Regular Season Rules

1. All games are seven innings or 55 minutes; Umpires must keep all games on time in fairness to teams playing later hours and due to facility permit restrictions. There are no tie games. Games will move to basic tie breaking rules after time limit has expired.

2. The minimum age to play in our league per Sportsplex rules will be 18 years of age.

3. Games start on time!!! Teams must be prepared to play. Forfeit rule: 10 minutes after game time. You may add up to 2 players from the stands or from another team. Any additional players will need the other coach’s approval, before the start of the game. You may not pick up any players during tournament play.

4. An umpire will determine all balls and strikes. All judgment calls are final. Any excessive disagreements will result in an ejection from the game and/or league if deemed necessary by HSP staff.

5. A legal pitch must have an arc. The pitching height has been modified to be 3 feet from release to 10 feet from the ground. Any pitch that is not deemed legal will be an automatic ball. A pitcher can now stand up to 5 feet behind the 1st rubber.

6. All batters will start with a one ball, one strike count. Batters will NOT get an extra foul ball any more. Once batter has 2 strikes, batted ball must be hit fair. No more extra foul balls. A foul ball above the batter’s head may be caught for an out.

7. You may NOT have an all women battery (catcher/pitcher), but you may have an all male battery. This is the only restriction on where male or female players may be play in the field.

8. Inning run limit rule: There will be a 6 run limit per inning, except for 5th or if the time is less than 10 minutes when the visiting team comes up to bat, whichever comes first. Both teams may score as many runs as they can in these innings.

9. The run rule will be in effect: 15 runs after 4 innings or 10 runs after 5 innings. If the run rule comes into play, scoring stops and the higher scoring team is the victor.

10. Teams may bat more than ten (10) players (See Rule #19); however, these teams must continue to bat with the same male, female rotation. The lineup must be organized in an order that does NOT allow four (4) or more male batters to hit consecutively. Every male/female must bat behind the same male/female throughout the game.

11. Defense teams may not change pitchers nor change any fielder once the clock has turned to 1 minute (ie last 2 minutes of the game). The penalty will be to play another inning.

12. Offensive team batter or base runner may not cause an automatic out by stepping on neither home plate nor a base runner leaving early once the clock has turned to 1 minute (ie 2 minutes left in the game). The penalty will be end of the game. No new inning may start.

13. Official Softball bats only (ASA):
   All USSSA bats will have to have the new 2012 1.20 BPF fingerprint stamp. ASA Stamped 2000, 2004, and 2012 are legal bats as well. Bats not allowed are Miken Ultra I/II and Senior bats. All bats will have to have either of these stamps in order to be used at HSP.

14. NEW STAY AWAY RULE. If batted ball hits a pitcher or infielder, all offensive players must stay away from the bat. ANY PLAYER WHO PICKS UP THE BAT WILL BE EJECTED FROM THE GAME. If the bat makes its way back to the dugout, the game is over. Forfeit. The player or team could be suspended from Houston Sportsplex. The umpire will initiate/institute this rule!
15. The homerun rule is “2 and 1-up.” This means that each team is allowed 2 homeruns, but after that can only be 1 homeruns “up” on the other team. Any additional homerun above this will be considered a dead ball out.
   • Example: Team A hits 2 homeruns in the 1st inning, then they cannot hit any more until Team B hits at least 2. Team B would be allowed to hit 3 homeruns in the 2nd inning, 2 to tie, and 1 to go “1-up” on Team A. If they hit 2 in the 2nd inning, Team A would then be allowed to hit a 3rd homerun to again be “1-up” on Team B.

16. All outfielders must remain behind the chalked and/or coned “outfield line” when a female is up to bat. If the “line” is not clearly marked it us up to the umpire’s discretion if an outfielder is too close to the infield.
   • There cannot be more than 6 players on the infield at any one time. Once contact has been made, the outfielders may cross the line. If an outfielder crosses the line before contact has been made, the female will be awarded first base.

17. If a base on balls is awarded to a male batter (intentional or not) and the next batter is a female, then the male batter will be awarded second base. If there are less than two outs, the female batter must bat. If there are two outs, the female batter has the option to walk or bat.

18. Teams may start play with a minimum of eight (8) players to begin a game. If a team begins with eight (8) players, then a minimum of one (1) must be female. Teams will take an out (ghost out) every time the second and third female's batting spot comes up on the line-up. With ten (10) players, a minimum of three (3) must be female. Only 7 males are allowed on the field on defense. Coaches are required to inform the opposing team and umpire of the position of the “ghost out”.

19. Your batting order is encouraged to consist of all your players playing in that game (i.e.: if you play 15 players, your batting order will be 1-15 organized in a way that complies with the male/female order defined in Rule #10). You may substitute players in the field from your batting line-up, but you are required to keep the other coach informed with each change. You are not allowed to replace a player in the batting line-up once the game has started unless of an injury. If you want to replace a player in the batting line-up other than injury, the player taken out cannot return to the field or batting line-up. Basically, your batting line-up is very important. You can do whatever you want as fielders, but you cannot change or modify your batting line-up unless with the items noted above.

20. Each team should be predominantly comprised of employees and spouses of an Architecture or Engineering Firm. We would like to keep each team as least 70-80% company employees or their spouses. Think of it like a company picnic—“Who would your company pay for and be invited to come to the employee picnic?” Relatives are borderline, but accepted in a way that does not get carried away. This rule is based on trust and honesty. I know that it can be hard to fill a team up with employees and when deadlines come up it is not fair to penalize those players that do not have a deadline. Remember that companies are welcomed to team up. If you have a total of 10 players, this means that at least 7 of them should be employees or spouses of an Architecture or Engineering Firm.

21. No leadoffs or stealing; runners can leave the base once the ball is hit by the batter. If a runner leaves early, the ball is dead and the runner is declared out. If this is the 3rd out of the inning the batter will be first up in the next inning. (See Rule #12 for additional information)

22. Base runner to defensive player contact will be closely watched by the ump. Any excessive contact or collision will result in an “out” and/or ejection. This includes contact with the catcher. Sliding is allowed. Any sliding into a base to break up a double play, or any intentional (in the eyes of the umpire) interference with the defensive player, the runner and the batter will be called out.

23. Safety Base is Required. The safety-base shall be 15 x 30 inches and not more than 3 inches high. The safety-base should be positioned so that the white portion is where first base would normally be (in fair territory) and the colored (red or orange) should be in foul territory. Any batted ball hitting the white portion should be fair and any ball hitting the red or orange part should be foul. On the initial throw to first base from the infield or outfield, the batter-runner MUST touch the red or orange portion of the base. If legally appealed by the defense during a live ball situation, the runner will be called out.
24. Any equipment in question should be brought to the attention of the umpire. The umpire or HSP staff will make all final decisions with regard to equipment discrepancies. NO METAL SPIKES ALLOWED.

25. The defensive player MUST always touch the white portion. This rule is in effect only on the initial play at first base, which does not include:
   - Returning to the base after over running.
   - Running on a base hit to the outfield (runner may touch the red or white part).
   - Re-tag to advance on a fly ball.

26. You are allowed one courtesy runner per inning, per sex.

27. If the ball is overthrown and hits the fence behind the 1st or 3rd base lines, this is NOT considered out of play and the runner may advance, BUT at his/her own risk. On overthrows out of play, the runner is granted the base he/she is going to (at the point of the throw) plus one more. Note: in cases where a base runner runs past first base, he/she must make a clearly aggressive turn towards second base to be granted 2nd and 3rd in overthrow situations.

28. On an infield fly (any fly ball within the infield with significant arc and deemed an “easy catch”) with less than 2 outs and runners on 1st & 2nd or 1st, 2nd & 3rd, the batter is automatically out and runners can advance, BUT at their own risk.

29. You can not switch positions at anytime during an inning unless:
   - Injury
   - Changing of a Pitcher (See Rule #11 for additional information)
   - If you are adding players from a 9 and under lineup to 10 players.

30. No switching/rotating positions during an inning. All player positions must remain the same during the entire inning. If you switch a player in the field with one of your players on the bench that is not in the batting line-up then that bench player must be inserted in the batting lineup where the player taken out is. The player taken out may not bat after being replaced.
   - “Switching” is not the same as “Shifting”. A shift, for example, is when a left-handed batter comes up to bat, the infield, and sometimes the outfield gets “shifted” or slid round to the right side of the field. This however leaves gaps in the infield and outfield. “Switching” is when you swap your left and right fielder when a left-handed batter comes up to bat to improve your defense on that side of the field, and is not allowed (for time saving purposes). A rover is considered a shift and not a switch only if the rover goes back to the position he/she came from.

31. Playoff rosters must be complete by the fourth week of regular play. Each captain must sign up with a good email address. All teams MUST enter their rosters again in HSP’s new system. Please make sure you get your roster on-line before Week 4. No team will be placed into the playoffs without a roster on-line. This will be checked during playoffs. All playoffs games will have ID's check before game can begin.

   Coaches please click on the link below to register your team.
   http://rosters.houstonsportsplex.com/default/user/register

   Sign up as a coach and register with the system. Then you will receive an email which you need to click on to verify the email address. Then proceed to login with the user name and password you setup and enter your team in the system. At that point you can add in your players. Please be sure to fill all information that is required for each player.

32. **FLIP/FLOP RULE:** If beginning an inning in which the Home Team is losing by a margin that constitutes a Run Rule for that inning, then the Home Team will “flip/flop” and become the Visiting Team, and the original Visiting Team will become the Home Team. If the new Visiting Team does not score enough runs to reduce the run difference below the run rule, then the game is over. If they reduce the run difference to below the run Rule, then the new Home Team will bat. If the new Home Team subsequently scores enough runs to exceed the Run Rule, the game will be over. If they do not, then the game will continue under that format.
33. Halo Rule: (Only for Male batters) Any batted ball (ground or not) within the marked pitching area and below arms length above the pitchers reach is a dead ball out. All runners should return to the base occupied during the at bat. In the event a pitcher is injured and has to leave the game the bat is disqualified and confiscated. If a pitcher moves away from the marked area then they are no longer protected by the Halo Rule. However if they move away from the marked area and the ball is still hit within the marked area the ball is also considered a dead ball out.

34. Strike Zone Mat: A strike zone mat will be used. The rectangular mat will be 20” wide and 35” in length. The mat is placed up to and around home plate and be aligned with the front edge of home plate. DEFENSE: A defensive player making a play at Home Plate must touch the regular home plate to make a play. Any legal pitch that strikes any portion of the black mat will be called a strike. If the pitch hit the home plate or doesn’t strike the black mat, the pitch will be called a ball. If the pitch touches black and home plate it is a strike. As long as it touches any part of the strike mat it will be called a strike. Legal Pitch: The pitched ball must arc at least 3ft after leaving the pitcher’s hand and before it reaches any part of home plate. The pitched ball shall not rise higher than 10ft from the ground.
Playoff Tournament Rules – “THE CALDERONI CUP”
1. The same rules used during the regular season will apply in the tournament playoffs and also for the World Series Championship game.

2. Only players on your original roster submitted during the third week of play are eligible to participate in the tournament. New players picked up after the third week of play may participate during the regular season, but not in the tournament playoffs.

3. Home team will be the higher seeded team.

4. (Single Elimination Tournament: with less than 18 Teams) At the end of the regular season teams will be ranked according to record and be divided into two division brackets to be played as single elimination brackets. If there are multiple teams with same records then the ranking will be determined by records against each other and then total runs scored during the season. Basically, teams only get one loss in order to become eliminated from the tournament.
   - The American Division will consist of the odd ranked teams.
   - The National Division will consist of the even ranked teams.
   - The Division Playoff games will follow normal regular season rules.
   - The top team from each division (Divisional Champs) will play a single World Series Championship Game. The Grand Championship game will be played using regular season rules. The winner of this game will take “THE CALDERONI CUP” to have their company name engraved on it (not provided), display it in their office until next season, and of course have bragging rights!!

5. (Double Elimination Tournament: with less than 18 Teams) At the end of the regular season teams will be ranked according to record and be divided into two division brackets to be played as double elimination brackets. If there are multiple teams with same records then the ranking will be determined by records against each other and then total runs scored during the season. Basically, teams must lose twice in order to become eliminated from the tournament.
   - The American Division will consist of the odd ranked teams.
   - The National Division will consist of the even ranked teams.
   - The Division Playoff games will follow normal regular season rules. A Division Championship game is the game where there is a possibility of a Division Champion being decided. Meaning that if Team “A” goes into a game with 1 loss and the Team “B” have 0 losses then this game is considered a Division Championship game. If team “B” loses then the next game will also be a Divisional Championship game.
   - The top team from each division (Divisional Champs) will play a single World Series Championship Game whether or not a team is undefeated. The Grand Championship game will be played using regular season rules. The winner of this game will take “THE CALDERONI CUP” to have their company name engraved on it (not provided), display it in their office until next season, and of course have bragging rights!!

6. (Upper/Lower Divisions Double Elimination Tournaments: with more than 18 Teams) At the end of the regular season teams will be ranked according to record and be divided into two division brackets to be played as double elimination brackets. Each Division (Upper and Lower) will be treated as a separate tournament bracket. If there are multiple teams with same records then the ranking will be determined by records against each other and then total runs scored during the season. Basically, teams must lose twice in order to become eliminated from the tournament.
   - The Upper Division will consist of the top 50% of the participating teams in the season.
   - The Lower Division will consist of the bottom 50% of the participating teams in the season.
   - In a season that there are an odd number of teams the middle team will have a choice to make on whether or not they want to be in the Upper or Lower Division.
   - At no point will the Upper Division Teams be matched up against the Lower Division Teams.
   - Each Division will have its Own Championship game playing with regular season rules. Both winning teams are to receive T-Shirts but “THE CALDERONI CUP” will only be awarded to the Upper Division Champion and be crowned A/E Softball Grand Champion. They will have a choice to have their company name engraved on it (not provided), and display it in their office until next season, and of course have bragging rights!!
7. If during playoffs the opposing coach protests one of your players and they are not on your official roster submitted by the 3rd week of play, then your team will forfeit the game and take a loss. Every player playing in the playoffs is required to have an ID. Any player not having an ID that is being protested then the team will take a forfeit and a loss.

- Protests on a roster will need to be brought up before the start of the 2nd Inning. If a late player joins the team after the 2nd Inning, the coach can only protest that player coming into the game as far as being in the roster.
- After the start of the 2nd Inning, there will be no further protests for players on the roster.

Protests

1. There are no protests on an umpire’s call. They call the plays as they see them, and the call stands once it has been made, see Rule #4.

2. You may, however, protest another team’s procedures (ex: batting lineup, player eligibility, etc.) Follow these steps:
   - Stop play while the infraction is being committed. Alert the umpires immediately, so that they may sort things out. If needed, have one of your players find the Arch/Engr Commissioners or HSP representative and bring them to your field so that they can help.
   - If you are not successful in stopping the game while the evidence is available, then the right to protest an infraction is lost.
   - Protests will be sorted out during game time, and lost time cannot be made up. Please be selective when filing a protest.