

CACD Softball

Alternative Games Played with a Softball

There are softball games and then there are games that can be played with a softball. The intention of this group's organizers is to arrange drop-in games of softball. However, due to a shortage of players, we may at times play one of the following games instead.

Half Field Play: This is the closest alternative to a regular game of softball, as was described in the document, "Guidelines for Practice and Play." Here are the modifications necessary:

- The regular field is divided into half fair territory and half foul territory by an imaginary line from home through second base. There may or may not be a marker placed in the field to help the fielders see the division. It is recommended that this marker, if used, whatever it is, be flat and not a trip hazard for the fielders. It is up to the fielder closest to the invisible line to say what would be a trip hazard for them and object to it. The marker in the field might change position due to a foot kick, wind, interlopers, or a mistaken initial placement (it is hard to see home plate from the field); fielders would be wise to keep placement accurate, because it is an indication to them for their attempt at catching a ball; field markers are not to be used for ruling a ball fair or foul when in dispute.
- Hitting to the wrong field is counted as a foul, not an out.
- Where the ball lands is where fair or foul shall be judged. An exception is if a fielder has touched it in the air. Then, fair or foul is judged according to where the fielder was standing when they touched it in the air.
- When playing half field, both pitcher and catcher have to bear witness as to whether the ball is fair or foul. They alone have the perspective needed but have to make sure they were standing in line with home or the pitcher's mound and looking past second base as the ball landed or as a fielder touched it. Captains have the final say whether to accept their witness or debate with each other for a "do-over." Special emphasis should be given to the opinion of any "neutral" parties, such as "all-time" pitchers or catchers.
- Catchers in half field play are usually supplied by the batting team because of the shortage of players. Such a catcher can never make an out against their own team. Catching a foul tip, for example, is not an out. Otherwise, the batting team would have a conflict of interest and would always supply a poor catcher--why should our games have to deal with that. Likewise, if the batting team has a runner going home yet is supplying a catcher, this catcher cannot make the out. The supplied catcher has to clear out of the way and the fielding team had better have someone cover the plate to attempt the out.

The benefits of the half-field game are twofold: 1) you are playing a game very similar to softball, and 2) it is easy to work in late arriving players / work out early departing players to achieve or exit full field play smoothly.

Flies & Grounders: This is a game we play on the rare occasion when not enough people show up for even half-field play, like early in the season, on holidays when people don't come out, on rainy days when people are deterred from driving, or if people are done practicing and it is not yet game time.

- Place a bat that is not in use flat on the ground in front of home plate, with the broad side facing the fielders. It will be a target for them to throw balls in and hit.
- There are three ways to become the batter: 1) by points, 2) by hitting the bat on the ground, or 3) as a gift when a batter or another player who has just earned the batting position by one of the previous methods gives away their rights.
- The batter tosses a ball to himself / herself. He or she can hit it anywhere in the field, or attempt to direct it at individual fielders.
- When a fielder catches a ground ball, it counts as two points. When a fielder catches a fly ball it counts as three points. Accumulate ten points and you go up to take over as batter.
- Errors award zero points to the player that mishandled the ball.

- If a different fielder catches either a ground ball or a fly ball as a result of someone else's error, they get full points. Thus the game trains fielders to attempt catches and to back up other players.
- The ball is dead when it stops rolling, awarding no points to the fielder.
- Throwing a ball caught without oneself making an error can bring one up to bat if it hits (in the air or when rolling) the bat that was placed in front of home plate for this purpose.
- Balls thrown in which did not award the fielders any points (because of errors or just the return of dead balls) can be practice throws at the bat on the ground but do not effect a change of batter if they happen to hit the bat on the ground.
- Fielding positions are not assigned. Thus players can compete with each other for flies and for grounders, say for example, when the batter chooses to not evenly distribute hits.
- Whenever there is a change in batter, all scores reset to zero.
- Batting is not done by turn taking. It must be earned by being a good and aggressive fielder. This game does not emphasize pitching or batting practice, it emphasizes fielding practice.
- The batter can strategize either to prolong his or her at bats, or shorten it, or to influence who the next batter will be, by hitting far vs. close (which makes throws at the bat more difficult / easy), or by letting certain players accumulate points or not get points.
- The batter is strongly encouraged to have multiple balls going in the field at the same time, without waiting for them to get thrown back, so people aren't standing around waiting. Please take care to hit to different areas of the field when batting rapidly because some fielders will have to retrieve missed balls or are playing cutoff for a throw in on a long or missed ball and will have their backs to the batter. Fielders are encouraged to watch for a batter that doesn't know this safety practice and hits to them while they are already retrieving some other long or missed ball.
- Because multiple balls are in play, it may happen that two players earn the batting on overlapping plays (the catching and the throwing in). The batting is awarded to whichever happens first: earning ten points or hitting the bat on the ground. It doesn't matter which ball was in play prior to the other one.

The benefit to this game is that it gives fielders much better practice making catches than does regular batting practice. You don't have to wait for a pitcher to make good pitches; you don't have to wait for the batter to be able to place the ball to you in the field (most people can hit well what they throw to themselves and most batters will want to evenly distribute these hits all over the field). Note: this game is the same as "Five Hundred" except for the values of the points earned, and the fact that a change of batters can be effected by a thrown in ball hitting the bat on the ground.

Three Small Teams on the Field: This is another game for when insufficient numbers turn out for a full field game with only two teams. Sometimes it has advantages over half-field play. Basically, players are not left to idle on the bench when their team is at bat, as happens with two teams playing half field, but there is an increased possibility of having to use ghost runners, as described in the document "Guidelines for Practice and Play." Here is how to play with three small teams. The example will be for three players each, but the game could be designed to operate with anywhere from two to five players on each team (evenly split).

- Game play is as normal or as modified by pitchers hand, "all-time" players, half-field, etc. as necessary. But each inning has three "thirds" instead of two halves; there are three scores to track, instead of just two.
- Positions: with three teams, three players each, and a total of nine players all together, one team of three is in the outfield, another team of three is in the infield, and the final team of three is at bat.
- When the at-bat team has three outs on its batters, all teams rotate: infield goes up to bat, outfield moves to play the infield, and the previous at-bat team takes the outfield.

The benefits of playing with three teams are multiple: We get to play full field more often; players get to take more positions; people spend less time waiting in the dugout and more time on the field. The downside is that your own team's at-bats is now six outs away; there is less base running; and the use of ghost runners can be confusing.

Simulation: Instead of half-field play, assign three people as the first set of batters. They hit pitches and run the bases while all the other players field the ball. When there are three outs on this temporary batting "team," those batters are

done and take up positions in the field. The fielders who were most responsible for making the three outs on those batters then become the new batting team. Play continues by obtaining three outs on the next batters and then other fielders come in to hit. Former batters headed into the field don't have to go to the locations being vacated--people can change positions by mutual agreement. Courtesy allows all fielders to eventually come up to bat. It's like a real game except the score doesn't matter because the same team of batters is unlikely to come up again. Hence, the name, "simulation."