Kern County Softball Association (KCSA) Rules and Regulations

Revision: Rev 4 (Cleaned and Streamlined Edition)

Date: September 10, 2025

1. Purpose and Scope

The Kern County Softball Association (KCSA) is dedicated to promoting and developing girls' softball by providing opportunities for both competitive and recreational play. KCSA strives to foster an environment that emphasizes:

- Teamwork

- Sportsmanship

- Skill Development

- Personal Growth

- Fun and Enjoyment of the Game

This document outlines the rules and expectations for all participants, including players, coaches, parents, and volunteers involved in KCSA activities.

2. Player Eligibility

- Age Requirements: Players must be between the ages of 4 and 18 as of August 31 of the current year.

- Documentation: All players must submit proof of age (e.g., birth certificate) and sign the KCSA Code of Conduct prior to participation.

- Dual Participation: Players participating in other softball leagues must prioritize KCSA commitments during the season.

3. Registration and Fees

- Registration Period: Registration must be completed by the specified deadline, which will be communicated through the KCSA website and official communication channels.

- Fees:

  - Payment: All fees are due at the time of registration unless alternative arrangements are made.

  - Financial Assistance: Scholarships or financial assistance may be available for families in need; applications should be submitted during the registration period.

  - Refund Policy: There will be no full refunds once registration closes for that season. Partial refunds may be considered in cases of injury or extenuating circumstances, with requests submitted in writing to the KCSA Board for review.

  - Late Registration: Late registrations may be accepted based on availability but may incur additional fees.

4. Seasons

KCSA operates two primary seasons:

4.1. Spring Season

- Focus: Competitive play with an emphasis on skill development.

- Player Evaluations: Conducted to assess skills and ensure balanced team formation.

- Evaluation Areas: Hitting, fielding, pitching, and catching.

- Process: Evaluations are conducted by division coaches and KCSA board members using standardized drills.

- Team Formation: Teams are formed through a coach draft system based on evaluation results.

- Draft Order: Determined by random draw and follows a snake format to maintain fairness.

- Season Duration: Typically runs from March through May.

4.2. Fall Season

- Focus: Developmental play aimed at improving skills and understanding of the game.

- Team Formation: Teams are assigned by the KCSA Board to promote balanced and diverse skill levels; no evaluations are conducted.

- High School Division: Offered exclusively during the fall season.

- Season Duration: Typically runs from September through November.

5. Divisions

Players are placed in divisions based on their age as of August 31 of the current year or as dictated by USA Softball.

- 6U: Ages 4-6 (Coach Pitch)

- 8U: Ages 7-8 (Kid Pitch with Coach Assistance)

- 10U: Ages 9-10

- 12U: Ages 11-12

- 14U: Ages 13-14

- High School: Ages 15-18

Note: Players may request to play in a higher division based on skill level, subject to KCSA Board approval.

6. Equipment and Uniforms

6.1. Uniforms

- Jersey: Official KCSA jersey with player number and name.

- Pants: Black softball pants.

- Footwear: Rubber cleats for all divisions except 14U and High School.

- 14U and High School Exception: Metal cleats are permitted.

- Undergarments: Sweatshirts, hoodies, or long sleeves may be worn under the uniform during cold weather.

- Jewelry: All jewelry must be removed before games. Exceptions are made for medical-alert bracelets or necklaces, which must be secured.

6.2. Equipment

- Helmets: Must have a faceguard and chinstrap. Required for all batters, on-deck batters, and base runners.

- Bats: Must be USA Softball-approved. Personal bats are allowed but must meet regulation standards.

- Gloves: Players must provide their own fielding gloves appropriate for their position and division.

- Catchers Gear: Includes helmet with face mask, chest protector, and shin guards. Required for all catchers during games and practices.

- Fielding Masks: Mandatory for all infielders in all divisions.

- Balls: Provided by KCSA and sized appropriately for each division.

- Additional Equipment: Players are encouraged to bring their own water bottles and personal protective equipment (e.g., mouthguards).

7. General Rules

7.1. Pre-Game Procedures

- Arrival: Teams should arrive at least 30 minutes before the scheduled game time for warm-ups and pre-game meetings.

- Warm-Ups: Conducted outside the base paths to prevent field damage.

- Lineups: Must be submitted to the official scorekeeper and opposing coach 15 minutes before game time. Late-arriving players will be added to the end of the lineup.

- Field Setup:

  - Home Team Responsibilities: Setting up bases and pitching mounds, providing official game balls, occupying the third-base dugout.

  - Visiting Team Responsibilities: Occupying the first-base dugout.

7.2. Game Time and Duration

- Start Time: Games should start promptly at the scheduled time. A 10-minute grace period is allowed if a team lacks the minimum number of players (8). Failure to field a team after the grace period results in a forfeit.

- Game Length:

  - 6U Division: 1 hour 10 minutes.

  - 8U to High School Divisions: 1 hour 10 minutes or 4 innings, whichever comes first.

- No New Inning: No new inning will start after time has expired.

- Maximum Extension: The current inning will be completed with a maximum game time of 1 hour 20 minutes.

- Official Time: The umpire will announce the official game start time to the scorekeeper.

7.3. Batting and Lineup

- Continuous Batting Order: All players present for the game will be included in the batting lineup.

- Minimum Playtime: Each player must play a minimum of two defensive innings and have at least one at-bat per game. No player should sit out for more than one consecutive inning and no more than two innings total per game.

7.4. Substitutions and Injuries

- Substitutions: Free defensive substitutions are allowed between innings.

- Injuries: If a player is injured while on base, the last player to make an out will serve as a substitute runner. If an injured player cannot take their scheduled at-bat, the player will be scratched. This will not result in an out.

7.5. Base Running and Collisions

- Avoiding Collisions: Baserunners must make every effort to avoid collisions, including sliding or altering their path. Failure to do so may result in the runner being called out at the umpire's discretion.

- Stealing and Leading Off: Specific rules regarding stealing and leading off are detailed in the Division-Specific Rules section (Section 13).

7.6. Conduct and Sportsmanship

(See consolidated details in Section 9.2 for full sportsmanship guidelines.)

7.7. Post-Game Procedures

- Field Clean-Up: Both teams are responsible for cleaning their respective dugouts and surrounding areas after the game. The home team is responsible for returning bases and pitching rubbers to the equipment room after the final game of the day. Failure to do so may result in a warning, followed by potential penalties including prohibition from tournament play.

- Scorecard Completion: At the completion of all games, scores must be entered into the website.

- Reporting Scores: The home team must post the final score online and submit the scorecard to the Division Representative promptly after the game.

8. Game Rules and Play

- Governing Rules: All games are played under USA Softball rules with specific modifications outlined by KCSA for each division.

- Innings: Games are scheduled for four innings, subject to time limits and mercy rules.

- 5-Run Rule: All games will adhere to a maximum of five runs per inning by each team. Once the fifth run crosses home plate, the umpire will halt play, and the inning will end.

- Dropped Third Strike: Applicable in 10U divisions and above, allowing the batter to attempt to reach first base if the catcher fails to cleanly catch the third strike.

- Infield Fly Rule: Enforced in 10U divisions and above as per USA Softball regulations.

- Pitching Limits: Specific pitch count or inning limits may be applied to protect young pitchers' arms, detailed in Division-Specific Rules (Section 13).

9. Safety and Sportsmanship

9.1. Safety Measures

- Warm-Up Protocols: Coaches must ensure players properly warm up before practices and games to prevent injuries.

- Equipment Checks: Coaches can conduct pre-game equipment checks, if necessary, to ensure all gear meets safety standards. Coaches are responsible for the use of legal and proper equipment.

- Weather Safety: Games and practices must be halted immediately in case of lightning, severe weather, or other hazardous conditions. Play may resume 30 minutes after the last observed lightning strike.

9.2. Sportsmanship

- Code of Conduct: All participants must adhere to the KCSA Code of Conduct, emphasizing respect, fairness, and integrity.

- Behavior Expectations: Coaches, players, and spectators are expected to always exhibit respectful and sportsmanlike behavior. Profanity, taunting, and aggressive behavior will not be tolerated and may result in ejection or further disciplinary action.

- Positive Environment: Coaches and parents should encourage and support all players, promoting a positive and inclusive atmosphere.

- Disputes and Appeals: Only the head coach may discuss rulings with the umpire and must do so respectfully and following proper procedures. Judgment calls by umpires are final and not subject to appeal. There will be no appeals of these games; the umpire's decision is final.

- Conflict Resolution: Any disputes or issues should be addressed through appropriate channels, starting with coaches and escalating to the KCSA Board if necessary.

10. Coaches and Volunteers

10.1. Coaches

- Qualifications: Must be USA Softball certified, complete SafeSport training, pass a background check, and complete concussion training prior to the season.

- Responsibilities: Teach fundamental skills and strategies of softball, foster sportsmanship and teamwork, ensure player safety during all activities, and communicate effectively with players, parents, and league officials.

- Conduct: Serve as role models by exhibiting professionalism and respect. Refrain from aggressive or inappropriate behavior towards players, officials, or other coaches.

10.2. Umpires

- Certification: All umpires must be USA Softball certified.

- Authority: Umpires have full authority over the game, and their decisions are final. This includes the start and stop time of the game.

- Junior Umpires: Utilized in certain divisions (e.g., 8U) for development purposes; must also undergo proper training and certification.

10.3. Volunteers

- Roles: Include assistant coaches, team parents, scorekeepers, concession workers, and field maintenance personnel.

- Requirements: Volunteers in direct contact with players must complete a background check and any required training.

- Engagement: Parents and community members are encouraged to volunteer to support the league's operations and foster community involvement.

11. Rainouts and Cancellations

- Communication: Decisions regarding cancellations due to weather or other factors will be communicated via email, KCSA website, and official social media channels. Notifications will be made no later than two hours before scheduled game time when possible.

- Rescheduling: Games canceled due to weather will be rescheduled only if division-wide cancellations occur and field availability permits.

- In-Game Suspensions: If a game is suspended due to weather after three innings (or two and a half innings if the home team is leading), it will be considered official. Suspended games may be resumed from the point of suspension if scheduling allows.

12. Disciplinary Procedures

- Violation Reporting: Any violations of rules or conduct should be reported to the Division Representative or KCSA Board.

- Review Process: A disciplinary committee comprised of KCSA Board members will review reported incidents.

- Possible Actions: Warnings, suspensions (games or season), expulsion from the league, or forfeiture of games.

- Appeals: Individuals may appeal disciplinary actions by submitting a written appeal to the KCSA Board within seven days of the decision.

13. Division-Specific Rules

6U Division

- Ball Size: 10-inch compression softball.

- Field Dimensions: Base Paths: 40 feet; Pitching Distance: 20 feet.

- Game Duration: 1 hour 10 minutes.

- Scoring: No official standings or scorekeeping; focus is on learning and fun.

- Gameplay: All players bat each inning in a continuous order. Defensive team fields all players; standard infield positions with remaining players in the outfield.

- Coach Pitch: Each batter receives up to three coach pitches; if unsuccessful, a batting tee is used.

- Base Running: Runners may advance up to two bases per play. No stealing or leading off; runners advance only on batted balls.

- Home Runs: Only the last batter of the inning can achieve a home run.

- Coaching: Coaches and assistants may be on the field to instruct and encourage players; all must have completed background checks.

8U Division

- Ball Size: 11-inch USA Softball regulation softball.

- Field Dimensions: Base Paths: 60 feet; Pitching Distance: 30 feet.

- Game Duration: 1 hour 10 minutes or 4 innings.

- Umpiring: Junior umpires will officiate games.

- 5-Run Rule: Maximum of five runs per inning.

- Pitching: Player Pitch: Opposing pitcher delivers up to three pitches per batter.

Coach Assistance: Based on the number of strikes and balls, coaches provide additional pitches,

- 0 Strikes/3 Balls: 3 coach pitches.

- 1 Strike/2 Balls: 2 coach pitches.

- 2 Strikes/1 Ball: 1 coach pitch.

- 3 Strikes: Batter is out; no coach pitches.

COACH MUST HAVE ONE FOOT ON PITCHING RUBBER WHEN PITCHING

- Batter is out after three swinging strikes regardless of pitch source. Batter will get ONE additional pitch if 3rd strike is fouled off.

- Batting: No bunting allowed.

- Base Running: Runners may only leave base when the pitcher releases the ball. No leading off; leaving early results in the runner being called out. Runners may advance one base on overthrows.

- Home Runs: A ball landing in the outfield grass behind outfielders is a home run. Outfielders must be no deeper than 15ft from the edge of the infield.

10U and Higher Divisions (12U, 14U, High School)

These divisions share common rules, with variations noted below. All use standard player pitching throughout the game, bunting allowed, Dropped Third Strike Rule in effect, and Infield Fly Rule enforced.

Common Rules:

- Game Duration: 1 hour 10 minutes or 4 innings.

- 5-Run Rule: Maximum of five runs per inning.

- Base Running: Runners may steal bases, including home plate (hot plate). Runners may only leave base when the pitcher releases the ball. No leading off; leaving early results in the runner being called out. Runners may advance on overthrows, without limitation.

- Defense: Teams field ten players: six infielders and four outfielders. Outfielders must position themselves on the grass.

10U Specifics:

- Ball Size: 11-inch USA Softball regulation softball.

- Field Dimensions: Base Paths: 60 feet; Pitching Distance: 35 feet.

12U Specifics:

- Ball Size: 12-inch USA Softball regulation softball.

- Field Dimensions: Base Paths: 60 feet; Pitching Distance: 40 feet.

14U Specifics:

- Ball Size: 12-inch USA Softball regulation softball.

- Field Dimensions: Base Paths: 60 feet; Pitching Distance: 43 feet.

- Uniforms: Players must wear complete KCSA uniforms as specified.

High School Specifics:

- Ball Size: 12-inch USA Softball regulation softball.

- Field Dimensions: Base Paths: 60 feet; Pitching Distance: 43 feet.

- Uniforms: Players must wear complete KCSA uniforms as specified.

14. Amendments

- Procedure for Changes: All rule changes must be proposed and approved during a KCSA Board meeting.

- In-Season Changes: No rule changes will be made during an active season to ensure consistency and fairness.

- Communication: Approved amendments will be communicated to all participants through official channels, including email, KCSA website, and team meetings.

- Review Cycle: Rules and regulations will be reviewed annually during the off-season to assess effectiveness and address any necessary updates.