

**LADIES D3 RECREATION LEAGUE SOFTBALL
BYLAWS AND PLAYING RULES
Effective JULY 2021**

A. ORGANIZED RECREATION SOFTBALL

The Villages Community Recreation Development District Recreation Softball Procedures and the Official Senior Softball - USA Rulebook ("Senior Softball Rules") governs The Villages softball.

B. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Division 3 (D3) is governed by a Board of Directors (the Board) of up to five members. All Board Members will serve a one-year term beginning June 1 and ending May 31.

1. Qualifications

Prospective Board members must a) be full-time residents of The Villages, b) have played full-time in either Division 2 (D2) or D3 for at least two of the past three consecutive seasons, and c) be registered members in D3. Prospective Board members also must have demonstrated the following during their playing time in D3 or as a Board member if serving currently or in the past: a) dependably supported and participated in D3 team games/Board operations even if injured, b) maintained a positive and constructive relationship with their teammates and manager/assistant manager, including communications before and after games, or with Board members, c) fulfilled promised commitments as a team player/Board member, including participation in team duties and d) displayed good sportsmanship both on and off the field.

2. Nominations, Selections, and Removal

Any qualified player, non-playing manager, and non-playing coach may volunteer by notifying the Board by a date in May set by the Board. If the Board determines that the individual is qualified, she will be added to the list of volunteers. If there are more than five volunteers, all names will be placed on an election ballot. The names of the nominated candidates and the date, time period, and physical place if done by paper ballot for the election will be emailed to eligible voters.

Any needed regular election will be held approximately during the second week of May in each year. Votes are by email or paper ballot. Votes by paper ballots are cast during regular game hours during the named weekly time period. If paper balloting cannot be held on the posted date, the next available playing date will be used. Those eligible to vote are registered D3 members immediately before or during the season the vote is held. Board members are expected to serve their complete term. If a Board member leaves D3, her position on the Board is terminated and her replacement will occur at the next call for Board volunteers and an election, if warranted.

3. Board Officers

The officers will be chosen by the members of the Board as follows: a) Chair, selected for a six-month term, b) Assistant Chair, chosen by the Chair for a six-month term, c) Secretary, and/or d) Treasurer, selected by the Board for a six-month term. Other members will be considered members at large. If there are less than five Board members, the Chair may combine positions. The Board will hold regular meetings, announce all decisions and policy changes to the players in D3 and make decisions necessary in the day-to-day management of the division.

4. *Board Decisions, Duties, and Responsibilities*

All Board decisions are by majority vote. At its discretion, the Board may consult with the managers and players on any issue. The Board reserves the right to alter, modify or update the Playing Rules and Bylaws as deemed necessary. The Board's duties and responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- a) Organize division registration and the maintenance of registration information.
- b) Determine the number of teams, schedule games, select team managers, and conduct the draft.
- c) Manage booth requirements and operations.
- d) Manage player substitutes and the substitute process before and during a game.
- e) Manage umpires, including the selection of a lead umpire coordinator.
- f) Manage game operations and reporting.
- g) Manage the creation, revision, and compliance with formal Division policies.

C. D3 MANAGERS

Team managers are responsible for the game-to-game management of teams.

1. *Qualifications and Selection*

D3 managers must a) be a full-time or seasonal resident of The Villages and have b) played a minimum of three seasons in D2 or D3, c) demonstrated knowledge of the game and of the D3 rules and bylaws, d) maintained a positive and constructive relationship with the Board and displayed good sportsmanship, and e) access to a computer and email service. The Board will select team managers. If there are more potential qualified managers than teams, the Board may grant preference to prior managers and those with positive managerial performance. Non-playing managers/coaches and non-playing base coaches must be registered in D3 and have signed a waiver before becoming a non-playing manager/coach or non-playing base coach in order to be allowed on the field or in the dugout. Managers can appoint assistant managers/coaches from their rostered team. Managers can assign base coaches but they must ensure they have been registered and have a signed waiver prior to allowing them on the field or in the dugout.

2. *Duties and Responsibilities*

Managers' duties include the following:

- a) Draft players to form a team or working with the Board to form teams.
- b) Ensure team members are aware of the D3 Playing Rules and Bylaws.
- c) Schedule and conduct pre-season practice sessions.
- d) Distribute a playing schedule to team members.
- e) Maintain all necessary communication with the Board via email or correspondence.
- f) Maintain an effective and timely communication stream with their players to share Board and Recreation Department information.
- g) Assign knowledgeable players to fulfill booth duties (scoreboard and scorekeeper) and notify the sub coordinator.
- h) Complete the official line-up form for the booth and opposing manager no later than 30 minutes prior to game start.
- i) Attend any meeting to which the Board invites managers.
- j) Keep track of their players' missed games and request a substitute when needed.
- k) Assign utility subs for games, when requested, and notify the sub coordinator.
- l) Identify in their batting lineup roster, any players who will have courtesy runners from home or from first and any substitute players in the lineup.

D. DRAFTING OF TEAMS

The draft is the method used to select players for the teams with the goal of achieving teams of equal playing strength. At its discretion, the Board may select roster players for teams.

1. *Player Registration*

The players entering the D3 draft or substituting must have either registered in the Ladies D2 or D3 league in their last active season or have completed an evaluation session in which they were rated at least a D3 player. Each newly evaluated D3 player must participate as either a roster player or substitute for their initial season, with substitutes having priority status for a minimum of two games. A player may move up or down one division per season after their initial season. If a D3 player signs up for D2 and does not get drafted, they will be put in the D3 draft pool. If un-drafted in D3, they will become a D3 substitute. Players may undergo a re-evaluation to determine division eligibility status at any time. Players registered as a substitute only must volunteer to be a substitute for a minimum of five games. Failure to do so will result in an inactive status for the subsequent season.

2. *Number of Teams and Roster Players*

The Board determines the number of teams and number of players who are on a team for the draft subject to the following restrictions: a) the availability of managers, b) the availability of pitchers, c) the number of players to be drafted on a team for optimal management, and d) the number of eligible players in the draft. If enough players are available, all teams must draft at least 10 players. The Board will strive to field the number of teams accommodating all players registered for the draft. However, if the D3 draft cannot accommodate all registered players because of one or more restrictions, any undrafted player becomes a priority substitute.

Only Board Members, Managers, and individuals invited by the Board may attend the draft. Prior to the draft date, the Board will provide a list of all players eligible for the draft. Managers should plan to attend the draft and prepared to make their selections. Attendance at the draft will be one of the criteria for selections of managers each season. Board members and managers should not discuss specific player abilities and draft order after completion of the draft. A random drawing will determine the order in which managers will draft pitchers and/or players.

E. ROSTER PLAYERS

Each team will have a roster from 10 to generally no more than 13 players. A minimum of 10 players is required to field a team. The maximum number of defensive players on the field at one time is 11. When a team has 12 or more players, the manager may elect to move players on or off the field as she deems necessary. However, no player will sit out more than a total of two non-consecutive innings. The manager is expected to schedule all roster players to play an approximately equal number of innings during the season. All roster players must be in the batting line-up and bat in order.

1. *Player Qualifications, Selection, and Commitment*

Each player must be a resident of The Villages or meet The Villages renter requirements and be at least 40 years of age or older. Each player must complete registration and release forms and be evaluated by the Villages Recreation Softball Evaluation committee.

2. *Players at Game Start and During the Game*

Players must arrive 30 minutes before the scheduled game time. If a player cannot participate, she must inform her manager in advance of lineup submission. Once the line-up is submitted to the scorekeepers, changes to the line-up may be made only with the approval of both managers, except for replacing a player injured or becoming ill during the game. If a team does not have a minimum of six roster players present after five minutes of the game's scheduled start time, that team will forfeit the game. If a substitute has not been selected and a late player was included in the line-up, she may join the remainder of the game. If her time comes up to bat and she is not present, she will be charged with an out. The late player may not join the game if she has missed more than two times at bat or 11 players are already fielded.

If a player cannot complete the game for any reason *other than* injury/illness/emergency and leaves the game before it is complete, her team may not replace her and must play short a player. An out is declared each time her at bat is missed. A playing manager may choose to sit out if there are still 11 additional players on the team. If there are fewer than 11 players, requiring a substitute, the playing manager must play to complete team. If the playing manager sits out the whole game, she cannot bat. There are no designated hitters.

F. REPLACEMENT PLAYERS FOR ROSTER PLAYERS

A team that permanently loses a drafted roster player for the remaining season will notify the Board. If the loss means the team has less than 11 players, the manager should submit a request to the Board for a replacement player and the Board will institute replacement procedures once notified. The Board will fill that position from newly evaluated players and other priority substitutes in order of replacement need and replacement availability. If a priority substitute player is not available, the Board will consider players from the "substitute only" pool who stated before the draft they would play full-time if a roster slot became available. Failing that, the Board will solicit volunteers from the pool to fill a full-time slot. If only one volunteer arises, that person will be assigned as the full time roster replacement player. If several volunteers are received, the Board will send the list of volunteers to the manager who will select the replacement player for their team. Once selected, the Board will notify the other volunteers that a replacement player was assigned. The manager will notify the player that was selected. If there are not any permanent replacement players, substitutes are to be requested in the normal manner until such time as a replacement player is named (from newly evaluated players first, then substitute only players and finally by requesting volunteers). A manager may not play short or use regular substitutes if a replacement player is available.

G. GAME SUBSTITUTES

The manager may request substitute players before and during a game.

1. *Before the Start of the Game*

The manager must make a request to the sub coordinator by Monday and Thursday noon for games played on Tuesdays and Fridays, if the team has fewer than 11 available roster players and does not anticipate a late arriving player. Teams may obtain up to five substitutes if six roster players are present, to a total of 11 players. If substitutes are not available, a team may play with 10 players only. If the other team has a full team, that team does not have to reduce the number of fielded players to make the teams equal. Substitutes must be placed at the bottom of the batting order. If a team has fewer than six roster players available, the team will forfeit.

2. *During the Game*

If, during a game, a player becomes ill, is injured, or is notified of an emergency and leaves the game, she will be replaced by a utility substitute if utility substitutes are available and at least six roster players are playing. If a substitute is not available, the team will play as is with at least 10 players. However, if a team falls below 10 players, the team will forfeit.

3. *Substitute Process*

The substitute process will be determined by the Board in any way the Board feels is necessary to provide substitutes to field a rostered team to keep teams from forfeiting a game. Once a substitute has been assigned, managers may not replace a substitute with a late-arriving roster player. Managers must place substitutes at the bottom of the roster in any order they wish.

Except for pitchers, substitutes will play where the manager assigns them. A manager is not allowed to move her designated pitcher to another position to obtain or use a substitute pitcher. A team that has a substitute pitcher must begin the game with that pitcher and she must pitch a minimum of three innings. After that time, the substitute pitcher may be shifted to another defensive position during the game. An injured pitcher will be handled as any other injured player, being replaced by a roster or substitute player already in the game or a utility substitute.

If a player selected as a substitute is participating in an earlier game, the subsequent game will not be delayed longer than ten minutes after the scorers, umpires, and other team is ready to start. At that point, a new temporary substitute will be selected to replace the player still playing in the earlier game. Once the earlier game is over, the substitute requested for the later game will replace the temporary substitute. If a roster player is subbing or umpiring in a game when her own team's game is ready to start, she will leave that game at the first opportunity and report to her own team. A new substitute or umpire will be assigned at that point, if available, to finish the earlier game.

H. GAME OPERATIONS

A game consists of seven innings with no time limit. If tied at the end of seven innings, then a "tie breaker" rule is followed.

1. *Scoring and Catch Up*

During innings one through six, teams are limited to five runs per inning unless a team is behind by more than five runs. That team may "catch-up" for a tie. For the seventh inning or any subsequent inning, teams may score runs to catch up or seven runs, whichever is higher. If a tie remains at the end of the seventh inning, the tie breaker rule is applied.

2. *Tie Breaker Rule*

When the teams are tied at the end of seven innings, each team starts the eighth inning with a runner on second base who was the player at bat when the last out was made in the previous inning. If the player at bat at the end of regulation play had a courtesy runner from home, she may have a courtesy runner starting at second base. If that base runner had a courtesy runner from first base, she receives a courtesy runner when she reaches third base. If the game remains tied at the end of the eighth inning, the game will end in a tie.

3. *Mercy Rule*

If a team is ahead by ten or more runs at any time after five innings have been completed (or four and one-half if the home team is leading), the game shall be declared a complete regulation game. Managers can agree to competitively play for an additional two innings if such practice play does not impact the start of any subsequent games.

4. *Adverse Conditions: Cancellation or Modification of Games*

The umpire(s) are empowered to stop or delay a game at any time because of rain, fog, lightning in the area, darkness or any similar cause that puts the umpires, players, or spectators in immediate peril. The Board may also modify or cancel a game because of adverse conditions. The Recreation Department will notify the groundskeeper(s) at the field when the heat index reaches or exceeds one-hundred-four (104) degrees or the temperature is at or below a fifty (50) degree wind chill factor. The groundskeeper(s) will advise the umpires/teams that the requisite heat index or wind chill has been reached and at that point, the games are officially stopped and cancelled. Any partial/full innings left will not finish. Games that have completed the fifth inning or beyond count as official game. If a game is being played with fewer than five innings completed, it is cancelled. Players in the game or any subsequent game may choose to unofficially play.

5. *Playing 5 Innings*

During a game, a manager of one of the teams may ask the other manager if they can agree to play only 5 innings if there is a situation that arises that may warrant a shorter game (i.e. weather). If both managers agree, then only 5 innings will be played and it will be considered full regulation game. If the other manager does not agree, then the game is expected to be played for 7 innings. If the requesting manager does want to play the 7 innings, then they will forfeit.

6. *Playing Specifics*

The ball remains live until any umpire calls "time," which should be done when the ball is held by a player in the infield area, and in the umpire's judgment, all play has ceased.

Batting out of order is an appeal play that may be made only by the defensive team. The defensive team forfeits its right to appeal batting out of order when one legal or illegal pitch has been made to the incorrect batter. If the error is discovered while the incorrect batter is at bat, the correct batter may take her place and legally assume any balls or strikes. If a pitch has not been thrown, the offensive team may correct a wrong batter at the plate with no penalty. If the error is discovered after the incorrect batter has completed her turn at bat but before a legal or illegal pitch has been made to the following batter, the player who should have batted is out. Any advance or score made because of a ball batted by the improper batter shall be nullified. The next batter is the player whose name follows that of the player called out for failing to bat. If the batter declared out under these circumstances is the third out, the correct batter in the next inning shall be the player who would have come to bat had the player been put out by ordinary play. If the error is discovered after the first legal pitch to the next batter, the turn at bat of the incorrect batter is legal, all runs scored and bases run are legal, and the next batter in order shall be the one whose name follows that of the incorrect batter. Players who have not batted and who have not been called out lose their turn at bat until reached again in the regular order.

When running the bases, A player will be called out for sliding, stealing, or leading off a base. The ball must be hit or cross home plate for a runner to leave the bag. Every base is a "force out." A tag on a runner can be made when she is advancing to the next base; however, the runner going home may not

be tagged out after crossing the commitment line. All batter/runners going to first base must use the runner's lane to avoid possible interference. A double bag is used at first base, the orange portion of the bag being in foul territory abutting first base. If there is a play on the batter-runner going to first base, the batter-runner must touch the orange bag. She will be called out if she fails to do so, except if, in the umpire's judgment, the batter-runner is avoiding a collision. This is not an appeal play.

The defending player has only the white base, in fair territory, to make the putout; her touch of the orange bag only will not result in an out. The batter-runner will be called out (the ball is dead and all runners will return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch) if she moves back toward home plate to avoid or delay a tag by a fielder. Once the batter-runner reaches first base, the double base (orange and white) shall be treated as one base and the fielder or runner may use either portion.

A rundown situation starts when the ball (whether batted or thrown) is fielded ahead of the runner. The runner may advance and be in jeopardy of being put out or she may make *one turn* to go back to the previously held base (still in jeopardy of being put out). The runner may not return to her base a second time. She will be out and the ball remains live. If she is returning to a previously held base, she does not have to go back to touch the base if the ball is overthrown on a subsequent play, and may advance to the next base. No runner may return to touch a missed base or one left illegally once she enters a dugout or bench area.

Running home, the offensive player must touch the "scoring plate." If the wrong plate is touched, she will be called out. The defensive player must touch the "strike zone mat/plate" for the out. Once the runner crosses the commitment line on her way to home plate, she is committed to going home and she may not return to third base-if she attempts to return, she will be called out.

For a legal pitching delivery, the pitcher must come to a full and complete stop with the ball in front of the body and facing the batter before pitching. This position must be shown before starting the pitch. A pitcher's pivot foot must remain in contact with the pitcher's box (area from the front of the pitcher's plate extending back 10 feet from the pitcher's plate) until the pitch leaves the pitcher's hand. The pitch must come in at a moderate speed and have an arc between 6 and 12 feet. If a step is taken by the pitcher, 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. The catcher must remain within the catcher's box until the pitched ball is batted, touches the ground or plate, or reaches the catcher's box. The catcher's box ends ten feet behind the rear boundary of the batter's box. If a pitcher uses a protective screen, it must be used by that pitcher throughout the game. Any batted ball hitting the screen is a dead ball. The pitcher using the screen must step behind the screen after every pitch. A pitcher is eligible to field a ball hit up the middle. The team wishing to use the screen is responsible for proper placement and removal.

A batter may choose to swing at an illegal pitch (a pitch below 6 feet or higher than 12 feet) and it will be either a strike or a hit. If she chooses not to swing, it is a ball. If a quick pitch is attempted (the ball is not released by the pitcher), the umpire may call time or no pitch to allow the batter to get set. If the quick pitch is released, it is an illegal pitch and a ball shall be called unless the batter swings at the pitch and either a strike is called or the ball is struck. A batter is out if she bunts (falls to take a complete swing) or chops the ball when hitting a pitched ball. Only one intentional walk may be imposed on any player per game. A player who is intentionally walked does not have to be pitched to but goes directly to first base. If the batter throws the bat, but not in anger, and it does not hit anyone, the batter is warned at the first infraction. If the batter again throws the bat, the batter may be called out. A bat thrown in anger is interference and grounds for ejection.

7. *Obstruction and Interference*

Obstruction is the act of a) a defensive player or team member who hinders or prevents a batter from striking at or hitting a pitched ball or b) a fielder who is not in possession of a ball, is not fielding a batted ball, or is not in the act of receiving a thrown ball, who impedes the progress of the batter/runner who is legally running the bases. Defenders may not block a base while waiting for a throw to arrive. When an obstruction occurs, the umpire will signal a delayed dead ball and runners will be entitled to advance.

Interference is the act of an offensive player or team member that impedes or confuses a defensive player from attempting a play. 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 will not be called out. If the runner is judged as failing to avoid a collision with a defensive player involved in the play, the ball will be declared dead and the runner called out.

8. *Courtesy Runners*

A batter may request a courtesy runner from home plate if she meets at least one of the following conditions: a) is playing under the Americans with Disabilities Act (with appropriate official government documentation) or b) is 75 years of age or older and requests a runner. The batter/runner from home may not advance to second base and is subject to being tagged out if she is in fair territory and time has not been called. A courtesy runner from home is not allowed to advance beyond first base on overthrows or errors.

All batters not eligible to use a courtesy runner from home must reach first base safely before requesting a courtesy runner. The batter/runner must wait for the conclusion of the play and the umpire calling time before requesting the courtesy runner replacement at any other base. Being slow is not considered a reason to use a runner. In the spirit of the game, no manager can require a player to take a runner. A player injured or who becomes ill during the game may request a courtesy runner from any base (not home) by her team informing the opposing manager of the injury. She may choose to run for herself during subsequent at-bats if she recovers.

Excepting for a player injured or ill during the game, managers must designate the need for a courtesy runner from home/first base on the batter's line-up before the game with an "R". The designation on the line-up cannot be changed after the game starts. A player designated for a courtesy runner must continue to use a courtesy runner each time she is at bat. The courtesy runner on base will not be replaced unless it is her turn to bat. She will then be replaced with another runner and she will take her turn at bat with no out being called. The courtesy runner may be anyone in the line-up, but each courtesy runner may run only once per inning.

9. *Injury or Health Issue During a Game*

If any player is injured or experiences a health issue during a game, either umpire may call time and allow first aid treatment. Whether to stop play immediately is up to the judgment of the umpire(s). If runners are on base when time is called, those runners will be awarded the bases that the umpire judges they would have reached if time had not been called. If an injured/ill player leaves the game, she may return to the game later. An injury substitute (utility sub) will replace the player in the same position in the line-up as the injured/ill player she replaced.

I. UMPIRES AND GAME CONDUCT

An umpire will be used at home plate (the plate umpire) and if available, on the bases (the field umpire). In the event of a controversial call, only team managers/assistant managers may discuss it with the umpire who made the call and ask that the umpire confer with the other umpire. The umpire who made the call has the option of conferring with the other umpire but is not required to do so. Only the umpire who made the call can reverse that call.

Players running the bases cannot make any comments, remarks or sounds that are directed to the opposing team. It is the umpire's judgement if such an event occurs and the runner will be called out. Care should be taken by the umpires in making the judgement, however, as many players do unconsciously talk to themselves and/or make noises during play that are not aimed at another player but simply themselves.

Players, managers, coaches, or officials shall not make disparaging or insulting remarks to or about any opposing players, officials, or spectators, or commit other acts that could be considered unsportsmanlike conduct. Any unsportsmanlike conduct can result in an ejection. As per The Villages Recreation Softball League Policies and Procedures, 3 (L): *Eligibility of players due to violations of the VCDD Recreation Code of Conduct is the duty of the Recreation Department. A two-game suspension is mandatory for any player or manager ejected from a league game. In the case of any physical contact the minimum suspension is 1 month. The Recreation Dept. will determine if further disciplinary action is necessary. The Recreation Dept. has the sole ability to discipline or suspend players from all recreation sponsored leagues.*

J. D3 MEETINGS

An annual meeting, open to all members shall be held during the Fall Season. The business to be transacted at such meeting shall be the reports of the Chair, Secretary/Treasurer, and any other Board member with pertinent information as well as any other relevant business from the membership. It is recommended that an open membership meeting also be held early in the Summer Season, to introduce new Board members and address any membership concerns. The Board determines how the concerns are raised and addressed. Significant Board Bylaw and Playing Rule changes should be explained at the annual meeting, the open meeting, or any another meeting held as soon as possible after such significant changes are made. Special membership meetings shall be called by the Board as necessary with dates and times to be determined. Regular Board Meetings will be held as often as necessary to conduct D3 business. A quorum shall be three Board members if there are four or more Board members and two if there are less than four Board members.

K. AMENDMENT TO THE BYLAWS AND PLAYING RULES

All amendments will be made by a majority Board vote when the Board believes such changes are in the best interest of D3 Ladies Softball.