



# A Guide For Parents





## RESPECT MY GAME

### RESPECT MY GAME PROGRAM

#### HOW IT CAME TO BE?

Softball Ontario had experienced a decrease in the Umpire Registration Program steadily over the past four (4) years. Umpires were hanging up their masks and leaving the sport because they had experienced abusive situations, which made them turn away from the game. At the last Softball Canada meeting, the president of Softball Canada, Kevin Quinn, even commented on the lack of respect from the players at the Senior Men's Canadian Championships towards Umpires. Simply put, Umpires do not feel respected on the field. The lack of respect comes from all directions, including players, coaches and fans.

In the past, when Softball Ontario has recognized an area in need of improvement, the required steps were taken to enhance the Association and address areas of concerns. Softball Ontario recognized the need to provide a safe environment, manage conflict, and put safeguards in place. They applied for an Active 2010 Capacity Grant to update, improve their Risk Management Plans and their Member Associations Risk Management plans. Softball Ontario and its Member Associations developed new Risk Management plans and policies - a positive step towards making Softball a safer sport.

While an important aspect of Softball Ontario was greatly improved, attention was required to address the abusive situations that were taking place on the diamond amongst the participants of the game including Players, Coaches, Umpires and other stakeholders. The creation of the Respect My Game Program was brought to life to raise awareness of abuses in softball and encouraging fair play and respect. Softball Ontario's main objective is to encourage mutual respect among participants to reduce abusive situations. The Respect My Game Program will be included in all educational opportunities provided by Softball Ontario. By incorporating the Respect My Game Program into all of Softball Ontario's educational opportunities, the ideals of the program will permeate throughout the entire softball community.



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### I WILL NOT

- make any verbal comments or physical gestures about or toward anyone that could be considered offensive, derogatory, or abusive.
- engage in any action that might be considered to be verbally or physically abusive.

### Consequences

- offenders to the code will be reported to their respective executive or association for disciplinary action.
- repeat offenders will be banned from participating for the remainder of the season.

### Enforcement:

Local Softball Associations are responsible for enforcing the code of conduct. Softball Ontario reserves the right to support the well being of the game of softball and the rights of all participants to be treated with respect.

### SPECTATOR'S CODE OF CONDUCT

#### I WILL

- be on my best behaviour, using appropriate language when communicating with players, coaches or game officials.
- respect the officials' decisions and teach young people to do the same.
- encourage players to always play according to the rules.
- support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from softball.
- condemn the use of violence in any form, whether it is by spectators, coaches, officials or players.
- respect the rights of every participant in softball regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background or religion.
- be aware of and follow the Spectator's Code of Conduct.



## RESPECT MY GAME

### STAKEHOLDER'S CODE OF CONDUCT

Softball Ontario believes in Fair Play. Fair Play is defined as much more than playing within the rules. It includes respect for others, always playing within the right spirit. Fair play is defined as a way of thinking, not just a way of behaving. Fair play is a positive concept. Fair play is moved from a secondary position it currently occupies to centre stage. Fair play must be given the highest priority by all those indirectly or directly participating in the game of softball. Integrity, fairness and respect, these are the principles of fair play.

Softball Ontario has the right and the responsibility to publish clear guidelines on what is considered to be ethical or unethical behaviour and to ensure that, at all levels of participation and involvement, consistent policies and practices related to fair play are applied.

Softball Ontario is undertaking the Respect My Game 2010 campaign to raise the awareness of fair play and to reduce abusive situations in the game of softball.

Softball Ontario is deeply committed to improving the sportsmanship and the behaviour of all participants. It is extremely important that all stake holders be part of this commitment, and do their part to enhance a positive experience in softball.

#### I WILL

- act as a responsible person
- acknowledge and appreciate efforts made by all participants
- be respectful of athletes, coaches, officials and spectators
- respect the rules
- encourage others to enjoy sport
- respect the sport of softball and the facility where it is played



## A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

### MISSION STATEMENT

"To educate stakeholders in softball, thereby creating awareness of abuses in the game and building mutual respect amongst participants, while introducing no tolerance policies to reduce abusive situations at all levels in all components of the game, thus reversing the decline in leadership roles within the sport."

### RESPECT MY GAME-VALUES

#### Respect My Game Philosophy

We stand alongside all stakeholders of Softball as partners on the same side, working in concert with them to provide a positive Softball experience.

This philosophy encompasses a belief that, by working together with Athletes, Coaches, Officials and spectators, we can impact our sport's experience in a positive way.

#### THE RESPECT MY GAME PROGRAM BELIEVES:

- That competition should demonstrate high standards of ethics and sportsmanship, and promote the development of good character and other important life skills
- That the highest potential of Softball is achieved when all the participants are committed to the following core principles:
  - Trustworthiness involves Integrity and Honesty
  - Respect is what we show each other through sportsmanship
  - Responsibility is being accountable and prepared
  - Fairness is making sure everyone competes honourably
  - Caring is showing compassion for each person's role
  - Civility is considering others while playing
- That by setting high standards of excellence for our own performance on the athletic stage, our sport can model the same pillars of character that we ask others to model





## RESPECT MY GAME

### DEFINITIONS FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF ABUSE



Behaviour by any person towards another, which a person knows or should have reasonably known, is unwelcome. This behaviour includes comments, conduct or gestures which are insulting, intimidating, humiliating, hurtful, degrading, or offensive to an individual which creates an uncomfortable environment, or which might be expected to cause embarrassment, insecurity, discomfort, offence, or humiliation to another person including, but not limited to:

**Threats:**

Declaration of an intention or a determination to inflict harm on another.



**Physical:**

Abuse involving contact intended to cause feelings of intimidation, pain, injury, or other physical suffering or harm.

**Intimidation:**

A deterrent usually a communication that makes you afraid to try or do something.

**Verbal:**

Unwelcome remarks, jokes, innuendoes, or taunting about a person's body, sexual orientation, age, marital status, ethnic or racial origin, religion, etc.

**Gestures:**

Leering or other suggestive/obscene gestures.

**Patronizing:**

Behaviour which undermines self-respect or working conditions.



## A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

6. Don't ever argue face-to-face with an umpire that leads to increased confrontation. Approach the umpire slowly, using your neutral voice and stand shoulder to shoulder when you are having your discussion. This is far less confrontational and allows the umpire an opportunity to walk away when they have finished their explanation.
7. Don't overstay your welcome. Know when the conversation is over and return to the bench.
8. Be polite. Look the umpire in the eye and take off your sunglasses when you are talking.
9. Know when to hold them, know when to fold them-Arguing every call is not going to get you anywhere. Umpires respect coaches who know the rules.
10. LISTEN. You have two ears and one mouth and should use them in that proportion.







## RESPECT MY GAME

### HOW TO BEST APPROACH AN UMPIRE

Umpires and coaches (athletes) have diametrically opposed jobs. An umpire's job is to keep the playing field level and ensure the best team wins. A coach's job is to help his/her team win whether he/she has the best team or not. With these realities it is inevitable that they will not always get along. Both parties should embrace these roles and try to make the best of a bad situation. The key for coaches is to make sure the lines of communication remain open with the umpire. Anything the coaches do to hamper or hinder this relationship will make their task more difficult.

The guiding principle of approaching an umpire must be to keep the lines of communication open.

#### Tips on Approaching Umpires

1. Be proactive-establish a rapport at the plate conference. Let the official know that you respect their role in the game
2. If you want to question a call use a neutral voice, nobody likes to be yelled at!
3. Make sure you ask, and receive time or a break in play before stepping on the field.
4. Take a deep breath before you approach the official-often we get caught up in the heat of the game and appear more aggressive than we actually are.
5. Don't let fans or athletes know you are upset. Coaches are leaders and if they are upset it often leads to others following suit. If you are very upset, take out your line-up card when you talk to the official so people who are out of earshot think you are making a change and the umpire can save face.



## A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

### DEFINITIONS FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF ABUSE



#### Visual:

Displaying of sexually explicit, racist or other offensive or derogatory material, sexual, racial, ethnic or religious graffiti.

#### Practical jokes:

Which cause awkwardness or embarrassment, endangering a person's safety or negatively affecting performance.

#### Harassment:

False accusations of harassment motivated by malice or mischief, and meant to cause other harm, is considered harassment;

#### Sexual harassment:

Conduct, comments, gestures or contact of a sexual nature that is likely to cause offense or humiliation or that might, on reasonable grounds, be perceived as placing a condition of a sexual nature on employment or any opportunity for selection, training or advancement





## PROMOTING AND TEACHING COMPLIANCE

### Top Ten Rules to Cover with Coaches and Parents

These ten rules have been selected as rules about which there are many common misconceptions. These misconceptions then lead to many forms of abuse whether it be heckling from the fans who misunderstand (or don't agree with) the rule, verbal abuse from coaches and/or players, etc.

#### 1. Left hand turn from first.

A runner forfeits his/her exemption from liability to be put out if, after overrunning first base, he/she makes an attempt to run to second base.

The key to this rule is to continue to second base. There must be at least an attempt towards second base. It does not matter which direction the batter-runner turns after reaching first base if they are coming back to first base without attempting to advance to second base.



### 10. Double Base.

The Double Base is used at first base with the orange portion in foul territory and the white portion in fair territory. Referring to 4. above - a batted ball striking the white/fair portion is declared a fair ball, a batted ball striking the orange/foul portion is declared a foul ball - a batted ball striking the centre of the double base is declared a fair ball as it therefore hits a portion of the white/fair portion of the base.

The defensive player (typically the first baseman) must use only the white/fair portion of the base at all times.

The offensive player must use only the orange/foul portion of the base on his/her first attempt at first base when a play is being made on him/her. This includes when the batter-runner runs on a dropped third strike.

On a ball hit to the outfield with no play being made at first base, the offensive player may touch either portion of the base on his/her first attempt at first base.

Once an offensive player has touched the orange/foul portion of the base on his/her first attempt at first base, he/she must then use the white/fair portion of the base:

- when returning to the base after overrunning first base
- when taking his/her position prior to the next pitch
- when tagging up on a fly ball

Points of Emphasis:

- the defensive player - provided any portion of his/her foot is touching any portion of the white/fair portion of the base, he/she is considered to be in contact with the base
- the offensive player - when he/she is required to use the orange/foul portion, provided any portion of his/her foot is touching any portion of the orange/foul portion of the base, he/she is considered to be in contact with the base
- once the offensive player has made his/her first attempt at first base, for simplicity sake the orange/foul portion of the base no longer exists for him/her





## RESPECT MY GAME

### 9. Difference between Interference/Obstruction

Interference:

- Typically an act by an offensive player.
- Also possible to have umpire interference and spectator interference.
- Results in "Dead Ball" being called (exception - umpire interference).
- Results in an out if by an offensive player.
- Common misconception - catcher's interference is actually catcher's obstruction.

Obstruction:

- Is an act by a defensive player.
- Results in a delayed dead ball.
- Award is determined at the end of the play (exception - if the obstructed runner is called out).
- An obstruction call does not entitle the obstructed runner to keep attempting to advance until played upon.

These two rules require:

- an immediate call when either interference or obstruction occurs - do not hesitate, these are not the type of calls to be made after the fact.
- A decisive call

Contact does not always mean interference or obstruction occurred. There is such a thing as incidental contact - 2 players both unsure of where to go and contact is made. Rule 8.10(c) states that *the runner is not out when more than one fielder attempts to field a batted ball and the runner comes in contact with the one who, in the umpire's judgment, was not entitled to field the ball.*

TIP - when contact occurs and in the umpire's judgment that neither interference nor obstruction occurred, make a "SAFE" signal with no verbal call - shows that you saw it and you made your decision that no call was necessary.

## A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

### 2. Check swing.

If it is the plate umpire's judgement that the batter made an attempt to swing at the ball (but not a full swing), the plate umpire shall call the pitched ball a strike. This call is NOT to be appealed to the base umpire - use the guiding principle that the plate umpire does not call it a strike unless he/she saw the attempted swing - therefore no need for an appeal of what the plate umpire saw.

However, if the batter attempted to swing at the ball but the plate umpire did not see the attempt (perhaps blocked out by the catcher) then a ball shall be called. With this call, the plate umpire does have the opportunity to check with his/her base umpire(s) with or without a request from the defensive team. The plate umpire may make the request on their own or may choose to make the request when requested to do so by the defensive team. The key to the base umpire is that they shall only answer a check swing request made by the plate umpire - they do not respond to a request made directly to them by a defensive player.

Should the base umpire see the attempt that the plate umpire did not see, they shall respond by calling "yes" and the call shall be changed from ball to strike.





## RESPECT MY GAME

### 3. Award of bases on overthrow.

The common misconception with this rule is the old rule of "one plus one," a rule that was changed long ago. The correct ruling is that when a thrown ball goes out of play (beyond the established boundary lines of the playing field)

- all runners, including the batter-runner shall be awarded two bases from the last base legally touched based on their position at the time that the thrown ball left the fielder's hand
- if there are two runners between the same bases, the award is based on the position of the lead runner

Keys to remember with this rule:

- the award is based on their position at the time the throw was made, not at the time that the ball went out of play - watch for that very long overthrow from the outfield
- the award is two bases from the last base legally touched
  - if a runner is returning to first base to tag up on a fly ball, they will still be awarded two bases which is second base and third base as the last base that they had legally touched was first base

The proper mechanics for this situation are to call "Dead Ball" as soon as the ball goes out of play then award the bases accordingly. Your award should be swift and decisive.

With multiple runners or a long overthrow, if you have any doubt consult with your fellow Umpire(s) immediately before the award and get it right the first time.



## A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

### 8. Lead-off (Pitcher's Circle) - FP only.

The Pitcher's Circle is the area within an 8' radius of the pitcher's plate - the lines are considered within the circle.

The common misconception is that if the ball is thrown back to the pitcher and he/she has it in his/her position in the pitcher's circle before the batter-runner reaches first base that the batter-runner must stop at first base.

Even though the ball may be in the pitcher's possession in the pitcher's circle, the batter-runner may:

- continue past first base.
- is entitled to run toward second base, as long as he/she does not stop at first base.
- once the runner makes a stop, he/she must immediately proceed to the next base or return to his/her base UNLESS the pitcher makes a play (including a fake throw) on the runner or another runner.

If the runner stops and simply stands there off the base while the pitcher has possession of the ball in the pitcher's circle and no play is made - "DEAD BALL - RUNNER IS OUT - LEAD-OFF"

If the runner stops and then makes a move in more than one direction immediately after the stop while the pitcher has possession of the ball in the pitcher's circle and no play is made "DEAD BALL - RUNNER IS OUT - LEAD-OFF"

Points of Emphasis:

- The pitcher cannot force the first stop by a runner merely by having possession of the ball in the pitcher's circle. Put another way - the runner is allowed one stop - as soon as he/she stops he/she must make a decision immediately to either advance or return.
- A play on the runner (including a fake throw) nullifies any penalty - put another way, every fake throw allows the runner one more stop.







## RESPECT MY GAME

### 7. Infield Fly.

Requirements for an Infield Fly:

- Runners on first and second base OR first, second and third base.
- Less than 2 out.
- Not a bunt.
- Not a line drive.
- Can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort this includes the, pitcher, catcher or any outfielder positioned in the infield.

What should the umpire do?

In an infield fly situation, prior to the first pitch of the at bat, the umpires should give the infield fly signal to each other. When it becomes apparent that a batted ball is an infield fly (typically when the ball reaches its' highest point and is just on its' way down) the plate umpire shall declare "INFIELD FLY, IF FAIR - THE BATTER IS OUT"

Once an Infield Fly is declared:

- if the hit becomes a foul ball, no penalty, treat like any other foul ball
- if the hit remains a fair ball
- the batter is out regardless of whether the ball is caught or not
- the ball remains alive
- the runners may advance at their own risk
- if the fly ball is caught, they must tag up
- if the fly ball is not caught, they can choose to advance but as the batter has already been declared out there is no force play



## A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

### 4. Batted ball hitting home plate, first, second or third base.

Home Plate

- A batted ball remains alive and in play when it strikes home plate: This is a common misconception - many, many years ago when a batted ball struck home plate it was declared a dead ball.
- In the event that a batted ball comes to rest on home plate, it shall be ruled a fair ball and the plate umpire shall signal accordingly.
- Remember, the fair/foul lines come to the back point of home plate so the plate is completely in fair territory.

First or Third Base

- When properly installed, first and third base are positioned on the diamond completely in fair territory. A smart Umpire looks around between pitches to ensure this is always true.
- Once a batted ball strikes first or third base without having been first touched by a player, the batted ball shall be ruled a fair ball regardless of where the ball ends up.
- Once the ball touches first of third base it does not have to pass the base, touching the base is all that is required to make it a fair ball.
- The plate umpire should signal fair ball immediately once the batted ball strikes the base

Second Base

- Once a batted ball strikes second base without having been first touched by a player, the batted ball shall be ruled a fair ball.





## RESPECT MY GAME

### 5. Batter stepping on home plate or mat or directly in front of home plate or mat.

Stepping on Home Plate or Mat

- the batter is out if any part of their foot is touching home plate or touching the mat when the bat contacts the ball
- the ball is dead and runners may not advance on the play.

Stepping directly in front of Home Plate or Mat

- The batter is out if their foot is completely outside the lines of the batter's box and touching the ground when the bat contacts the ball - therefore if the batter's foot is completely in front of home plate their foot is obviously completely outside the lines of the batter's box.
- The batter is out if their foot is completely in front or behind the mat touching the ground when the bat contacts the ball.
- The ball is dead and runners may not advance on the play.

Points of Emphasis:

- There is no penalty unless the batter makes contact with the ball.
- the position of the foot must be judged at the time the bat makes contact with the ball - if the foot is in the air and then comes down on the ground after the ball is hit, there is no penalty.
- With the exception of the foot touching home plate or touching the mat, the foot must be completely outside the lines of the batter's box - touching any part of the lines is acceptable as the lines are part of the box
- The same penalty applies whether the batted ball is fair or foul - "Dead Ball" is called as soon as the batter makes contact with the ball.

10

Give Respect



## A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

### 6. Fair ball bouncing out of play or off a defensive player.

When a fair ball bounces out of play, including if it deflects off a defensive player, the umpire shall declare "Dead Ball" as soon as the ball goes out of play.

- All runners shall be awarded two bases.
- The award is based on their position at the time of the pitch - not at the time that the ball went out of play.
- The award is the same regardless of where the ball actually goes out of play.
- Be prepared that this rule could actually end up bringing runners backwards.
- A long rolling ground ball goes out of play and the batter is already past second base - the batter goes back to second base.
- Same play, runner starting at first base is already past third base and on their way to score when the batted ball goes out of play, the runner is returned to third base.



To Get Respect

11

