

April 2024

Dear Softball League Director:

Spring and the softball season have arrived! Some, (but not all), of this information was presented at the league directors meeting in March. Thank you to those in attendance. Scorebooks are still available for pick-up -- email softball@mnrpa.org to schedule a time.

EQUIPMENT:

Bats: All bats for the 2024 season used in league and tournament play must have the “new” USSSA logo on its tapered end. Licensed bat and ball manufacturers can be found at this link:

<http://www.ussa.com/slowpitch/slowpitch-licensed-softball-bat-ball-manufacturers>



THE OFFICIAL BAT shall be round in cross section, straight in length and measure not more than 34 inches long, including tape or other grip additions to the bat, shall have a knob at the end of its handle, and not more than 2¼” inches in diameter at its largest part. Its weight shall not exceed 31-ounces, including tape or grip addition to the bat. The bat shall have a grip of tape or some other material to facilitate holding the bat during the batter’s swing. The grip shall be not less than ten inches (10”) long, nor extend to touch the taper or barrel of the bat. All key graphics, including USSSA and BPF markings, must be permanent and cannot be applied as decals or by any other method that would allow the key graphics to be easily removed or added to the bat.

A. Material. The bat may be made of hard wood of one piece, or laminated from sections of hard wood bonded together with adhesive in such a way that the grain directions of all the pieces are essentially parallel to the length of the bat. The bat may also be made of aluminum or other metals, fiberglass, graphite or composite materials.



B. Construction. The bat may be made in pieces from different materials but must have a closed barrel end, a handle and a taper. The bat may be modular with interchangeable parts, subject to additional safety and tampering requirements as set forth in the standard USSSA Bat Licensing Agreement. The knob portion must be welded or mechanically attached to the bat. Only USSSA approved bats, USSSA approved weighted bats or USSSA approved bat weigh attachments, may be used by the on-deck batter while loosening up on the field.

C. Official Softball. Authorized bat manufacturers shall mark their products with the words “Official Softball.”

D. Other Criteria for Legal USSSA Bats. Bats will be legal for USSSA-sanctioned play only if the bat is manufactured by an approved USSSA bat manufacturer on the USSSA-approved bat manufacturer list (kept by USSSA and published and made available by means including, but not limited to, the USSSA website) and have the new USSSA mark (kept by USSSA and published and made available by means including, but not limited to, the USSSA website) on the taper of the bat. Wood bats on the approved USSSA bat manufacturer list shall be legal without regard to this section D.2.

E. Altered Bat Director Inspection and Suspension. A USSSA Director may at any time ask to inspect a bat that has been brought into the location of a USSSA-sanctioned event or any other USSSA facility. The owner and/or user may either: **1.** Withhold the bat from inspection and accept an immediate two (2) year (automatic life for second time offenders under EI and/or E) suspension from USSSA sanctioned activities with no right to appeal; or, **2.** Allow the Director to inspect the bat and reach a conclusion as to whether or not the bat might be altered.



Dudley: In all programs that utilize the 12" softball, the Dudley .40 COR Classic M Optic Yellow ball will be used in postseason tournaments. The Blue Stamped or Stitched ball is the USSSA ball. This ball is recommended for all leagues and tournaments. The .40 COR Classic M 12" ball is the men's ball and the Classic W 11" ball is the women's ball. These balls have an optic yellow cover. Due to a potential shortage of .40 COR softballs, if .40 are not available, league directors are encouraged to communicate directly with their teams any changes/adjustments.

Websites: The Minnesota Recreation and Park Association website is www.mnrpa.org The Minnesota USSSA website's direct link is www.mnusssa.com. The national website is www.ussa.com

TEAM SANCTION FEES FOR THE 2024 SEASON:

- Adult slow-pitch softball teams: \$25
- Youth slow-pitch softball teams: \$15

USSSA SOFTBALL TEAM REGISTRATION INFORMATION:

Team registration spreadsheets are due to the MRPA office by **Thursday, May 10** for processing and invoicing to be issued an eleven (11) digit team registration number. Teams are required to have a team registration number in order to participate in any USSSA-sanctioned event. Team registration spreadsheets can be found on the MRPA web site at www.mnrpa.org, and completed spreadsheets can be emailed to MRPA at softball@mnrpa.org.

USSSA requires electronic team registration

- USSSA has provided a Team Registration Worksheet.
- A cover worksheet is also included for league(s) and the league director contact information and to summarize team registration and payment information.

Getting started with Electronic Softball Team Registrations:

- Make sure your computer has at least Microsoft Excel 97.
- You can also request the worksheets by contacting MRPA staff at softball@mnrpa.org for the latest version.
- When ready to enter softball team registrations, open Microsoft Excel, then open the 2024 Softball Team Registration file
 - Cover Worksheet
 - If you receive a message from your computer saying "This workbook you are opening contains macros..." click on the "Enable Macros" options to open the workbook.
- Complete all areas of the Cover Worksheet. The Cover Worksheet asks you to describe the team type (ex. Men's, Women's, Mixed, etc.) you are registering. Enter only teams which fall under this type on the Team Worksheet.
- Complete the Team Worksheet for the perspective league. Enter data in all fields except the Team ID Number field.
- The Team Classification Guide worksheet provides full descriptions of the Team Classification Codes requested on the Team Registration Worksheet.

- **Saving your work:** When team data entry is complete, save the updated workbook under a new name using the “Save As” feature under the file menu. For example, call the workbook “Mens2024” or “Girls2024.” This will preserve the file as your blank template for future use.
- Print a copy of the Cover Worksheet to send with your payment to MRPA.
- Email the completed workbook to MRPA at softball@mnrpa.org by attaching the file to an email message. If emailing, write “Softball Team Registration” in the subject line of the email message.

UMPIRES:

Umpire Registration Fee: Is \$85 for 2024 season.

Umpires must be registered with National USSSA in order to officiate any sanctioned USSSA leagues and/or tournaments. Leagues not using USSSA assignors must provide a list of umpires to the MN-USSSA State Director that is being used in your community. This is to verify that each umpire working in your community is sanctioned and to verify that he/she attended an umpire clinic in 2024.

Use of Improper Language and Players outside the Dugout Area: These are two topics that will again be emphasized at all umpire clinics. It is a MUST that you, as a league director, go over this in your team manager and local umpire meetings.

TOURNAMENTS:

- **MRPA/MN-USSSA Sanctioned Weekend Tournaments**
 - on Website at www.mnusssa.com
- **MRPA/MN-USSSA State and National Tournaments**
 - on Website at mnusssa.com
- **USSSA World Tournaments:** Schedule on National USSSA website at www.usssa.org

RULES:

Pitching: The pitcher may pitch from the pitcher's rubber or from an area the width of the pitcher's rubber and up to six feet behind the pitcher's rubber. The pitcher must have one foot in contact with the pitching rubber in ALL divisions. The pivot foot MUST be in contact with the pitcher's plate when the pitched ball is released.

Baselines: 70' baselines will be used in all adult programs. This will give the fielders extra reaction time and put more defense into the game.

Minnesota Concussion Law: All youth leagues must be aware of and abide to the Minnesota concussion law.

TEAM CLASSIFICATIONS:

Teams not classified by National USSSA By-Laws and National USSSA Classification Committee will be classified by their respective State Director. The State Director will decide on an acceptable method to control team rosters and classifications of all programs in the state of Minnesota.

The main criteria for classifying teams are the overall strength of the team offensively and defensively regardless of whether the team has any home run hitters. The MNCC and State Director will review rosters and decide on acceptable team classifications of all programs.

The Minnesota Classification Committee (MNCC) along with the Minnesota State Director has the authority to reclassify any team at any time during the season.

Any team found in violation by exceeding the player classification limit of four (4) or more set forth by the MNCC will be reclassified to the higher classification by the state director and cannot appeal their classification.

Team Classifications for the current season were set based on team's finishes in the National and World Tournament, National By-Laws and the USSSA National Classification Committee. Minnesota USSSA Classification Committee factored in the above placement to the best of their knowledge based on a team's finish in the previous year's qualifiers, state, and national tournaments. Minnesota USSSA also took into consideration teams placing at USSSA-sanctioned community tournaments.

MRPA/MN-USSSA classification projections for the current season was a general observation from the Minnesota Classification Committee (MNCC), tournament directors (TD), and the state director based on the outcome from the previous season and potential returning teams with the same rostered players to determine this year's classification, however; this is based on judgment and subject to change based on roster review from the MNCC unless your team was affected by the reclassification from USSSA By-Laws and National Classification Committee.

- **Men's Program**

- Any team or roster with four (4) or more previous and/or current USSSA National Conference players cannot play below "C" classification (Path Back from USSSA National Conference Rule), in addition any players listed on the USSSA National Major Player or Major Watch List cannot play below the classification "B" (per National rule) unless the player in effect appeals his own classification and needs approval by the Minnesota Classification Committee and Minnesota USSSA State Director. If approved by the MN-USSSA State Director the team affected will be eligible for "C" worlds only.
- **Path Back from USSSA National Conference Rule**
 - Any team with one (1) player from the USSSA National Conference from the previous or current year will be classified as "C"
 - Any team with two (2) players from the USSSA National Conference from the previous or current year will be classified as "B"
 - Any team with three (3) players from the USSSA National Conference from the previous or current year will be classified as "A"
 - Any team with four (4) or more players from the USSSA National Conference from the previous or current year will be classified as "AA"

Team classifications are recognized by two (2) tiers:

- **COMPETITIVE:** Gold Division (Classifications: "AA", "A", "B", "C")
- **RECREATIONAL:** Silver Division ("D" and "E")

The **COMPETITIVE** division consists of any team that is interested in playing any post season tournaments. Teams in this division are highly competitive with have several years of experience playing competitive softball and who have a high level of tournament experience that prefer to compete locally at a high level but, not at the highest level unless playing in National USSSA tournaments. Teams are heavily skilled in the fundamentals of softball. Teams in this division have the capability to hit home runs, have speed on the bases and out in the field. Errors are limited on defense, usually few overthrows or missed plays. Base runners are very aggressive and persistent on the bases. Teams are fundamentally sound on both defense and offense with situation acumen.

- **"B" TEAMS**

- Any class "C", "D" and/or "E" team that has a roster of two (2) USSSA National Conference players must play in the "B" program.

- **"C" TEAMS**

- Any class "D" and/or "E" team that has a roster of one (1) USSSA National Conference player must play in the "C" program.

- **“D” TEAMS**

- Any “D” team with 1-2 rostered “C” players may remain “D” but are subject to change and can potentially be reclassified to a “C” team depending on the outcome of any USSSA sanctioned tournament(s) from the previous year and the overall strength of your roster from the previous or current year. Any class “D” team with at least one (1) rostered USSSA National Conference player will automatically take a higher classification and be sanctioned as a class “C” team in Minnesota. If you carry more than one (1) USSSA National Conference player your classification is subject to change to a higher classification based on the strength of your roster. It is highly discouraged to have USSSA National Conference players on a class “D” roster and will change your classification to a higher classification.

The **RECREATIONAL** division is the most popular and historically is classified by their league director. These teams do not have an interest in playing post season outside of the state tournament; however if these “D” teams do want to continue onto post season play (National and Worlds) they can be reclassified to “Competitive” and play up in the “D” program or down in the “E” program to qualify for the National and World tournaments. This ruling will be made by the State Director and MNCC.

- **“D” TEAMS**

- The “D” division is best described as an intermediate division and are semi-competitive who have some experience in recreational softball and are less committed. Teams have knowledge of softball and want to compete at a higher level and want to have fun. Several players on the team can hit home runs, have an aggressive defense but not all players have a high skill level. Base runners are aggressive. Teams played at least some recreational softball in the past and are looking to play for the enjoyment of the game.

- **“E” TEAMS**

- The “E” division is best described as a beginner division. Teams in this division may still be learning the game of softball, have little experience in softball, are less committed, or cannot compete in the competitive divisions, but play for the enjoyment of the game. Usually the best league for those teams that will be playing in their first season of organized softball. Teams have minimal knowledge of softball and want to compete at an equitable level in a recreational environment. Teams participating in the Men’s “E” program are provided an opportunity to participate in post season play.

The “D” and “E” divisions cannot have any past or current USSSA National Conference players on their roster. Any player(s) who is/are rostered on a competitive team cannot play down in the recreational program unless that player appeals/petitions his/her case by submitting the USSSA Appeal Form to the State Director. Players who participate and are on a team roster in the recreational program; can play up in the competitive program but once he/she makes that transition that player now becomes frozen in the competitive program and cannot play down or go back to the roster he/she was released from.

- **Women’s Program**

- The Women’s softball teams will be classified by strength of team roster. These classifications have been set at the National USSSA level for the current year. Any ASA women’s teams wanting to crossover or participate in any MRPA/MN-USSSA softball tournaments, rosters will need to be reviewed by the Minnesota Classification Committee and approved by the USSSA State Director.
- Minnesota USSSA Women’s Softball Program, teams may consist of:
 - Women’s Class “A” program: No women’s major players.
 - Women’s Class “B” program: No more than four (4) rostered “A” players from the previous year and/or current season.
 - Women’s Class “C” program: No more than four (4) rostered “B” players from the previous year and/or current season.

- Women's Class "D" program: No more than four (4) rostered "C" players from the previous year and/or current season.
- Women's Class "E" program: No more than four (4) rostered "D" players from the previous year and/or current season.

- **Mixed Program**

- The Mixed program shall feature five (5) divisions that will consist of the: Mixed Major, "B", "C", "D" and "E".
- Teams or individuals not reclassified by USSSA By-Laws will be classified by their respective State Director.
- Mixed Major teams shall be allowed any number of players whose name(s) appear on the Associations Major Player List (Men's or Women's).
- A Mixed class "B" team shall be allowed to carry any combination of four (4) players whose name(s) appear on the Associations Major Player List (Men's or Women's)
- Mixed class "C", "D" or "E" teams shall not be allowed to have any male and/or female players whose name appears on the Associations Major Player List and Major Player Watch List or competed during the season on a class "B" team or higher.
- Mixed class "C" teams shall only be allowed to have male players whose current and previous year's classification is "C" and female players whose current and previous years classification is "B", "C", "D", and "E". No player who has appeared on a roster from a higher classification can be added or approved after August 1st.
- Mixed class "D" teams shall only be allowed to have male players whose current and previous year's classification is "D" and female players whose current and previous year's classification is "C", "D" and "E". No player who has appeared on a roster from a higher classification can be added or approved after August 1st.
- Mixed class "E" teams shall only be allowed to have male players whose current and previous year's classification is class "E" and female players whose current and previous year's classification is "D" and "E". No player who has appeared on a roster from a higher classification can be **added**.

ROSTERS:

Managers/Coaches registering a team on National USSSA website bypassing the MN-USSSA Guidelines put your team at risk when entering a USSSA-sanctioned event. Tournament Directors are requiring for their tournaments that all rosters are online and must be approved by the state office. Not following this procedure puts your team in jeopardy to participate in that event.

Your team classification for the 2024 season is not confirmed nor approved until you have submitted your roster online (USSSA-ISTS) and the Minnesota Classification Committee along with the State Director has reviewed your roster to be assigned a USSSA classification letter of (Major, "AA", "A", "B", "C", "D", or "E") for the season. Once you have been assigned a classification letter your roster will be locked so no other moves can be made without approval from the state office. The sooner you have your roster online will allow for a smooth transition in classifying your team to allow you to play the program.

If you are a new team and have new players to USSSA; once rosters have been approved by the Minnesota Classification Committee and State Director, the manager can upload their roster into USSSA-ISTS by following the steps below. If it's a player's first time playing the USSSA program and isn't registered with USSSA-ISTS that player must submit his/her credentials to the state director to be added to that team's roster. Once you're in the system a manager will have the ability to add and/or delete you from a roster.

For the 2024 National USSSA slow-pitch softball season: no player can be added by a manager that currently does not exist in the USSSA National database (ISTS). To have this player and/or players added please contact your state director or tournament director. In order for the state/tournament director to add these players to your roster you must provide the following information:

1. What team(s) the player played on last year.
2. What classification the player ended the season with.
3. List team names that they played on (USSSA and/or ASA).

If these players are approved by the MNCC to play on your team you must also provide the following:

- Attach and/or scan players driver's license for verification
- Players Full Name (as it appears on his/her driver's license)
- Mailing Address
- City
- County
- State
- Zip Code
- Date of Birth
- Phone Number
- Email Address

Player(s) can only be on one (1) Men's and Women's roster. If that player wants to play on another team for that weekend, the manager must release that player to be added to his/her new team. NOTE: Once that player is released from that team, the player cannot go back to that team.

If a team wishes to appeal their classification for the current season, they must contact the State Director in writing by submitting the USSSA National Appeal Form. It is the manager's responsibility to be able to prove to the Minnesota Classification Committee and State Director that their team should be reclassified. A meeting will be arranged to hear the petition for reclassification.

It is a player's responsibility to make sure that his/her name is only on the roster he/she thinks it should be on. If a manager puts a name on a roster and that player isn't playing for that manager/team, the player needs to be checking on a daily/weekly/monthly basis to make sure which roster his/her name is on. Unless a team's roster is frozen, the manager DOES NOT have the right to keep a name on a roster unless the player has a financial obligation to the team. If a manager has a question regarding a player's classification, please email MRPA at tournaments@mnrpa.org - your request must be made in writing in the form of an email. If the appeal is denied, the team will be required to participate in at least three (3) MRPA/MN-USSSA tournaments prior to making additional appeals.

All teams that are automatically reclassified by Minnesota USSSA may appeal their reclassification in writing using the official "USSSA Classification Appeal Form," available at www.ussa.com under "Team Information." Appeals must be approved by both the Minnesota Classification Committee and the State Director.

Teams affected by the above rules must compete in three (3) MRPA/MN-USSSA-sanctioned tournaments in their new classification before an appeal will be considered. Appeals will only be considered between April 1st and July 1st. Teams reclassified by Minnesota USSSA must participate in their new classification for a period of one year. Teams that fail to participate the following year will remain at their new classification until such time as they participate and meet the requirements above.

If a team did NOT play State and Nationals in 2023, then team classification for 2024 will be at the highest level played. All rosters are locked the first Monday in May. All roster player adds/drops must go through the Minnesota Classification Committee and State Director. No exceptions.

All rosters are frozen August 1 and you can no longer appeal your classification status. No exceptions.

Rosters should include the team's name for this season, last year's team name if applicable, the manager's name, mailing address, county, state, and zip code. Other requirements include a home and/or mobile phone number, email address and your date of birth, plus a listing of rostered player's names with date of birth and email addresses.

If a name is not on the 2024 Minnesota USSSA Team/Player Classification List, the player is classified by the last team played on.

Managers must have their roster online seventy-two (72) hours prior to the first tournament. Rosters that are not online will be considered late and charged a \$50 late fee, will not receive points, default to the lower seed and not qualify for tournament awards, i.e.; (apparel, equipment, plaques, berths and/or payout). If a team doesn't have a minimum of ten (10) players on its online roster BEFORE it plays a tournament, that team will be considered late and charged a \$50 late fee, will not receive points, default to the lower seed and not qualify for tournament awards, i.e.; (apparel, equipment, plaques, berths and/or payout). It is the manager's responsibility to make sure his/her team's online roster has the minimum number of players at any time.

Tournament directors will be making "roster checks" at various times during a tournament. A player is required to have his/her ID in his/her possession at all times. You will NOT be allowed to leave the complex to obtain your ID. Failure to produce an ID will result in your team having played an illegal player. Your team will forfeit not only the game being played but will be forfeited out of the remainder of the tournament and the player not on the roster will be placed on probation and/or suspended.

Thank you for partnering with MRPA again this year for the upcoming softball season. Please contact MRPA staff at softball@mnrpa.org if additional information would be helpful. Thank you!