

# **SOUHEGAN VALLEY STORM**



## **RECREATION SOFTBALL PROGRAM**

# **RULES AND BYLAWS**

Version 1:  
January 2009

I. PREFACE:

- A. The following are rules and bylaws for the recreation softball program for the Souhegan Valley (SV) Softball.
- B. Souhegan Valley Softball is comprised of the following towns as chartered and approved by Babe Ruth Softball: Amherst, Bedford, Brookline, Hollis, Milford, and Wilton (including Mt. Vernon and Lyndeborough).
- C. Each town shall have a softball director assigned to coordinate the teams and players from their town. The town softball directors and Souhegan Valley President shall comprise the Souhegan Valley Softball Board.
- D. Interpretation of the rules and bylaws are the responsibility of the Division Coordinator and SV Softball President with the best interests of the league in mind.
- E. Souhegan Valley Softball is chartered through the Milford Community Athletic Association (MCAA).
- F. All players, coaches, and parents are subject to these rules and bylaws as well as the rules of Babe Ruth Softball.

II. HIERARCHY AND RESPONSIBILITY:

- A. SV Softball President: Oversees all aspects of the league and sets direction for Division Coordinators. In a dispute over a decision made by the Division Coordinator in which a party does not agree, the President shall make the final determination. The president is responsible for coordination of regular league meetings, season preparation, schedule completion, and completion of league paperwork. In addition, the President must also provide periodic updates to the MCAA Board and membership prior to and during softball seasons at the MCAA monthly meeting.
- B. Assistant Softball Director: Will assist the President in completing their duties. Also will maintain minutes from league meetings, website updates, and league schedule updates.
- C. Town Softball Director: The governing organization for each member town shall assign a softball director. This person will be the representative for that town to Souhegan Valley softball. They will coordinate their town's softball program, secure field space, coordination of umpire scheduling, and be the primary point of contact for coaches in their town.

- D. Division Coordinator: A Coordinator will be established for each Division (Junior, Minor, Major, and Instructional). The Division Coordinator shall make the first determination on any situation requiring interpretation of the rules and bylaws within a Division. They will be the primary point of contact to mediate disputes that may arise during the season.
- E. Head Coaches: A Head Coach will be established for each team. They shall be responsible for the coordination of team activities such as regular practices and game preparation. They will be the point person for which every issue is brought up regarding their team. These positions will be assigned by the Softball Director in each town.
- F. Assistant Coaches: One or more assistant coach(es) will be established for each team. These coaches are meant to assist the Head Coach and fill in for the Head Coach in their absence. Assistant Coaches will not have the herein noted authority given to head coach as outlined in the bylaws. These positions will be assigned by the Softball Director in each town.

III. PURPOSE AND PHILOSOPHY

- A. The purpose and philosophy of Souhegan Valley Softball is to provide Souhegan Valley youth with athletic instruction to promote sound bodies, keen minds, positive competitive attitudes, and the spirit of teamwork.
- B. It is the philosophy of this organization to:
- Accept the youth of the area served, without exception to race, religion, nationality, gender or financial status
  - Guarantee a minimum playing time to all enrolled youth in any activity in every scheduled game (except as noted in rules pertaining to specially selected teams)
  - Teach teamwork, skills, recreation, sportsmanship, and the ability to attain individual goals, with competition as the means, not the purpose
  - Provide the best possible level of instruction and organization to the end that the purpose of Souhegan Valley Softball is best served
- C. All recreation season games are governed by a must play rule, where each player (all things considered) should expect to play a minimum of 50% of each game. Additionally, players should have the opportunity to play in the infield each game. Details of the must play rule for each division are specified in the Local League Rules. Absenteeism, avoiding practices, or behavioral issues would be conditions whereby a coach

may determine that a player may be penalized. Just as the coach has an obligation to the players, so does the player have an obligation to the coach and team.

- D. Post season tournament teams are selected from the leagues within Souhegan Valley Softball. Selection is based upon the qualifications of relative skill, sportsmanship, availability, commitment, and age. The must play rule for these teams varies from the recreation season and is detailed in the Tournament Team section.
- E. The goal of the Souhegan Valley Softball program is to provide a positive experience for the children that helps them develop their softball skills and understanding of the game
- F. Coaches are encouraged to take the philosophy of 'Athletes First, Winning Second.' Coaches should work together to promote growth for all players in the program as opposed to focusing their coaching on finding ways to beat the other teams.

#### IV. DIVISIONS:

- A. Divisions shall be established according to age, experience, and peer group abilities. The intent of establishing these age divisions is to promote fair play and increase competition.
- B. The Divisions breakdowns are as follows:

Instructional (10U) - **Beginner** This league introduces players to softball with direct involvement from coaches and parents. Coaches pitch to players. This level gives players a chance to excel to the next level and not feel overwhelmed. Players must be 10 years old or younger as of December 31 of the year prior to season play (e.g. for the 2008 season, a player can not turn 11 before 12/31/08)

Minor (12U) - **Novice to Intermediate** Players in the Minor league begin to play competitively, have umpires, and play by Babe Ruth rules with some home rules. These teams travel to compete against surrounding Souhegan Valley teams. Players must be 12 years old or younger as of December 31 of the year prior to season play (e.g. for the 2008 season, a player can not turn 11 before 12/31/08)

Major (12U) - **Intermediate to Advanced** Players in the Major league have ample experience hitting a fast pitch, better understanding of fielding and play making. These teams travel to compete against surrounding Souhegan Valley teams (Hollis, Milford, Brookline, and

Wilton). Players must be 12 years old or younger as of December 31 of the year prior to season play (e.g. for the 2008 season, a player can not turn 11 before 12/31/08)

**14U - Advanced** These players want to continue to develop their experience to compete at the middle school levels. These players have a solid understanding of the fundamentals of softball: hitting, fielding, throwing, and rules. These teams travel to compete surrounding Souhegan Valley teams (Hollis, Milford, Brookline, and Wilton). Players must be 14 years old or younger as of December 31 of the year prior to season play (e.g. for the 2008 season, a player can not turn 11 before 12/31/08)

**Juniors (16U) - Advanced to Expert** These players want to continue and hone their experience to compete at the middle and high school levels. These players have a solid understanding of the fundamentals of softball: hitting, fielding, throwing, and rules. These teams travel to compete surrounding Souhegan Valley teams (Hollis, Milford, Brookline, and Wilton). Players must be 16 years old or younger as of December 31 of the year prior to season play (e.g. for the 2008 season, a player can not turn 11 before 12/31/08)

- C. Players and team assignment is responsibility of each town director for the teams in their town. Care should be taken to ensure competitive balance among teams. This should be accomplished by through player evaluations and age. Teams should be balanced so that they do not have all older players for the division.

Team selection should be based on a drafting procedure that results in the individual teams within the league having either age or school grade balance, whichever criteria is used for league eligibility. Balance is defined as each team having the same ratio of players per category (e.g. 12 yr olds, 8th graders, etc.).

General guidelines for each division are as follows:

Instructional – 6-9 years old; 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

Minors – 9 – 12 years old; 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade

Majors – 10 – 12 years old; 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> grade

14U – 13 – 14 years old; 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade

Juniors - 15 – 16 years old; 9<sup>th</sup>– 10<sup>th</sup> grade

- D. The lower age must be reached and the upper age may not be exceeded prior to December 31 of the previous year according to Babe Ruth Softball age determination guidelines.

- E. A player with a disability or developmental problem may be allowed to play in the next youngest Division, if and only if all of the following conditions are met:
1. The parent of the player submits a request in writing to the Division Coordinator.
  2. Both of the Division Coordinators (i.e. from the division the player is intended to be in based on age and the division the player is entering) agree with the parent's request.
  3. The SV Softball President agrees with all recommendations.
- F. If a player is moved up or down a division and is later deemed that it is not in the best interest of the player, the player will be moved back into their age appropriate division.
1. Softball Director will decide team placement.
- G. If the number of participants does not allow for an adequate number of teams in each Division, towns may combine players to complete team placement.

V. ELIGIBILITY:

A. Rosters:

1. Players who have not submitted registration paperwork, paid their registration fee, or are not in good standing will not be placed on rosters. They will not be allowed to participate in practices or games with the team until these requirements have been met.
2. If a player participates in a game and is not on the active roster, as determined by the Division Coordinator, the ineligible player's team will forfeit every game in which that player participates.

B. Playoffs:

1. To be eligible to participate in the playoff, all players must have participated in at least 50% of the regular season games and be on the active roster.
2. If a player participates in a playoff game and has not met the above-noted criteria, the ineligible player's team will forfeit that game.
3. It is the Head Coach's responsibility to maintain records of games played and ensure that his/her players are eligible to participate in playoff games.

## VI. CODE OF CONDUCT

- A. A code of conduct will be required for each player and signed by the player, parent, and coach. This code details expectations for player, coach, and parent behavior during the softball season.
- B. This process has been established to ensure players are able to participate in an environment that supports their ability to develop as softball players and have an enjoyable experience.
- C. It is expected that every player will have a completed form that has been signed by the player, parent/guardian, and coach. Each coach will maintain the signed forms for their respective team.
- D. If anyone witnesses a violation of the code of conduct it should be reported to that team's head coach or the Softball President and Division Coordinator. The Softball President and Division Coordinator will be responsible for determining corrective actions that should be taken up to, and including, removal of a person from the league.
- E. Any disagreements with decisions may be escalated to the Souhegan Valley Board for a final decision.
- F. The Code of Conduct will be maintained on the Souhegan Valley Website

## VII. LOCAL LEAGUE RULES

These league rules will apply to Souhegan Valley Softball teams in addition to the Babe Ruth. These are the Souhegan Valley local league rules. Unless otherwise stated in these local rules, the games will be played according to the latest edition of **The Softball Division of Babe Ruth League, Inc. Rules and Regulations**. Coaches should meet with the umpire(s) before the game begins and agree on any rules for clarification, field conditions, and possible hazards. Local rules will remain in affect for the regular season and for playoffs.

- A. Playing Time:
  - 1. All teams will bat through their order.
  - 2. Each Head Coach shall make every attempt to play each player throughout the game during the season.. Additionally, each Head Coach shall make every attempt to play each player at a variety of positions throughout the season to encourage player development and understanding of the game.
    - a. Instructional / Rookies - Players can not play any position more than 2 innings in a game, including pitching.



- G. Only designated coaches are allowed in the dugouts or bench area (1 head coach and up to 3 assistant coaches).
- H. Rain/Reschedule:
1. During regular season, home team coach can officially call the game after contacting opposing coach at least 90 minutes before game time. If opposing coach is unreachable, game must be called at the field.
  2. Home team coach must contact umpire when applicable.
  3. If bad weather prohibits game play, coaches must agree to postpone. If umpire is available, game is called by the umpire.
  4. Bad weather is when:
    - a. Any sound of thunder or flashes of lightning.
    - b. When there is standing water on the field from rain.
  5. Postponed games will be rescheduled by the home team coach. It is up to the coach and their town commissioner to coordinate field availability.
- I. Suspended Games:
1. Suspension Rule 4.12 shall **NOT** apply when the game has completed enough innings to be declared official (3 ½ to 4 innings) and where one team is in the lead.
- J. Safety Equipment: All players are required to wear appropriate softball shoes (cleats or tennis shoes). When hitting, in on deck circle or on the base path players must wear approved helmets with faceguards. Girls playing Majors or Juniors and wearing shorts are also required to wear sliding pads or sliding shorts. Athletic support may also be worn but are not required. Pitchers in Juniors and Majors are required to wear a mouthguard. Pitchers in Minors and 3<sup>rd</sup> base in Minors, Majors, and Juniors will be required to wear mouthguards. Mouthguards are optional, but recommended for pitchers in Instructional.
- If a player is not wearing appropriate safety equipment, they will be issued a warning for that game. Players will receive only one warning. If they are not wearing proper safety equipment in any subsequent games they will be suspended for that game. All warnings and suspensions must be reported to the Souhegan Valley Softball President.
- K. Attire – because softball is a physical, athletic activity proper attire must be worn. Players dress appropriately for practices and games and also should **not** wear, pajama pants, strap tank tops, or half shirts.

- L. A player is ejected from a game at the discretion of the umpire. If a player is ejected from a game, they will also not be allowed to play in the next game. If a player receives two ejections in one season, that player will not be allowed to play for the remainder of the season.
- M. Coach warnings: If a coach is ejected from a game, they will not be allowed to coach in the next game. If a coach receives two ejections in one season, that coach will not be allowed to participate for the remainder of the season.
- N. Scoring and Standings: League standings will be determined based on won/loss record.

1. If there is a tie at the end of the regular season, the tie breaker will be determined as follows:  
Winning percentage will be used to determine standings. If a tie still exists, then  
If an even number of games have been played:
- 1). Head-to-head. If a tie still exists, then
  - 2). Runs Scored. If a tie still exists, then a coin flip
2. Scores for teams will be maintained in the MCAA SportsManager program.

- O. Extra Innings for a tie game will be allowed provided the game is still within the time limits. If the time limit has been reached, then the game will be declared a tie.
- P. Assignment of umpires is the responsibility of the home team. More experienced umpires should be assigned to the higher level games.
- Q. All coaches will be required to achieve and maintain coaching certification from Babe Ruth Softball. If a coach is already certified by Cal Ripken baseball, that certification may be used to satisfy this requirement. Certification is effective for the coaches lifetime.
- R. There are no local rules that require sliding. Below is a summary of how sliding applies in the Babe Ruth rulebook.

- Babe Ruth does not have any rule that states that a runner must slide.
- Runners should not be called out simply for not sliding.
- Runners are required to avoid contact with the fielder in process of making a play. If there is no contact or intentional acts to distract the fielder, then there is no penalty.

- If the runner interferes with a fielder, then interference is the call. Rule 7.09 (i) regarding interference is the primary rule in place for this situation.
- If the fielder does not have the ball, or is not in the process of fielding a ball, then the runner has the right of way to the base or base path. Rule 7.06 discusses obstruction. In other words catchers and fielders should not be standing on top of a bag or home plate unless they have the ball. They can not block the bag/plate.

S. Additional local rules for each division are detailed below:



Below is a summary of these rules across divisions and additional rules regarding game play. This does not include all information regarding the rules. For full rules please see the Babe Ruth Softball rulebook. If something is not listed in these local rules, follow the Babe Ruth Rulebook. Local rules remain in effect for the playoffs

|                              | <b>U10</b>   | <b>U12 – Minor</b>  | <b>U12 – Major &amp; U14</b>  | <b>U16</b>  |
|------------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| Ball Size                    | 11"  | 11"   | 12"   | 12"   |
| # players required on field  | 7  | 7   | 7   | 7   |
| Substitution                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free substitution</li> <li>• No changes to batting order</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free substitution</li> <li>• No changes to batting order</li> <li>• Rules regarding pitcher removal apply</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free substitution</li> <li>• No changes to batting order</li> <li>• Rules regarding pitcher removal apply</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free substitution</li> <li>• No changes to batting order</li> <li>• Rules regarding pitcher removal apply</li> </ul> |
| Minimum play time per player | ½ the game<br>2 innings of infield   | ½ the game<br>2 innings of infield  | ½ the game<br>1 inning of infield   | ½ the game<br>Encourage infield   |
| Pitching Distance            | 30'  | 35'   | 40'   | 40'   |
| Game Time                    | 6 innings  | 6 innings   | 6 innings   | 7 innings   |
| Min Game Time                | 4 innings (3 ½ if home team is ahead)  | 4 innings (3 ½ if home team is ahead)   | 4 innings (3 ½ if home team is ahead)   | 4 innings (3 ½ if home team is ahead)   |
| Leading                      | Once ball crosses plate (per BR Rules)   |   | Once pitcher releases ball (per BR Rules)   |   |

Below is a summary of these rules across divisions and additional rules regarding game play. This does not include all information regarding the rules. For full rules please see the Babe Ruth Softball rulebook. If something is not listed in these local rules, follow the Babe Ruth Rulebook. Local rules remain in effect for the playoffs

|                 | <b>U10</b>   | <b>U12 – Minor</b>  | <b>U12 – Major &amp; U14</b>                   | <b>U16</b>                                     |
|-----------------|--|---|--|--|
| Stealing        | No   | Yes – can not steal home<br>Also can not proceed to next base on overthrow of a steal | Yes – including steal of home                  |  |
| Scoring         | No   | Yes   | Yes  | Yes  |
| Batting         | All players bat through order  | All players bat through order   | All players bat through order                  | All players bat through order                  |
| Bunting Allowed | Yes  | Yes   | Yes  | Yes  |
| Pitching        | Kid pitch for 4 pitches – if batter has not hit or struck at, hitting team coach will pitch until one of those outcomes is reached | Kid pitch -<br>4 balls = walk; 3 strikes = out  | Kid pitch –<br>4 balls = walk; 3 strikes = out | Kid pitch –<br>4 balls = walk; 3 strikes = out |
| HBP Limits      | N/A  | 3 HBP; removed for min 2 inning   | 3 HBP; removed for min 2 inning                | 3 HBP; removed for min 2 inning                |
| Walks allowed   | No   | Yes   | Yes  | Yes  |
| Run Rules       | 4 runs per half inning   | 5 runs per half inning  | 7 runs per half inning                         | 7 runs per half inning                         |

Below is a summary of these rules across divisions and additional rules regarding game play. This does not include all information regarding the rules. For full rules please see the Babe Ruth Softball rulebook. If something is not listed in these local rules, follow the Babe Ruth Rulebook. Local rules remain in effect for the playoffs

|                              | <b>U10</b>   | <b>U12 – Minor</b> | <b>U12 – Major &amp; U14</b> | <b>U16</b> |
|------------------------------|--|--------------------|------------------------------|------------|
| Req'd Game End Time          | 2 hours or 8:00 pm (inning in progress is allowed to complete); No new inning may begin within 15 minutes of required end time<br>Official start time will be agreed upon by umpires if present. If no umpire is present, start time will be agreed upon by coaches. |                    |                              |            |
| Umpires (Home team provides) | Parent Volunteer   | Umpire             | Umpire                       | Umpire     |
| Playoffs                     | No – may have postseason games, but not formal playoff   | Yes                | Yes                          | Yes        |

## VIII. REGULAR SEASON AND PLAYOFFS

- A. The SV Softball President or designated individual will establish a schedule of games for the regular season. Each team should be scheduled for a minimum of 11 games. This will help players reach the 10 game minimum to be eligible for All Star Tournament Team play.
- B. Coaches of the home team responsible for reporting the results of their games – 12U, 14U, 16U only.
- C. In the case of inclement weather, the home team should make a decision on the game at least 2 hours prior to the game. If no decision is made by that time, the teams should come to the field. Once the umpire arrives at the field, it is their sole discretion to postpone the game
- D. If a game is postponed before the umpire reaches the field, the umpire and umpire coordinator **MUST** be contacted by the home team coach
- E. In the event of rainouts, the home team will coordinate a date for make-up game – working within their town's procedures.
- F. Playoffs will be scheduled for the 12U, 14U, and 16U Divisions. If the schedule allows, double elimination playoff format is preferred. Playoffs will follow the regular season local league rules.
- G. Souhegan Valley Softball will budget to pay for all playoff game umpires. Attempts will be made to ensure each town receives an equal number of games for the playoffs.
- H. Trophies - For the 12U, 14U, and 16U Divisions, trophies will be awarded to the Winner and Runner-Up team in each set of playoffs. All other trophies, including awards at the 10U and younger levels are the responsibility of each town.
- I. Umpires should be assigned so that they are always at least one age group above the game they will be umpiring. Coaches will be given the opportunity to anonymously submit feedback on the umpire. A form will be provided to coaches to capture this feedback.

## IX. TOURNAMENT TEAMS

The following regulations detail organizational and operational information regarding All Star tournament teams.

- A. All Star teams are a collection of the most proficient players from within the appropriate league.

1. Participation on an All Star team is an honor and as such, the league shall select the best players
2. The nature of the team is understood to be competitive
3. Every member of any all star team shall be selected through a process of tryouts, and the tryout procedure shall be determined by the appropriate league director(s) and coaches. All league coaches, the league director, and the All Star coaching staff will be eligible to participate in tryout grading and team selection.

B. Every player is guaranteed minimum playing time. No player should go more than 1 game without playing. When a player plays in a game, the should play at least:

- 1 inning in the field, and
- 1 at bat *or* 1 time as a baserunner

C. Although the objective of the All Star team is to compete at the highest level, there remains the understanding that the overall philosophy of Souhegan Valley Softball will be observed and that the experience of the players should be considered.

D. Funding

Guidelines have been established to detail procedures for budget and spending for All Star teams

1. Prior to the start of the All Star season the coach, or designated individual, shall create a budget for the team. The budget should include sources of revenue and where monies will be spent.
2. Revenues and expenses for All Star teams must be received and paid by the MCAA Treasurer. This includes monies raised through fundraising.
3. Any money remaining at the completion of the season should be distributed to parents of the players to offset fees paid.

## X. COACHING PHILOSOPHY

From Babe Ruth Softball Coaching Certification:

As a softball coach, you'll be called on to do the following:

1. *Provide a safe physical environment.* Playing softball holds an inherent risk, but as a coach you're responsible for regularly inspecting the practice and competition fields as well as for making sure that your team has and understands how and when to use the proper protective equipment.

2. *Be an effective and positive communicator.* You'll communicate not only with your players but also with parents,umpires, and administrators. Communicate in a way that is positive and that demonstrates you have the best interests of the players at heart.
3. *Teach the skills, strategies, and rules of softball.* We introduce you to the Ripken method of teaching and practicing the strategies and skills young athletes need to know—an approach that kids thoroughly enjoy. We ask you to help all players become the best they can. As a coach you also must teach your players the rules of softball.
4. *Direct players in competition.* This includes determining starting lineups and a substitution plan, relating appropriately to umpires and to opposing coaches and players, and making tactical decisions during games (see chapter 10). Remember that the focus is not on winning at all costs but on teaching your kids to compete well, do their best, and strive to win within the rules.
5. *Be a role model.* Just as kids imitate their parents and teachers, they take their cues from their coaches when it comes to how they act on the softball diamond. A coach's attitude and behavior set the tone for the atmosphere surrounding a team. If a coach gets visibly frustrated with his or her players, the higher-skilled players on the team are more likely to get frustrated with the lower-skilled players. The lower-skilled players may get easily frustrated with themselves and not enjoy the sport. Similarly, a coach who yells at umpires will foster that type of behavior within his or her team as well as among the team's supporters.

### **Athletes First, Winning Second**

This motto recognizes that striving to win is an accepted component of organized sports. But it emphatically states that efforts in striving to win should never be made at the expense of the athletes' well-being, development, and enjoyment.

Take the following actions to better define your outlook:

1. Determine your priorities for the season.
2. Prepare for situations that challenge your priorities.
3. Set goals for yourself and your players that are consistent with those priorities and are appropriate for the age group you coach.
4. Plan how you and your players can best attain those goals.
5. Review your goals frequently to be sure that you are staying on track.

## **XI. COACHES ROLE DESCRIPTION**

**Job Description:** As a coach in the Souhegan Valley Softball you will be considered a role model for young athletes. You should emphasize skill development, fair play, teamwork, cooperation, sportsmanship, responsibility, and fun. Coaches should provide each participant equal playing time every game and the chance to play different positions.

## **The Head Coach**

The Head Coach(es) responsibilities shall be:

- To complete any designated coursework if specified by your league.
- To attend league meetings.
- To participate in player evaluations and team drafts.
- To assist league directors when the need arises.
- To monitor their team's equipment, and return it at seasons end.
- Act as the contact person for players and parents.
- To plan and organize practices and games.
- Be on time for all practices or games, and stay within designated time periods if specified.
- To understand the rules of the game.
- To teach the skills that are targeted for your age group based on the Progression of Skills.
- To oversee the actions of their assistants.
- To provide first aid when injuries occur.
- To abide by all officials' decisions
- To provide a safe and positive environment for **all** players participating.
- To remember "Athletes First, Winning Second"

## **The Assistant Coach**

Each team should have at least ONE DESIGNATED assistant coach prior to the season however coaches may recruit others to help assist the team after the teams are chosen.

The Assistant Coaches responsibilities shall be:

- To act as an extension of the head coach.
- To maintain a positive attitude and a willingness to help and learn.