

Softball History

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The interest in baseball during the last part of the 19th century created the need for a similar game that could be played indoors during the winter months. In 1887, George W. Hancock, a member of the Farragut Boat Club in Chicago, Illinois developed the game of indoor softball. In 1895, Lewis Rober of the Minneapolis, Minnesota Fire Department adapted the game for outdoor play. Rober's game is considered the forerunner of the modern game of softball, since the rules used are similar to those used today.

In 1927, the National Recreation Association set up a committee to establish rules for the game that would make it adaptable for playground facilities. In the same year, an adaptation of the men's rules was made for women and a committee of the American Physical Education Association adopted these rules.

During the depression years of the 1930's, the unemployed workers saw the game being played by both boys and girls in recreation centers. They became interested in the game and began playing it in their neighborhoods. At first, the game had many names including playground ball, recreation baseball, kitten ball and softball. The popularity of the game spread throughout the country and, in 1933, a national softball tournament was held at the Chicago World's Fair under the direction of Lee J. Fisher and M. J. Pauley. These same men organized the Amateur Softball Association, which officially adopted the name of the game and standardized the rules and equipment. Each year, a Championship World's Softball Association Tournament is conducted for both the men and women in whom teams compete from all parts of the country.

The Activity

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The game of softball is played between two teams composed of ten players each, designated as catcher, pitcher, first baseman, second baseman, shortstop, third baseman, left fielder, left center fielder, right center fielder, and right fielder. The purpose of the game is for one team to score more runs than their opponents in the regulation seven innings. If the score is tied at the end of seven innings, the game continues until one team scores more runs than the other team at the end of a complete inning. In the final inning, the team that bats last does not receive its turn to bat if it is winning. Unless otherwise stated, the choice of first or last bat in the first

inning is decided by a toss of a coin. An inning is completed when each of the teams have been alternately on offense (at bat) and on defense (in the field) and have made three outs while at bat.

Although softball is quite similar to baseball, the basic differences involve: 1. Bases are 60 feet apart rather than 90 feet, 2. The pitcher's mound to home plate is 46 rather than 60'6", 3. A regulation game is seven innings rather than nine innings, 4. The pitchers delivery must be underhand, 5. Base runners must remain in contact with the base until the ball leaves the pitcher's hand, and 6. The ball is larger and the bat is smaller.

Scoring- A run is recorded each time a player on the offensive team (team at bat) becomes a base runner and legally and safely advances from home plate to all 3 bases and returns to home plate again before 3 outs are recorded. A run does not count if the third out in an inning is made. There is no limit to the number of runs that a team may score in each inning. A forfeited game is scored as 7-0 in favor of the team not at fault.

Equipment- the equipment used in the game of softball includes: 1. Softball 2. A bat, 3. Gloves- 3 different kinds, 4. Bases, 5. Catcher's equipment which includes a mask, chest protector and shin guards.

TERMS

Balk- A pitcher making an illegal motion with one or more players on base.

Ball- A ball thrown by the pitcher that does not cross the plate between the batter's knees and arm pits, and the batter does not swing at it.

Bullpen- The name given to the area, usually near the end of the right or left field foul lines, in foul territory, where pitchers and catchers get ready to enter the game.

Bunt- A ball that is legally hit, usually by placing the bat in front of the ball without swinging and projecting the ball slowly to the infield to either advance a runner or get on base safely.

Called strike- A pitch that the umpire calls a strike even when the hitter does not attempt to swing at the ball.

Curve- A pitched ball that curves rather than proceeding straight due to the spin given to the ball when it is released.

Cut-off- When a player intercepts a throw for another player with the intention of putting out a base runner or preventing a base runner from advancing to another base.

Double- A fair hit ball that permits the batter to reach second base safely without an error occurring.

Doubleheader- Two games, one played after the other, during the same afternoon or evening.

Double play- Two outs made in succession during the time the pitcher throws the ball and receives it back again for the next pitch.

Error- A misplay by a member of the defensive team that allows either the batter to continue batting, or a base runner to advance bases.

Fielder's choice- When a player on the defensive team chooses to put out a base runner instead of the batter on a batted ball.

Fly ball- A ball that is hit high into the air.

Force out- When a base runner is put out because it was necessary for him to advance to another base.

Foul ball- A batted ball, either on the ground or in the air, that lands outside the foul lines.

Full count- When a batter has 2 balls and 1 strike called on him.

Ground ball- A batted ball that is hit on the ground.

Hit- A batted ball in fair territory that permits the batter to reach one or more bases safely without the aid of an error.

Home run- A batted ball in fair territory that does not involve an error and allows the batter to circle all the bases.

Inning- When both offensive and defensive teams have been at bat and each team has made 3 outs.

Line drive- A ball hit with considerable force in a line parallel to the ground.

Passed ball- When the catcher fails to control a pitched ball that he should have caught and it allows the base runner to advance another base.

Pinch hitter- A player who enters the game in order to bat for another player.

Put out- Recorded for the defensive player who handles the ball last on a play that retires a base runner.

Sacrifice- A ball hit by the batter that advances the base runner and results in the batter being out at first base.

Single- A fair hit that permits the batter to reach first base safely without an error occurring.

Stolen base- When a base runner advances to a base without the assistance of a hit, put-out, an error, a force-out, a fielder's choice, a passed ball, a wild pitch, or an illegal pitch.

Strike- A ball throw by the pitcher that crosses the plate between the batter's knees and armpits which he does not swing at or swings at and misses. Also a foul hit.

Triple- A fair hit ball that permits the batter to reach third base safely without an error occurring.

Triple play- Three outs made in succession during the time the pitcher throws the ball and receives it back again for the next pitch.

Walk- When the batter advances to first base due to the pitcher throwing 3 pitches that are not in the strike zone.

Wild pitch- A ball, legally thrown by the pitcher, that is so high, or wide of the plate that the catcher cannot control it.