

The United States Specialty Sports Association sponsors 2 divisions of Fastpitch: USA Elite Select (USAES) and USSSA. Both divisions are governed by the USSSA Fastpitch Rules Book, but it's important to know which brand you are umpiring. USSSA rules are generally more liberal than USAES.

Here is a summary. Where the rules differentiate between USAES and USSSA, the differentiation is noted; otherwise, the following apply to BOTH divisions,

COURTESY RUNNER

USAES requires the CR to be a substitute who has not been in the game, just like FED and USA Softball. However, that sub may run for both the pitcher and catcher -- just NOT IN THE SAME INNING. If a team has no unused subs, they have no CR option.

USSSA - requires teams to use the USAES rule first to determine their CR. If, and only if, a team has no unused subs, then, and only then, they may use the Last Completed at Bat (LCAB) as a CR.

The bottom line regarding CR's is -- In USAES, if you have no unused sub, you have no CR; in USSSA, you always have a CR option, even if you have no unused subs

LINEUPS

USAES has one lineup method with multiple options. In USAES, teams must use a TRADITIONAL (i.e., uses the substitution/re-entry rule) LINEUP which may have 9, 10, or 11 batters with (or without) the DP/FLEX option. The additional batters are known as additional players (APs), and they may bat anywhere in positions 1-11 and play defense as well.

USSSA uses the USAES traditional lineup as well, but also allows a ROSTER BATTING OPTION. Under Roster Batting, a team bats all players physically present (batters in excess of 9 are listed as APs). A late arriving player is added to the end of the batting order. Because a team has no unused substitutes under Roster Batting, they use the LCAB CR option.

SHORTHANDED RULE

In both divisions, lineup size is established at the pre-game conference. Throughout the game, a team is required to maintain the batting order at the number established at the plate meeting. If a player leaves the game FOR ANY REASON and no substitutes are available to fill the vacancy, the following applies:

USAES - allows a team to drop ONE batter -- the vacancy is notated on the lineup card as the ABSENT PLAYER. Whenever the Absent Player is due to bat, an out is declared. In USAES, only one Absent Player is allowed; if another player leaves with no replacement available, the director/UIC should be summoned to declare a forfeit

USSSA - allows MULTIPLE Absent Players, as long as a team maintains at least 8 batters. An out is declared each time an Absent Player fails to bat. If a team is using Roster Batting and a player arrives late, she is entered in the Absent Player's spot rather than added to the end of the lineup

OTHER USSSA RULES

DEFENSIVE CONFERENCES - 3 per game allowed, must replace pitcher on the 4th and thereafter

BUNT ATTEMPT - the bat must be WITHDRAWN as in FED

PITCHER'S FEET - part of pivot foot must be on TOP of the pitching plate; the non-pivot foot must be IN CONTACT with the plate ("toed up")

JEWELRY - STUD EARRINGS are allowed if not dangerous. Other jewelry is not. Coaches wristbands must be worn as designed WHEN BATTING

BATS - must have the USSSA THUMBPRINT logo to be legal. The Easton GHOST model is NOT LEGAL unless it has the thumbprint logo, BAT CHECKS MUST BE PERFORMED BEFORE EACH AND EVERY GAME

CHINSTRAPS are not required; METAL CLEATS allowed in 13U AND ABOVE -- ILLEGAL in 12U and below

BLUE STITCH USSSA ball must be used (47 COR, 375)

LINEUPS must have starters' first name, last name, number and position -- subs must have first and last name -- a player may be added to the lineup card at any time as long as she is on the online roster (umpires should take a coach's word that a player is on the online roster -- if she isn't, the opposing coach should protest and then it's up to the director to resolve the eligibility protest)

CLOCK starts when the PREGAME CONFERENCE ends

In COLD WEATHER, HEATERS must be at the far end of the dugout (farthest away from the bats)

ON-DECK BATTERS must use the on-deck circle on THEIR SIDE

HIT BY PITCH - batter does not have to attempt to avoid a pitch in the batter's box, but may not move into the pitch to get hit

3 LEVELS OF BEHAVIORAL SANCTION: Warning, restriction and ejection. Use progressively where possible

RUN RULES: 12/10/8 after 3/4/5 innings

10U BALL has only TWO rules differences: ball size and pitching distance. Everything else is the same

NOT USSSA RULES:

No verbal intentional walks

An Illegal Pitch is STILL a ball on the batter AND runner advancement

SLAPPERS must have the foot completely out of the box and on the ground at bat/ball contact to be illegal -- if the foot is touching the line, the batter is LEGAL

BATTERS are NOT REQUIRED to keep a foot in the box between pitches, but must be in position within 10 seconds

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