

# MENIFEE SENIOR SOFTBALL LEAGUE RULES

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**Rev 03-27-2025**

Menifee Senior Softball League (MSSL) follows rules found in the most current Official Senior Softball – USA Rulebook of the Independent Softball Association (ISA). This document describes structure, policy, philosophy and added or changed rules that are specific to the MSSL. All rules are subject to revision if the need is established.

## **MSSL MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the MSSL is to provide an organizational structure for Senior Men 55 years and older to participate in slow pitch softball. All eligible seniors, regardless of ability, are welcome to participate. Our goals, in order of priority, include player safety, equal opportunity, sportsmanship, fair competition and social interaction.

It is the commitment and practice of the Menifee Senior Softball League (MSSL) to keep all league members' personal information private from all parties outside of the MSSL. MSSL members' personal information is and will only be used for regular league business, with the primary purpose being to allow team managers to establish and maintain regular communications with their team members.

## **MSSL IS A RECREATIONAL LEAGUE SUPPORTING FAIR COMPETITION. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?**

Have fun, play ball, and have a fair chance to win. Just prior to each season, all players are drafted onto teams by managers or committee to establish competitive team balance. The number of teams and roster sizes are optimized to accommodate all players. New or returning players are immediately eligible to play as substitute players and are placed on teams when appropriate openings exist or by the next team draft. Scores are kept, umpires are used, standings are kept, and a league champion is determined at the end of each season. Team managers have the authority to create a batting lineup, assign players to field positions and make all strategic decisions such as using courtesy runners. Players are encouraged to discuss their desires and strategy with the manager, but the manager's decision is final.

## **MSSL SAFETY CONCERNS**

Participating in or even watching any sporting event involves certain risks. The MSSL recommends that all participants and spectators remain alert and aware of activities in games and warm up areas at all times. Danger of injury exists from thrown and batted balls, swinging and thrown bats and running bases. It is recommended that all players wear athletic supporters with hard plastic cup inserts. Pitchers, being the closest infielder to the batter and most susceptible to batted balls, are required to wear safety masks, and encouraged to wear shin guards and chest protection. The MSSL is a non-contact league that allows run-throughs without touching second or third bases and also provides separate bases for the runner and fielder at first base (orange side for runner) and home (scoring plate)/line.

## **ARTICLE I UMPIRE DISPUTES**

1. ONLY the manager or his designated replacement may challenge an umpire's decision

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regarding League rules.

2. An umpire's judgment call regarding balls or strikes, fair or foul, safe or out, legal pitch, interference, obstruction, infield fly, tagging up, missing a base and caught balls, CANNOT be protested. Managers may, however, request responsible umpire to seek assistance from the other umpire who MUST consult with the responsible umpire.
3. Protests must be settled at the time a potential rule misinterpretation occurs. A manager wanting to protest must notify the umpire before the next pitch or if at the end of the game before the umpire crew leaves the field. The umpire crew must call time and allow the protesting manager to provide proof of the proper decision, usually by referring to the written rule in the SSUSA rule book or the MSSL Rules and Procedures and in a reasonable time, usually 5 minutes or less. Other MSSL members may be consulted on the proper interpretation of the rule. The intent is to fairly and properly apply all rules as intended. The decision of the umpire crew, after hearing arguments, is final, the game continues normally and not "under protest."
4. The umpire's decision shall be final.

## ARTICLE II PLAYER SUBSTITUTIONS

1. Substitutions for players rated 1 thru 5 will require the same or lower rating than substituted player. Substitutions for players rated 6 thru end of roster can be rated 1 level higher. For example, a player rated 5 can replace a player rated 6. Players rated 10 thru 12 are interchangeable.
2. Managers must review their Rosters to determine if all their players meet the ranking criteris noted in Article II. If they determine they have a roster that doesn't meet this criteria they must pull the illegal players from the lineup or ask the opposing Manager if he will approve the illegal players. A Manager who doesn't follow this criteria and plays an illegal player will forfeit the game.
3. Non-roster players desiring to join the league can play in place of missing players once they are rated and league fees paid.
4. The opposing manager must be notified of pickup players.
5. Unassigned (non-roster) players can request a re-evaluation of their rating.
6. Players involved in trades can have different rankings. However, the team who has that player whose ranking was lowered must sub for him at the new ranking while teams who pick him up as a sub must use his drafted ranking.
7. Umpires should also make every effort to ensure Player Substitution rules are followed but it is ultimately the Manager's responsibility

## ARTICLE III PLAYERS LEAVING GAME

If, for any reason a player is unable to continue during the game, one of the following can occur:

1. If an eligible replacement can be found before the exiting player's next turn at bat, the eligible player may be inserted into the same batting position with no penalty of an automatic out.
2. If no replacement player is found, the next time the exited player's position comes to bat it will be an automatic out but only the first time. Subsequent at bats will not be an out.
3. If a replacement is found but after the first automatic out has occurred, the replacement player will be put at the bottom of the batting order. Replacement player is not required to play a

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certain amount of innings

The above does not apply to an ejected player. Each at bat will be counted as an out.

**ARTICLE IV INJURY / MEDICAL**

1. Any player who leaves a team due to injury or health can return to the same team any time before the next draft.
2. A manager must notify the Commissioner, in writing, when a player requests to return to his original team.

**ARTICLE V TEAM ROSTER**

1. All participating players on the team at the beginning of the game must be placed in the batting order at the start of the game. Teams shall have a maximum of 12 players.
2. All players in the batting order at the beginning of a game must play a minimum of three *complete* innings in the field. Players coming late but entering before the beginning of the fifth inning must play a minimum of two defensive innings.
3. Once the game starts, players not on the original batting order arriving late are added/placed at the bottom of the batting order
4. We now have in-season trades. Up to the 7<sup>th</sup> week (game 13), trades can be made. Both managers and both players must agree, and final approval will be by a majority of the Board of Directors.

**ARTICLE VI GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT**

Team managers shall have the authority to change rules of play for the purpose of increasing players' safety when environmental conditions warrant. For example, wind, rain, wet playing surfaces, etc. Managers are not allowed to change any of the rules of play for any other reason. Both managers and umpire must agree to any rule change, however, the umpire has the final decision.

**ARTICLE VII LEAGUE FEES**

1. The Board of Directors, in conjunction with the league Commissioner and Treasurer will establish an annual league fee per roster/pool player. In addition to the league fee, each player is required to purchase and wear an official MSSL uniform.
2. New players to the league will be assessed a full year league fee and be required to buy a uniform. The new player will be permitted to play for a team as soon as he is rated, and the league fee and uniform payment is paid in full. The new player will be permitted to play out of uniform if all fees have been paid but the uniforms have not been delivered. Once the uniform is delivered it must be worn in games or the player will not be eligible to play. (Also see "league Fees" in procedures.)
3. All league fees must be paid by players drafted in the fall draft by the end of their team's second game. Any player who has not paid in full after this time is defined an ineligible player. Any team using an ineligible player will forfeit all games in which the player participated.
4. In addition to league fees, if new player uniforms have been delivered, a uniform fee must also to be paid in full by their team's second league game.

**ARTICLE VIII 160 RULE FOR PLAYERS AGED 75 AND OVER**

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1. Each time he comes to bat, a batter aged 75 or older may choose, if he wants, to use the 160-rule by notifying the umpire prior to stepping into the batter's box and having play ball being indicated by the umpire. Once the at bat has started, no changes may be made.
2. If the batter requests the 160 rule the home plate umpire must not call play ball until all fielders are in the proper 160 rule positions. All fielders once in the proper 160 rule positions, must remain there until the batter hits a fair ball. When the batter hits a fair ball that touches the ground in the outfield, whether by clean base hit or error, the batter will be safe at first base. Any base runners, run at their own risk.
3. The proper 160 rule fielder positions are, as follows: outfielders must be no closer than the 160-foot outfield line, and infielders, including the infield rover, must be on the infield dirt or inside the line marking the outer edge of the infield.
4. If the 160-rule position is violated by a defensive player who is involved in a play on a fair batted ball, the batter will be safe at first base and all runners will advance one base. Violations to this rule are only applied when the batter hits a fair ball, and when the defensive player making the play was in violation of the rule.

**ARTICLE IX MANAGERS DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Should the Board of Directors approve a draft by managers, the managers shall notify all selected team players.
2. Provide a list to the Chief Umpire of team members who would like to umpire.
3. Communicate with players about game schedules, MSSL rules, manage player's grievances, assign batting lineup and defensive positions, manage player's physical and verbal conduct, enforce team courtesy between innings on and off the field.
4. The team manager is responsible for the conduct of his players.
5. A manager must play a newly ranked/assigned player.
6. The manager must instruct his players to not get involved with other players or the umpire on matters that are the manager's responsibility.
7. If a team does not have a permanent manager, then prior to the beginning of each game, the umpire must be notified which players will assume the duties of manager for that game.
8. Managers neglecting their duties will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including removal from the game/league. The Board of Directors shall be the judge and disciplinarian regarding manager's duties and responsibilities.

**ARTICLE X PLAYER RULES OF CONDUCT**

1. At no time shall any player lay a hand, push, shove, strike, or threaten to strike a fellow player, or umpire. This action results in an automatic ejection from the game.
2. Players shall not exhibit anger by throwing his glove, bat, or any other items.
3. Continued arguing and / or heaping personal abuse upon an umpire, an opposing player, or any other league affiliate, ON or OFF the field will not be tolerated.
4. Players shall not use any form of rough tactics upon an opposing player by making physical contact or unnecessary obstruction of a runner or interference of a fielder.
5. Players shall not use profanity, or abusive language.
6. There shall be no use of alcoholic beverages at any time during the game by the players in the

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game or by players as spectators at the game.

7. Only team members and scorekeepers will be allowed in the dugout while game is in process.
8. Players shall not smoke on the field or in the dugout.
9. The term PLAYER as used on all of the above shall apply to all team personnel such as managers, coaches, bat boys, scorekeepers, sponsors, and spectators.

**ARTICLE XI BREACH OF RULES OF CONDUCT ON OR OFF THE FIELD**

1. Breach of these Rules of Conduct during a game will be dealt with in one of the following ways:
  - a) Warning.
  - b) Ejection from the game. The umpire shall write the name of the player(s), the inning of ejection and the reason for ejection on the back side of the score card. The score card shall be given to the Commissioner. The Commissioner shall make a copy of the card and forward the copy to the Judicial Committee for any required action.
  - c) Ejection from the park for a flagrant violation shall follow the same procedures as above.
2. The ejected player has the right to appeal. The appeal is to be in writing and presented to the Commissioner within 24 hours. The Commissioner shall present the appeal to the Judicial Committee. The Judicial Committee must convene prior to the ejected player's next game when possible. During the interim, the ejected player may not be used as a substitute for another team. No appeal, then no action required by the Judicial Committee.
3. The penalty for the ejected player is the player cannot play another game for his team or any other team until his team has played a subsequent game should the umpire's decision be upheld.
4. Second offense within 6 months of the first offense (for same player) will be missing his team's next 3 playable games. Third offense, during that 12-month period, will be suspension for the remainder of the one-year period. Any offense while a player is on probation or after the one-year suspension is over will result in permanent expulsion from the league
5. No substitute can be used for the ejected player.
6. The Board reserves the right to overrule and send back to committee for reevaluation, any decision that was made by incomplete or inaccurate information.
7. Breach of these Rules of Conduct outside of a game, but not limited to an event such as a Board meeting, committee meeting, picnic, etc. will be handled when a written grievance is presented to the Commissioner who will notify the Board and forward the grievance to the Judicial Committee for review in a timely manner.

**ARTICLE XII GENERAL RULES**

1. Teams that field less than 11 players may use a Rover if they choose
2. Teams must bat all participating team players attending the game.
3. Each player present at the beginning of the game must play a minimum of three complete innings in the field. If a roster player shows up late but before the beginning of the fifth inning, he must replace his substitute in the batting order. Players entering the game late must play a minimum of two complete defensive innings. The penalty for breaking the player time requirement is a forfeit.
4. All players shall be granted the right to reach first base if their fair batted ball is fielded by an outfielder. Any infielder, including the infield rover, can play anywhere, and can throw a batter out at first regardless of where a fair ball is hit. If it is not obvious, the defensive team must

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inform the umpires who the outfielders are. A runner shall be called safe at first, regardless of any other action, such as a force at second, if the umpire rules an outfielder participated in the play.

5. A team using substitutes may not exceed the current season roster limit of players in its lineup.
6. Uniform numbers are not necessary.
7. Forfeit: There must be a minimum of eight players ready to play within ten minutes of scheduled game start time. Games will be delayed to wait for players who are playing in an earlier game. A team failing to field a team to play a scheduled game will suffer a forfeit (loss) and the opposing team will be credited with a win.
8. Canceled games: Games canceled because of factors such as but not limited to rain, MSSL management decisions, Menifee Parks and Recreation decisions or other factors beyond the control of the teams will be considered non-games. Regular league games are not made up when missed. The Board of Directors may override this rule.
9. Should there be tournament games see PROCEDURES Article XIX,
10. In games where an at bat starts with a 0 and 0 count, a batter fouling one pitch after two strikes shall be called out. In games where an at bat starts with a 1 and 1 count, a batter who has two strikes, may foul one ball (referred to as “one to waste”) after which another foul ball or called third strike will put the batter out. Any ball hitting the pitching screen is treated as a foul ball.
11. A posted lineup must be present on the clip board in the dugout.
12. Current league approved jerseys must be worn during all league play. Violators will not be allowed to play. Proper uniform not required during the summer season.
13. Each new at-bat shall start with a 1 ball, 1 strike count.
14. Games will be 7 innings. Teams will not hit or field in consecutive innings, the same as normal Senior Softball National rules.
15. The league will use the Batter’s box boundary as noted in the current SSUSA rule book Section 7.3 and not adopt the new boundary being used beginning in 2024 by SSUSA

**ARTICLE XIII BASE RUNNING**

1. A base runner who, in the umpire’s opinion, makes a commitment to a base may be “tagged” out by the fielder by either touching the runner with the hand holding the ball or by touching the base while holding the ball. This is not necessarily a force play.
2. Sliding into a base is not allowed. The runner is out, ball is dead, and no runners may advance. This is a safety rule. Players accidentally falling down and crawling back or reaching back to touch the base with their hand in a non-aggressive way shall not be called out for sliding.
3. To avoid being hit by the batted ball, a runner on first or third base has the option to stand in foul territory prior to the ball being pitched but must return to the base to advance.
4. If the defensive player obstructs the runner’s ability to pass on either side of the base the runner will be deemed safe.
5. Runners must run on either side of the base when the defensive player occupies the base while in the process of “forcing” the runner. A runner reaching the base by itself before he is “forced” will be safe. Runners should run to the opposite side of any base from the direction of a thrown ball to avoid interference with the defensive player. If the runner runs on the side of the base the throw is coming from, the umpire will make a judgment call whether the runner should be called out for physical or distraction interference.

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6. The runner must avoid a collision with the fielder on all plays made at all bases, if possible. The runner has the right-of-way to the base path on a thrown ball. While attempting to avoid a collision with the first baseman, the runner may run in foul territory as far off the path as necessary and not touch either base but not to avoid a tag. To be safe at first, the runner must pass the line of the base before the first baseman, with the ball, touches first base. The umpire will judge the runner has reached any base or scoring line when the runner's foot touches the base or touches the ground next to or past the base or touches the ground on or past the scoring line. Runner will be called out if they run through the batter's box or through the blank part of the scoring line
7. A minimum of (6') six feet commitment line shall be marked across and perpendicular to the foul line and thirty (30) feet from home plate. Once a runner has touched/crossed the commitment line he: (a) cannot re-cross the line and (b) cannot return to third base. ONCE BOTH FEET HAVE TOUCHED/CROSSED HE (a) CANNOT be TAGGED out by the defensive player and (b) the. Defensive player MUST touch the strike zone mat. The ball remains live
8. Runners may overrun (running wide of all) bases to avoid collisions, but not to avoid a tag. Base runners are encouraged to run through to avoid contact with the defensive player.
9. A runner touching a base on a run through will be live to be put out by either a "tag," force out, or called out for running out of the baseline if he is avoiding a tag. A runner not touching a base in a run through must return to the base to advance to the next base. If the runner continues to the next base without touching a base after the overrun, the umpire, on appeal, can call the runner out.
10. Any runner returning to a base, whenever possible, may overrun the base without touching it if necessary to avoid a collision or interference with the defensive player as described above. If the runner returning to a base, touches the base and continues to overrun, he is a live runner subject to being put out.
11. A batter who is walked need not go to first base if he will be using a courtesy runner. When a batter/runner who has hit a fair ball is going to first base and a play is made, if the ball goes out of play, time will be called, and the batter/runner may get a courtesy runner to advance to the next base.
12. Once a pinch runner has taken his position and during the same timeout, a different pinch runner may be inserted without penalty. NOTE: Once the umpire has signaled to the pitcher to pitch or says, "play ball," then a second pinch runner (for the original runner) cannot be used without penalty of being called out.

**ARTICLE XIV MAXIMUM RUNS PER INNING**

1. For innings 1-6, the maximum number of runs allowed in each half inning is five.
2. Inning 7 is an open inning for unlimited scoring by both teams with the following exceptions:
  - If the visiting team is ahead by less than 10 runs, the maximum number of runs it will be allowed may not exceed a 15-run lead.
  - If the visiting team is ahead by 10 or more runs, the maximum number of runs it will be allowed is 5. Note: No flip-flop rule since visiting is limited to 5 runs whenever the flip-flop rule can be invoked.
  - If the visiting team is limited by either run rule, the home team may only tie the game.

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Hence, the game will go into extra innings. If the run limit rule does not apply to the visiting team (meaning the visiting team made 3 outs in an open inning), the home team, may score enough runs to win the game.

3. All extra innings will be open innings.

## ARTICLE XV PITCHING

### 1. PITCHING SCREEN

Use of the pitching screen is mandatory. The pitcher must use the screen as follows:

- The Pitching Screen must be placed 4.5 feet in front of the rubber and shall overlap by a minimum of  $\frac{1}{4}$  or the maximum of  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the length of the pitching rubber. The pitching screen must be placed on the “glove” side of the pitcher.
- The net must face the batter and must be placed upright.
- A batted ball hitting the screen is a foul ball.
- Defensive players may not intentionally move or knock over the pitching screen during a live ball. All runners are awarded two bases. A defensive player may adjust the pitching screen position, within its legally defined limits, during a dead ball or time out.
- If a thrown ball hits or embeds in the pitching screen, the ball remains live and in play. Backup balls should not be placed in the pitching screen well.

### 2. INTENTIONAL WALKS

Beginning Fall Season 2024 no intentional walks will be allowed. This being the case the Premier Player rules have also been eliminated.

### 3. HOME RUNS

Effective Spring Season 2025 for games played at Centennial Field in Menifee, teams will be allowed 3 Home Runs per game. Any Home Runs hit after that results in a Walk.