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**HONG KONG SOFTBALL ASSOCIATION**  
**LOCAL GROUND RULES**  
**2017-18**

The Rules and Regulations governing the League Competition shall be the International Softball Federation (ISF) Rules, and subject to the Local Ground Rules of Hong Kong Softball Association where otherwise expressly stated or provided. The Hong Kong Softball Association, subject to prior notice, reserves the right to make alterations and amendments to any of the rules mentioned below.

**1. Player Eligibility**

- 1.1 All players must be current registered members of Hong Kong Softball Association. Male teams' rosters shall include only male players and female teams' rosters shall include only female players.
- 1.2 The maximum number of players registered in a team is twenty-five (25) and the minimum number shall not be less than fifteen (15). If a team requests to register more than twenty-five (25) players, prior approval shall be obtained from the Commissioner of League Affairs.
- 1.3 The minimum age of any registered player eligible to participate in any league game or associated activity shall be fourteen (14) years by date of birth. For safety reasons, players in between the age of 12 to 14 may also be registered for league games but they should apply for registration individually. Approval will be granted by the Council if their tryouts being tested by Hong Kong Team coaches are satisfactory.
- 1.4 A player shall only play for **one** team and in **one** division, to which he/she is registered to.
- 1.5 Any player is not allowed to change his/her team in a league season unless with the prior approval from the Commissioner of League Affairs.
- 1.6 Ineligible player found to play for other team(s) (irrespective of whether he/she uses false name) shall be suspended from the remainder of the season, with potential additional suspensions for the offended team for future seasons and other leagues. The suspension will be decided by the Commissioner of League Affairs after consultation with the Executive Council.
- 1.7 Violation of the rules on the eligibility of players shall result in the relevant game being forfeited.
- 1.8 Any new player of a team must be registered at least 3 days (72 hours) before he/she shall be eligible to play a game for that team.
- 1.9 If a team requests not to be promoted in next season, the maximum number of the remaining players in the team shall not be more than seven (7).
- 1.10 Any new team must be registered in the lowest division (MC or WB-Blue). The Commissioner of League Affairs has the full discretion in deciding the admission of a new team, including the selection of an appropriate method of testing its standard.

**2. Game Fixture**

- 2.1 All scheduled games must be started on time and no delay is allowed. Both teams should have nine (9) physical uniformed players on the field when the game starts.
- 2.2 No request of unavailability, postponement or re-scheduled of games shall be entertained

unless an approval is granted from the Commissioner of League Affairs.

- 2.3 A team insisting on postponement of a game may contact the team managers concerned to switch the games on their own. Official confirmation letter or notice from all the related team managers should be sent to the Hong Kong Softball Association at least 3 days before the scheduled game day. The Commissioner of League Affairs has the sole discretion to approve or reject a formal notice of postponement or re-scheduling of games without giving reasons for his/her decision.
- 2.4 If the team requests for a postponement and cannot arrange another team to fill up the schedule, the team can request for a forfeit game with no penalty. Official request must be sent to Hong Kong Softball Association at least 3 days before the scheduled game. The opposing team will be informed officially by HKSA and may not necessarily show up at the game time. Otherwise, double walkover will be penalized to both teams. Another request of this kind will not be entertained and will be considered as a "walkover".
- 2.5 If a team has less than nine (9) uniformed players on the field to start the game, the game will be considered as a "walkover" by the opposing team. The **HK\$1000** deposit of the offended team will be forfeited. This penalty will be applied to the scheduled games in both open league and festival of sports.
- 2.6 Any team, which gives a total of two "walkovers", will automatically be ejected from its league and associated competition (including the games of Festival of Sports and other associated matches) for the remaining season. All its registered players, without exception granted from the Commissioner of League Affairs, will not be permitted to transfer in the other teams and divisions for the remaining season. The Commissioner of League Affairs reserves the right of allowing an ejected team to be registered in next season.
- 2.7 If a team does not have sufficient players (9 players) to continue the game, in the case of player's injury or unfitness, it is considered as a forfeit game but not as a "walkover".
- 2.8 If two teams give a "doubled-walkover" in a double-elimination playoff series, both teams cannot be advanced to the loser bracket.
- 2.9 The lost runs of the offended team in a forfeit or walkover game shall be the most run(s) against recorded in the round robin of its division group. All other cases of a forfeit game shall also follow this rule.
- 2.10 Most games will be scheduled to play on Saturday, Sunday and Public Holiday. On urgent necessity, games will be scheduled on weekday's evening. Day or week double-headers will be scheduled for making-up rainout games.
- 2.11 Basically, without any adverse ground conditions, MA-Super, MA, MB-Gold and WA will be scheduled to play at Tin Kwong Road softball field; MB-Blue will be scheduled to play at both Tin Kwong Road and Shek Kip Mei softball fields; MC, WB-Gold and WB-Blue will be scheduled to play at Shek Kip Mei softball fields.

### **3. Home & Away team**

- 3.1. The choice of Home or Away team shall be decided by coin-toss before the game.
- 3.2. The Home team takes the field ahead of the Away team.

3.3. No infield practice is allowed before the game.

#### **4. Home run and passed ball ground rules**

4.1. Tin Kwong Road Softball Ground:

4.1.1. A home run will be awarded if a batted fair fly ball clears over or hits on the top soft net (the tallest net fencing) at the outfield.

4.1.2. If a batted ball hits on the middle soft net fencing at the outfield, the ball is dead, and the batter is awarded two bases. The batter-runner(s) shall be awarded two bases from the time of the pitch.

4.1.3. If a batted ball hits on the blue protective padding of the outfield fence, the ball is in play.

4.1.4. If a batted foul ball hits the soft net fencing at foul area, the ball is dead, and the runner must return to last base held at the time of the pitch.

4.1.5. If a pitched ball (whether it is touched or untouched by a catcher or umpire) hits the backstop soft net fencing, the ball is dead, and the runner is entitled to one base without liability to be put out.

4.1.6. When a ball is in play and is overthrown (whether it is touched or untouched by a fielder or umpire) to soft net fencing, the ball is dead. The batter-runner and all other runners shall be awarded one more base. The award will be governed by the position of the runner(s) when the ball touches the soft net fencing.

4.1.7. An overthrow ball goes into the dugout on the play, the ball is dead, the runner or batter-runner may advance beyond the base to which he is entitled.

4.2. Shek Kip Mei Softball Ground (Pitch #3):

4.2.1. A home run will be given to the batter if a batted fair fly ball first lands beyond the outfield boundary cones.

4.2.2. If a fair-batted ball (whether it is touched or untouched by a fielder or umpire) bounces or passes through the outfield boundary cones, the ball is dead. The batter is awarded two bases and all other runner(s) shall be awarded two bases from the time of the pitch.

4.2.3. When a fair-batted or thrown live ball (whether it is touched or untouched by a fielder or umpire) enters the boundary line at left and right fields, the ball is dead. The batter-runner and runner(s) shall be awarded one more base. The award will be governed by the position of the runner(s) when the ball enters the dead ball area.

4.3. Shek Kip Mei Softball Ground (Pitch #4): (near the changing room)

4.3.1. If a batted fair fly ball clears over the fence at right field, or first hits on the concrete wall at left and center fields, a home run shall be awarded to the batter.

4.3.2. If a batted fair ball (whether it is touched or untouched by a fielder or umpire) enters the concrete jogging pavement at outfield, the ball is dead. The batter is awarded two bases and all other runner(s) shall be awarded two bases from the time of the pitch.

4.3.3. If a fair-batted ball or thrown live ball (whether it is touched or untouched by a fielder or umpire) enters the dead ball area at left and right fields, the ball is dead. The batter-

runner and runner(s) shall be awarded one more base. The award will be governed by the position of the runner(s) when the ball enters the dead ball area.

## 5. The game

- 5.1 A regulation game shall consist of seven innings or in accordance with the time limit, whichever comes first.
- 5.2 Time limit for each division is:

	Division	Time Limit	
1	MA-Super	1 hr. 40 min.	100 min.
2	MA	1 hr. 40 min.	100 min.
3	MB-Gold	1 hr. 30 min.	100 min.
4	MB-Blue	1 hr. 30 min.	90 min.
5	MC	1 hr. 30 min.	90 min.
6	WA	1 hr. 40 min.	100 min.
7	WB-Gold	1 hr. 30 min.	90 min.
8	WB-Blue	1 hr. 30 min.	90 min.

### 5.3 MA-Super, MA, MB-Gold, WA

- 5.3.1 No extra inning shall be started after the game has been played up to the time limit, except for tied game.
- 5.3.2 The exact time recorded for the completion of an inning is the moment when the umpire called for the third out. In other words, an inning starts when the final out of the preceding inning is made.
- 5.3.3 A regulation game shall be called after the completion of the top half of the inning when the game has been played up to the time limit and if when the home team is leading.
- 5.3.4 If a game is in a draw or if the away team is leading when the game has been played up to the time limit, the game should be continued until the completion of the inning or when the home team turns the defeat.
- 5.3.5 A tiebreaker system shall be executed if the game is tied with complete inning after reaching the time limit in round robin and knockout games.

### 5.4 MB-Blue, MC, WB-Gold, WB-Blue

- 5.4.1. No extra inning shall be started after the game has been played up to the time limit, except for tie game.
- 5.4.2. The exact time recorded for the completion of an inning is the moment when the umpire called for the third out or "walk home". In other words, an inning starts when the final out or "walk home" of the preceding inning is made.
- 5.4.3. A regulation game shall be called after the completion of the top half of the inning when the game has been played up to the time limit and if when the home team is leading.

- 5.4.4. A regulation game shall be called if one team leads the other by 10 runs or more when the game has been played up to the time limit.
- 5.4.5. If a game is in a draw or if the away team is leading (less than 10 runs) when the game has been played up to the time limit, the game should be continued until the completion of the inning or when the home team turns the defeat.
- 5.4.6. A tiebreaker system shall be executed if the game is tied with complete inning after reaching the time limit in round robin and knockout games.
- 5.4.7. Run ahead rule
- 5.4.7.1. A run ahead rule shall be adopted at all Preliminary Round Robins and Playoffs Series in all divisions.
- 5.4.7.2. The run ahead rules for MA-Super, MA, MB-Gold, MB-Blue and WA are: Fifteen (15) runs after three (3) innings; Ten (10) runs after four (4) innings; Seven (7) runs after five (5) innings.
- 5.4.7.3. The run ahead rules for MC, WB-Gold, WB-Blue are: Twenty (20) runs after three (3) innings; Fifteen (15) runs after four (4) innings; Ten (10) runs after five (5) innings.
- 5.5 Tiebreaker
- 5.5.1 For all divisions, the offending team must place a base-runner on second base who is scheduled to bat ninth in that respective half-inning and play until the score is decided one way or the other.
- 5.5.2 The player(s) who is/are positioned as a runner/runners in tiebreaker can be substituted in accordance with the substitution rules.
- 5.6 Ranking System (Round-Robin and Playoff)
- The ranking of the teams at the end of the round robin is determined in order by the following procedures until the tie is broken.
- Winning Percentage; Head-to-head; Runs Against; Left-on-base and Coin Toss.
- 5.6.1. Team with higher winning percentage ranks on top of the others.
- 5.6.2. When 2 teams are tied in the winning percentage, rank the teams by the head-to-head result of the game played between them in preliminary round, the winning team is ahead of the other team.
- 5.6.3. If 3 (or more) teams are tied in the winning percentage, use the following system to break the tie:
- 5.6.3.1. Head-to-head results
- ◇ If one team beat all of the other tied teams, this team will be ranked on top of the tied teams. (The remaining teams shall follow the ranking system rules 5.6.2 and or 5.6.3 to rank the order)
  - ◇ If one team has been beaten by all of the other tied teams, this team will be ranked as the lowest team. (The remaining teams shall follow the ranking system rules 5.6.2 and or 5.6.3 to rank the order)
- 5.6.3.2. Runs Against results

- ✧ If the tied teams have the same record against each other drawn, ranked the teams by their total runs-against recorded in the round robin played among these tied teams, the team(s) with the lowest runs-against is/are placed ahead of the others.
- ✧ If again drawn, ranked the teams by their total runs-against recorded in all the round robin games, the team(s) with the overall lowest runs-against is/are placed ahead of the others.

#### 5.6.3.3. Left-on-base (LOB)

- ✧ If all tied teams have the same records in the runs against results, ranked the teams by their total left-on-base recorded among these tied teams in the round robin, the team(s) with the highest left-on-base is/are placed ahead of the others.
- ✧ If again drawn, ranked the teams by their total left-on-base recorded in all the round robin games, the team(s) with the overall highest left-on-base is/are placed ahead of the others.

#### 5.6.3.4. Coin Toss

- ✧ If the tied teams have the same record in left-on-base, their rankings will be decided by a toss of coin in the presence of the tied team managers.

### 5.7 Signing the Score Sheet

- 5.7.1. Both team managers are requested to sign the score sheet after the game to verify the score.

### 5.8 Batting position

- 5.8.1 To speed up the game, a strike shall be called if the batter does not take his/her position in the batter's box within 10 seconds after the umpire has declared "Play Ball".

- 5.8.2 The batter must keep at least one foot in the box between pitches, unless for the exceptions apply in which case the batter may leave the batter's box. If not, the umpire issues a strike.

(Refer to ISF Official Softball Rules 2014-17 Rule 7 sec 3d for exceptions)

- 5.8.3 The batter may switch batter's boxes before two strike as long as he/she does not switch sides once the pitcher is on the rubber taking his/her signs.

## 6. 9th-batter Rules (For MB-Blue, MC, WB-Gold, WB-Blue)

- 6.1 9<sup>th</sup>-batter rules are to be used in MB-Blue, MC, WB-Gold and WB-Blue leagues. Only a maximum of nine batters from an offensive team shall have their turns at bat in an inning.
- 6.2 The 9th batter is entitled to "Walk Home" in the following conditions:
  - 6.2.1 Hit by a pitched ball,
  - 6.2.2 Four balls have been called by umpire,
  - 6.2.3 The batter is obstructed by the catcher,If there is/are runner(s) on base, the runner(s) shall be advanced and is/are entitled to score in a "walk home" situation.
- 6.3 When less than two outs and the 9th batter becomes a batter-runner, except for a Walk

Home, the fielder may choose to put out the base-runner(s) or batter-runner for the out(s) or return the live ball to touch home plate to end the inning.

- 6.4 At Tin Kwong Road softball fields, when the 9th batter hits a fair-batted ball, the ball is in play until the base-runner(s) or the batter-runner is put out to end the inning; or until the live ball is returned to touch home plate.
- 6.5 At Shek Kip Mei softball fields, when the 9th batter hits a fair-batted ball (whether it is touched or untouched by a fielder or umpire) bounces or passes through the outfield boundary cones (Pitch#3) or enters the concrete jogging pavement (Pitch#4), the ball is dead. The batter-runner and all other runners shall be awarded two more bases from the base they would have reached when the ball enters the dead ball area. Number of Run(s)-batted-in will be credited to the 9<sup>th</sup> batter if the run(s) is/are scored to conform to rules.
- 6.6 After the 9th batter has finished his turn at bat, and the ball has returned home for the end of the inning or the runners have been entitled a "Walk home situation", the fielding team can make verbal live ball appeals for the runners missing a base or failing to tag up the base on a caught fly ball. Additional outs can be made under proper appeal and the corresponding runs are nullified.

## **7. Line-up**

- 7.1 A player's name shall not be on the starting line-up, unless that player is present in the team area and uniformed.
- 7.2 Eligible roster members may be added to the substitute list at any time during the game.
- 7.3 The line-up sheets should be submitted to the official scorer at least 15 minutes before the game, and both opposing teams should exchange their teams' line-up rosters.
- 7.4 Any change or substitution requested by the manager after submitting the line-up sheet to the scorer must be changed in accordance with the substitution rules.
- 7.5 Full names, dress numbers and positions of the players should be clearly printed on the line-up sheet.
- 7.6 The name of the manager/coach should also be written and signed on the line-up sheet.
- 7.7 The identities of the players shall be checked by the scorer with respect to the registered record before the game.

## **8. Ground Condition**

- 8.1 The umpire is empowered to suspend or call a game at any time because of darkness or adverse weather condition.
- 8.2 Suspended Game:
- 8.2.1 If the game has been played for less than one complete inning when it is suspended, the game will be scheduled to replay from the beginning. Original line-ups may be changed when the game is replayed.
- 8.2.2 If the game has been played for more than ONE (1) complete inning but less than FIVE (5) innings for MA-Super, MA, MB-Gold, WA; and less than Four (4) complete innings for MB-Blue, MC, WB-Gold, WB-Blue; provided that the time limit in 8.2.3 or 8.2.4 has not reached when it is suspended, the game shall be continued and rescheduled to

play at later dates. The continued game shall be played for the remaining time at the exact point where it is suspended. Original line-ups and the reserves shall not be changed in the continued game. Substitution can be made in accordance with the substitution rules.

8.2.3 A regulation game shall be declared if the suspended game has been played for five or more complete innings, or when the game has been played for 80 minutes in MA-Super, MA and WA. The score should be counted up to the end of the previous complete inning.

8.2.4 A regulation game shall be declared if the suspended game has been played for four or more complete innings, or when the game has been played for 70 minutes in MB-Gold, MB-Blue, MC, WB-Gold and WB-Blue. The score should be counted up to the end of the previous complete inning.

8.2.5 If the suspended game is tied after it has been played for time limit, the game shall be continued and rescheduled to play at later dates. The continued game shall be played at the exact point where it is suspended. Original line-ups and the reserves shall not be changed in the continued game. A tiebreaker system shall be played for the continued game for any new extended inning.

## **9. Warm-up Pitches**

- 9.1 The starting or substituted pitcher may deliver for not more than five (5) warm-up pitches to the catcher or other team members.
- 9.2 At the start of each half inning (after the first inning), the pitcher shall be allowed only three (3) warm-up pitches.
- 9.3 No warm-up pitch should be allowed in any tiebreaker inning; and when the time limit is reached; and if a former pitcher is returned to his/her pitching position again.
- 9.4 Player must wear a catcher's mask when warming up a pitcher before or during a game.

## **10. Equipment and Uniform**

- 10.1 Ball caps must be worn by all male players in the game.
- 10.2 Exception:
  - 10.2.1 An offensive player will not be required to wear a cap when he is wearing with an approved batting helmet, or
  - 10.2.2 When the defensive catcher is wearing an approved catcher mask or helmet.
- 10.3 Caps, visors and headbands are optional for female players. Plastic or hard visors are not allowed.
- 10.4 Any exposed item, including jewelry or decoration extended from the uniform, judged by the umpire to be distracting and dangerous to opposite players may be worn or displayed.
- 10.5 The uniform shirts of a team should be alike and numbers of contrasting colour be worn on the back. No players of the same team may wear identical numbers. (number 1 and 01 are examples of identical numbers.) Only whole numbers 01 to 99 shall be used. Players without numbers will not be permitted to play. Any exposed metal may not be attached onto the uniform.
- 10.6 Approved batting helmets are mandatory while batting and base running.

- 10.7 Helmet, mask and protectors should be worn by the catcher.
- 10.8 Softball bat marked either of ISF, ASA, JSA Approved Official Softball should only be used.

### **11. Appeal and Protest**

- 11.1 Official umpires and scorer will be arranged in every game. There shall be no appeal from any decision of any umpire on the judgement calls.
- 11.2 Protests shall only be considered concern matters of the following cases:
  - 11.2.1 Misinterpretation of a playing rule;
  - 11.2.2 Failure of an umpire to apply the correct rule to a given situation;
  - 11.2.3 Failure to impose the correct penalty for a given violation.
- 11.3 The official written protest letter together with a deposit of HK\$500 should be delivered by hand to the Hong Kong Softball Association within 48 hours after the protested game. The deposit will be refund if the protest is valid.
- 11.4 When a protest is allowed for misinterpretation of a playing rule, the game is replayed from the exact point at which the incorrect decision was made, with the decision corrected. Original line-ups and the reserves may not be changed in the replayed game.
- 11.5 When a protest for ineligibility of a team roster member is allowed, the offending team shall forfeit the game.

### **12. Charged Conference**

- 12.1 Offensive Conference: Only one time out in an inning and a maximum of three in the whole game may allow the team manager/coach or other team representatives to suspend the play to confer with any member of his/her/their team. Failing to do so shall result in the ejection of the manager or coach insisting on another charged conference.
- 12.2 Defensive Conference: There shall only be three charged defensive conferences in a game. Failing to do so shall result in the pitcher, who is the listed pitcher at the time of the excess conference, being declared an Illegal Pitcher who may not pitch again for the remainder of the game.

### **13. Team behaviour**

- 13.1 Any team member disputing any judgment decision by an umpire will constitute a team warning. Any repeat offense shall result in the ejection of that team member.
- 13.2 Any team member must not speak or act in a un-sportsman liked manner to the officials, spectators and the opposing team. Should such bad behaviour continue despite the Chief Umpire's warning, the offending team member is to be ejected out of the team area.
- 13.3 If a batter carelessly, IN UMPIRE'S JUDGEMENT, throws the bat with no harms after hitting, the umpire should issue a warning to the batter, a second offend on that player shall be called a dead ball out. That player shall be ejected from the game in the third occurrences.
- 13.4 If a batter throws the bat and it hits a catcher or umpire, than the batter is out without warning and no runners may advance. A second offend on that player shall be ejected from the game.
- 13.5 For serious offence, that offended player or manager will be suspended for the rest of the season.

**14. Temporary Runner**

- 14.1 A Temporary Runner is legal for a catcher, of record from the previous half inning, who is on base with two (2) out. The following provisions apply:
- 14.1.1 It is optional for the offensive team manager;
  - 14.1.2 The Temporary Runner may be used any time after the 2nd out occurred;
  - 14.1.3 The Temporary Runner is the player scheduled to bat last and who is not on base at the time the option is taken.

**15. Injury**

- 15.1 In the event of any player bleeding during the game, that player must be withdrawn from the game.
- 15.2 If the bleeding cannot be stopped within a reasonable time, or his/her uniform becomes covered with blood, the withdrawn player shall be replaced by a Replacement Player, who may act for the withdrawn player for the remainder of the inning in progress.

**16. Players' obligation**

- 16.1 All players should maintain the tidiness of the field and dugouts.
- 16.2 In order to keep the ground in good condition, team members are requested to rake the infield area after the game.

**17. Scoring**

- 17.1 The title of batting champion shall be awarded to the eligible player having the highest batting average in the preliminary round robin of the same league. If more than one player having the same batting average, the title will be awarded in accordance to the rankings of most hits; most home runs; most runs-batted-in (RBI).
- 17.2 Only the game statistics in preliminary round robin will be used for calculating the Batting Champion.
- 17.3 The player who is eligible to win the title of batting champion must meet the minimum at-bat requirement. The minimum Plate Appearance (PA) to qualify for the title of batting champion should be at least 50% of the maximum PA recorded in the same preliminary round robin games.
- 17.4 Awards will be given to the players in MA-Super and WA divisions with most Home Runs and most Runs-batted-in (RBI) recorded in the preliminary round.

**18. Awards**

- 18.1 A title of Most Valuable Player (MVP) shall be awarded to one of the players in the Champion Team of each division. The Most Valuable Player (MVP) in each division shall be nominated by the team manager of the Champion team.
- 18.2 Batting Champion – the highest batting average recorded in the preliminary round (minimum PA is equal to half of the highest PA recorded in the preliminary round).

**【END】**

Commissioner of League Affairs  
(Revised 25/10/2017)