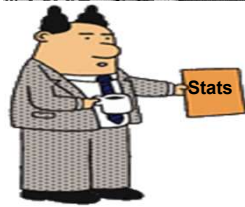




**Community  
Sportsmanship  
Competition**



## **Managing Teams in EMASS**

**EMASS Board  
Division Coordinators**

Welcome.

This material integrates information from a few different sources:

1. The EMASS Guidelines for Managers and Players document.
2. Good ideas, practices and experience from several EMASS oldtimers.
3. Guidance and wisdom from EMASS division coordinators and managers.

Good managers are in short supply everywhere in the world. Managing a Senior Softball team can be rewarding and a lot of fun...or it can be a burden and frustrating (for you and our members). We put this material together to help EMASS managers be more efficient and more effective at increasing the enjoyment across our membership.

# Why We Play

- We enjoy playing senior softball



– Connecting with like-minded peers



– Competing in the sport we love



– Winning

- What are the obstacles?



– Aging



– Injuries



– ***Frustrating management***



Most of us senior softball players know how blessed we are to play. We are inspired by the elder players who can still perform well at an advanced age. We love seeing a teammate return from an injury, or some other life-threatening ailment. We enjoy the escape to our fields where camaraderie, teamwork and competition block out the everyday challenges and stresses.

Senior softball is a pastime where the main goal is healthy enjoyment for everyone involved. Playing softball is fun. Winning softball games is more fun but winning is NOT the highest priority. EMASS offers the fun of healthy competition without conflict.

In this pursuit of enjoyment, there are some obstacles to overcome. We don't want frustrating team management to be one of those obstacles. The objective of this content is to ensure that the role of our team managers is well-defined and that we are doing the best we can to deliver a "well-managed" league.

## The Objectives of this Material



Primary Objective:

- Share some effective management practices to improve the enjoyment across our divisions.

Expected Outcomes:

1. More effective team leadership
2. More enjoyment, fewer complaints
3. Improve the wisdom in this workshop

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Our 2019 survey had some clear messages from our members. One of these was that ***team leadership has a significant impact on the overall experience and enjoyment.*** The EMASS board and our division coordinators hear this message anecdotally every year as well. Feedback varies across the divisions but here are some examples we hear from our members:

1. “The difference between good team management and poor team management is a huge factor in the enjoyment I experience in any particular season.”
2. “I did not enjoy my EMASS experience this year. Our manager was more concerned about winning every game.”
3. “The board should offer guidance on good team management practices.”
4. “Some managers are overly competitive resulting in an unfair and unequal amount of playing time.”
5. “Some managers spend too much time sniping about team balance. Micro-managing team balance is a fool’s errand. Just play ball with the skills you are given.”
6. “Managers need to come to the field with an offensive lineup and a defensive plan for rotating players in the field. We all want a plan that is communicated clearly.”

Each division is different; some of the rules are different in each division and how they operate is substantially at the discretion of the division coordinator. One of the most important responsibilities for each division coordinator is to attract and retain good managers. This is crucial to a successful division. If you are a manager, it is because your division coordinator has confidence that you will do it well. It is important to work closely with your division coordinator to lead a team successfully and to maximize the enjoyment you get out of being a manager.

# Make Team Management Fun

- Pay attention to administrative and strategy needs
- Play Offense: Know your players.
  - Communications: Open, timely and trustworthy
  - Strategy: Safety & Sportsmanship first, but play to win
  - Leadership: Practice what we preach
- Play Defense: Shit happens.
  - Manage the risks of absences, injuries, poor sportsmanship
  - Balance the load: rotate people, rest everyone, use everyone



Think of managing a team as a game. Have a game plan. Play offense. Play defense. Do it well and your team will have more fun. **Teams having fun win a lot more games.**

Playing offense includes getting to know your teammates not only as players, but as people. We are not paid professionals, we are just a bunch of folks out to compete and have a good time. If the players know you care, they will trust you. Communicate on and off the field, be prepared with a plan and lead the team in sportsmanship.

Playing defense means managing risks and avoiding obstacles. Absences and injuries happen. You need backup players for every position on your team and occasionally from pool players. Communicating with your players and division coordinator helps you to be prepared and field the best skills at your disposal. Nip any hint of bad sportsmanship on your team early before it festers into a real problem. Finally, watch out for exhaustion, safety concerns, and rest breaks to help avoid injuries.

In leading a team, there is both administrative work and strategic decision making. Administrative activities include communications, scheduling, scorekeeping, safety, personnel. Strategy decisions include lineups, fielders, and game plan decisions.

Most teams use 2 managers to cover all the administration and strategy work. Rarely does a single person enjoy and excel at all these management responsibilities. In EMASS, our co-managers usually collaborate to make administrative decisions and strategy decisions. In most co-management teams one person typically takes on most of the administrative management and strategy decisions are shared. This is completely up to the managers but don't underestimate the impact of strong administrative management.

# Content



## Outline of Topics

- **Introduction**
- Why? EMASS culture
- Who? Roster management
- What? Communications
- When? Calendar, scheduling
- Where? Fields/Equipment
- How? Strategies
- How much? Time, effort
- Summary and conclusions


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This content is structured around seven basic questions:

1. Why: The EMASS raison d'être
2. Who: People aspects
3. What: Communication aspects
4. When: Timing aspects
5. Where: Field aspects
6. How: Strategy aspects
7. How much: Effort expectations

## Why?

Reinforce  
our EMASS  
culture



## Outline of Topics

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Our first topic is contextual but the most important topic our leadership needs to understand and internalize.

**Why do we play?**

The simple answer is that **we love to compete in the game of softball within a community of like-minded peers.**

As managers, we are all part of the EMASS shared leadership team and responsible for upholding the culture that we all hope to participate in.

What is the EMASS culture?

We communicate our culture with 3 themes: **Community, sportsmanship and competition** and prioritized in that order.

Who is responsible for our culture?

Ultimately, the EMASS board is responsible. We delegate this responsibility to our division coordinators who delegate this responsibility down to their Team Managers. And we ask all our members to share and participate in the leadership and practice of our values.

Per our by-laws, all team managers must be approved by the division coordinators and EMASS board. The discriminating factor in manager approval, or disapproval, by the EMASS board are **our beliefs that a candidate will be a model of our culture and lead a team to optimize the enjoyment of our community with good sportsmanship in a competitive manner.**

# EMASS Culture

*EMASS is a vibrant community of more than 400 members who love softball and compete in a sportsmanlike manner.*



- **Community:**

- *Supportive teammates, opponents, friends*



- **Sportsmanship:**

- *Respect the game and everyone lucky enough to be on the field.*



- **Competition:**

- *Safety & fun first but we play to win*

**EMASS leadership must practice what we preach.**

**Leadership = EMASS Board, division coordinators, team managers**

The EMASS culture is captured in three themes: Community, Sportsmanship and Competition, **in that order**. If you are a manager, you will do well if you simply prioritize these three themes in your decision making:

1. *What would our members want us to do? (What is best for the community is the highest priority)*
2. *What do the EMASS rules say we should do? (Sportsmanship is the next priority)*
3. *What is the best thing we can do to win? (Competing to win is a lesser priority)*

Every member of every EMASS team wants to win and gets more enjoyment out of winning than losing. But winning is less important than playing with others who share our love of the game of softball.

Good sportsmanship is primarily evident in competition without conflict as well as all the banter, wit and support that you hear out on the field. Almost every member of our senior softball community has health issues and challenges like diminished strength and less stamina. We can't run as fast as we used to. We can't throw as hard or as far. Some of us have replaced hips or knees. Most of us have sore backs, too much belly fat, or are more overweight than we wish. We have trouble just bending over. Competing in senior softball is a statement by us all. We thumb our nose at Father Time and we are all deeply grateful to take the field and compete together whether we are teammates or opponents.

Winning is great, but secondary.

# Sportsmanship in EMASS

- Good Sportsmanship



- Follow the rules of the game
- Empathy, respect and positive attitudes
- Diverse skillsets, teamwork, everyone contributes

- Bad Sportsmanship



- EMASS Code of Conduct forbids certain behaviors
  - » Verbal assault (threats, profanity, provocation, ridicule,...)
  - » Physical assault or intimidation
  - » Deceitful behavior
- Drinking/smoking at any EMASS field



Sportsmanship. We all know abstractly what it is, but how about writing it down?

**Sportsmanship** has a few dimensions:

1. Personal attributes: such as self-control, courage, and persistence
2. Team attributes: such as fairness, shared leadership/support and putting team outcomes first
3. Game attributes: such as respect for the rules of the game, and respect for authority, umpires and opponents.

The EMASS code of conduct draws some redlines for behaviors we consider unacceptable. The appendix at the end of this document has more detail on those behaviors and procedures for addressing code of conduct violations. While there are many gray areas, we do hope all managers and players can help everyone avoid going over any red lines.



# De-escalating

- Team managers argue disputed calls
  - Umpires should calmly & respectfully ensure this
- DO:
  - **Understand the rules**
  - Ask the vocal combatants to move away
  - Listen calmly to each side of the dispute
  - Accept bad judgment calls. We all make errors
  - Positive body language
- DO NOT:
  - Get personal, name-call, or provoke aggression



We want our managers to help avoid conflict and de-escalate conflict. Probably the most important advantage in avoiding and de-escalating disputes is to **know the rules**. If you are ignorant of the rules, you are going to infuriate the other side and complicate the resolution.

Many players want to vent their frustration with a bad call. That is human nature, or senior softball player nature. When a call goes against a player, let them scream and bitch **once**, and then ask them to stop. It is a part of the game to protest bad or unfair calls - once. Anything further needs to be between the managers and the umpire.

When someone gets upset about a call, it can be difficult to refrain from arguing with them. Remember, it takes two to argue. If someone is trying to argue with you, and you are calm and non-confrontational, chances are that the other person will also calm down or stop arguing all together. Disputed calls can be discussed in a respectful manner. Here are some general tips for de-escalating arguments:

1. Let the other person talk through their dispute.
2. Show that you listened by repeating the comments back to them.
3. Judgment calls should not turn into debates. Poor judgments are part of the game.
4. Only discuss the current issue, previous calls don't matter anymore.


Positive body language matters a lot.

1. Avoid aggressive hand gestures. People innately feel that aggression and it could make the matter worse.
2. Eye contact and facial expressions help people know you are listening and engaged.
3. Avoid tuning away and staring off into space.
4. Stay calm and act calm, not confrontational. Keep body posture up and look approachable.

In EMASS, as in most baseball leagues, we want the managers talking through disputes with umpires. If a player is arguing, their manager should immediately take the player aside, calmly ask to understand the beef, ask the players to back off, move away with the umpire, represent the beef, discuss the resolution, and accept the outcome.

## Who?

Roster  
management



## Outline of Topics

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Division coordinators do their best to create balanced teams where every team has the **potential** skills to win a division. The team that uses their assets most effectively will usually win. *We give each team roughly the same potential energy, but it is up to them to convert that potential energy into kinetic energy (putting assets in motion to play games) that accomplishes work (wins).* Clearly, our managers play a crucial role in the decisions that lead to wins.

One primary responsibility of division coordinators is the balance of teams across a division. As a manager, you also have some responsibility for the team balance across a division. Your inputs and feedback to the division coordinator are important throughout the year when you perceive an out-of-balance team. But don't expect all your beefs to be agreed to and acted on. Division coordinators must make these decisions as best they can based on several competing opinions.

Skills balance is a complex judgment across many factors. Micro-managing (obsessing about little stuff) this balance is a recipe for frustration just as ignoring obvious imbalances are a recipe for frustration. When a team loses a player to a season-ending injury early in the schedule, there may be an imbalance that a division coordinator feels compelled to resolve.

Once balancing decisions are made, it is important for managers to support those decisions. Spreading any discord among teammates is poisonous to the culture and to team unity. We don't always agree with team balancing decisions, and they are never perfect, but once the leadership team decides, we owe it to our teams to accept those decisions as "best for the division" and move forward with unity. This is a big part of shared leadership.

# Who? Roster Management

- Forming rosters (Division coordinator & all managers)
  - Balance skills objectively and dispassionately
    - **Winning is a function of balance AND execution**
    - **Losing is also a function of balance AND execution**
- Lineups and fielding positions
  - Bat everyone and play everyone
  - Unified, happy teams win more than their share
- Pool Players should not pre-empt team players
  - Sub for missing position player if needed or elsewhere



Managing your own team roster is also an exercise in balance. Balancing lineups and fielders is an important aspect of team enjoyment, sportsmanship, player participation, and competitiveness.

EMASS managers have wide discretion on who to play, where to play them, and how much everyone plays. We do not want to micromanage these decisions or write up rules that complicate team management. Consequently, we mostly leave it up to management discretion.

EMASS imposes no explicit guidelines for playing time. But every manager should ensure that every player on a team has an opportunity to contribute. We all pay the same enrollment fee. Everyone bats and every player should be in the field at least a few innings per game. Managers should understand everyone's positional preferences and adjust the best they can to accommodate.

Managers are encouraged to **share their plan** for assigning playing time in the field, using courtesy runners, etc. This can be done before the first game or before each game. Some managers might use a different plan during the regular season than during the playoffs. Helping teammates understand the plan and the rationale for the plan can help set expectations early and avoid player misunderstandings.

When it comes to pool players, they should usually be used in the position vacated by an absence, but they should not take precedence over other roster players who have showed a preference for that position and

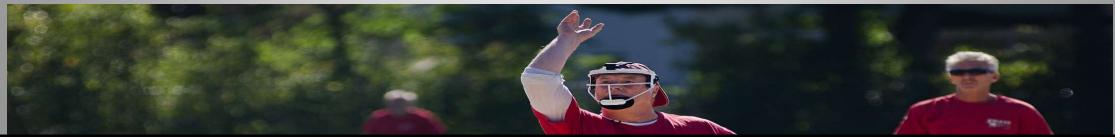
are available. In other words, they are there to fill in and pool player preferences should not pre-empt roster player preferences.

# Diversity of Skills

- Every league has stronger players and weaker players—Even MLB!
  - Variations in skills is what makes team sport so much fun.

**Without weaker players, we don't have a league!**

- No player should feel unwelcome
  - Benching players or confining them to catcher
  - Discouraging any player from playing in the playoffs
  - Public or private discouragement/ridicule



In the past, we have seen instances of managers and players making some of our weaker players unwelcome. Creating an unwelcome environment comes in many forms, but we all know it when we see it.

**This is one area where we want our leadership to throw gas on the fires of welcome (encouragement, participation, friendliness) and water on the cinders of unwelcome (open ridicule, behind-the-back ridicule, disgust, and discouraging participation in any way.)**

The board's strong preference is that the culture of every team, every manager, and every division coordinator is one of shared leadership and accountability through self-policing. If somebody sees any words or action that make others feel unwelcome, we want them to say so directly to the source of the unwelcome. "Dude, that ain't cool" or "C'mon buddy, nobody deserves that treatment" or "Let's encourage our teammates, not shit on them" are fine reactions. It is more meaningful when these minor interventions come from teammates and not authority figures (like the board or the division coordinator). It reinforces the culture we all want to play in.

Some players enjoy being a weaker player in a stronger division and some players enjoy being a stronger player in a weaker division. That is their choice, not ours. The exception is when there is a true safety issue perceived or the division's minimal skills requirements are not met, but these exceptions should be rare.

1. When one of these exceptions is raised, we expect the decision to be a consensus of the division's managers and division coordinator, and NOT the decision of a single manager.
2. We prefer that players make such division changes at the beginning of a new season because they feel they will have more fun in the new division, NOT because they were made to feel unwelcome in last year's division.

## A Relative Skills Matrix

	Hitting	Power	Running	Fielding	Throwing	Heart, Hustle, Attitude + √ -	Attendance Reliability
<b>5</b>	Batting Average over 700	Threat to hit HR in any AB	Fast and smart (both in field & on bases)	Catches everything within reach; frequent gems	Accurate Cannon	All-Around great teammate	Played in >80% regular season games
<b>4</b>	600 - 700	At least one extra base hit in most games	Good range Good baserunner; can pinch run	Makes most routine plays; occasional gem	Strong and accurate most of the time		
<b>3</b>	Over 500	More than 1/2 balls hit into outfield	Not a liability Doesn't need pinch runner	Reliable to make routine plays; seldom flashy	Average	Good teammate	Played in 60-80% of games
<b>2</b>	350-500	Majority of AB's are ground balls or soft flies	Needs pinch runner; Limited range	Error prone	Weak or inaccurate	Hard to coach, complainer	Played in less than 60% of games
<b>1</b>	Under 350	Hits seldom leave infield	Can't run	Safety concerns	Injured arm		

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Division coordinators hold the primary responsibility for decisions on Team Balance. Managers can help the division coordinators with objective feedback on their team and other teams. At the end of the year, managers should be prepared to provide division coordinators with rough assessments of player skills so there is an objective basis for balancing skills next year. These relative skill assessments are **confidential**. Their only purpose is to form teams. Sharing them outside the leadership team is a fool's errand and will result in a bunch of non-productive debates.

We generally judge skills in a division with a number between 1 and 5. This approach is plenty accurate even though it is not very precise. The matrix shown here is probably the most precise assessment we need. This may be more data than some division coordinators want to use, but it is a good starting point. Each division coordinator should maintain some sort of spreadsheet of assessments across all the players to help in balancing teams next year.

**Division coordinators search for accurate balance not precise balance.** In softball skills balance, we know our player skills accurately (like rating someone a 1 or a 3 or a 5) but not very precisely (like a 3.3). **We can't compare player skills precisely, therefore we should all resist making small changes.**

One objective way to assess team balance is to look at the average age on each team in a division. Within a division, most EMASS teams (15 players) should have an average age within a few years of each other with some occasional wide variations. In tournament play, a 5-year difference in average age is dealt with by giving the older team a +5 run handicap. So if you see the difference between the youngest team's average age and the oldest team's average age is 4 or 5 years, it may be worth discussing. Again, we shouldn't treat the average age as a precise reflection of skill but it is sometimes a good quality check.

**What?**  
Communication

WTF?

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EMASS managers are responsible for communicating EMASS information TO our teams and providing feedback to the league FROM our teams. We take pride in maintaining a well-managed league and the crux of “well-managed” is to communicate in a timely and effective manner. These communication channels include the following:

1. Reinforcing EMASS values and culture
2. Rosters and schedules
3. Offensive and defensive lineups on game days
4. EMASS rules, especially senior softball rules unique to EMASS
5. Game operations and disputes with umpires
6. Award voting, EMASS events, and other special league wide initiatives
7. EMASS Board and division coordinator decisions to teams
8. Feedback from teams back to division coordinators or the EMASS Board
9. Escalating any safety issues or serious conflicts



# What? Communications



- Communications with Div Coordinators

- Pool player needs
- Team feedback, division feedback



- Communications with team

- Weekly player availability
- Game lineups, field positions, pinch runners



- Communication with umpires

- Courtesy runners
- Rule, call disputes
- Roster changes

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Managers have 3 distinct channels of communication.

1. To and from division coordinators. Rosters, injury reports, pool player needs, safety concerns, feedback on division operations.
2. To and from teammates. Attendance, complaints, lineups, field assignments, running assignments. For new players, managers have a special obligation to help them understand the senior softball rules and especially those rules that are unique to EMASS, or to certain divisions in EMASS.
3. To and from umpires. Ground rules, disputes, courtesy runners and roster changes during a game.

The best managers and best division coordinators are always strong communicators.



# Communications Options

- Communication
  - Email, phone, text
  - Preferences vary. Be prepared for some differences
- Communications with TeamSites (Phone App)
  - Attendance Polls
  - Team Rosters, Calendars, E-mail
- Training is available: <https://www.screencast.com/t/9KyZKPxz12f>




Players may prefer to communicate with very different styles. Some like email, some like phone calls, some like word of mouth. Understanding how to communicate with all the members of your team is important. Some are responsive, some are not.

We do have a phone app available to us that provides everything you need. It is easy to use and our teams that have tested it have been very happy with its capability. Search on TeamSites (from TeamSideline) in the app store on your phone. It is a free download.

## When?

Calendars  
Scheduling  
Timing



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Timeliness is an important aspect of any leadership role. There are internal processes that can become far more challenging if feedback is not received in a timely manner. In EMASS, this includes roster formation in the off-season, and time-sensitive communications during the season including:

1. Pool player needs
2. Division coordinator queries
3. Safety concerns or injury reports

Every division coordinator values timely feedback and is frustrated by tardy feedback. If you want to be a manager in EMASS, come forward with a commitment to provide responsive feedback. It matters.

# When? Calendars and Scheduling

## Manager responsibilities:

- Offseason: October-March



- Recruiting, collaborating with division coordinator
- Managers identified in Oct/Nov
- Managers selected and committed by Jan/Feb

- Pre-season: April



- Collaborating with Div Coord on roster assignments

- Regular Season: May-September



- Managing rosters and pool players
- Managing lineups, positions, runners, decisions
- Managing communications to and from team

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Most of a team manager's timing deadlines occur during the regular season. Simple email or text or phone response is suitable. Determine your division coordinator's preferences and do your best to meet them. Division coordinators have a demanding job and honoring their preferences in communication helps to minimize errors and maximize efficiency across diverse managers.

Most division coordinators will try and have some face-to-face meetings with managers. In the pre-season, this meeting can define/discuss rosters and rule changes. During the season, these meetings may be necessitated by unforeseen situations or looking for consensus on operational challenges that may arise. And in the post-season, you may want to discuss recruiting new players, recruiting new managers, manager selection, rule changes or other things. Managers should be prepared for occasional face to face meetings when a tougher challenge arises and building consensus across the management team is desirable.

## Important Timing Practices

- Player availability queried well prior to game
- Pool player needs identified 3 days prior
- Game 1 starts on time, Game 2 ends on time
  - Come to game prepared (lineups and positions)
  - Have pinch-runners ready early
  - **Hustle on/off the field**



Pool player needs are one of the most time sensitive challenges for division coordinators. The earlier in the week that team managers can identify their needs, the easier it is for division coordinators to identify appropriate pool players. Division coordinators have the exclusive responsibility for assigning pool players.

**Managers are NOT to recruit their own pool players unless expressly authorized by the Coordinator.**

Umpires frequently emphasize the following to ensure that games complete on time:

1. Having courtesy runners ready
2. Getting teams to hustle on and off the field
3. Minimizing infield and pitching warm-up between innings
4. Having base coaches ready

## Where? Fields & Equipment



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EMASS managers are responsible for ensuring that fields/equipment are prepped for safe play and cleaned up afterwards. This doesn't mean that the managers do all the work. But managers should take the responsibility to ensure their teams share the load.

# Where: Field Practices

- Home team preps field, visiting team cleans up
  - Bases (65 feet), pitching screen, batting mats, scoreboard
  - Unlock and lock equipment box, restrooms
- Managers delegate field prep and clean-up
  - Encourage sharing across team
- Adjusting to inclement weather
  - Managers make the call together with umpire



Here are some important manager responsibilities associated with field decisions.

1. The home team for the 1st game is responsible for field preparations including the bases, the commitment line, the pitching screen, the batter's box mats, the strike board, and the hanging of the scoreboard.
2. First and third base are measured from the back tip of home plate to the backside of the bases and second base is measured from the back tip of home plate to the center of second base. Second base is positioned so one side is parallel with the first base line and another so it's parallel with the third base line, and the distance from those sides to the base lines is 65 feet.
3. The batter's box mats are measured with a template from the back of the strike board.
4. The commitment line is marked off 20 feet from home plate up the 3<sup>rd</sup> base line.
5. The team indicated as the visiting team on the schedule for the 1st game is responsible at the conclusion of the games for removing the bases, the scoreboard, the pitching screen, and batter's box and strike mats, and to store them properly in the equipment boxes and ensure that the box is locked and the key stored properly.

# Safety & Equipment

- Managers watch out for safety concerns:
    - Pitching screens, masks, hydration
  - **Good base coaching** helps teams win & avoid injury
  - **Bad base coaching** causes injuries
  - Whenever confronted with a decision
    - Protect our community and follow the rules
    - Employ these priorities
- 1. Safety**, then **2. Sportsmanship**, then **3. Winning**



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Most equipment responsibilities have to do with the safety of our community. The safety rules (see the appendix) are important for all managers and players to enforce. Safety of our community is everyone's utmost responsibility.

Why is base coaching so important?

Injuries happen when there is high force: **Force** = Mass \* Acceleration.

Speeding up (acceleration) and slowing down (deceleration) is where force on the body mass is maximized and when injuries are most likely to occur. Abrupt direction change mostly occurs in base running. Coaches can help runners by signaling early and loudly. They can hinder base runners and put them at higher risk of injury by deciding late or changing their mind.

# Conflict Resolution

- Managers help with conflict resolution
  - Player beefs with each other, with Manager, with EMASS, or with an Umpire
- Understand the role of the Division Player Rep
- Communicate with division coordinator
- Minimize conflicts:
  - Early warnings, consistently applied across all
  - Whole team accountability (Neighborhood watch)
  - Immediately address players operating on the boundaries of poor sportsmanship

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We all do our best to avoid conflicts. Alas, they still occur. We have a diverse set of characters in our league and we sometimes rub each other the wrong way or misinterpret a situation. Managers are the first line of communication for any conflicts that players may have with umpires, team operations, league operations or code of conduct violations.

Along with division coordinator and rules coordinator, managers should ensure that players involved with any conflict are listened to and represented. The Division player representative can help mediate any escalated disputes between managers and players, or between players. The following process is a starting point for any serious conflict resolution:

1. **Understand the conflict.** The Player Rep should meet with each party separately and get both perspectives. If there are any independent observers, they can be consulted to clarify the claims of both sides. The Player Rep should also probe for what sort of resolution each party may be looking for.
2. **1st hand settlement.** Both parties should first be asked to attempt to resolve the dispute with each other directly. If they cannot come to a resolution, the Player Rep can then move to help mediate.
3. **Mediate a resolution.** An apology, a compromise, a temporary resolution, or whatever works.
4. **Board escalation.** If both sides dig their heels in and cannot work out a resolution then escalate to the board for a resolution.



**How?**  
**Strategies**

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- Summary and conclusions

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Management strategies for team management, game management and motivation management are the most fun part of managing a senior softball team. This material does not provide guidance on this broad topic because these strategies are as diverse as our managers and debatable on many fronts.

You can find a 1-page summary of senior softball strategy on the website under Management downloads. This summary is certainly debatable, but a good starting point for the important tips that lead to more wins in senior softball games.

# Team Management Strategies

- Lineups
  - Change lineups frequently
- Fielding positions
  - Understand where people want to play
  - Help them understand what is best for team
  - Switch off every now and then
- Runners
  - Don't wear out the same guys



The basic game strategies that managers need to enact are:

1. Knowing your opponents.
2. Picking the hitting lineup.
3. Choosing the fielding lineup and rotations.
4. Identifying the players that need runners and players that can run for others.

# Roster Balance

- Work with division coordinators to balance rosters

- Position coverage
- Hitting
- Runners
- Team chemistry



Some divisions hold a draft. Some divisions assign teams. Some divisions assign a core team and then draft the rest of the players. There are many ways to form teams and we will continue experimenting with different methods.

No matter what, as a Manager, you need to ensure your team has balance. In particular, you need to ensure:

1. You have coverage for each position.
2. You have a backup pitcher (or 2) who can be available if your main pitcher is absent.
3. You work with division coordinator to acquire pool players that cover your skills/positions needed.
4. You have hitters and runners spread across your batting order in an optimal manner.
5. You have a lineup that allows your better runners to be available as courtesy runners.
6. You have good coaches at the bases who know your players and don't risk injuries.

## Better Practices

- Where do you play yourself?
  - Some managers bat last and participate in rotations
  - Some managers bat third and play shortstop every inning
- Provide short game summaries, standout performers
  - Reinforce the community, sportsmanship and competition
- Come to field early and prepared
  - Lead the setup or tear down
  - Post lineups and positions
- Know your players
  - As people and as teammates
  - Preferences, pet peeves



Over the years, we have observed some other general practices that seem to make a difference in the enjoyment realized by the team.

1. Where you bat yourself “makes a statement.” Everyone notices. Do what you think is best for your team chemistry (community is the primary consideration), for your comfort as a manager (secondary consideration), and for winning.
2. Providing a short summary of the games to the team is a common and welcome practice. It is a chance to reinforce team strengths, personal accomplishments and solicit attendance for upcoming games.
3. Coming to the field with a plan (lineups/defense already planned out) helps with efficiencies and a leadership style that says “we’re ready, let’s go.” This doesn’t mean that every detail is planned out. It is fine to make lineup adjustments and defensive alignments at the field. But...if you are showing up and saying “who wants to play outfield?” or making up a last minute lineup as the Ump says “play,” well, that sets a tone too. And it is a tone that leads to inefficiencies and errors.
4. EMASS is a conglomeration of some interesting characters. They all have stories, idiosyncrasies, strengths and weaknesses. Getting to know them is fun. This knowledge is also invaluable to navigating our community, playing the game and winning.
5. Managers should quietly and subtly get to know personalities and “life situations” of their players. For example – how open to suggestions players are, how “down” they get with errors or bad days at the plate, whether softball is a big part of their lives or simply once-a-week exercise activity. It matters when you can remember from week to week the ailments of players and maybe other little things. Asking how a grandchild is doing in college or how their daughter is doing in her new job can go a long way in connecting with others.

# Better Practices (Continued)

- Maintain basic statistics.
  - Managers keep a scorebook
    - Batting average, On-base average, Slugging average and OPS (On-base + Slugging) average are common
    - Lineups and awards and assessments for Div Coords
  - Publishing to the team is not necessary
    - Players with good stats know them
    - Players with weak stats don't want to know them
- Be vocal with situation awareness
  - # of outs, hitter tendencies, outfield arms, score, etc.



Maintaining statistics is a personal choice but most managers want to keep some data so they have a stronger objective basis for lineups. When arguing team balance and end of season player assessments, these statistics are very helpful. Don't go overboard. Maintain the minimum number of useful stats.

When scoring a game, we seniors tend to be generous in scoring hits and errors. An obviously muffed, routine play is an error. **Every other at-bat where the runner safely reaches base is usually a hit. Any hard-hit ball where you would have said "good catch" or "good throw" or "good range" and the fielder does not turn it into an out, is a hit. When in doubt, it is a hit.**

Managers and coaches vocalizing the current game situation is especially important for senior players. Our minds wander, newer players are unaware, older players forget. Whatever the reasons, chatter and cheerleading help keep us all aware of the current situation.

# Playing Weaker Players

Like these guys



- Toughest challenge, no pat answers
  - Each situation is different
- General considerations:
  - Rotate in any position, not just catcher
  - If you win the first game, start the 2<sup>nd</sup> game where the batting order left off.

When a weak player makes a great play, it thrills everyone!  
When a strong player makes a great play, we all yawn...



Playing weaker players in a way that brings them enjoyment as well as the team, is the recurring dilemma for many of our managers. We won't provide a recipe for resolving this as it is too situation dependent. However, here are some specific ideas to consider.

1. When a strong player makes a solid play or big hit, everyone yawns. When a weaker player makes a good play or gets a clutch hit, everyone feels the thrill. Don't you want to see more such plays? It can turn around teams that are down and win games. So while some people feel that a weak player is too risky to play at certain positions, they can also payoff with a huge reward. Take a risk every now and then.
2. In any given inning, you don't know where the action will be and it changes constantly. So putting weaker players in almost any position is just fine. Sure they may make an error, but so might everyone else.
3. When you do well in the first game, some managers show some extra sportsmanship and start the 2<sup>nd</sup> game where the batting order finished in the 1<sup>st</sup> game. That goodwill can pay off over a long season. It will feel like a big deal to those bottom-of-the-order players and it won't feel like a big deal to the top of the order. It won't impact your chance of winning by much. **It is a good tradeoff to demonstrate that community/sportsmanship trumps winning.**

When managing in the playoffs, most managers adjust lineups and defensive rotations to win. Players understand these decisions and after a long season of fun and teamwork, everyone will respect the chosen game plan.

## Worse Practices

- Lack of preparation/plan
  - Lineups, courtesy runners, field positions
- Berating rather than coaching
  - We are all peers, not subordinates
- Ignorance of the rules
  - Senior softball rules
  - EMASS rules
  - Ground rules



**Never prioritize winning over sportsmanship**

*You will regret it and nobody will enjoy it.*

We have also seen some general practices that frustrate players. Managing by the seat-of-your-pants is one of these. Coming to the field and making up the offensive lineup and defensive positions at the last minute gives the team the feeling that there is no game plan or that it is rather ad hoc. We frequently adjust our lineups at the last minute because of absences or last-minute changes, but most teams appreciate a management team with a plan.

One caution on “preparation.” You can also over-prepare. Deciding the defensive rotation beforehand is sometimes a useful starting point, but there are many situations where adjustments make sense to optimize your chance of winning. Sticking to the pre-defined rotation for the first 4-5 innings and then flexing the last 2-3 innings may make a big difference.

Nobody feels worse than the guy who just made the error, or just whiffed at a 3<sup>rd</sup> strike, or just made a baserunning boner. Why pile on? Just forgive and forget (we are all good at that). We want our managers to lead by example when it comes to making everyone feel welcome.



# How Much?

Time  
Effort



## Outline of Topics

- Introduction
- Why? EMASS culture
- Who? Roster management
- What? Communications
- When? Calendar, scheduling
- Where? Fields/Equipment
- How? Strategies
- **How much? Time, effort**
- Summary and conclusions

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Managing a team in EMASS takes some time. It is a great way to serve our community. The time and effort is up to you but there are some minimum commitments we expect.



# We Need Effective Managers!

- Managing a team requires
  - 4 hours a week of on-field leadership
    - Field prep, team decisions, cheerleading
    - Scorekeeping
  - 1-2 hrs per week of game preparation
    - Attendance, pool players, lineups
    - E-mail polls, phone calls, etc.
    - Game summaries
  - 1-2 hrs per month of division collaboration
    - Issue resolution, pulse of the team
    - Maintain basic stats



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The biggest time commitment is when your team is on the field. On game days, you can expect at least 4 hours including field prep/cleanup, playing/scoring the game, and post-game summary (narrative, stat compilation, etc.).

At least one of the team managers should also expect 1-2 hours per week of coordinating attendance and pool players; and 1-2 hours per month of collaborating with the division coordinator on general league business, roster balance and issue resolution.

The actual time managers spend on their management responsibilities varies a lot. We have estimated a starting point here for new managers so they understand the commitment they might be signing up to. If you want to spend more or less time, that is up to you, how you share responsibility with your co-managers, and how you exploit the tools we have available to help.

## Other Considerations

- Watch for health challenges. Ask how you can help.
  - Exhaustion, dehydration, muscle strains
- Help players navigate EMASS resources
  - Website (rules, rosters, schedule, directories, policies, etc.)
  - Division coordinators, player reps, EMASS Board
  - EMASS community experts
    - Tournaments
    - Players with like health challenges
    - Leadership/volunteer opportunities



As a manager, you become one of the **stewards of our community**. We don't expect everyone to have the people skills to handle all the challenges of our community, but we do ask that you watch for them and help our members navigate the resources we do have to deal with life's challenges.

Many men do not express emotion comfortably ..unless they are on a softball field. Have you ever noticed that there are more man-to-man hugs during and after a senior softball game than anywhere else? Senior softball can be a valuable vehicle for emotion, providing excuses and circumstances for manly interactions that are hard to do anywhere else. Especially when struggling with an illness, the support of fellow senior ball players is precious. Seeing a teammate or opponent with a health problem, there is always the empathetic reaction that "it could be me." This awareness and the discussions that follow are very healthy and build a more intimate community that acts as a natural support network. Softball gives older men a "safe" opportunity to open up with others.

**In senior softball, we all act as listeners, supporters, challengers, jokesters, therapists and story tellers. We can all help each other navigate life's elderly challenges. The EMASS community may not be the reason we join, but it is almost always the reason we stay.**

Summary  
Conclusions

Outline of Topics

- Introduction
- Why? EMASS culture
- Who? Roster management
- What? Communications
- When? Calendar, scheduling
- Where? Fields/Equipment
- How? Strategies
- How much? Time, effort
- **Summary and conclusions**

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We hope this material has given you a stronger foundation for managing an EMASS team. If you have ideas for improvement, please let us know.

## A Few Key Takeaways

- EMASS Decision Making:



- *What would our members want me to do?*
- *What do the EMASS rules say I should do?*
- *What is the best thing to do to win?*

- Use our leadership assets



- EMASS Board, division coordinators
- Other Managers



- Player Representatives

Management is doing things right  
Leadership is doing the right things

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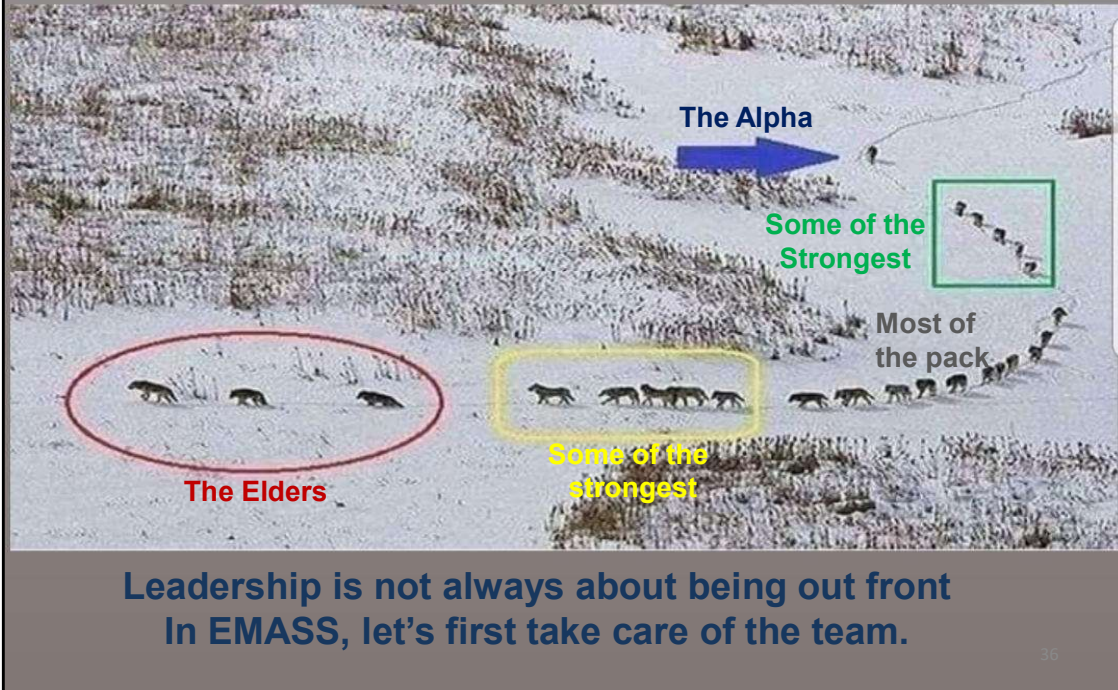
The EMASS culture can be captured in 3 prioritized words: Community, Sportsmanship and Competition, **in that order**.

Throughout your EMASS career, especially if you are a manager, you will do well if you simply prioritize these three themes in your decision making:

1. *What would our members want us to do? (Community)*
2. *What do the EMASS rules say we should do? (Sportsmanship)*
3. *What is the best thing we can do to win? (Competition)*

Management and leadership are frequently used as synonyms. They are not. The main **difference between** the two is that **leaders** have people that want to follow them, while **managers** have people who simply work for them. For any team to be successful, it needs **managers** that can plan, organize and coordinate its players, while also **leaders** who help them perform to the best of their ability by making the right decisions.

# The Senior Softball Wolfpack



Wolf Pack: The first 3 are the old & weak, they walk in front to set the pace of the entire pack. The next 5 are the strongest, they are tasked to protect the front side if there is an attack. In the center are the rest of the pack members, always protected from any attack. Then 5 stronger members are following, protecting the back side. Lastly is the alpha. The LEADER. He controls everything from the rear, ensures that no one is left behind and is always ready to run in any direction, to protect, and serve as the 'bodyguard' to the entire group.

Leadership is not always about being out front. It frequently means watching out for the team. In EMASS, this is the role we hope our managers adopt.

This concluding visual is offered as food for thought. We hope you enjoyed this material, take it to heart and help us improve on it. This is your league. **Good managers and leadership improve the enjoyment for all involved.**

Please help us reinforce the themes of community, sportsmanship and competition.

# Appendix 1: Other References

- Manager Tools and assets (See e-mass.org\downloads)
  - Lineup/Defense plan template
  - Gameday checklist
  - Skills assessment spreadsheet
  - *Winning In Senior Softball: The big strategy considerations that matter*
- Other EMASS website downloads available:
  1. EMASS Bylaws
  2. EMASS Rules
  3. EMASS Directory
  4. EMASS Schedules
  5. EMASS Rosters
  6. EMASS Code of Conduct
  7. EMASS Pool Player Policy
  8. EMASS Award Process
  9. Surviving Senior Softball Workshop

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Under Downloads on the EMASS website, there are several assets that managers and players have access to.

# Appendix 2: EMASS Rules

## Managers need to know the rules

- In the Notes section below is a compilation of the EMASS Rules that managers need to be aware of that govern the management of the team.
- Managers need to be aware of all the other playing rules, but this excerpt captures the rules that apply to the topics in this handbook

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### Code of Conduct Rules:

The EMASS code of conduct states the following:

1. Smoking and alcohol consumption are prohibited on or about any EMASS playing facility.
2. Unsportsmanlike conduct of any type could mean ejection from the game by the umpire:
  - a) Verbal assault (threats, profane language, provoking, taunting, ridiculing, berating, threatening) or gestures directed at any EMASS player, spectator, umpire or general public.
  - b) Physical assault on anyone.
  - c) Deceitful behavior, tactics and/or actions.
  - d) All ejections shall be reported to the Rules Coordinator by the Umpire and Managers of both teams for further review and action. Any player ejected from a game for any reason is subject to suspension for additional games as determined by the Rules Committee.
3. Any player using language at a level which might be heard beyond the boundaries of the playing field and judged by the umpire as foul or obscene will be warned by the umpire upon a first offense. If it occurs a second time, the umpire shall eject the player. There is no requirement that the obscenity be heard by anyone other than the umpire.
4. No questioning, arguing, commenting or gesturing on balls and strikes called by the Umpire will be permitted. Following at least one warning per team per game, the offender may be ejected.
5. Any player or Manager ejected from a game must leave the field premises. In the event the player does not leave the field premises in a reasonable amount of time, the umpire will warn the manager. If the player still does not leave, the player's team will forfeit the game.

### Game-time Roster Rules:

Some guidelines on managing team rosters on the field

1. Managers may request the opposing Managers line-up prior to game.
2. Every player who is available to play shall be in the batting order for both games.
3. If a player arrives after the start of game, they shall be placed at the end of the batting



order and may be inserted immediately on defense.

4. If a player is forced to leave a game as a result of an injury, illness, or emergency, "NO OUT" shall be declared for the vacated spot in the batting order. If a player leaves a game for any other reason (e.g. ejection, work, appointments, etc.) an "OUT" will be recorded each time that player comes up in the batting order unless the Manager has disclosed this to the Umpire and the opposing Manager prior to the game, or the game has proceeded beyond 1:00 PM (weekday) or 12:00 PM (weekend divisions).
5. Defensive playing time is left to the discretion of the Manager. Managers should provide each available player the opportunity to play a fair amount of time defensively. Any player who believes that the Manager is not abiding the general policy is encouraged to discuss the matter directly with his/her Manager and to report this matter to the division coordinator.
6. If, at any time during a game, a player is ejected from the game, an out will be recorded each time the vacated position in the batting order comes up during that particular game.
7. When a non-defensive catcher is used, the player assuming the position at the beginning of an inning should be the last batter scheduled to bat in that inning.
8. If a team has fewer than 9 players available at game time, the 1st game shall be declared a forfeit. If neither team has 9 players available, the game shall be declared a double forfeit.
9. If a team has forfeited the 1st game due to insufficient players, the 2nd game shall begin 10 minutes after the original starting time for the 1st game (i.e. the shorthanded team will have 10 minutes to reach the required number of players to avoid a forfeit of the 2nd game).

#### **Game Timing Rules:**

The timing challenges on game day are also largely our Manager's responsibility to govern.

1. The 1st game of a doubleheader in all weekday divisions will start at 10:00 AM (9:45 for the Metro Division). The 1st game of a doubleheader in the weekend divisions will start at 9:00 AM.
2. When the 1st game of a doubleheader in any weekday division has not concluded by 11:30 AM, the 2nd game may be played with a 1-1 count, if agreed upon by both managers.
3. When a batter is walked without a strike, the batter's Manager may choose a) to have the batter proceed to first base as a batter would after any base on balls or b) remain at bat with a new ball and strike count. If the Manager elects to have the batter continue at bat, a Courtesy Runner will be inserted at first base. Managers should have the courtesy runner identified and ready when the count reaches 3-0. The 4-ball walk rule is listed in this section because it is one of the primary complaints by umpires in adhering to game time constraints.

#### **Field Safety Rules:**

1. If the umpire believes conditions are safe (weather or otherwise) but a Manager reasonably believes in good faith that it would be unsafe to play or continue to play, the



manager may elect not to play the scheduled games. If both Managers have not agreed, the Manager who does not agree with the cancellation may file a written protest with the Rules Coordinator for a final determination as to whether the cancellation was reasonable and made in good faith.

2. If both managers agree to cancel for whatever reason, they shall inform the umpire that they are declaring the game(s) for the day at that field cancelled.
3. In the event of visible lightning or audible thunder, play or pre-game practice is immediately suspended for at least 30 minutes.

**Safety Rules:**

1. Before pre-game batting practice begins in all divisions, the Pitching Screen must be set up. There is no good reason for a batting practice pitcher to pitch without a screen.
2. The use of the Pitching Screen is also mandatory for all pick-up games where there are players across mixed divisions.
3. In every division anyone pitching shall wear a mask. Pitchers are also encouraged to wear any additional protective gear they believe will make them less susceptible to injury by a batted ball. Any bat not authorized for play by the ASA/USA is considered to be an "unauthorized bat" in EMASS and may not be used in any EMASS softball activity including batting practice. Please note that prior to the 2016 season, Easton voluntarily removed several popular models from the ASA/USA list of certified bats. While these models were approved in the past, they are now unauthorized bats in Saturday divisions officiated by USA Softball umpires.
4. It is each player's responsibility to determine whether his/her bat is approved by asa/usa softball. Managers should make sure that players understand that if an umpire discovers a player using an Unauthorized Bat, even in batting practice, the owner of the bat (if identifiable) and the player using the bat shall be ejected and unable to play for the entire day.
5. Senior bats are not allowed in EMASS except for players over 75 in the National division.
6. Managers should ensure that players are wearing the designated team jersey color for the day based on the schedule.

## Appendix 3: EMASS Bat Policy

- USA Softball bats
- No Senior bats
  - Exception: National Division players 75 and older.
- EMASS Bat Policy is published on the website at
  - <https://e-mass.org/content/24882/EMASS-Bat-Policies>

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Any bat not authorized for play by the ASA/USA Softball is considered to be an “UNAUTHORIZED BAT” in EMASS and may not be used in any EMASS softball activity including batting practice. Please note that prior to the 2016 season, Easton voluntarily removed several popular models from the ASA/USA list of certified bats. While these models were approved in the past, they are now unauthorized bats in Saturday divisions officiated by USA Softball umpires.

- IT IS EACH PLAYER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO DETERMINE WHETHER HIS/HER BAT IS APPROVED BY ASA/USA SOFTBALL. FOR COMPLETE INFORMATION SEE: <https://www.teamusa.org/usa-softball/play-usa-softball/certified-usa-softball-equipment> <https://www.teamusa.org/USA-Softball/Certified-Equipment> > EQUIPMENT – BATS. Once on that page, scroll down below the section reading “Approved Bats: 2000, 2004, and 2013 and click on “Go” to see all approved bats or change the drop down box reading “Display All” and select a particular company before clicking on “Go” to verify whether your bat is approved.
- A bat must bear either the ASA approved 2000 certification mark, the ASA Certified 2004 certification mark, or the new the ASA Softball, the USA Softball Certified or the USA Softball certification mark, and must not be listed on the ASA/USA Non-Approved Bat List with Certification Marks list. Bats on the ASA/USA Non-Approved Bat List with Certification Marks can be found here: <http://usa.asasoftball.com/e/BB1P2000.asp> (ASA USA Softball RULE 3 Sect 1-A.1)
- A bat must be included on a list of approved bat models published by the

ASA/USA National Office; or must, in the sole opinion and discretion of the Umpire, have been manufactured prior to 2000 and if tested, would comply with the ASA/USA Softball bat performance standards then in effect. (ASA USA Softball RULE 3 Sect 1-A.3)

- Unauthorized Bats should remain in the owner's trunk of their car and should not be brought on or about the playing field. If the umpire discovers a player using an Unauthorized Bat, even in batting practice, the owner of the bat (if identifiable) and the player using the bat shall be ejected and unable to play for the entire day.
- Any person who has attempted to fraudulently apply a USA Softball Certification Stamp to a bat shall be banned from all EMASS softball activities for a full year.
- Although a bat may be authorized for use by meeting the requirements detailed above, if the bat fails to meet other USA Softball Bat Regulations (i.e. the bat is altered or damaged), the bat shall not be permitted. (USA Softball RULE 3 Sect 1-H)

## Appendix 4: Players and Subs

- Managers may request line-ups of other team.
- Play everyone a reasonable amount of time.
  - Position and innings are Manager discretion
- Team members should wear appropriate jerseys
- Report any ejections to Division Coordinator and the Rules Coordinator.

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- Prior to the commencement of any game, a Manager may request that the opposing Manager provide a copy of his/her team's line-up.
- Although defensive playing time is generally at the discretion of the Manager of each team, the Board of Directors has adopted a policy guideline that Managers shall endeavor, to the extent reasonable under competitive circumstances, to provide each available player the opportunity to play a fair amount of time defensively. There is no guarantee that any player shall play a specific defensive position and the Manager has the discretion to place players in positions as he/she sees fit. Any player who believes that the Manager is not abiding the general policy is ENCOURAGED to discuss the matter directly with his/her Manager AND to report this matter to the

## Division Coordinator and the Division Player Representative.

- Players are expected to wear the designated team jersey color for the day based on the schedule, and it is the Manager's responsibility to ensure compliance.
- All ejections shall be reported to the Rules Coordinator by the Umpire and Managers of both teams for further review and action. Any player ejected from a game for any reason is subject to suspension for additional games as determined by the Rules Committee (Commissioner, Rules Coordinator, and applicable Division Coordinator).
- In games played in divisions in which a non-defensive catcher can be used, ideally the player assuming the position at the beginning of an inning should be the last batter scheduled to bat in that half inning.