a batted ball or intentionally interferes with a fielder attempting to throw the ball.

G. When he makes contact with a fair batted ball before reaching first base.

H. When he moves back toward home plate to avoid or delay a tag by a fielder.

7.3 - BATTER-RUNNER REACHING FIRST BASE

A. Each batter must reach first base without the aid of a courtesy runner.

B. Whenever a play is being made on the batter-runner going to first base:

1. The batter-runner must touch some portion of the orange bag. He will be out if he fails to do so, except if, in the umpire's judgement, the batter-runner is avoiding a collision. The batter-runner may use either the white or orange portion of the bag to avoid contact with the defensive player attempting to field the ball.
2. The defending player must touch the white base to make the putout.

C. When there is no play being made on the batter-runner at first base, the batter-runner may touch either the white or orange portion. Once a batter-runner attains first base the white and orange portions of the base are considered a “merged” single base and the runner and the defensive player may use the “merged” bag.

7.4 - RUNNERS ADVANCE AT THEIR RISK

Runners are entitled to advance with liability to be put out:

A. When a pitched ball is batted.

B. On a thrown ball or a fair batted ball that is not blocked.

C. On a thrown ball that hits an umpire.

D. When a legally caught ball is first touched.

E. When a fair batted ball strikes an umpire.

7.5 - RUNNERS ARE ENTITLED TO ADVANCE

A. When forced to vacate a base because the batter was awarded a base on balls.

B. When a fielder obstructs the runner.

C. When a fielder intentionally contacts or catches a fair batted or thrown ball with his cap, helmet, mask, protector, pocket, detached glove or any part of his uniform that is detached from its proper place on his person.

1. If the ball was batted, the runners are entitled to three bases from the time of the pitch.
2. If the ball was thrown, the runners are entitled to two bases from the time of the throw.
3. In either case, runners may advance farther at their own risk. (See also SECTION 9.1 Obstruction)

7.6 - RUNNERS ARE OUT

A runner is out:

A. When he is struck by a batted ball on fair ground while off the base. The ball is dead and the batter is awarded first base. Other runners advance only if forced. If a base runner is struck by a batted ball while in contact with the base, the runner is not out and the ball is live.

B. When he intentionally interferes with a ball in play, whether or not he is in contact with a legally occupied base.

C. When he passes a preceding runner before that runner has been put out. The ball remains live and other base runners advance at their own risk.

D. When he reverses his direction more than one time when a play is being made on him while he is advancing to the next base. A play starts when the ball is fielded. The term “fielded” includes a batted ball, a ball thrown, or a “look-back” by a defensive player making the play. The runner must then retouch the original base he was returning to before attempting to advance. EFFECT: Runner is out and the ball remains live.

E. When he slides or dives going to any base or scoring plate. EXCEPTION: Players may slide or dive when returning to any base.

7.7 - COURTESY RUNNERS

A. A courtesy runner may be used at any time, for any reason, from any base.

B. A courtesy runner is officially in the game when he touches the base.

C. The same courtesy runner may not be used more than once an inning or three times per game (including extra innings).

D. A runner who is replaced with a courtesy runner may not be used as a courtesy runner for the remainder of the same inning; he may be used as a courtesy runner in subsequent innings.

E. Any player or substitute recorded on the lineup card may be a courtesy runner.

F. The name or jersey number of the courtesy runner must be given to the scorekeeper.

G. Scorekeepers will track courtesy runners and alert the umpire that a courtesy runner has already run three times, or once in that inning, and is ineligible to run again.

H. There is no penalty for using an ineligible courtesy runner. If an ineligible runner is discovered on base before the first pitch after his entry, he is removed from the base and replaced with another runner. If discovered after a pitch has been delivered, the ineligible runner remains on base and all results of the play stand.

I. Any player that requires a runner and receives a walk, intentional or not, does not have to touch first base. He may go directly to the dugout and the courtesy runner shall go to first base.

7.8 - AVOIDING COLLISIONS

A runner must make every effort to avoid colliding with opposing players while running the bases. If, in the umpire's judgment, a runner misses a base to avoid a collision with a defensive player, the runner shall not be called out.

7.9 - OVER-RUNNING BASES

A. A batter-runner may over-run first base without being called out unless he attempts to advance to second base.

B. Any over-run at first with an attempt to advance to second base, or over-run at second, or third base shall place that runner in jeopardy of being put out when returning to the base. No tag of the runner is necessary; the runner is out if the fielder is holding the ball in his glove or hand(s) while in contact with the bag.

C. A base runner may slide or dive when returning to any base.

7.10 - RUNNING TO HOME

A. When a runner's foot touches the ground on or past the commitment line, he must advance to the scoring plate. If the runner re-crosses the line in order to return to third base, he will be declared out and the ball remains live.

B. A runner will touch only the scoring plate or cross the scoring line. He will be called out if he touches any portion of batter's box or Home Plate.

SECTION 8 - DEFENSE (DEFENSIVE SITUATIONS)

8.1 - CATCH

A. A legal catch occurs when a fielder catches a batted or thrown ball with his hand(s) or glove, has demonstrated he has control of the ball, and the resulting release of the ball is voluntary.

B. A no-catch occurs when a fielder:

1. Does not demonstrate control of the ball in the hand or glove. EXAMPLE: A fielder trapping a ball (trapped ball) between his glove and chest is not a legal catch until the fielder demonstrates control/secure possession of the ball in only his hand or glove.
2. Does not intentionally and voluntarily release the ball. EXAMPLE: A fielder, after he catches the ball, collides with another player or umpire or falls to the ground and loses possession of the ball as a result of the collision or falling to the ground.
3. D4S does not recognize the Infield Fly Rule, other than in the umpire's discretion a fielder intentionally doesn't field a fly ball, the runners advance one base and the batter is safe.

8.2 - DEFENSIVE PLAY AT HOME

A. A defensive player may not tag the runner after he crosses the commitment line. EFFECT: The run will score and the ball remains live.

B. A defensive player, while in possession of the ball, is not allowed to touch the scoring plate in an attempt to retire a runner. EFFECT: The run will score and the ball remains live.

C. A defensive player, while in possession of the ball, must touch only Home Plate to make an out.

SECTION 9 - OBSTRUCTION AND INTERFERENCE

9.1 - OBSTRUCTION

A. The act of a defensive player or team member (including any bench personnel) that impedes the advancement of a runner going to or returning to a base. Examples: blocking a base or runner's path without having possession of the ball, distracting a runner verbally from advancing to the next base, or faking a tag.

B. The act of a defensive player that hinders a batter from striking at or hitting a pitched ball. Catcher obstruction is when a batter, in the act of swinging at a pitched ball, contacts the catcher's glove or person.

NOTE: When catcher obstruction occurs and the batter reaches first base safely and all other base runners advance one base, catcher obstruction is nullified. If the batter-runner does not reach first base safely, time is called at the end of play and the batter is awarded first base and all players are advanced one base.

C. The act of obstruction does not have to be intentional. No contact is required for obstruction to be called.

D. When obstruction is seen by the umpire the delayed dead ball signal shall be shown (left arm extended horizontally at the shoulder). The umpire shall hold the signal until the ball is dead or if runners advance beyond the obstructed base(s).

E. Bases shall be awarded by the umpire based on the base(s) the obstructed runner would have reasonably achieved had the obstruction not occurred. All other runners advance if forced by the awarded base(s).

F. If an obstructed runner is put out after passing the base(s) he would have reasonably achieved had the obstruction not occurred, the runner is out and the ball remains live.

9.2 - INTERFERENCE

Interference is the act of an offensive player or team member that impedes, confuses or distracts a defensive player attempting to execute a play. Examples: running too close to a fielder attempting to field a ball, yelling at a fielder attempting a play, striking a held ball from the glove or hand of a defensive player, running into a defensive player to prevent an out.

A. A base runner must always avoid a fielder making a play on a batted ball.

1. If runner interference is called, the runner is out and the batter is awarded first base. Other runners return to the base previously held unless forced.
2. If runner interference causes a double play to be avoided, the second out shall be declared by the umpire.

B. Interference is an immediate dead ball situation.

C. The act of interference does not have to be intentional.

D. No contact is required for interference to be called.

E. If an on-deck, or "in-the-hole" batter, or coach interferes with a defensive players' ability to:

1. Field a fly ball (fair or foul), the ball is dead, the batter is out and all runners return to bases previously achieved before the ball was batted.
2. Make a play on a runner, the ball is dead, the runner closest to home is declared out and the batter is awarded base(s) based on when the interference occurred.

F. If a retired runner interferes with a fielder attempting a play, the ball is dead, the runner closest to home is declared out, and other base runners return to bases occupied prior to the interference call.

SECTION 10 - UMPIRES

10.1 - POWER AND DUTIES

Umpires are volunteer representatives of the Board and the Villages VDRD. As such, they are authorized and required to enforce each section of the rules. They are empowered to order a player, coach, or manager to perform or omit any act, which in their judgment is necessary to enforce and effect any one or all of these rules and to impose penalties as herein prescribed.

A. D4S utilizes two umpires, a plate umpire and a base umpire, during regular season games. The Board may assign additional umpires per game during tournament play.

B. The plate umpire has the authority to make decisions on any situation not specifically covered in the rules.

C. Umpires may inspect the playing field boundaries, equipment and clarify ground rules to both managers as necessary.

D. Each umpire has the power to decide on violations committed any time during the game or during suspension of the game until the game is over.

E. Neither umpire has the authority to set aside, or question decisions made by his colleague within the limits of their respective duties as outlined in these rules.

F. An umpire may consult his colleague at any time. However, the final decision shall rest with the umpire who had the authority to make the decision and who requested the opinion of the other.

10.2 - PLATE UMPIRE RESPONSIBILITIES

A. The home plate umpire shall take a position alongside or in back of the catcher. He shall have full charge of, and be responsible for, the proper conduct of the game.

B. He shall call all balls, strikes, and illegal pitches.

C. He shall by agreement and in cooperation with the base umpire call plays in the field either out or safe, call batted balls either fair or foul, and declare fly balls a catch or no catch.

D. He shall determine and declare whether:

1. A batter bunts, takes less than a full swing, or chops a ball.
2. A batted ball touches the batter or his clothing.

E. He shall render base decisions as required.

F. He shall assume all duties, when assigned as a single umpire to a game.

10.3 - BASE UMPIRE RESPONSIBILITIES

A. He shall take positions on the playing field that are in accordance with standard umpire mechanics to judge plays at the bases.

B. He shall assist the plate umpire to enforce the rules of the game.

10.4 – PLATE UMPIRE OR BASE UMPIRE RESPONSIBILITIES

The plate umpire and the base umpire shall have equal authority to:

A - Call a runner out for leaving a base too early.

B - Call ''TIME'' for suspension of play. “Time” is the term used by the umpire to order suspension of play during which interval the ball becomes and remains “dead.” The umpire shall call “Time” when the ball is held by a player in the infield area and, in the judgment of the umpire, all play has ceased.

C. Eject a player, coach or manager from the game for violation of the rules.

10.5 - APPEAL PLAYS

A. An appeal play is a play in which an umpire may not make a decision until requested by a manager, coach or player. An appeal may be made during a live ball situation (see below) or when time is called. The appeal must be made before the next pitch, before an intentional walk or before the pitcher and all infielders have clearly vacated their normal fielding positions and have left fair territory on their way to the dugout area. On the last play of the game, an appeal may be made until the umpires leave the field of play. The types of appeal plays are:

1. Missing a base.
2. Leaving a base on a caught fly ball before the ball is first touched.
3. Batting out of order.
4. Attempting to advance to second base after making a turn at first base (live ball appeal).

B. Unless there is an appeal, an umpire shall not call a player out or penalize him for failing to touch a base, leaving a base too early on a caught fly ball, batting out of order, or making an attempt to go to second base after reaching first base, as provided in these rules.

10.6 - UMPIRE JUDGEMENT CALLS

A. Judgement calls include but are not limited to

1. A batted ball being fair or foul.
2. A runner being called safe or out.
3. A pitched ball being a strike or ball.

4. On any play believed to be a personal judgment call.

B. An umpire judgement call is not an appeal call. A manager may ask a question to the umpire about a call. If the umpire making the call believes the question has merit, he may confer with his colleague about his decision. He will then determine if his call was correct or incorrect and indicate either safe or out (see 10.1.F).

10.7 - EJECTIONS

A. Players or Managers may be ejected from the game at the umpire's discretion, but not limited to, the following reasons. The umpire should attempt to warn the player about these items before issuing the ejection.

1. Verbally abusive language (including profanity).
2. Throwing equipment in anger.
3. Threats or acts of physical aggression.
4. After being warned to stop, a continued expression of displeasure with an umpire ruling.
5. Knowing using or attempting to use an altered bat.

B. The ejected player or manager must leave the softball complex for the remainder of the game.

C. The ejected player will not be replaced with a sub. Every time he is due to bat, an out will be recorded.

D. Umpires will complete and submit a Recreation Department Incident/Ejection Report to a member of the Board and/or VDRD on the same day as the incident.

E. VDRD mandates a two-game suspension for a player or manager ejected or, in the case of physical contact, the minimum suspension is one month. VDRD will solely determine if additional disciplinary action is warranted.

F. A suspended player or manager is allowed to be at the softball complex, but may not, in any manner, participate in any team activity or become involved in harassment or verbal abuse of an umpire.

SECTION 11 – ADDITIONAL RULES

11.1 – PROTECTED BATTER

A. A Protected Batter may be named by a Manager before each game.

B. If a Protected Batter is walked, the next time the Protected Batter bats (or any subsequent at bat), the batter must receive one strike before being walked a second time (intentional or not). In such cases, the Protected Batter may continue to take pitches until a strike is recorded or the Protected Batter decides to take first base on a minimum of four called balls.

C. In any such case where the Protected Batter is walked a second (or subsequent) time in a game (intentionally or not), the Protected Batter will receive a "two base walk" where the Protected Batter will take second base and all other runners on base will advance by "force". There will be no automatic two base advancement by the base runners unless they are "forced" to the next base.

11.2 – INFIELD PRACTICE AND PITCHER WARM-UPS

A. The fielding team may practice between innings and pitchers may take warm up pitches between before the umpire declares "Balls In", which indicates the infielders must remove any softballs used for practice from the field and the pitcher must take the game ball and prepare for the first pitch of the half-inning.

B. Pitchers are entitled to have at least one warm-up pitch between innings. Any additional pitches may be granted at the discretion of the umpire.