

**MEMORANDUM –
Special Olympics Oregon**

TO: Local Program Coordinators
CC: Special Olympics Oregon Sports & Field Staff
FROM: Mark Hanken, Sr. Vice President of Sports
DATE: March 27, 2009
RE: Coach Pitch Softball – NEW EVENT

The Special Olympics Oregon Sports Management Team recently approved the addition of a new event to the 2009 sports menu – **Coach Pitch Softball**.

This decision was based on feedback from coaches, from staff and volunteer observation and additional research. There are several programs around the country who have successfully implemented the Coach Pitch level into their softball menu. We anticipate that we will have success with this event as well.

For us to achieve the greatest success with COACH PITCH Softball, it is important to understand the intent of Special Olympics Oregon in adopting this new event.

1. Athletes who have played individual skills or t-ball in the past now have another step in their skill progression by playing COACH PITCH before moving into traditional or Unified Sports® softball.
2. COACH PITCH is age appropriate for youth softball players – especially those teams comprised of elementary and middle school age athletes. With our growing youth population, this event was a good fit.
3. Teams who have historically been in our lowest divisions of traditional softball are appropriate to consider moving into COACH PITCH. This is especially the case where teams have struggled with pitching or have been concerned about the safety of using a regulation softball.
4. If teams DO have athlete(s) on a team who are ABLE to LEGALLY PITCH consistently, then they are NOT appropriate for COACH PITCH level.
5. COACH PITCH level teams should still work on developing pitching skills. Even if not game ready, we need to be sure to prepare athletes for advancement to the next level in the future.

Please be sure to review the rules closely if you are considering implementing COACH PITCH softball in your local program. There is also some specific equipment needed (softer impact Incredi-balls®) which you will need to purchase. COACH PITCH rules are attached to this memo and can also be found in the 2009 Summer Sports Regional Registration Packet – Sports Specific Information at:
<http://www.soor.org/sports/summer.htm>

If you have questions, please work with your field director.



Special Olympics
Oregon

2009
COACH PITCH SOFTBALL RULES
UPDATED 3/18/2009

SPECIAL OLYMPICS OREGON COACH PITCH SOFTBALL RULES

I. Playing Area and Ball - The field shall conform to ASA standards with the following modifications:

1. Bases may be modified to a distance of 60 feet.
2. A “neutral zone” will be marked in an arc of 46 feet from home plate. Any ball batted from a tee that does not cross this line will be designated a foul ball, unless fielded within this zone by a defensive player while the ball is still moving.
3. A coaches’ circle will be located 10 feet beyond second base and made with a 6 foot diameter. One coach from the defensive team may be allowed to stand in this circle while his team is on the field.
4. 12” Easton IncrediBall® (SofTouch) must be used for Coach Pitch Softball.

II. Team, Coach, Pitcher-Coach, Players, and Lineup

1. It is the batting team’s coaches’ responsibility to adjust the height of the tee. Please do not expect the umpire to do this for any batter.
2. Each team has a coach, called the Pitcher-Coach, who pitches to their own team.
 - a. The Pitcher-Coach must be at least 25’ from the batter and can be as far away as 45’.
 - b. They must pitch the ball with an underhand motion, but they do not have to put an arc on the pitch as stated in ASA rules.
 - c. The Pitcher-Coach must make every attempt to move out of the way of defensive players attempting to make a play. The defense will position a defensive player next to the pitcher. If the coach interferes with the defense, or touches the ball, the batter will be called out.
 - d. The Pitcher-Coach cannot touch any player and must stay within the vicinity of the pitcher’s circle.
 - e. The Pitcher-Coach should wear a team uniform shirt or matching coach’s shirt.
 - f. The Pitcher-Coach must be listed on the Official Team Roster. They should be familiar with the players and the players should be familiar with their pitching. They must be at least 16 years of age.
3. Teams will be allowed a defensive coach in the field, as in T-ball, behind second base. The defensive coach must stay in the coach’s circle and cannot touch any players.
4. The catcher must be able to safely play that position, and understand its positioning. The catcher must also be able to routinely field pitches and return them to the pitcher. If the umpire or competition committee feels that the catcher cannot safely play that position they may ask the coach to replace the catcher.

5. A team must start a game with a minimum of **TEN** players. If a player is injured or ejected from a game and the team is left with less than nine players, that team must forfeit the game. If you have 9 players & have to play with nine players, you will take an out for the duration of the game for that athlete's turn at bat.
6. The outfielders must play a minimum of 10 feet behind infielders. Four outfielders must start play, on each pitch, in the outfield.

III. The Game

1. The length of games may vary depending on the tournament format. Generally, games have a time limit of 1 hour. The Finals may be longer. No inning will start after the time limit. Half-innings must be completed. Full Innings must be completed after the time limit if the home team is trailing or the game is tied.
2. A regulation game shall consist of six innings or until the time limit is reached, whichever comes first. The game will be considered complete if after five (5) full innings of play one team leads the other by ten runs or more. A game will be considered complete once the time limit has been reached and the final inning is over, regardless of how many innings have been played.
3. Teams will switch sides when whichever of the following occurs first: A team bats through its lineup (maximum 10 in the order) or gets 3 outs. Sliding is not allowed. If runners slide they will be called out.

IV. Pitching and Batting

1. Teams will be allowed to use the Tee for 2 batters within the lineup, if needed. These batters will have to hit the ball within the foul lines and beyond the 41 ft. "neutral zone" line to be ruled a fair ball. The tee must be used in the same place in lineup each time the batting team goes through the lineup.
2. When a tee is used all defensive players must stand behind the neutral zone before the ball is hit. They may enter the neutral zone once the ball is hit. If the defensive team plays the ball in the neutral zone while it is moving the ball is live.
3. If the batter completely misses the ball, or the ball and the tee, the attempt shall be ruled a strike.
4. If the batter has two strikes and fouls the third attempt, he/she shall be declared out.
5. Players cannot bunt.
6. Coach pitching distance may vary but must be a minimum of 25 feet.
7. Batters cannot be walked. Umpires will call strikes. A foul on the third strike is an out.
8. Batters will get a maximum of 7 pitches. If the batter has neither made an out, nor put the ball in play after 7 pitches, the batter will be called out.
9. Pitchers do not have to put an arc on the pitch as in ASA rules.

V. Base running

1. Players can only overrun first base without being in danger of being tagged out.
2. Sliding is not allowed. If runners slide they will be called out.
3. When a ball is put in play by the batter and fielded by the defense, the Umpire will call time when the ball is held by the defense in the infield. Runners halfway to the next base will be allowed that base.
4. The umpire must remove the tee if base runners are advancing to home plate.
5. The Infield Fly Rule will be in effect when there are less than two outs and:
 - a. There are runners on first and second or the bases are loaded.

The umpire will announce, "Infield Fly" when one of the above conditions exists and a batter hits a pop-fly in the infield. Please note that an infield fly is a judgment call by the umpire and NOT subject for controversy. When the Infield Fly Rule is declared, the batter is automatically OUT. The ball is alive and runners may advance at the risk of the ball being caught. The runner may also tag-up and advance after a defensive player has touched the ball.