

INSTITUTE OF HUMAN KINETICS
Department of Teacher Education
Visayas State University

SOFTBALL
History of Softball and the ASA

Softball was invented inside the **Farragut Boat Club** on a blustery, winter day in **November, 1887, in Chicago, Illinois**. A bunch of Yale and Harvard alumni anxiously awaited the results of the Harvard-Yale football game, and when the news came that Yale had defeated Harvard, 17-8, one Yale supporter, overcome with enthusiasm, picked up an old boxing glove and threw it at a nearby Harvard alumni, who promptly tried to hit it back with a stick. This gave George Hancock, a reporter for the Chicago Board of Trade, an idea. He suggested a game of indoor baseball.

George Hancock used what was available; he tied together the laces of the boxing glove for a ball. Using a piece of chalk, Hancock marked off a home plate, bases and a pitcher's box inside the Farragut Boat Club gym, with the two groups divided into teams. The final score of the game was 41-40. The ball, being soft, was fielded barehanded, but what was significant was that Hancock and his friends had invented a sport that would continue to grow in popularity to where today more than 40 million people enjoy playing it each summer, making softball the No. 1 team participant sport in the United States. George Hancock is credited as the game's inventor for his development of ball and an undersized bat in the next week. The Farragut Club soon set rules for the game, which spread quickly to outsiders. Envisioned as a way for baseball players to maintain their skills during the winter, the sport was called "Indoor Baseball". Under the name of "Indoor-Outdoor", the game moved outside in the next year, and the first rules were published in 1889.

In 1895 **Lewis Rober**, Sr. of Minneapolis organized outdoor games as exercise for fire-fighters; this game was known as kitten ball (after the first team to play it, "The Kittens"), lemon ball, "mush ball", and "pumpkin ball" or diamond ball. Rober's version of the game used a ball 12 inches (305 mm) in circumference, rather than the 16-inch (406 mm) ball used by the Farragut club, and eventually the Minneapolis ball prevailed. The name softball had spread across the United States by 1930. By the 1930s, similar sports with different rules and names were being played all over the United States and Canada. The formation of the **Joint Rules Committee** on Softball in 1934 standardized the rules and naming throughout the United States. His ball was a small sized medicine ball with the bat two inches in diameter. The game became popular overnight and other fire companies began to play. In 1895, Rober transferred to another fire company and organized a team he called the Kittens.

George Kehoe, captain of Truck Company No. 1, named Rober's version of softball "Kitten League Ball" in the summer of 1900. It was later shortened to "Kitten Ball."

The name softball didn't come about until 1926 when **Walter Hakanson**, a Denver YMCA official and a former ASA president and commissioner, suggested it to the **International Joint Rules Committee**. Hakanson had come up with the name in 1926, but the committee didn't include the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) until 1934. Efforts to organize softball on a national basis didn't materialize until 1933, when **Leo Fischer** and **Michael J. Pauley**, a Chicago Sporting goods salesman, conceived the idea of organizing thousands of local softball teams in America into cohesive state organizations, and state organizations into a national organization.

To bring the teams together, Fischer and Pauley invited them to participate in a tournament in conjunction with the **1933 World's Fair** in Chicago. With the backing of the Chicago American newspaper, Pauley and Fischer invited **55 teams** to participate in the tournament. Teams were divided into three classes - **fastballers, slow pitch and women**. A 14-inch ball was used during the single-elimination event. During the 1934 National Recreation Congress, membership on the Joint Rules Committee was expanded to add the Amateur Softball Association (ASA). Until the formation of the ASA, softball was in a state of confusion, especially in the rules area where the length of the bases and pitcher's box were constantly being changed. The formation of the ASA gave softball the solidarity and foundation it needed to grow and develop throughout the U.S. under the network of associations proposed by Fischer and Pauley.

Development of Softball

1933 - Slow pitching was present in the World's Fair; the main course of action taken was to lengthen the pitching distance. Slow pitch achieved formal recognition in **1953** when it was added to the program of the Amateur Softball Association, and within a decade had surpassed fast pitch in popularity.

1934 - Amateur Softball Association was formed and gave stability to the name and rules of softball.

1940 - Fast pitching started to dominate the game.

1952 - The first British women's softball league was established.

1952 - The International Softball Federation (ISF) held its first meeting, taking control of International Softball competition.

1991 - Women's fast-pitch softball was selected to debut at the 1996 Summer Olympics.

2002 - Sixteen-inch slow pitch was written out of the ISF official rules, although it is still played extensively in the United States under The Amateur Softball Association of America, or ASA rules.

July 2005 - Voted to drop softball and baseball as Olympic sports for the 2012 Summer Olympic Games.

Nature of Softball

Softball is played between two teams on a large field called the "softball diamond", with 9 players from one team on the field at a time. The game is played in a series of innings, usually 7 (youth leagues may play 6). There is no time limit or clock as in other sports, although amateur leagues often impose a time limit for practical reasons. An inning is one series of both teams playing offense and defense. Each inning is divided into a top half and a bottom half, indicating which team is playing which role. The offense, bats and attempts to score runs, while the defense occupies the field and attempts to record outs in a variety of ways. After the defense records 3 outs, the half inning is over and the teams switch roles.

Object of the Game

To score more runs than the opposing team. The team with the most runs at the end of the game wins.

Equipment

Equipment differs for offensive and defensive positions.

- On offense, batters have a wooden or aluminum bat, batting gloves for grip, and batting helmets for protection.
 - On defense, fielders use a leather glove. The catcher has special protective equipment, including a face mask, chest protector, and shin/leg guards. All players wear shoes with cleats. The uniform consists of a jersey; pants, shorts, or skirt; and a baseball cap, visor, or headband.

Major Differences from Baseball

Fast pitch softball is similar to baseball; however, there are notable differences.

- For example, the pitch is delivered underhand, the ball is larger, the field is smaller, and base runners cannot leave a base until the pitcher releases the pitch.

The Game

1. There are 9 players on a softball team.
2. The playing field is divided into the infield and outfield
3. The lines between the bases are 60ft apart and when joined they form a “diamond”, inside the baseline is known as the infield.
4. Outside the baseline but inside the playing field is called the outfield. Any ball going outside the 1st or 3rd base line is a foul ball (runners cannot advance and the batter gets another try unless the ball was caught in the air, which translates to an out).

An official game is 7 innings (an inning is when both teams have had their turn to bat)

- The visiting team bats in the first half of each inning, called the “top of the inning;” the home team bats in the second half of each inning, called the “bottom of the inning.” There is no set time that an inning lasts; each half of the inning continues until the defense accumulates three outs. If the game is tied after the last inning, the game goes into “extra innings,” and continues until one team holds a lead at the end of an inning.

PITCHING

1. The pitcher must have both feet on the pitcher’s rubber and can only take one step forward while pitching.
2. The ball must be thrown underhand.
3. Both hands must be on the ball at the start of the pitch.

BATTING

1. Batters must follow the same order throughout the whole game.
2. The batter is out if and when:
 - a. Three strikes have been called
 - b. A fly ball is caught
 - c. The batter does not stand in the batter’s box

BASE RUNNING

1. Runners must touch each base in order.
2. Runners may overrun 1st base only, all other bases the runner may be tagged and called out if they are off the base.
3. Runners cannot lead off a base; they must be on base until the ball has left the pitcher's hand.
4. After a fly ball has been caught the base runner must tag the occupied base before advancing to the next base.
5. One base runner cannot pass another base runner that is ahead of them.
6. Stealing a base is not permitted a runner is out if:
 - a. They are tagged with the ball before reaching a base.
 - b. The ball gets to 1st base before the runner.
 - c. They run more than 3 feet out of the base line to avoid being tagged.

TERMS:

1. **Ball:** a legally pitched ball that does not enter the strike zone (four balls equals a walk).
2. **Altered Bat:** A bat is altered when the physical structure of a legal bat has been changed.
3. **Base on Balls:** A base on balls occurs when four pitches are judged by the plate umpire to be balls, including illegal pitches. The batter is awarded first base.
4. **Base Path:** A base path is a direct line between a base and the runner's position at the time a defensive player is attempting (or about to attempt) to tag a runner.
5. **Batter-Runner:** A batter-runner is a player who has finished a turn at bat but has not yet been put out or touched first base.
6. **Batting Order:** The batting order is the official listing of offensive players in the order in which members of that team must come to bat. When the line-up card is submitted, it shall also include each player's position.
7. **Bunt:** A bunt is a batted ball not swung at, but intentionally met with the bat and tapped slowly within the infield.
8. **Dead Ball:** Touches any object that is not part of the official equipment or official playing area or a player/person not engaged in the game. Lodges in the umpire's gear or in an offensive player's clothing. The umpire has ruled dead.
9. **Dislodged Base:** A dislodged base is a base displaced from its proper position.
10. **Grounder:** A ball that is hit on the ground.
11. **Force out:** when the runner has to advance to the next base to make room for the following base runner.
12. **Fly ball:** ball hit up in the air to the outfield.
13. **On deck:** the next batter.
14. **Strike:** term used when a ball is swung at and missed or is called when the ball enters the strike zone and is not swung at all.
15. **Strike zone:** the ball passes the batter over the plate between their chest and knees.
16. **Infield:** The infield is that portion of the field in fair territory which includes areas normally covered by infielders.
17. **Outfield:** The part of the field beyond the diamond, or infield. It is occupied by the fielders and it is farthest from the batsman.
18. **Foul Lines:** Two lines (first and third base line) that distinguish fair territory from foul territory.

19. **Fair Territory:** Fair territory is that part of the playing field within and including the first and third base foul lines from home plate to the extreme playing field fence and perpendicularly upward.
20. **Batter's Box:** Box marked with chalk near home plate that a batter must stay within while batting.
21. **Bases:** Home plate is one corner of a diamond with base at each corner. The bases are numbered counter clockwise as first base, second base, and third base.
22. **Inning:** An inning is that portion of a game within which the teams alternate on offense and defense, and in which there are three outs for each team. A new inning begins immediately after the final out of the previous inning.
23. **Over-Slide:** An over-slide is the act of an offensive player when as a runner he over-slides a base he is attempting to reach.
24. **Pitcher's Mound:** Located near the center of the diamond it is the spot from where the pitcher throws the ball.
25. **Double play:** A play in which the defense records two outs.
26. **Stealing:** Stealing is the act of a runner attempting to advance during or after a pitch to the batter. Stealing is not allowed in Slow Pitch.
27. **Triple Play:** A play during which the defense records three outs.
28. **Tag Out:** A base runner that is not on a base when she or he is tagged by a player with the ball. The defense must create three "outs" before it can switch to defense. Outs can be by strike out, force out, fly out or tag out.
29. **Hit:** A batted ball that allows a batter to safely reach base.
30. **Home Run:** Fair ball hit over the outfield fence between the two foul poles.
31. **Run:** An offensive player safely tags home plate.
32. **Strike Out:** Occurs during an at-bat when a batter accumulates three strikes, at which point the at-bat ends and the player is called out.
33. **Safe:** Called when a base runner reaches a base without getting **tagged out** or avoids a **force out**.
34. **Hit and run:** Base runner advances to the next base when the pitch is released, knowing that the batter is swinging at the pitch.
35. **Sacrifice:** A batter strategically hits the ball into an out situation to advance or score a runner. Usually a "sacrifice bunt" or "sacrifice fly."

PLAYING POSITIONS

- A. **Outfielders (CF, RF, and LF):** Positioned beyond the infield, they catch and field "fly balls," line drives, and ground balls hit into the outfield.
- B. **Second Basemen (2B):** Plays in the gap between the bag at second and the first baseman. Receives throws from fielders attempting to make outs at 2nd base and fields "grounders" and "pop ups" hit to this side of the infield.
- C. **Short Stop (SS):** Fields the balls hit to the infield between second and third base. She or He covers second base (along with the second baseman) and is often involved in force plays and "double plays" with the second baseman.
- D. **Pitcher (P):** Throws the softball from the center of the diamond (pitcher's mound) to the catcher. The pitcher uses an underarm motion to pitch the ball toward the "strike zone". After making a pitch, the pitcher gets ready to field balls hit up the middle.
- E. **Third Basemen (3B):** Plays to the left of third base and covers any plays there. Receives throws from other fielders attempting to make outs at 3rd base.

- F. **First Basemen (1B):** Positioned just to the left of the first base. Their main role is to make fielding plays on balls hit toward first base.
- G. **Catcher (C):** Plays in a semi-crouched position behind home plate and receives pitches thrown by the pitcher. Also receives throws from fielders attempting to make outs at home plate.

CAUTIONS SPECIFIC TO SOFTBALL

1. All protective equipment required by rule must be worn at practice and competition in those situations that require it.
2. Helmets are to be worn by batters, base runners, catchers, and base coaches.
3. "On deck" hitters are to take practice swings in a designated circle but with complete attention directed to the pitcher and batter. If no circle is designated, stand behind the backstop. Keep hand off the backstop.
4. Swing only one bat when taking practice swings. Use a bat ring that will not slide off the thick end of the bat.
5. Batting practice, infield drills, outfield drills and pitching practice are to be done in designated areas and at designated times. DO NOT begin these practices without the direction of the coach.
6. Sliding is only to be performed in the manner taught and approved by the coach BEFORE it is tried.
7. Offensive and defensive participants involved in sliding or other close plays must recognize the possibility of being hit by a thrown ball, being bumped accidentally, or of being injured by friction burn or being stepped on. Be alert to the location of the ball and opponents. Assume a protected position. Do not leave limbs extended when on the ground.
8. Burns, sprains, strains, and contusions must be reported to coaches.
9. Dugout participants on the field must be alert to its location when making defensive plays. Participants in the dugout must be alert to foul balls, overthrows or defensive participants moving toward the dugout at high speed.

Officiating Officials

The Plate Umpire

- a. Shall take a position in back of the catcher. He shall have full charge of, and be responsible for, the proper conduct of the game.
- b. Shall call all balls and strikes.
- c. Shall, by agreement and in cooperation with the base umpire, call plays, hit balls, fair or foul, legal or illegal caught balls. On plays that would necessitate the base umpire leaving the infield, the plate umpire shall assume the duties normally required of the base umpire.
- d. Shall determine and declare whether:
 - ✓ A batter bunts, or chops, a ball.
 - ✓ A batted ball touches the person, or clothing, of the batter.
- e. Shall render base decisions when required to do so.
- f. Shall determine when a game is forfeited.
- g. Shall assume all duties, when assigned as a single umpire to a game.

The Base Umpire

- a. Shall take such positions on the playing field as required in accordance with the relevant umpire systems.
- b. Shall assist the plate umpire in every way, to enforce the rules of the game.

The Official Scorer

- a. Shall keep records of each game as outlined in the following rules.
- b. Shall have the sole authority to make all decisions involving judgment. For example, it is the scorer's responsibility to determine whether a batter's advance to first base is the result of a hit, or an error. However, a scorer shall not make a decision which conflicts with the Official Playing Rules, or with an umpire's decision.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3p4yyJ6-pDA>

Prepared by:

EDILBERTO A. ARTIGA JR. II

Instructor, IHK

RALPH JULIUS A. BUEN

Instructor, IHK