**Etobicoke 55+ SLO PITCH LEAGUE RULES** for 2017

Rules changes adopted and approved by ESPL exe, Jan.25, 2017 revised April 3, 2017

**PREAMBLE**: The ESPL 55+ is organized under the auspices of the Toronto Parks and Recreation Department and operates out of the Fairfield Seniors’ Centre in South Etobicoke. The ESPL is a recreational league and exists to allow seniors, both male and female, 55 years and older to play slo-pitch on a regular basis from the end of April to the middle of September each year. The league began in 1994 and operates through a system of committees which organize and conduct the activities of the league.

 Each year an executive is formed and their main objective is to balance all teams in strength. Although there is competitiveness among teams, the main thrust is for all players to have fun and exercise. Although the ESPL comes under the jurisdiction of the Toronto Parks and Recreation, we remain self-supporting as sponsors for each team are obtained.

 All team uniforms (shirts), bats, balls and bases and game needs are supplied by the ESPL. Games are played using SPN rules and League rules where there are exceptions.

**LEAGUE RULES**

**RULE 1. THE PLAYING FIELD.**

 A. The official dimensions of the diamond shall be baselines 65 feet and the pitching zone shall be 24 inches wide located 50 to 65 feet from home plate.

 B. For the purposes of our league, the grass area of the field will be considered the outfield, and the dirt area as the infield.

 C. A board 21 inches by 36 inches shall be covering home plate.

 D. A batted ball that hits the board and goes into fair territory is a fair ball.

**RULE 2. EQUIPMENT**

 A. All players must wear team jerseys in order to participate in a game, each sweater will have a unique number easily distinguished. The umpire may grant exceptions to this rule if a legitimate reason is provided and both captains agree.

 B. Players will be advised for safety reasons not to wear jewelry. There will be no penalty for the wearing of jewelry.

 C. The League provides all bats and balls, GRAY DOT. Personal bats are not allowed.

**RULE 3. DEFINITIONS**

 As per SPN with the following exceptions:

 Sec. 3. A ball. A ball that does not strike the board/plate or conform to the legally delivered pitch rules, and is not struck at by the batter, is a ball.

 Sec 32. Fake tag. Will be considered obstruction and the obstruction rules will apply. A warning will be given.

 **Sec 35**. Force out. When a base runner is advancing or returning to a base and the “force out” is not in effect the runner must be tagged to record the out.

 Sec.48. Infield fly. A batted ball of reasonable arc and height hit within the “box” of the bases, is an automatic infield fly and the batter is out. All other aspects of the infield fly rule still apply.

 **Sec.50**. Intentional Walk. Will not apply to ESPL.

 **Sec. 87 WALK**: A player will be awarded one base when four pitches have been called balls. If a pitcher throws 4 balls to a batter without throwing a strike, the batter or his substitute runnerwill beawarded 2nd base. Any runners on base will only move one base unless the walked batter forces him to move further. If a male or female batter is walked, and is followed by a female batter they will be awarded 2nd base. The female batter must bat.

 **Sec. 64**. Sliding is permitted in the ESPL, either advancing or returning to a base.

 Sec.76. Strike Zone. Any legally pitched ball that strikes any part of the plate is a strike.

 Sec 78. Tag. Tagging is an option in the ESPL. A runner cannot be tagged between the commitment line and the plate.

**RULE 4. THE GAME**.

 A. Games are played **Mondays and Wednesdays starting at 9:45 am**. Warm up time will be from 9:15 to 9:30 for visiting team and 9:30 to 9:45 for the home team with the home team remaining on the field to begin the game at 9:45.

 B. A regulation game consists of 9 innings. (see rule 4 F) If a game is abandoned while in progress, a regulation game will be declared if the home team is ahead after 4 and a half innings have been played. No extra innings are played in case of a tie (one point each). In the playoffs, extra innings are played to determine a winner.

 C. If any game is rained out prior to the playoff round, all games on that day shall be considered rained out and each team scheduled shall be awarded one point in the standings.

 D. During the playoff round only those games actually rained out will be replayed at the originally scheduled diamond at the end of the round if necessary to determine semi-final teams.

 E. The maximum number of runs a team can score in an inning is 5. This “mercy rule” applies to innings 1-8. The final inning is open. In the playoffs there isn’t any maximum for the ninth and subsequent ininngs.

 F. Where weather or other situations make it difficult to play a regulation full nine inning game, the teams will decide as to play a 9 inning or 7 inning game. If either team decides on 7 innings, the game will be 7 innings. A nine inning game with each batter starting with a 1 ball 1 strike count is not an option.

**RULE 5. PLAYERS.**

 A. The maximum number of defensive players on the field is 11, two of whom must be rovers. There must be 5 players in the outfield at all times, except when a team has less than 11 players in the line-up.

 B. A team must have a minimum of 9 players to make it an official game. Less than 9 players will result in a defaulted game. An exhibition game may be played.

 C. From the beginning of each inning a defensive player (rovers excepted), cannot change his/her position with another player, for succeeding batters. An exception to this rule would be if a pitcher has control problems, another pitcher may be switched from another position. A maximum of 3 player switches will be permitted at that time. This also applies in the event of an injury.

 D. If fewer than 11 players are expected, a team may call relief players from the “sit out” team or spare list. Relief players must be of the same rank or lower than the player to be replaced. Relief players used in the playoffs must be approved by the Commissioner and/or the non-involved captains. Replacement players from the “standby list” for long term injuries must be approved by the Commissioner and/or non- involved captains.

 E. When a team has more than 11 players at game time, one or more players must sit out each inning and not take a position on the field. A player must not sit out two consecutive innings. All players must sit out once before a player sits out a second time. If a team captain fails to follow the above procedure and an appeal is made, the team captain must make the appropriate change. In the play offs sit outs must continue during extra innings as mentioned above. In the play offs, captains should come prepared with the line up to cover 12 innings.

 F. All player changes, such as additions or trades, require the majority approval of the non- involved team captains and sanctioned by the Commissioner.

G. Players who leave a game early or who are injured or ejected will not be considered outs when their turn is reached in the batting order.

 H. Players reporting late for a game may bat at their designated place in the batting order if they arrive before their turn at bat is reached. If they arrive later their names must be moved to the bottom of the batting order.

**RULE 6. PITCHING**

1. All SPN rules apply except the ESPL rule that pitchers cannot be changed to face particular batters. Must follow ESPL rule 5 C. and female batter bunting rule 7 B.
2. Pitching Screens
	1. The pitching screen must be set up on the field in close vicinity of the pitching rubber, facing the batter.
	2. Any batted ball that hits the front side or top of the screen before being touched by a fielder is a dead ball; the play counts as a strike; if it is the third strike, the batter is out. Otherwise a ball hitting the screen is in play.

**RULE 7. BATTING**

1. A batted ball that strikes the plate board and rolls into fair territory is a fair ball.
2. Bunting
	1. Only female batters have the option to bunt when not taking a courtesy runner from the screen.
	2. Prior to the pitch, defensive players must remain behind the base line until the pitcher delivers the ball.
	3. All defensive players can move once the pitcher releases the ball from his hand. (all other ESP rules re bunting still apply)

**RULE 8. BASERUNNING**

A. Courtesy Runner:

a) The player is the one who initiates the request for a pinch runner.

b) A player can pinch run only 3 times per game and only once per inning. In the event of extra innings, a player may pinch run 1 more time, for a total of 4 in the entire game.

c) A pinch runner can have a pinch runner, however this constitutes one time as a pinch runner (of their three times).

d) A player does not have to declare he needs a pinch runner at the beginning of the game. He/she may ask for a pinch runner at any time, and is not confined to a pinch runner all the game.

e) If a courtesy runner from the screen lets go of the rope before the ball is hit, the courtesy runner will be replaced by another courtesy runner and this will count against the offender’s number of times they can be a courtesy runner, which is three times- the pitch counts and the ball is dead. If the batter strikes out or is out any other way, so as the courtesy runner, from the screen, is NOT successful in reaching first base, the courtesy runner will NOT be charged with a courtesy time. The courtesy runner from the screen may advance only to first base. However, in the case of an overthrow, ( ie. the ball goes out of play or out of bounds), he is awarded 2nd base and other baserunners will be awarded 2 bases from the last base touched**.**

 B. An “anticipation step” is allowed by runners on base after the ball has reached the plate or has been offered at.

 C. Female batters may request courtesy runners from the screen as per Rule A. but they cannot use them when they bunt.

 D. Catchers are not permitted to tag a runner who has crossed the commitment line, but has to be in contact with the board plate to register the out. Any base runner touching or running over the board plate is out.

**RULE 9. BALL IN PLAY AND DEAD BALL**

 SPN rules apply.

**RULE 10. UMPIRES**

 A. Unless umpires are assigned, teams umpire their own games. Qualified umpires are assigned for the playoffs. The decisions of the umpires and captains are final and there are no game “protests”.

**RULE 11. SCORING**

 Teams are responsible for their own scoring and report their scores to the League.

**RULE 12. TEAM SELECTION**

Team selection will be chosen with the use of the ratings of the players, with the purpose of establishing balanced teams. Each captain at the end of the season will be responsible for providing new ratings to be used the following year. New players will be evaluated at the preseason field drills. Female players will be assigned to the teams equally so as to retain the balance of the teams. The final team roster is to be presented to the “rules & fairness” committee for final scrutiny.

**ESPL - FAIRPLAY**

 A. Unsportsmanlike conduct will not be tolerated and could result in a player being ejected from the game, with the possibility of further suspension upon review by the Fairness Committee (see Fairness Committee supplement to rules March 12 2009).

 B. If a player is ejected from the game the umpire will file a report with the Fairness Committee. A repeat offender may be asked to meet with this committee.

 C. The decision of the umpire is final on all judgment calls. Decisions based on rules will be discussed by the two team captains and umpires at the time of the situation and resolved fairly. There are no protests on rules.

**Appendices:** ESPL FAIRNESS COMMITTEE: SUPPLEMENT MARCH 2008.

 ESPL PLAYOFF ROUND TIE-BREAKER FORMAT AUGUST 2008

 (see the captain for a copy or the web site)

Rules changes (2017): Amended:-rule 4 F, Rule 2 C, Rule 6 B added

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