

\$9.95

**USA SOFTBALL
Code**

2018

USA SOFTBALL™

This copy of the USA Softball Code became effective on January 01, **2018**. USA Softball does have the authority to make emergency changes from time to time and highly recommends that you review the official copy of the USA Softball Code which can be found on the USA Softball website at **WWW.USASOFTBALL.COM**. In the event a conflict in language between this printed version of the Code and the version on the internet, the official copy of the USA Softball Code found on the USA Softball website controls. If there is incorrect information regarding this Code published or issued via voice, written, electronic or any other form of communication, whether by USA Softball personnel or not, the provisions and intent of the Code found on the website will always prevail.

PLEASE REVIEW THIS ENTIRE DOCUMENT

USA SOFTBALL CODE PREAMBLE

WARNING, DISCLOSURE AND DISCLAIMER

One of the primary purposes of USA Softball's official playing rules (including its equipment standards) and USA Softball's Code is to promote competitive balance and to preserve the integrity of the sport of amateur softball. USA Softball's Official Playing Rules, Code and Procedural Manual should not be considered a guarantee that participants, spectators or others will be safe or free from injury or harm. There are risks and dangers incidental to the game of softball, including specifically (but not limited to) the danger of being injured by thrown bats, thrown balls, batted balls or other objects. Softball poses a risk to its participants, spectators and other persons at or near USA Softball events or practices. Softball is a vigorous team sport at times involving severe cardiovascular stress and violent physical contact. Softball involves certain risk, including but not limited to death, serious neck and spinal injuries resulting in complete or partial paralysis, brain damage and serious injury to virtually all bones, joints, muscles and internal organs, and equipment provided for the protection of the participants may be inadequate to prevent serious injury. It is further disclosed that softball involves a particularly high risk of ankle, knee, head, and neck injury. In addition, participation in USA Softball events may involve activities incidental thereto, including but not limited to, travel to and from the site activity, participation at sites that may be remote from available medical assistance, and possible reckless conduct of other participants. Participants engaging in softball and activities incidental to softball do so with knowledge of the danger involved and agree to accept any and all inherent risks of property damage, personal injury, or death. Parents, family, guests, participants and spectators assume all risk and danger of personal injury, losses, damages to person or property and all hazards arising from, incidental to or related in any way to the game of softball. **DISCLAIMER:** USA SOFTBALL, ITS OFFICIALS, AGENTS, EMPLOYEES, SPONSORS, VOLUNTEERS, CONTRACTORS, LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS AND AFFILIATES ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY INJURY (INCLUDING DEATH) OR LOSS OF PROPERTY TO ANY PERSON SUFFERED WHILE WATCHING, PLAYING, PRACTICING, OR IN ANY OTHER WAY AT OR INVOLVED IN THE GAME OF SOFTBALL FOR ANY REASON WHATSOEVER, INCLUDING ORDINARY NEGLIGENCE ON THE PART OF USA SOFTBALL OR ITS AGENTS, EMPLOYEES, SPONSORS, VOLUNTEERS, THE OWNERS AND LESSORS OF THE PREMISES AND ALL OTHERS WHO ARE INVOLVED AND INCLUDING THE RECKLESS CONDUCT OF OTHER PARTICIPANTS. USA SOFTBALL EXPRESSLY DISCLAIMS ANY AND ALL LIABILITY FOR ANY INJURY OR PROPERTY LOSS RELATED IN ANY WAY TO THE GAME OF SOFTBALL. This warning, disclosure and disclaimer are intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by applicable laws. If any portion is held invalid the remainder of the warning, disclosure and disclaimer will continue in full legal force and effect.

USA SOFTBALL STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY

VISION **USA Softball will be the standard of excellence in softball**

MISSION **USA Softball is the National Governing Body of softball in the United States.**

We develop, administer and promote the sport of softball to provide opportunities for participation and the best possible experience for those involved.

VALUES

- **Teamwork**
- **Fair Play**
- **Common Good**
- **Promotion and Education**
- **Sportsmanship & Civility**

GOALS

- **Ensure our future success as the leader in softball by improving the leadership and governance of our organization.**
- **Continue and enhance our long standing focus on the player, the quality of the game, quality of service, and overall service.**
- **Be accountable to each other and our sport in our mutual efforts to be the international leader in the sport of softball.**
- **Focus on financial and organization effectiveness that enhances our service, products and image.**
- **Craft effective external and internal connections with our players, officials, parents, affiliates and the public.**
- **Create an internationally recognized, world class venue that meets our needs, and supports our mission and vision.**

**USA SOFTBALL CODE
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USA SOFTBALL CODE

(Adopted January 27, 1977 with amendments through 2018)

PART 1

MISSION AND DEFINITIONS

Article 101 NAME. The name of the association shall be ‘ USA Softball ‘, hereinafter referred to as the Association or USA Softball. The Association shall also do business as ‘ The Amateur Softball Association of America ‘ and ‘ American Softball Association ‘.

Article 102 MISSION STATEMENT. Develop, direct and promote the sport of softball to ensure maximum participation, optimal performance and educational excellence.

Article 103 OBJECTIVES. The objectives of USA Softball shall be:

- A. To promote amateur softball for all persons regardless of race, color, creed, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, veteran status, national origin or ancestry.
- B. To establish uniform softball rules and regulations.
- C. To encourage amateur softball to be conducted in accordance with the spirit of true sportsmanship free from bullying, hazing, harassment (including sexual harassment), emotional misconduct, physical misconduct, and sexual misconduct (including child sexual abuse) and establish principles for ethical behavior and matters relating to conflict of interest as provided by the USA Softball Council and Board of Directors.
- D. To encourage the union of all eligible teams, organizations or groups into such separate associations with active membership in USA Softball as may from time to time be deemed best adapted to advance the cause of amateur softball.
- E. To establish and maintain by allied membership, alliances with non-profit associations or organizations devoted wholly or partially to the promotion and development of the game of softball on a state, regional or national level.
- F. To promote and conduct annual amateur softball championships.
- G. To educate and train in the proper skills of amateur softball play and rules of the game through promoting, organizing, and conducting clinics, seminars and training courses.

Article 104 PRINCIPLES. It shall be the responsibility of each member of USA Softball to strive to fulfill the goals of USA Softball and to promote the sport of softball. At a minimum, each member of USA Softball:

- A. Shall follow the rules and regulations of USA Softball as established by the USA Softball Code, Procedural Manual and Playing Rules.
- B. Shall support USA Softball’s programs that promote the sport of softball and educate players, coaches, officials, volunteers and the public about the game.
- C. Shall act at all times with the utmost civility and sportsmanlike conduct, promoting wholesome, safe competition.
- D. Shall strive to provide programs that encompass fairness to the participants and promote fair play and sportsmanship.
- E. Shall take seriously their responsibility as a role model and encourage competitiveness in a positive manner.

Article 105 JURISDICTION. The United States Olympic Committee and the World Baseball Softball Confederation recognizes USA Softball as the governing body of amateur softball in the United States. USA Softball agrees to submit, upon demand of the United States Olympic Committee, to binding arbitration in any controversy involving the opportunity of any amateur athlete, coach, trainer, manager, administrator or official to participate in

amateur softball competition, as provided for in the United States Olympic Committee's Constitution and By-laws. USA Softball shall remain free from outside restraint and shall independently determine and control all matters central to its governance, and shall not delegate to another, such determination and control.

Article 106 DEFINITIONS. Whenever used in this Code, unless otherwise specifically mentioned, the following words, terms and phrases are defined to mean:

- A. 01) **USA Softball** is the national organization.
- 02) **Additional Player** is a player that has been added to a team's championship roster and meets all the requirements set forth in **Article 301** and **302** of this Code.
- 03) **Association** is USA Softball, the national organization.

NOTE: See definition below of Local Association.

- C. 01) **Championship Play** is a tournament or competition from which the winner or the winner and other selected teams may advance to higher levels of play of this Association (See **Article 308, Levels of Championship Play** of this Code).
- 02) **Church Member** is one who regularly attends the religious services of the sponsoring church congregation. If a church member attends the services of two or more churches and is on the bona fide membership roll of one of the churches, then this player is ruled a member of the church where their name appears on the membership roll.
- 03) **Classification** is level of play within a division.
- 04) **Code** is the operating regulations of USA Softball.
- 05) **Commissioner** is the commissioner of a local association. A commissioner is the principal liaison between a local association area and USA Softball.

D. 01) **Defending Champion**

- a. **Adult Team.** A team composed of five (5) or more of the players that won the championship of that particular division of play the preceding season. These five players must be physically present at the championship tournament site in order for the team to be eligible.
- b. **Junior Olympic Team.** The top designated teams in the Gold National Championship Finals (**See Article 316 K** and **L** of this Code) and in each of the Class A National Championship Finals (**See Article 316 H** and **I** of this Code) shall receive a berth to the following year's Junior Olympic Girls' USA Softball National Championship Finals in the team's current or succeeding year's age classification provided the team has five (5) participating players from the previous year's roster on the current year's roster and physically present at the current championship tournament site prior to the start of their first game.

NOTE: The defending champion berth will be awarded to the team composed of five (5) or more participating players that won the championship of that particular age classification the preceding year.

- c. **Split / Separate Teams.** If a team is eligible to return to a National Championship Final, and splits into two or more separate teams, with each meeting the above mentioned criteria, the team with the most players from the previous year's team receives the berth. If multiple teams have the same number of returning players, the berth will be awarded based on the previous year's registered manager. If the previous year's manager does not return, the berth will be awarded based on a coin flip or draw at the National Office.
- 02) **Division** refers to the different types of championship competition conducted by this Association (See **Article 306, Divisions and Classifications of Championship Play Defined** of this Code).
- 03) **Doping** is the administration of or use by the competing athlete of any substance foreign to the body or of any physiological substance taken in an abnormal quantity or taken by an abnormal route of entry into the body, with the sole intention of increasing in an artificial and unfair manner their performance in competition. When necessity demands medical treatment with any substance that because of its nature, dosage or application is able to boost the athlete's performance in competition in an artificial and unfair manner, this is to be regarded as doping.
- F. 01) **First Round of Championship Tournament Bracket** is completed when each team has won or lost a game.
- 02) **Full-Time Employee** is a person who works at least the minimum number of hours normally worked by a full-time employee in that particular job or industry.
- 03) **Full-Time Student** is determined by the registration requirements of an educational institution.
- H. 01) **His** (e.g. he, him) is also to include female gender.
- 02) **Host Team** is a team that is representing a local association in a regional or national championship tournament and said team must be from the local association hosting the tournament.
- I. 01) **Ineligible Person/Team** is a team, player, manager, official, or member who is not eligible to participate in USA Softball championship competition or USA Softball sanctioned events, (A suspended person is included in this definition).
- 02) **Invitational Tournament** is a tournament that does not lead to a championship tournament.
- L. 01) **Local Association** refers to a member association.
- M. 01) **Mandatory Classification** is the process by which teams are moved up a class based on their performance in the preceding year's National Championship Final (See **Article 307 (H)**, **Mandatory Classification** of this Code). To qualify for a berth in the present year's National Championship Final in the higher classification, the team must meet the provisions of 'Defending Champion ' , (See **Article 106 (D)(01)**, **Defending Champion** of this Code).
- 02) **Members** are those individuals, teams and organizations that come under

- Article 201** of this Code.
- N. 01) **National Office** is the national headquarters of the Association located in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
- P. 01) **Participation in Championship Play** is being available at the tournament and signing the USA Softball Official Tournament Signature Form. Participation in sanctioned events is being available to play, coach, manage, umpire and assist in the organization or otherwise be a part of a sanctioned event other than as an observer.
- 02) **Pick-up Player** is a player who has been added to a team's championship roster and meets all the requirements set forth in **Article 303** of this Code.
- 03) **Player Release** is for a player that has participated on a team in championship play. They may be released from a team after participating in Championship Play, but it shall be prior to the State / Metro Association roster change deadline and shall have written approval from the Coach and Player / Parent Guardian (if under age 18). For Junior Olympic Players, if the Manager / Coach and Parent / Guardian are one and the same, there needs to be an additional Manager / Coach signature. For Adult Players if the Manager / Coach and the Player are one and the same, there needs to be an additional Manager / Coach signature. The Player Release Form must be approved via signature by the State / Metro Association Commissioner or his / her designee. A player may only be released one time. If a request to be released is denied by the coach, the player may appeal to the Executive Director.
- 04) **Player Representative** is a representative from a local association.
- Q. 01) **Qualified Team** is a team who has earned and accepted a berth to a USA Softball National Championship Final.
- R. 01) **Region** is a geographical entity encompassing a specific number of local associations, as listed in **Article 202** of this Code.
- 02) **Returning Team** is a team that is eligible to return directly to a specified championship the following year. The team, in order to be eligible to return, must meet the provisions of 'defending champion',(See **Article 106 (D) (01)** , **Defending Champion** of this Code).
- S. 01) **Sanctioned Tournament** is a tournament approved by USA Softball or a local association.
- 02) **Substitute Team** is a team eligible to replace a qualifying team in the next level of championship play when the qualifying team is unable to advance. The substitute team must be the next highest finishing eligible team from the qualifying tournament. A substitute team may not replace a previous year's defending champion or a returning team in the current season's championship play.
- 03) **Suspended Person/Team** is a player, manager, official, team or other USA Softball member who has been found in violation of this Code and is therefore ineligible to participate in USA Softball championship competition or USA Softball sanctioned events.
- T. 01) **Team** refers to but shall not be limited to the following: players, coaches, managers, trainers, scorekeepers and sponsors.
- 02) **Team Personnel** is defined as all coaches, managers, scorekeepers and

other on field assistants that are required to meet the eligibility requirements of USA Softball.

03) **Tournament Staff** refers to a USA Softball Representative, Tournament Director, Umpire In Chief, Assistant Umpire In Chief and Umpire Coordinator and no manager, coach, player, family member may be involved in these roles at National Championship Finals.

U. 01) **Unsportsmanlike and Unprofessional Conduct** refers to conduct that is detrimental or unbecoming to the purposes and objectives of USA Softball and/or its local associations.

Article 107 REGULATIONS.

A. **Operating Regulations.** The Operating regulations of the Association are defined in this document, hereinafter referred to as the USA Softball Code, which is divided into three parts as follows:

Part 01	Articles 101	-	199	Mission and Definitions
Part 02	Articles 201	-	299	Organization
Part 03	Articles 301	-	399	Eligibility, Competition and Tournaments

B. **Order of Business.**

01. Robert's rules of order shall be the parliamentary law for all meetings of the association.
02. All meetings are open except when in executive session.

**PART 2
ORGANIZATION**

Article 201 MEMBERSHIP. Upon proper application and qualification, membership in USA Softball shall be available to state or metro associations, individuals, teams, umpires, scorekeepers as further defined in this Code and organizations on a voluntary basis who agree to be governed by the Code, rules and regulations of USA Softball.

A. **Local Associations.** The geographical area of the United States shall be divided into state and metro associations each of which shall be represented by a commissioner who shall act as a liaison between such area and USA Softball. Local associations are defined as follows:

State Associations

- 01) Alabama
- 02) Alaska
- 03) Arizona
- 04) Arkansas
- 05) Central California
- 06) Northern California
- 07) Southern California

Metro Associations

- 10) Colorado
- 11) Connecticut
- 12) Florida
- 13) Georgia
- 14) Hawaii
- 15) Idaho
- 16) Illinois Chicago (17
- 18) Indiana
- 19) Iowa
- 20) Kansas
- 21) Kentucky
- 22) Louisiana
- 23) Maine
- 24) Maryland-DC-
Delaware
- 25) Massachusetts
- 26) Michigan
- 28) Minnesota Detroit (27
Minneapolis (29
- 30) Mississippi
- 31) Missouri Kansas City (32
St. Louis (33
- 34) Montana
- 35) Nebraska
- 36) Nevada
- 37) New Hampshire
- 38) New Jersey Newark (39
- 40) New Mexico

41)	New York	
42)	New York City	
43)	North Carolina	
44)	North Dakota	Cincinnati (46
45)	Ohio	Dayton (47
48)	Oklahoma	Portland (50
49)	Oregon	Philadelphia (52
51)	Pennsylvania	
53)	Rhode Island	
54)	South Carolina	
55)	South Dakota	
56)	Tennessee	Dallas-Fort Worth (58
57)	Texas	Houston (59
		San Antonio (60
61)	Utah	
62)	Vermont	
63)	Central Virginia	
64)	Piedmont Virginia	Seattle Tacoma (66
65)	Washington	
67)	West Virginia	
68)	Wisconsin	
69)	Wyoming	

B. **Individual Membership.** Individuals acquire membership in USA Softball by paying applicable registration fees to their local association in one of the following categories:

- 01. Individual registration.
- 02. Membership on a registered team in compliance with **Article 301 (C and D)** of this Code.
- 03. Scorekeepers.
- 04. Umpires.

C. **Life Members.**

- 01. Life Members are those individuals who desire to aid in the promotion of the game of softball, and who have previously been members of the USA Softball or served as members of the Council of the USA Softball.
- 02. Life Members shall pay lifetime dues of \$150.00 and, without voice, also receive the official publication of the USA Softball as often as it is printed or electronically created, and an official USA Softball Participant Manual. In addition, a membership plaque shall be issued to each life member.

Article 202 REGIONS. The local associations as defined in **Article 201 (A)** of this Code shall be organized into 10 regions.

REGION	ASSOCIATIONS
01. Northeast	Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Newark, New York, New York City, Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Rhode Island and Vermont.
02. Central Atlantic	North Carolina, Maryland-DC-Delaware, Ohio, Cincinnati, Dayton, Central Virginia, Piedmont Virginia and West Virginia.
03. Southeast	Georgia, Florida, South Carolina and Tennessee.
04. South	Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi.
05. Southwest	Oklahoma, Texas, Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston and San Antonio, New Mexico.
06. Midwest	Indiana, Kentucky, Illinois, Chicago, Michigan and Detroit.
07. Mid-America.	Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Kansas City, St. Louis and Nebraska.
08. Northern.	Minnesota, Minneapolis, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin.
09. Northwest Mountain.	Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Portland, Utah, Washington, Seattle Tacoma and Wyoming.
10. Pacific Coast.	Arizona, Central California, Northern California, Southern California, Sacramento, San Francisco, Hawaii and Nevada.

Article 203 TERRITORIES. The ten regions listed in **Article 202** of this Code shall be organized into four territories as follows:

- A. **Eastern.** (Inclusive of Regions: **1 and 2**)
- B. **Northern.** (Inclusive of Regions: **6, 7 and 8**)
- C. **Southern.** (Inclusive of Regions: **3, 4 and 5**)
- D. **Western.** (Inclusive of Regions: **9 and 10**)

Article 204 SECTIONS. The ten regions listed in **Article 202** of this Code shall be organized into two sections as follows:

- A. **East.** (Inclusive of Regions: **1, 2, 3, 4, and 6**)
- B. **West.** (Inclusive of Regions: **5, 7, 8, 9, and 10**)

Article 205 COMMISSIONERS. A local association commissioner is the principal liaison between a local association and the USA Softball.

Article 206 UMPIRES

A. **Membership.**

- 01. An umpire **may become a member by placing his/her membership with the** local association commissioner where they reside or work either as an umpire or in their regular occupation.
- 02. Umpires become **members** of USA Softball on a voluntary basis and agree to be governed by the Code, rules and regulations of USA Softball. Registration by an umpire does not establish an employer/employee relationship and no umpire is considered an employee of USA Softball or the local association, but is instead acting as an independent contractor.
- 03. **Membership** is on an annual basis and shall expire December 31 of each year.
- 04. A member of the armed forces may become a ' military ' registered umpire only while stationed overseas, by registering through their military base athletic office.
- 05. Umpire membership may be declined or revoked for unethical, immoral or unprofessional conduct. Before declining or revoking membership, the umpire must be given the same hearing procedure afforded a team or team member as set forth in **Article 305, Suspension** of this Code.

B. **Championship Play.**

- 01. Only USA Softball-**member** umpires may be used in championship play.
- 02. All tournaments that lead toward national play require a minimum of two umpires per game.

C. **Conduct.**

- 01. **Use of Tobacco.** Umpires may not smoke or use tobacco like products on the playing field. This includes but is not limited to chewing, dipping and spitting.
- 02. **Use of Alcohol.** Umpires may not consume alcoholic beverages on a

game day until assignments have been completed.

Article 207 COMPLAINT PROCEDURE.

A. **Procedure.** For complaints not covered under **Article 305** of this Code, any member of USA Softball may file a complaint with USA Softball alleging that the complainant has been or is about to be detrimentally affected by an action of another member of USA Softball in violation of USA Softball rules.

01. Any complaint shall be in writing and signed under oath by the individual or the chief executive officer of the group or organization making the complaint. The complaint shall be filed with the Executive Director by Registered or Certified Mail and must be received by the Executive Director prior to or within six (6) months after the alleged violation of the USA Softball rules. Any complaint received which seeks relief for a violation of the USA Softball rules that occurred more than six (6) months prior to the receipt of the complaint by the Executive Director shall not be considered.

02. The complaint shall:

- a. Set forth the name and address of each party;
- b. Set forth the particular factual allegations that form the basis of the complaint, with each allegation set out in separate, numbered paragraph(s);
- c. Include a specific reference to each provision of the USA Softball Code or Rules that is alleged to have been violated;
- d. Set forth the efforts made to exhaust available remedies at the local or regional level or set forth a specific allegation that exhaustion would result in unreasonable delay causing irreparable harm to the complainant;
- e. Provide any and all evidence in support of the claimant's allegations;
- f. Set forth the specific relief requested; and
- g. Request a hearing if one is desired.

NOTE: If the complaint does not contain the above information, the Executive Director may dismiss the complaint without prejudice to its re-filing. If, upon review of the complaint, the Executive Director determines the complainant failed to exhaust all available remedies at the local or regional level, unless it is determined that exhausting all such remedies would result in unreasonable delay causing irreparable harm to the complainant, the Executive Director may dismiss the complaint without prejudice to its refiling.

03. Whenever a complaint is filed with USA Softball, the Executive Director shall provide the party against whom the complaint is made with a copy of the complaint.

04. The party charged may respond in opposition to the complaint. The response must be made, in writing, within twenty (20) days after receipt of a copy of the complaint, or such shorter period of time as the Executive Director shall set by written notice, but such time to respond shall in no event be less than five (5) business days after receipt of a copy of the complaint. The respondent shall provide a copy of its response to the complainant at the same time the response is provided to the Executive Director.

05. The response shall:

- a. Respond to each factual allegation contained in the complaint, with the

- response to each allegation set out in separately numbered paragraphs which correspond to the paragraphs contained in the complaint;
- b. Provide any and all evidence in support of the respondent's position.
06. The complainant may file a reply to the response within five (5) business days of receipt of the response.
 07. If either party requests a hearing, the process will be as follows:
 - a. A date, time and place for the hearing which is not unduly burdensome for the complainant or the respondent will be selected by the Executive Director and will in no event be later than forty-five (45) days after the filing of the complaint. The hearing will be held before the Executive Director.
 - b. Each party has the right to be represented at the hearing by an attorney, with each party to bear its own expense for counsel. Each party has the right to call witnesses and present oral and written evidence and arguments in support of its position.
 - c. If requested and paid for by the party, a record of the hearing may be made by a court reporter. Each party shall have the right to obtain a transcript of the hearing, if any, at its own expense.
 - d. The complainant has the burden of proving, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the respondent has violated a specific provision of the USA Softball Code or Rules and that such violation has caused or is likely to cause the complainant harm.
 - e. Within thirty (30) days after the hearing, the Executive Director shall render a written report of the decision. A copy of this report will be provided to each party.
 08. If neither party requests a hearing, the Executive Director shall review the complaint and any response or reply and shall issue a written report of the decision, a copy of which will be provided to each party.
 09. Complaints involving the USA Softball President and/or the USA Softball Executive Director:
 - a. For any complaint involving the President as a party, whether as the accuser or accused, the duties of the President as described in this section shall revert to the immediate past president.
 - b. For any complaint involving the Executive Director as a party, whether as the accuser or accused, the duties of the Executive Director as described in this section shall revert to the president.
 - c. In the event of a complaint involving the President, the Executive Director or the immediate past president, the duties, as described in this section, shall be filled by a representative elected by the Board of Directors.
- B. **Appeal.** Any party adversely affected by the decision of the Executive Director regarding a complaint may appeal the decision to the USA Softball Board of Directors.
01. The appeal shall be in writing and signed by the party making the appeal. The appeal shall be filed with the Executive Director by Registered or Certified Mail and must be received by the Executive Director within ten (10) business days of the date of the written report of decision issued by the Executive Director. The appellant shall provide a copy of the appeal to the adverse party. If no appeal is received within ten (10) business days of the

date of the written report of the decision of the Executive Director, such decision shall be final and binding upon all parties.

02. The appeal shall:
 - a. Set forth the name and address of each party;
 - b. Set forth the specific grounds upon which the appeal is based;
 - c. Set forth the specific relief requested.
03. Any party opposing the appeal shall file a response in writing with the Executive Director within five (5) business days of receipt of the appeal. The party opposing the appeal shall provide a copy of its response to the appellant at the same time it is provided to the Executive Director.
04. Upon receipt of the response from the party opposing the appeal, or upon expiration of the time for such response to be filed, the Executive Director shall provide all written materials relevant to the appeal to the members of the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors shall consider the appeal at their next meeting. If a meeting of the Board of Directors is not scheduled to occur within forty-five (45) days after the Executive Director's receipt of the appeal, the USA Softball President shall call a special meeting of the Board of Directors to consider the appeal within such forty-five (45) day period which may be conducted in person or by telephonic conference, at which time the Board of Directors shall review the appeal and decide what action is warranted, if any. The complainant and the respondent shall each have the right, at their respective sole expense, to attend that portion of the Board of Directors meeting in which the recommendation of the special committee is reviewed by the Board of Directors and shall be allowed the opportunity to address the Board of Directors at that time. Any vote on the disposition of the appeal shall be made in open session. The decision of the Board of Directors shall be final and binding on all the parties.

C. **Accelerated Review Procedure.** When a complaint pursuant to this article, **Article 207** of this Code, involves the right of an athlete or coach to participate in an upcoming competition, the complainant may file a request for accelerated review of the complaint.

01. This request shall be attached to the complaint and shall:
 - a. Specifically request that the complaint be filed under the accelerated review procedures set forth in this section;
 - b. Set forth the specific factual allegations which complainant alleges support the request for accelerated review by showing that the complainant will suffer irreparable harm if forced to file its complaint under the regular procedures outlined in **Article 207 (A)** of this Code.
 - c. Provide any and all evidence in support of its request for accelerated review.
02. The Executive Director will then review the request for accelerated review and decide if the complainant has shown by a preponderance of the evidence that the complainant will suffer irreparable harm if the complaint is reviewed under the regular complaint procedures. The factors to be considered by the Executive director include, but are not limited to, any delay in filing the complaint with the Executive Director, support of the complaint by any USA Softball local affiliated organization, and the severity of the potential loss to the complainant balanced against the interference with the conduct of the competitors. If the Executive Director determines the complainant will suffer irreparable harm if the complaint is not reviewed under an accelerated

procedure, the Executive Director shall provide the party against whom the complaint is brought with a copy of the complaint as soon as reasonably possible.

03. The party against whom the complaint is brought shall have an opportunity to respond, in writing, to the charges set out in the complaint in accordance with a time schedule set by the Executive Director. Upon receipt of the response by the party charged in the complaint or upon the expiration of the time within which the response must be filed, the Executive Director will present all the written materials regarding the complaint to the president.
04. The president will appoint a panel of one (1) or more members of the Board of Directors and shall include a sufficient number of Athlete Representatives, who are directly elected to the panel by the Athlete Representatives then serving on the Board of Directors, so as to comprise not less than twenty percent (20%) of the panel. The panel shall evaluate all written materials relevant to the complaint and shall make a written report of its decision within the time period set by the Executive Director. A copy of the decision will be provided to each of the parties. Such decision is made on behalf of the Board of Directors and shall not require further approval by the Board of Directors. The decision shall be final and binding on all the parties.

- D. **Waiver of Protest Rights.** Failure of an aggrieved party to act upon knowledge of a violation of the USA Softball Code, Procedural Manual or Rules affecting the eligibility of an athlete or team to participate in a USA Softball tournament prior to such competition shall act as a waiver of any right thereafter to protest such participation.
- E. **Binding Arbitration.** USA Softball shall submit to binding arbitration to the extent required by the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act or the Bylaws of the United States Olympic Committee, as amended from time to time.
- F. **Remedies.** If any complaint filed hereunder is decided in favor of the complainant, the Executive Director or the Board of Directors, as the case may be, may enjoin the respondent from further or future violations of the USA Softball rules or may prevent the respondent from participating in any USA Softball events for such period as the Executive Director or the Board of Directors, as the case may be, deems appropriate in their sole discretion. Nothing in this Code shall entitle a complainant to receive monetary relief.

PART 3
ELIGIBILITY, COMPETITION AND TOURNAMENTS

Article 301 ELIGIBILITY.

A. Eligibility Compliance Required By Each Player, Manager and Team.

01. It is the duty of each player, player's parent (if applicable), manager, coach and team to review USA Softball's eligibility requirements and comply with USA Softball's eligibility requirements. Each team manager/coach is responsible for complying with the eligibility requirements and other requirements set forth in the USA Softball Code as to his/her team. This specifically includes, without limitation, eligibility requirements pertaining to proper classification, proper divisions, eligible pick up player requirements, eligible age requirements and all other eligibility requirements.
02. As to eligibility matters, any assurances or statements from USA Softball members, USA Softball commissioners or USA Softball officials other than USA Softball's Executive Director are not binding and shall not be binding upon USA Softball and shall not constitute a valid excuse for a team's, manager's or player's failure to comply with any eligibility requirement. USA Softball disclaims any and all liability for any player, team, manager or coach's reliance's upon assurances of persons other than USA Softball's Executive Director. USA Softball disclaims any and all liability for any player, team, manager or coach's failure to comply with all eligibility requirements.
03. Teams, players, coaches and managers that are ineligible under the USA Softball Code and that incur travel and other expenses in connection with an USA Softball tournament do so at their own risk and peril. Teams, players, coaches and managers that are ineligible under the USA Softball Code are subject to disqualification or forfeiture at any time, as otherwise provided for in the USA Softball Code (i.e. upon the timely protest of any other team or official).
04. Any USA Softball official's signature (i.e. Commissioner's signature) on a roster form or any other document shall not be considered as a determination of the eligibility of a player or team. Eligibility of players or teams shall be governed as otherwise provided in the Code. Any solicitation or invitation for a team to participate in an USA Softball tournament by a Tournament Director or other USA Softball Official shall not be considered a determination of that team's eligibility. Eligibility of players or teams shall be exclusively governed as provided in the Code.

B. International Eligibility Standards. USA Softball shall not adopt an eligibility standard that is more restrictive than that of the applicable international sports federation, the World Baseball Softball Confederation.

C. Team Eligibility.

01. **Team Registration.** A team must register with the local association in which the greatest number of its' players reside, and this number must be retained for the remainder of the season.

EXCEPTION: Teams in an adjoining county to a state or metro association may register with either the state or the metro association by mutual consent of the State/Metro Commissioner's involved.

02. **Team Participation.** A team may register and participate in more than one division of play, but that team is limited to only one classification within a division of Championship play.

EXCEPTIONS:

- a. **All Divisions of Play.** Teams can play in a higher classification than their current classification. Participation in a higher classification could affect the team in their next USA Softball playing season.

Clarification: This allows teams to play up in level classification (Example: Class B to Class A) and age classification (Example: 12-Under to 14-Under)

- b. **Armed Services Teams.** The Women's Armed Services team must play in Women's Class Open Slow Pitch and the Men's Armed Services team must play in the Men's Class A Slow Pitch.

- c. **Fast Pitch.**

01. In the Junior Olympic Girls' Fast Pitch 16-Under and 18-Under Classification, Class A teams are allowed to participate in any Gold National Qualifying events and have the ability to return to Class A play provided the team did not earn a berth at the Gold level.

02. In all adult Fast Pitch, no USA **Men's** National Team Member may participate below the **Major** level.

EXCEPTION: A member of the USA Junior Men's National Team may participate below the Major level in a National Championship Final.

- d. **Modified Pitch.** Men's 9-Man Modified Pitch teams will be determined by a restricted pitchers list. The restricted modified pitch pitchers list will be available on the USA Softball website and this list will be updated, modified and/or revised on a regular and continuous basis but will be finalized by August 1 each year for the current year's National Championship Finals. Pitchers listed on this list are ineligible to pitch in the 10-Man Modified championship play tournaments, but may participate in another position. Any appeals regarding this list can be made through the National Office to the modified pitch sub-committee.

- e. **Slow Pitch.**

01. All Men's Slow Pitch players and or teams are eligible to participate in the Men's Class A or Men's Class B National Championships and retain their eligibility for their original classification in championship play.

02. A restricted slow pitch player list will be compiled by a USA Softball committee representing slow pitch. The restricted slow pitch players list will be available on the USA Softball website and this list will be updated, modified and/or revised on a regular and continuous basis but will be finalized by August 1 each year

for the current year's National Championship Finals. Players on the USA Softball restricted slow pitch player's list may only play Class A and Super. Any team that participates in Class A may not have more than three (3) players from the USA Softball restricted slow pitch player list. Any appeals regarding this list can be made through the National Office to the National Adult Slow Pitch Players Classification Board.

03. All Women's Slow Pitch players and or teams are eligible to participate in the Women's Class Open National Championship and retain their eligibility for their original classification in championship play.
04. All Slow Pitch players and teams need to review **Article 307 (H)(01)** of this Code for classification restrictions prior to completing a team roster.

03. **Junior Olympic**

- a. Any Junior Olympic team participating in championship play must have at least one ACE certified coach (current year) on the field/dugout during championship play games.
- b. All Junior Olympic team personnel assisting in the dugout must visually display proof of an USA Softball background check (current year).

D. **Player Eligibility.**

01. **Player Participation.** A player may participate in any one local association during the current year.

EXCEPTIONS:

- a. In 9-Man Modified and 10-Man Modified Pitch, teams shall be made up of players from their respective region or the associations bordering state(s). A rostered player can play in championship play if they come from within their respective region or bordering state(s).
- b. In the 50, 55, 60 and 65 seniors divisions of slow pitch teams shall be made up of players from the team's home state plus adjoining states. The home state is defined as the state where the most players on the roster reside.
- c. **Seniors Major Plus teams can get their players anywhere in the East Section for the East National or the West Section for the West National.**
- d. Foreign players may not participate in the 10-Under, 12-Under, 14-Under, 16-Under and 18-Under Boy's Fast Pitch.

02. **Rostered Player.**

- a. A player may participate as a regular rostered player on only one team within a division in championship play during a season.

EXCEPTIONS:

01. **Armed Forces.** Members of the Armed Forces team are exempt from this rule if competing with their individual service (branch) team or the Armed Forces team.
02. **All Men's Fast Pitch.**
03. **Men's Super, Class A and Class B Slow Pitch.**

04. **Released Player.** See definition in **Article 106 (P)(03)** of this Code.

05. **Women's Class Open Slow Pitch.**

- b. On adult or Junior Olympic rosters, a player may participate in more than one adult or Junior Olympic division of play, but that player is limited to only one classification within a division of play.
- c. **Adult Player Classification.** Individual adult players may not play more than one (1) classification below the classification level of their most recent team.
- d. **Junior Olympic Classification.** Once a player participates in an intercollegiate softball program for a university, college, or junior/community college, the player is ineligible to play below the Class A level.

CLARIFICATION: A redshirted player is considered to be a participant in an intercollegiate softball program.

03. **Electing to Participate.** Once electing to participate in championship play on a team registered in a local association, the player may not play in the same division in any other local association during the current year.

EXCEPTION: In the Seniors Divisions, a player may play in the same division in another local association, but not in the same classification.

EXCEPTION: Released Player. See definition in **Article 106 (P)(03)** of this Code.

04. **Player Identification.**

a. **Providing Proper Identification.**

01. Upon demand by league or tournament officials including National championship finals, a player must produce proper identification (which shall include a current photograph of the player and the player's signature) or the player shall be declared ineligible and the team may be subject to suspension. For the purpose of this section, driver's licenses or comparable identification is acceptable.

02. In all Championship Play events, every player must sign in prior to playing. This name needs to match what is on the driver's license or comparable identification. Failure to do so will result in disqualification from the tournament, unless the player has not played, in this case they will be allowed to sign in. A player must provide proper identification (which shall include a current photograph of the player and the player's signature) to the tournament director prior to participating in the competition. The Tournament Director shall follow the sign in procedures developed and provided by the National Office. The tournament director shall compare the identification with the name and signature appearing on the team's championship roster.

- b. **Local Association Photo / Identification Card.** If a photo ID card for a player is issued by the local USA Softball Commissioner and/or their designated Deputy, it will satisfy the required proof of age

during USA Softball championship play. The card will include the date of birth and signature of the player and any other information required by the current USA Softball Code. The card will also include the signature (or facsimile) of the local USA softball Commissioner and/or their designated Deputy to certify the date of birth and that proof of age is on file with the local USA Softball office. Other information on the card may include the player's USA Softball registration number and information on the USA Softball insurance coverage. A photo ID card with the above requirements and issued by the local USA Softball will satisfy the requirements of paragraph a, b and c.

- c. **Junior Olympic Birth Verification.** For each member of a Junior Olympic team, one of the following forms of birth verification or proof of age must be attached to the team's roster/affidavit form: Birth certificate, baptismal certificate, hospital certificate, driver's license, a photo ID card issued by a local USA Softball Commissioner and/or their designated deputy or a valid passport. In the case of a Junior Olympic player whose name has changed from that which appears on their birth certificate, baptismal certificate, hospital certificate, driver's license or passport by reason of adoption or a court approved name change, a copy of the court order or decree approving such adoption or change of name shall also be attached to the roster/affidavit form. Photocopies of any of the above are acceptable.

05. **Proof of Age.** A player must provide proof of age in Junior Olympic, adult 18-Over, masters and seniors divisions.

- a. **Junior Olympic Age Qualifications.** A player's age as of December 31 determines the age in which the player is eligible to play the following year.

- 01. **8-Under Age Classification.** A player born after December 31, **2008** is ELIGIBLE.
- 02. **10-Under Age Classification.** A player born after December 31, **2006** is ELIGIBLE.
- 02. **12-Under Age Classification.** A player born after December 31, **2004** is ELIGIBLE.
- 03. **14-Under Age Classification.** A player born after December 31, **2002** is ELIGIBLE.
- 04. **16-Under Age Classification.** A player born after December 31, **2000** is ELIGIBLE.
- 05. **18-Under Age Classification.** A player born after December 31, **1998** is ELIGIBLE.
- 06. Players of younger age classification may play in older age classifications, but an older age classification player may not play in the younger age classification.

For the 2018 Junior Olympic Playing Season, use the chart below to determine Junior Olympic Age Qualifications. 'E' indicates the player is eligible for the respective age group(s).

AGE GROUP		18	16	14	12	10	8
YEAR OF BIRTH	1999	E					
	2000	E					
	2001	E	E				
	2002	E	E				
	2003	E	E	E			
	2004	E	E	E			
	2005	E	E	E	E		
	2006	E	E	E	E		
	2007	E	E	E	E	E	
	2009 - 2018	E	E	E	E	E	E

- b. **18-Above Age Qualifications.** A player who is 18 years of age or above on or before December 31 of the current year is eligible for the 18-Above age classification.
- c. **Masters and Seniors Age Qualifications.** Cutoff date is December 31. A player whose birthday (35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65, 70, and 75) is on or before December 31 of the current year is eligible.

Note: Senior ages 70-over and 75-over may have up to three players who are one year below the minimum age requirement.

- 06. **Industrial Qualifications.** USA Softball shall conduct championship tournaments for industrial or all employee teams. Industrial team rosters must have the eligibility form attached that verifies employment requirements.
 - a. **Eligible Teams.** All players must be full-time employees of one company or of one city or county government or of one military installation, or of one fraternal organization (same Lodge) and must have competed together during the current season of play. Military Teams: Base/Post level teams (active duty military only) may participate in this division of play. U.S. Armed Forces All Star Teams may not enter National Championship Finals unless they have played through local association or regional play leading to the nationals.
 - b. **Full Time Employee Qualifications.** To qualify as a full time / contract employee, a player must work the minimum number of hours per week normally worked in the industry by a full-time employee.

- c. **Layoffs.** A player who has established seniority on the job and is temporarily laid off may continue to play in the industrial division.
 - d. **Length of Service.** A player must have been continuously employed by the company on a full-time basis from April 15 of the current year to be eligible for industrial competition.
 - e. **Name of Team.** Industrial teams may use only the name of the company they represent in the brackets on rosters, and any other communication efforts such as radio, TV and newspaper during industrial competition. This provision would not preclude a team from having additional sponsors or from wearing a uniform displaying another sponsor's name.
 - f. **Retirees.** A company's employee who has completed the required number of years of service with the company and then elects to retire under the company's regular retirement plan would maintain eligibility to participate in the industrial division for said company.
07. **Church Qualifications.** All players must be church members by March 1. Church team rosters must have the eligibility form attached that verifies Church Membership requirements.

- E. **Protest of Eligibility.** Protest of player eligibility can be made or appealed at any time. Eligibility protests cannot be waived by local notice.
- F. **Adult Slow Pitch Only.** The Commissioner or designee signing the roster must verify the players ranking in the USA Softball Slow Pitch Player database and write the players classification next to them on the roster. If said person signing the roster has knowledge or can verify that a player's classification in another National Association they must also note that ranking as well. Refer to **Article 307 H 01 NOTE.**

Article 302 ROSTERS. A team's roster becomes official when a commissioner or designee signs it for championship play. Each team is permitted pick up players according to **Article 303** of this code.

- A. **Rosters.** Male rosters shall include only male players and female rosters shall include only female players.
- B. **Number of Players.** A championship roster can only have a maximum of 20 players, including pickup players. A manager or coach shall not count as a player unless listed as one. Player(s) names cannot be removed or replaced once the player on the roster has participated in championship play.

EXCEPTION: Released Player. See definition in **Article 106 (P)(03)** of this Code.

- C. **Roster Change Deadline.** The roster change deadline for championship play is 24 hours prior to the start of championship tournament play.

NOTE: Local associations may establish an earlier deadline for classification purposes.

- D. **Roster Form.** Roster forms shall be provided by the National Office and are the only official rosters for championship play.

- E. **Roster Procedure.** The roster / affidavit form must be signed by the player, their guardian (if necessary) and the manager. Parent's signatures are not required for players 18 years of age and over. A red line must be drawn on the line beneath the last player's name listed on the roster. The roster must be signed by the local commissioner or their designee.
- F. **Roster Eligibility.** Receipt and acceptance of an official USA Softball affidavit roster shall not be considered as a determination of the eligibility of a player or team. Eligibility of players or teams shall be governed as otherwise provided in the Code.

Article 303 PICK-UP PLAYERS.

- A. **General Rule.** All teams are permitted to pick-up three players as follows:
 - 01. The team adding pick-up players must select eligible roster members from USA Softball registered teams.
 - 02. Pick-up players must have played for a USA Softball registered team during the current season.

EXCEPTION: Senior Slow Pitch and Junior Olympic Fast Pitch

- 03. **(JO ONLY)** Pick-up players must be registered during the current season. Players must be registered seven (7) days prior to the start of a National Championship Final.
- 04. Pick-up players must be selected only from USA Softball registered teams no longer eligible for championship play.

EXCEPTION: A player that has been released from a team's championship roster prior in accordance with the Player Release form.

- 05. Pick-up players must be from the team's same or lower classification.

EXCEPTION: Players who are age eligible may be picked up by a lower age classification team.

CLARIFICATION: In Junior Olympic play there are two types of classification, one type of classification is Gold, Class A and Class B; the other type of classification is age classification, 18-Under, 16-Under, 14-Under, 12-Under and 10-Under. Therefore as an example, a player who has competed on a Junior Olympic Girls' Fast Pitch 16-Under team is an eligible pick-up player for any team below the 16-Under age classification if she meets that age classification criteria. Another example, once a player participates on a Class A team, they are not eligible to participate in Class B even if moving up in the age classification.

CLARIFICATION: A player who has competed in any Junior Olympic Girls' Fast Pitch National Championship Finals is an eligible pick-up player in a higher classification. Therefore as an example, a player who participates in a Western Championship Final is an eligible pick-up player for any team at the USA Softball National Championship Final.

- 06. Players (Adult and Junior Olympics) whose teams have qualified to compete in the highest level tournaments within a classification shall not be

eligible pick-up players.

CLARIFICATION: A player who has competed in any Junior Olympic Girls' Fast Pitch National Championship Finals is not an eligible pick-up player for any other Junior Olympic Girls' National Championship Finals.

EXCEPTION: A player who has competed in the Men's 23-Under championship play is eligible to participate in other adult championship play during the same season as a pick-up player.

07. No player may be picked up for National Qualifiers or National Gold Qualifying tournaments.
08. In adult divisions of play, a pick-up player may be substituted for after participation.
09. In Junior Olympic divisions of play, a pick-up player may not be substituted for after participation.
10. A player may play as a pick-up player with only one team other than their rostered USA Softball registered team within a division in a season.
11. Teams adding pick-up players must submit a completed official USA Softball pick-up player form attached to the official roster before the team plays in the tournament.

B. **Fast Pitch, Modified Pitch, and Slow Pitch Pickup Players.** A player may be picked up at any level of championship play prior to the National Championship Final as follows:

01. If players are picked up prior to the local association championship, they must be governed by their local association rules.
02. If players are picked up after their local association championship, the pick up player(s) must be governed by **Article 303** of this Code.

Note: Men's Modified Pitch pick-up players may come from the teams' respective region or the associations bordering state(s).

C. **Church Slow Pitch and Industrial Slow Pitch Teams.** Teams may not pick up any player that does not meet the eligibility requirements of that division of play.

Article 304 USA SOFTBALL DRUG CONTROL PROCEDURE AND POLICY. USA Softball will adopt and enforce the findings, procedures and penalties in accordance with the United States Anti-Doping Agency (**USADA**) and the United States Olympic Committee (**USOC**).

Article 305 SUSPENSION.

A. **Acts of Suspension.** A team, team member, manager, team official, administrator, volunteer or umpire may be suspended for any of the following:

01. Unsportsmanlike conduct.
02. Physical violence, such as an attack on an umpire, tournament official or participant immediately preceding, during or immediately following a game or arising out of USA Softball Activities.
03. Commission of fraud, such as playing under an assumed name, falsifying an affidavit or roster or giving false information to tournament officials.
04. Participating when they do not meet the eligibility requirements of USA Softball.

05. Knowingly competing with or against individuals or teams which are suspended from USA Softball play.
06. Commission of any act while participating in USA Softball activities such as: failure to pay indebtedness, destruction of property, violation of state or local laws or any other acts that are contrary to the objectives and purposes of USA Softball or arising out of USA Softball Activities.
07. Violation of USA Softball substance abuse policies and procedures.
08. Forfeiting a game in championship play.
09. Bullying, hazing, harassment (including sexual harassment), emotional misconduct, physical misconduct, and sexual misconduct (including child sexual abuse) as defined by the USOC SafeSport program at www.safesport.org.
10. Interference with any USA Softball Hearing Process as cited in Article 305 B 04 of this Code.
11. Other misconduct that reasonably calls into question the participants suitability to participate in the applicable activity.

B. Suspension Procedures.

01. **Time Limitations.** Suspension complaints must be filed with the Commissioner in whose association the offense is alleged to have occurred or the commissioner in whose association registered the player or team, within at least one of the following time restrictions: within six (6) months of the date of the alleged violation; or within six (6) months of the complaint's discovery of the alleged violation, so long as the complaint was not unreasonable in failing to discover the alleged violation.
02. **Hearing.** Prior to suspension, the accused must be given an opportunity for a hearing by the commissioner in whose jurisdiction the violation took place, or by the commissioner of the association that registered the player or team. The commissioner may appoint a deputy or district commissioner, an officer or an official of the local association or any other disinterested party to conduct the hearing in their place. Notwithstanding the prior sentence or other provisions of **Article 305** of this Code, for purpose of addressing extenuating circumstances, USA Softball Executive Director and or any USA Softball Commissioner shall have the authority to issue an interim suspension pending a hearing. In cases of an interim suspension, an initial hearing on the matter must be scheduled within twenty-one (21) days from the first day of the interim suspension. An interim suspension shall have the same effect as a suspension.
03. **Notification.** The accused must be notified in writing of the time, place and date of the hearing. An accused person is entitled to an alternate date if for a good cause the original date is not acceptable. Should the accused person fail to attend the hearing, the hearing official conducting the hearing may proceed and take the evidence without the accused present, and make a determination based upon the evidence presented at the hearing.
04. **Hearing Process Interference Penalties.** No person may interfere with the USA Softball hearing process under **Article 305** of this Code or any other Code **Article**. Any person, who harasses, threatens, tampers with, or intimidates any member of any hearing panel, any USA Softball administrator or official, or any potential hearing witness, or who attempts to do so, shall be subject to discipline under this USA Softball Code, including suspension for such actions. Any attempts to interfere with USA Softball's hearing process shall constitute independent grounds for discipline against that person.
05. **Rulings.** After hearing the evidence the person presiding at the hearing

shall render a written decision within fourteen (14) days. If a decision is not rendered within fourteen (14) days, a written appeal may be made to the Executive Director or their designee, whose decision shall be final.

06. **Right of Appeal.** Following the decision of the local association commissioner or their designee(s), the accused or any person claiming that an act of suspension was or was not committed may appeal in writing within fourteen (14) days to the Executive Director or the Executive Director's designee, whose decision shall be final. The written appeal submission must contain a statement of the specific grounds why the prior determination should be reversed, must be accompanied by all evidence supporting the request for reversal and must state the relief requested by the person filing the appeal. With the written appeal submission, the person filing the appeal may also file any other information or evidence in support of the appeal. Failure to appeal the prior determination to the Executive Director within fourteen (14) days shall constitute sufficient grounds for denial of an appeal. Failure to submit all required appeal submissions at the time of the appeal shall constitute sufficient grounds for denial of the appeal. The Executive Director shall endeavor to render a decision on any appeal within fourteen (14) days. The Executive Director shall have the authority, in extenuating circumstances to issue a stay pending appeal.

- C. **Effect of Suspension.** A team, team member, manager, team official, administrator, volunteer or umpire shall cease to be eligible to participate in USA Softball activities, league play, tournaments or any other events conducted or sanctioned by USA Softball while suspended by USA Softball or any local association. Persons suspended in one local association shall be deemed suspended and ineligible for purposes of all activities of all USA Softball local associations. Any attempt to participate in any local association's activities while suspended shall constitute grounds for additional potential discipline and suspension.

D. **Suspension Procedures (Tournament Play).**

01. **Protest Committee.** There shall be a tournament protest committee. Unless otherwise constituted, the tournament protest committee shall normally include the tournament director, USA Softball Representative and/or other members as agreed upon by the tournament director and/or the USA Softball Representative. The Tournament Protest Committee shall have jurisdiction to decide questions of forfeiture or suspension from that tournament or to which a decision (except one of an umpire's judgment) in tournament play be appealed. The decision of such Committee shall be final.
02. **Hearing.** Upon the discovery of an ineligible player or acts of suspension under **Article 305 (A)** of this Code, the team or team member shall be provided a fair notice and opportunity for a hearing before the Tournament Protest Committee whose decision shall be final.
03. **Suspension.** A team that is determined to be in violation of USA Softball's rules and requirements shall forfeit the game being played or the game last played. An ineligible player shall be suspended from further play in the tournament and in any subsequent tournament for which he/she may have qualified by virtue of their play in the tournament in which they were suspended. A team, team member, manager or team official may be subject to further penalties.
04. **Forfeits.** Teams that forfeit as a result of other than ineligible players or acts of suspension under **Article 305 (A)** of this Code, shall be allowed to continue in tournament play unless the forfeit was their eliminating loss.

05. **Further Suspension.** Discipline, forfeiture and/or suspension by a tournament protest committee shall not limit or bar any further discipline or suspension pursuant to **Article 305 (B)** of this Code.

E. **Additional Penalties.** A team, team member, manager, team official or umpire may be suspended for a period of time for violations outlined in **Article 305 (A)** of this Code at the sole discretion of the commissioner or the commissioner's designee(s), subject only to any right of appeal to the Executive Director. However, the following acts of suspension require a minimum of loss of eligibility, as follows:

01. Commission of fraud – one (1) year minimum.
02. Competing knowingly with or against suspended players – one (1) year minimum.
03. Competing with a team that is discovered to have within its possession or control an altered bat – two (2) year minimum.
04. Player found in possession of an altered bat and found guilty according to **Article 305** of this Code shall be suspended for a five (5) year minimum.
05. Team discovered to have within its possession or control of an altered bat may be suspended for a two (2) year minimum.
06. Bullying, hazing, harassment (including sexual harassment), emotional misconduct – two (2) year minimum
07. Physical misconduct/Physical violence – five (5) year minimum
08. Sexual misconduct (including child sexual abuse) – ten (10) year minimum

F. **Reciprocity.**

01. A determination of suspension or ineligibility by one local association shall automatically constitute a determination of suspension or ineligibility for the applicable time period with respect to participation in all USA Softball activities, including those activities conducted by other USA Softball local associations and for any national events conducted by USA Softball.
02. At the discretion of the Executive Director or any Local Association Commissioner, a determination of suspension or ineligibility of a team, team member, manager, team official, administrator, volunteer or umpire made by another sports organization, an affiliated member of USA Softball, an allied member of USA Softball or another sport's governing body may be afforded reciprocity by USA Softball so long as that determination of suspension or ineligibility was made after the accused person was provided notice and an opportunity to present facts of his/her side of the issues to the applicable organization or governing body. In the event USA Softball elects to provide reciprocity to any such determination, the Executive Director or any Local Association Commissioner shall issue a written statement that the USA Softball has become aware of the determination and shall similarly enforce the suspension or eligibility determination of the other organization or governing body as to all USA Softball activities. Such a written determination shall be mailed to the accused person. If the determination is made by any Local Association Commissioner, then the written determination of the Local Association Commissioner shall be appealable by the accused person by written appeal within 14 days to the Executive Director, whose decision shall be final. If the determination is made by the Executive Director, then the Executive Director's determination shall be final and not appealable.

Article 306 DIVISIONS AND CLASSIFICATIONS OF CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY DEFINED.

A. USA Softball recognizes the following divisions and classifications of championship

play. Each local association shall establish a classification code to determine team and/or player classification for championship play in the following divisions:

DIVISIONS	CLASSIFICATIONS
01. Men's Fast Pitch	Major Open
02. Men's 23-Under Fast Pitch	
03. Women's 18-Over Fast Pitch	
04. Men's Slow Pitch	Super A B C D E / Rec
NOTE: The Men's Super and Class A qualifying guidelines will be established by the USA Softball Executive Director. The USA Softball Super National Championship date and location will be approved by the USA Softball Board of Directors.	
05. Men's 21-Under Slow Pitch	
06. Men's 19-Under Slow Pitch	
07. Women's Slow Pitch	Open C D
08. Men's (09) Man Modified Pitch	
09. Men's (10) Man Modified Pitch	
10. Men's Industrial Slow Pitch	
11. Men's 16-Inch Slow Pitch	Major A
12. Men's Church Slow Pitch	
13. Co-ed Slow Pitch	Open C D E
14. Men's Masters 40-Over Fast Pitch	
15. Men's Masters 50-Over Fast Pitch	
16. Men's Seniors 60-Over Fast Pitch	
17. Men's Masters 35-Over Slow Pitch	
18. Men's Masters 40-Over Slow Pitch	
19. Men's Masters 45-Over Slow Pitch	

NOTE: The Masters Slow Pitch playing guidelines will be established by the USA Softball Executive Director.

- | | | |
|-----|---|----------------------------------|
| 20. | Men's Seniors 50-Over Slow Pitch | Major Plus
Major
AAA
AA |
| 21. | Men's Seniors 55-Over Slow Pitch | Major Plus
Major
AAA
AA |
| 22. | Men's Seniors 60-Over Slow Pitch | Major Plus
Major
AAA
AA |
| 23. | Men's Seniors 65-Over Slow Pitch | Major Plus
Major
AAA
AA |
| 24. | Men's Seniors 70-Over Slow Pitch | Major
AAA |
| 25. | Men's Seniors 75-Over Slow Pitch | Major
AAA |

NOTE: The Senior Slow Pitch playing guidelines will be established by the USA Softball Executive Director.

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 26. | Women's Masters 35-Over Slow Pitch | |
| 27. | Boy's Fast Pitch | 18-Under
16-Under
14-Under
12-Under
10-Under |
| 28. | Boy's Slow Pitch | 18-Under
16-Under
14-Under
12-Under
10-Under |

NOTE: The Boys Slow Pitch playing guidelines will be established by the USA Softball Executive Director.

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|--|
| 29. | Girls' Fast Pitch | 8-Under
GOLD 18-Under
16-Under
Class A 18-Under
16-Under
14-Under
12-Under
10-Under |
|-----|--------------------------|--|

Class B 18-Under
 16-Under
 14-Under
 12-Under
 10-Under
 Class C 14-Under
 12-Under
 10-Under

30. **Girls' Slow Pitch** 18-Under
 16-Under
 14-Under
 12-Under
 10-Under

B. **Additional Classification.** Local associations may adopt additional classifications (adult and Junior Olympic). A copy of each local association classification code shall be filed with the National Office.

NOTE: Listing in any of the above divisions and/or classifications does not indicate a National Championship Final unless also listed under **Article 316** of this Code.

Article 307 CLASSIFICATIONS OF CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY.

- A. **Local Association.** The local association commissioner shall classify teams and/or players within the local association in accordance with their respective classification code. A copy of each local association classification code shall be filed with the National Office.
- B. **Team Classification.** A team, who has been classified in any division of play during the previous year, will remain in the same classification during the current season until reclassified by their respective Classification Board. However, if a team is subject to the USA Softball Mandatory Classification Rule, the new classification is effective immediately.
01. An adult team may participate in championship play in a higher classification but not below its assigned classification. Participation in a higher classification could affect the team's classification.
 02. A Junior Olympic Class B team may participate in a Class A National Qualifier. Participation in a higher classification could affect the team's classification.
 03. Teams may not participate in more than one national championship final in any division of play unless specifically covered in this Code.
 04. Men's Seniors Slow Pitch will be classified by a three member National Seniors Classification Board to be appointed by the Executive Director.
- C. **Local Classification Board.** Each local association shall establish a classification board to review, upon written application, the classification of a team and/or players, and shall have the authority to change the classification if found to be not in accordance with the respective classification code.
- D. **Regional Classification Code.** The region shall have the authority to classify teams according to a classification code adopted and approved by the voting members of the region. A copy of the regional classification code shall be submitted to the National Office.
- E. **Regional Classification Board.** The voting members of the Region, by

majority vote, may revise and amend a classification code of a local association within the region to correct inequities in classification as reflected in regional tournament play. This body may also assign classification for USA Softball play to teams belonging to allied member organizations within the region.

F. National Adult Fast Pitch Players Classification Board.

01. **Responsibilities.** The National Fast Pitch Player Classification Board will oversee all aspects of the adult fast pitch pitcher player classification. The Board will create procedures regarding classification.

a. The Board will consist of five people, one representative from each territory plus one at-large member, as shown:

- Eastern Territory
- Northern Territory
- Southern Territory
- Western Territory
- At large member to be assigned by USA Softball President.

NOTE: If a territory cannot elect a representative, then the president will fill the vacancy by appointment.

b. Each territory representative shall name a territorial subcommittee comprised of no less than five and no more than 9 people from their territory. Local association representatives will be assigned in conjunction with the Association Commissioner.

02. **Duties.**

- a. Each territory shall create and maintain a fast pitch player classification.
- b. This board is to uphold the national pitchers list and classification strategy.
- c. This board in concert with the National Office staff will oversee and maintain a national players classification list.
- d. This board in concert with the National Office staff will communicate with the tournament directors of USA Softball National Championships to ensure all pitchers participating in USA Softball Fast Pitch events are within the established procedures.
- e. This board will also seek out further information by contacting local commissioners, player representatives, district commissioners, league directors, and tournament directors to acquire the best and most recent information on fast pitch pitchers.

03. **Rules.**

- a. Male and Female pitchers that are classified Major Fast Pitch by the local association in which they reside must remain in that classification until changed by the same local association.
- b. Any Men's Class B or C Fast Pitch pitcher who earns First Team All Tournament, MVP or outstanding pitcher awards and whose team is reclassified pursuant to **Article 307 (H)(02)** or **Article 307 (H) (03)** of this Code, Receiving these awards could affect the players classification the next playing season.
- c. Foreign Pitchers will be classified by the Men's Fast Pitch Territory and

National Classification boards. Unclassified foreign pitchers will not be eligible to pitch in Men's Open.

- d. In all adult Fast Pitch, USA National Team Members will not be eligible to be to participate in Men's Open.
 - e. All Men's Fast Pitch players and or teams rated below Major are eligible to participate in the Men's Major Fast Pitch National Championship and retain their eligibility for their original classification in Championship Play.
 - f. Men's Major Fast Pitch Players will be classified by a restricted fast pitch players list. The restricted fast pitch players list will be available on the USA Softball website and this list will be updated, modified and/or revised on a regular and continuous basis, but will be finalized by July 15 each year for the current year's National Championship Finals. The players on this list are ineligible to participate in the Men's Open Fast Pitch classification. Any appeals regarding this list can be made through the National Office to the Fast Pitch Classification Board.
04. **Classification Appeal.** Players classified in accordance with this article have the right to appeal their classification after participating at the higher classification. The appeal must be submitted in writing to the team's local commissioner and should include game results and reason for appeal. The local commissioner shall evaluate the information presented and forward the appeal with their recommendation to the National Adult Fast Pitch Players Board. The National Adult Fast Pitch Players Board shall review the information presented and make a determination on the appeal.

G. National Adult Slow Pitch Player Classification Board.

01. **Responsibilities.** The National Player Classification Board will oversee all aspects of the adult slow pitch classification. The Board will create procedures regarding classification.
 - a. The Board will consist of five people, one representative from each territory plus one at-large member, as shown:
 - Eastern Territory
 - Northern Territory
 - Southern Territory
 - Western Territory
 - At large member to be assigned by USA Softball President.
 - b. Each territory representative shall name a territorial subcommittee comprised of no less than five and no more than 9 people from their territory. Local association representatives will be assigned in conjunction with the Association Commissioner.
02. **Duties.** The duty of the board is to uphold the national team and player classification strategy. The board, in concert with the National Office staff, will oversee a National Player Classification Registry. The Board, in concert with National Office staff, will communicate with tournament directors of National Championships to ensure all teams participating in USA Softball Slow Pitch events are within the procedures. The board will also seek out further information by contacting local commissioners, player representatives,

district commissioners, league directors, and tournament directors to acquire the best and most recent information on teams and players. **The board will also review rosters from other associations on an annual basis and adjust player ratings or add the players to the database.**

H. Mandatory Classification.

01. **Mandatory Slow Pitch Player Classification.** Starting January 1 each year will start a player appeal process where each player can submit an appeal to have their player rating dropped. This process ends August 1 and at that time appeals will not be accepted until January. We have taken our team procedures and based it on the USA Softball Code in which a team could have 3 Mandatory players from the next higher division on their roster. We consider our list equal to Mandatory classified players. With the player classification system that we have in place helps create a fair and level playing field for all of our teams not only at a local but also at a national level. Below are the procedures that we use on how to classify a team. Players on the USA Softball Restricted List can only participate in the Men's A or Coed Open Programs. A player may have a + (plus) designation, this player cannot play down a class.

SUMMARY OF SLOW PITCH CLASSIFICATIONS

CLASSIFICATION	RESTRICTIONS
a. Men's Class A	Three (3) players from the USA Softball Restricted Player's List.
b. Men's Class B	Three (3) A classified players and no players from Class A+ or the USA Softball Restricted Player's List.
c. Men's Class C	Three (3) B classified players and no players from Class A, Class B+ or the USA Softball Restricted Player's List.
d. Men's Class D	Three (3) C classified players and no players from Class A, Class B, Class C+ or the USA Softball Restricted Player's List.
e. Men's Class E	Three (3) D classified players and no players from Class A, Class B, Class C, Class D+ or the USA Softball Restricted Player's List.
f. Women's Class Open	Any female player.
g. Women's Class C	Three (3) Open classified players.
h. Women's Class D	Three (3) C classified players and no Open classified players.
i. Co-ed Class Open	Any female player and two (2) male players from the USA Softball Restricted Player's List.
j. Co-ed Class C	Two (2) Open classified female players and no male

players from Class A, Class B or the USA Softball Restricted Player's List.

- k. Co-ed Class D **Two (2) female C classified players and two (2) male C classified players. No Open classified female players or male players from Class A, Class B or the USA Softball Restricted Player's List.**
- l. Co-ed Class E / Rec **Two (2) female D classified players and two (2) male D classified players. No Open, Class C or Class D+ classified female players or male players from Class A, Class B, Class C, Class D+ or the USA Softball Restricted Player's List.**

NOTE: Players that have no USA Softball playing history should be handled in the following manner. If a track record of a player can be verified in another National Association that player shall be classified at that level. The higher classification level from any association will set the rating for classification of players, within a two (2) year time period.

- 02. **Mandatory Team Reclassification.** An adult team that has four or more players on a roster, including pick-up players, from a team or teams that finished in the following divisions and classifications in the same National Championship Final must participate in the next higher classification in championship play for their next USA Softball playing season unless they played in the highest classification. In all Adult national Championships, the top finishing 10% (plus ties) will be reclassified to the next higher classification. Fractions will be rounded up to the nearest whole number.

NOTE: If a team fails to participate in Championship play the next calendar year this restriction will remain in effect until the team participates at the higher classification.

NOTE: The National Office shall forward the championship rosters for teams that are subject to the Mandatory Classification Rule, **Article 307 (H)(02)** to the respective National Championship Tournament Directors as follows:

- 01. The tournament for which the team is advancing (Higher Classification).
- 02. The tournament for which they participated in the previous year (Lower Classification).

EXCEPTION: Coed Class C, Coed Class D and teams must finish in the top ten percent (10%) of National Championships in two (2) consecutive years before they will be required to play in the next higher classification in USA Softball Championship Play.

EXCEPTION: Adult Fast Pitch teams that finish first in a National Championship Finals and in their next playing season finish first again shall be reclassified to the next higher classification.

- 03. **Restricted Classification Rule.**

- a. **Teams.** A team that wins two or more games in a double elimination bracket, or three or more games in a three game bracket, excluding

forfeits, in a National Championship Final may not participate in a lower classification in the same division of championship play during their next USA Softball playing season unless they played in the highest classification. Those players currently classified shall be moved to a (+) level. Those already classified as one level higher would not be affected by this change. A team that has four or more players on a roster, including pick-ups, from such a team shall be considered the same team.

EXCEPTIONS:

- 01. Men's Major Fast Pitch. Any team that has not competed in the Men's Major Fast Pitch National Championship Tournament for two consecutive years shall be allowed to participate in a lower classification regardless of the number games won at the national tournament, provided they have received permission from their Local Commissioner, to compete at a lower classification for the following season.
- 02. Men's Class A Slow Pitch

- b. **Returning Players.** A team that has a combination of four or more players on a roster, including pick-ups, from a team or teams subject to mandatory reclassification and/or restricted classification must maintain the classification as assigned by the mandatory classification rule.

EXCEPTION: Players that have successfully appealed and been granted a reclassification shall not be counted towards the four player rule for a returning team.

- I. **Classification Appeal.** Teams and players classified in accordance with this article have the right to appeal their classification after participating at the higher classification. The appeal must be submitted in writing to the team's local commissioner and should include game results and reason for the appeal. The local commissioner shall evaluate the information presented and forward the appeal with their recommendation to the Chair of the Tournament Programs Committee. The Tournament Programs Committee shall review the information presented. If the appeal is granted, the team's roster and players shall be frozen for the balance of the year. If the team adds a player to their roster, except **Pick-Up Players** pursuant to **Article 303** of this Code, the appeal is nullified and the team is reclassified to at least the next higher classification.

Article 308 LEVELS OF CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY. The following are levels of championship play:

- A. **Local Association Championships.** Local Associations championship play at the state or metro championship must follow the USA Softball Code.

EXCEPTION: All adult slow pitch.

EXCEPTION: Local Association rules may be enacted for run ahead rules, time limits, uniforms (except that a minimum must be shirts that are like in color and style with numbers on the back), home run rules, stealing, metal cleats and fence distances.

- 01. **Tournament Structure.** Local associations may conduct sub district,

district or county championships for the purpose of qualifying teams for local association championships. These tournaments are open to registered member teams in accordance with the rules and regulations of the local association, provided such rules and regulations are not in conflict or inconsistent with this Code or the established policies of the USA Softball.

NOTE: Local associations may not conduct championship play tournaments in locations outside of their association's boundaries without permission from that local association's commissioner.

02. **Bracket Options.** State and Metro Associations may choose to have pool play and a single elimination tournament to qualify 10-Under, 12-Under, 14-Under, 16-Under and 18-Under Class A and Class B fast pitch teams for advancing to National Championship Finals.

EXCEPTION: This does not include any 16-Under Gold and 18-Under Gold Fast Pitch National Qualifying Play.

03. **Scheduling.** Local Associations may conduct JO qualifying tournaments for the following years championship play. Teams that participate in these tournaments must use age eligible players for the year the championship play will be played and must meet the returning team requirement to maintain their berth.

04. **Berth Distribution.** Local association berths may be open to all USA Softball registered teams from any local association if the host State / Metro commissioner allows. Teams from outside the local association must have a national championship entry form and Championship roster signed by their local State / Metro commissioner or designee in order to participate.

- B. **National Qualifiers.** The association shall conduct national qualifiers in the following divisions of championship play.

01. Junior Olympic Girls' Class A 18-Under, 16-Under, 14-Under, 12-Under, 10-Under Fast Pitch.

NOTE: Local association berths may be given as additional berths in these Junior Olympic qualifiers.

02. Adult Slow Pitch National Qualifiers may be held in Adult Slow Pitch. The association hosting the tournament must use their local association berths. Teams that accept the berths must abide by the rules set forth by their local association to advance in championship play.

EXCEPTION: Men's Class C will have 64 allocated berths.

- C. **Regional Championships.** Regional Championships may be held in any division and classification.
- D. **National GOLD Qualifying Tournaments.** National GOLD Qualifying Tournaments (NGQT) will be held in accordance with **Article 315** of this Code.
- E. **National Championships Finals.** National Championship Finals will be held in accordance with **Article 316** of this Code.

Article 309 DATES OF CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY. Regional Tournaments, National Qualifiers, and National Gold Qualifiers must be scheduled to start no earlier than Friday and complete

no later than Sunday.

- A. **Local Association Tournaments.** The dates for Junior Olympic Class A Championships must be scheduled to be completed at least twelve (12) days prior to the start of the first game of their prospective Junior Olympic National Championship final.
- B. **Regional Tournaments.** The dates for regional tournaments shall be established by the commissioners within the respective region. Junior Olympic Gold and Class A Regional Tournaments must be scheduled to be completed a minimum of twelve (12) days prior to the start of the first game in the Junior Olympic Gold National Championship Final.

EXCEPTION: Gold Regional Qualifiers may be held during the week if agreed upon by the local associations in the region.

- C. **National Championship Finals.** The Executive Director has the authority to change dates of National Championship Finals for extenuating circumstances.

01. **Adult Slow Pitch.** All adult slow pitch National Championship Finals shall be scheduled over the Labor Day weekend, commencing no earlier than Friday at 6:00 p.m. and concluding no later than Labor Day, with the following exceptions:

- a. **Men's Class A and Women's Open Slow Pitch.** These National Championship Finals **shall have dates established and approved by the Executive Director.**
- b. **Men's Class B Slow Pitch.** This National Championship Finals **shall have dates established and approved by the Executive Director.**
- c. **Men's Class C Slow Pitch.** These National Championship Finals shall be scheduled on Labor Day weekend and shall commence no earlier than Thursday at 6:00 p.m. and concluding no later than Monday.
- d. **Men's Class D and E/Rec Slow Pitch.** These National Championship Finals can be scheduled on the weekend prior to Labor Day or on Labor Day weekend. If scheduled on the weekend prior to Labor Day the tournament shall commence no earlier than Thursday at 6:00 p.m. and conclude no later than Sunday. If scheduled on Labor Day the tournament shall commence no earlier than Thursday at 6:00 p.m. and concluding no later than Monday.
- e. **Men's 35-Over Masters Slow Pitch.** This National Championship Final **shall have dates established and approved by the Executive Director.**
- f. **Men's 40-Over Slow Pitch.** This National Championship Final **shall have dates established and approved by the Executive Director.**
- g. **Men's 45-Over Slow Pitch.** This National Championship Final **shall have dates established and approved by the Executive Director.**
- h. **Men's Seniors Slow Pitch.** These National Championship Finals shall be have dates established and approved by the Executive Director.
- i. **Men's Industrial Slow Pitch.** This National Championship Final

- shall be scheduled over the weekend that includes the fourth Saturday in August, commencing no earlier than Friday at 6:00 p.m. concluding no later than Sunday.
- j. **Women's Class C and D Slow Pitch.** These National Championship Finals can be scheduled on the weekend prior to Labor Day or on Labor Day weekend. If scheduled on the weekend prior to Labor Day the tournament shall commence no earlier than Thursday at 6:00 p.m. and conclude no later than Sunday. If scheduled on Labor Day the tournament shall commence no earlier than Thursday at 6:00 p.m. and concluding no later than Monday.
 - k. **Women's 35-Over Slow Pitch. This National Championship Final shall have dates established and approved by the Executive Director.**
 - l. **Open Co-ed.** This National Championship Final shall be scheduled on the weekend that includes the third Saturday in September, commencing no earlier than Friday at 9:00 a.m. and concluding no later than Sunday.
 - m. **Class C and Class D Co-ed.** These National Championship Finals shall be scheduled on the weekend proceeding the Labor Day weekend commencing no earlier than Thursday at 6:00 p.m. and concluding no later than Sunday.
 - n. **Men's Church.** This National Championship Final shall be scheduled on the second weekend in August.
02. **Adult Fast Pitch.** All adult fast pitch National Championship Finals shall be scheduled as follows:
- a. **Men's Major Fast Pitch.** This National Championship Final shall be scheduled on the weekend that includes the last Saturday in July. The tournament may not begin prior to 4:00 p.m. on Thursday and concluding no later than Sunday. If there are 13 or more teams entered into the Championship, the bracket shall reflect a four day schedule.
 - b. **Men's Open Fast Pitch.** This National Championship Final shall be scheduled no earlier than the weekend that includes the second Saturday in July. The tournament shall commence no earlier than 6:00 p.m. Thursday and concluding no later than Sunday.
 - c. **Men's 23-Under Fast Pitch.** This National Championship Final shall be scheduled on the first weekend in August at the same time and location as the Boy's 18-Under Fast Pitch National Championship Finals.
 - d. **Men's Masters 40-Over Fast Pitch.** This National Championship Final shall be scheduled on the weekend that includes the third weekend in July commencing no earlier than 6:00 p.m. Wednesday and concluding no later than Sunday.
 - e. **Men's Masters 50-Over Fast Pitch.** This National Championship Final shall be scheduled on the weekend which includes the last Saturday in July and shall be scheduled for a maximum of four days to conclude on Sunday.
 - f. **Men's Seniors 60-Over Fast Pitch.** This National Championship Final shall be scheduled on the weekend which includes the fourth Saturday in September, commencing no earlier than Friday at 9:00 a.m. and concluding no later than Sunday.
03. **Modified Pitch.** These National Championship Finals shall be scheduled

on Labor Day Weekend, commencing no earlier than Friday at 6:00 p.m. and concluding no later than Labor Day.

04. **Junior Olympic National Championship Finals.**

Actual schedule shall be as follows.

- a. **Boy's Slow Pitch** (all ages). These National Championship finals shall be scheduled and approved by the Executive Director.
- b. **Girls' Slow Pitch** (all ages). These National Championship Finals shall be scheduled and completed on the weekend that includes the last Saturday in July. This championship is scheduled for a maximum of four days.
- c. **Girls' USA Softball Class A Fast Pitch** (all ages). These National Championship Finals shall be scheduled and completed on the weekend that includes the last Saturday in July and shall commence no earlier than 6:00 p.m. on Sunday. Opening ceremonies shall be held on that Sunday afternoon. These championships are scheduled for a maximum of seven (7) days.
- d. **Girls' USA Softball Territorial Class A and B Fast Pitch** (all ages). These National Championship Finals shall be scheduled by the territory in which the tournament takes place, these tournaments must be scheduled for either the weekend that contains the third week of July or either the fourth week of July but must conclude no later than the weekend that includes the last Saturday of July. Opening ceremonies may be held on that Monday. These championships are scheduled for a maximum of six (6) days.
- e. **Girls' USA Softball Gold 16-Under and 18-Under Fast Pitch.** These National Championship Finals shall be scheduled and completed on the weekend that includes the last Saturday in July and not be held more than seven (7) days. This event will not have an opening ceremonies event and the managers meeting cannot be scheduled prior to 6:00 p.m. on the prior Sunday.
- f. **Boy's Fast Pitch.** These National Championship Finals shall be scheduled as per approval of the Boy's and Men's Fast Pitch Committee.

Article 310 GENERAL REGULATIONS OF CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY. All championship play must be conducted in accordance with this Code and the playing rules as adopted by the USA Softball. In case of a conflict between the playing rules, USA Softball Code **and the Procedural Manual, the USA Softball Procedural Manual shall take precedence.**

- A. **Assessment Fees.** Each team participating in USA Softball Championship play, not including state/metro championships shall be assessed an USA Softball fee. For further information (See **Article 305 (D) Tournament Assessment Fees and Summary of Tournament Assessment Fees**) of the Procedural Manual.
- B. **At-Large Berths.** For the purpose of determining at-large tournament berths:
 01. Only registrations received by October 1 shall be counted for at-large berths.
 02. Adult and Junior Olympic classifications for each respective division shall be considered collectively.

- C. **Barrel Compression Testing Machine.** A USA Softball approved barrel compression testing machine shall be used at all National Championship Finals. The barrel compression testing shall be coordinated by the Tournament Director and shall be conducted under the direction of the umpire staff or their designees.

EXCEPTION: Men's 16-Inch and Senior Slow Pitch National Championship Finals.

- D. **Continuation of Game.** In the event of rain or any cause that interrupts a game, the game must be resumed at the exact point where it was stopped.

- E. **Entry Deadlines.** An official team entry form and proper entry fee must be submitted to the tournament director of all National Championship Finals seven (7) days prior to commencement of the tournament.

EXCEPTION: The Men's Major Fast Pitch, Men's Open Fast Pitch, Men's Masters 40-Over Fast Pitch, Men's Masters 50-Over Fast Pitch and Men's Seniors 60-Over Fast Pitch.

- F. **Fill-In Procedure.**

01. Fill in procedure may be implemented only after the entry deadline date and/or with the consent of the National Office.

02. In all National Championship Finals, the local commissioners working with the organizing committee (commissioner makes the final decision) have the option of adding a maximum of eight (8) teams to replace vacancies created by regular entries not entering. Fill-in teams must have participated in a regional tournament in their respective division of play and be the next team in the order of finish. Fill-in teams would alternatively come from the hosting association and their region. If the eight (8) positions cannot be filled, the fill-ins can come from touching regions, at the discretion of the host commissioner. If the tournament entries are still not complete, then the remaining fill-in teams can come from any association at the discretion of the host commissioner provided that such team(s) have properly qualified through regional championship play and have been selected in the proper order of finish.

03. At the discretion of the host commissioner, when all eight fill-in spots have been used and the tournament capacity has not been reached, additional fill-ins may be added up to tournament capacity based on order of request provided that such teams have properly qualified through local association or regional championship play and have been selected according to the order of finish.

EXCEPTIONS:

a. **Junior Olympic Girls' Class A Fast Pitch Only.** No fill-in procedure if the tournament has 128 qualified teams. At no time will the fill-in procedure be used to exceed 128 teams.

b. **Men's Class B, C and D Slow Pitch and Women's Class C and D Slow Pitch.** Fill-in teams shall be selected only from teams that played Championship Tournaments and fill-in berths shall be offered to teams based on the order of finish.

- G. **Junior Olympic General Regulations.** USA Softball has developed the following policy regarding Junior Olympic tournament play as follows:

01. **Use of Tobacco Products.** The use of any tobacco products is prohibited at all Junior Olympic Tournaments.
02. **Cash Award Prizes.** No Junior Olympic player may participate in any tournament in which cash prizes are awarded.

H. **National Championship Finals Entry Fee.** Each team participating in a National Championship Final shall be assessed a \$100.00 fee (\$25.00 for Slow Pitch) The assessment shall be included in the tournament entry fee (See **Article 303 (A), Fast Pitch, Modified Pitch and Slow Pitch Bids**, of the Procedural Manual).

I. **Official Order of Finish.** The following procedures will be used in determining the official order of finish.

NOTE: When breaking ties with more than two (2) teams within the same position in the bracket, once you pass a step when following the order of finish code procedures, you do not return to those passed steps until changing to a different bracket position.

01. **Completed Tournament.** The tournament director shall determine the official order of finish based upon the following:

- a. Top four teams based upon their actual finish.
- b. Remaining teams listed by descending order of finish according to their bracket position when eliminated (e.g. fifth place shall show two teams tied for that position, the next two teams tied for seventh, the next four teams tied for ninth, etc).
- c. Tied teams shall be determined by:
 01. Head to head competition.
 02. The team that advanced the farthest in the winner's bracket.
 03. Won-loss records.
 04. The teams shall be ranked according to the fewest runs allowed per game played.
 05. If a tie still exists, the teams shall be ranked according to the most runs scored per game played.
 06. If a tie still exists, by a coin toss.

EXCEPTION: If there are only two teams remaining and each has one loss, the championship game must be played or the teams shall be declared co-champions.

02. **Incomplete Tournament.** In the event a national qualifier, regional, territorial qualifier or national championship final tournament cannot be completed within the scheduled time frame the following procedures shall be used to break ties among teams in the same spot in the bracket.

- a. Head to head competition.
- b. The team that advanced the farthest in the winner's bracket.
- c. Won-loss records, except among undefeated teams.
- d. If only two teams are tied for a position and have played each other, the winner of that game.

EXCEPTION: If there are only two teams remaining and each team has one loss, the championship must be played or the teams shall be

declared co-champions. In the case of the USA Softball Eastern / Northern / Southern / Western National Championship Finals, Co-Champions will not be declared. If this occurs, the tiebreaker in **Article 310 (1) (02) (e, f and g)** of this Code followed in order will be used to determine the team advancing to the USA National Championship Series.

- e. The teams shall be ranked according to the fewest runs allowed per game played.
- f. If a tie still exists, the teams shall be ranked according to the most runs scored per game played.
- g. If a tie still exists, by a coin toss.

NOTE: Only bracket play games should be used in determining the official order of finish for National Championship Finals, pool play games should not be used.

- J. **Official Tournament Entry Form.** The official tournament entry form must be signed by the local association commissioner and accompany the roster / affidavit form for national qualifier, regional, territory qualifying or national championship final tournaments.
- K. **Severe Weather Guidelines.** USA Softball has adopted severe weather guidelines that can be found on the USA Softball website at www.usasoftball.com.
- L. **Souvenir Items.** Selling souvenir items with the USA Softball emblem or logo is restricted and must be cleared in writing with the National Office.
- M. **Substitute Teams.** If for any reason a team cannot compete in the next level of championship play during the current season, the second place team or next highest eligible team in the respective tournament shall be substituted for the team.
- N. **Team Conduct.**
 - 01. **Team Manager.** Team managers must have full control of their players at all times including on or off the field.
 - 02. **Restricted Activity.** At no time shall any players, coaches or managers be allowed to drink alcoholic beverages or smoke on the field or in the dugout. No person may knowingly possess or have under his/her control a weapon or explosive device on the playing field or in the dugout. For purposes of this subsection, a "weapon" means any firearm or any weapon of the kind usually known as slung shot, sand club, or metal knuckles, or any knife, dagger, dirk, or other similar weapon that is capable of causing death or bodily injury and is commonly used with the intent to cause death or bodily injury, but the definition of weapon shall specifically exclude an ordinary pocket knife or any softball-related equipment.
 - 03. **Fighting.** During regional, territorial, national tournament or National Championship Final play, anytime that a player, coach or manager strikes another player, coach or manager, said player, coach or manager is to be ejected from the game and is not to sit on the player's bench.
 - 04. **Unsportsmanlike.** Managers are to report any unsportsmanlike or derogatory acts by players or spectators to the tournament director.
 - 05. **Disputed Play.** In case of disputed play or decision, team managers or captains may consult game officials. The other players and coaches or sponsors are to be kept out of the discussion.
 - 06. **Equipment.** The National Championship UIC, Assistant UIC, or Tournament staff shall have the right to remove any and all equipment not meeting the requirements of USA Softball Playing Rule 3, including bats and helmets through testing, pregame inspection or during the game. Removed

equipment shall be marked properly with the name of the team and/or player and not returned until after the team's final game of the tournament. The equipment is to be securely stored by the tournament committee until returned to the team and/or player.

07. **Non Approved Bat.** Any person discovered using a non approved bat shall be ejected from the game and are subject to further action by the protest committee.
 08. **Altered Bat.** Any person discovered in possession of an altered bat at or near the facility or grounds of a softball competition in which such equipment is not permitted to be used shall be subject to discipline pursuant to **Article 305** of this Code. USA Softball shall have the right to take possession of a bat that is, in the sole discretion of the official, reasonably suspected to be an altered bat. In the event the suspected altered bat is tested and determined to be an altered bat, then the person shall surrender ownership of the altered bat to USA Softball; otherwise a bat of equal or greater value, or a monetary equivalent, in the sole discretion of USA Softball, shall be returned to the owner of the subject bat. In addition a player found in possession of an altered bat and found guilty according to **Article 305** of this Code shall be suspended from USA Softball play for a minimum of five (5) years. A team that is discovered to have within its possession or control an altered bat may be suspended from further tournament competition and USA Softball play for a period of two (2) years.
 09. **Hotel / Motel.** Any hotel or motel management report of destruction of hotel / motel property or abuse of hotel / motel guests by a team competing in championship play.
 10. **Property Damage.** Any property damage reported by officials of the hosting facility in championship play.
 11. **Team Conduct Violation Penalty.** Any team or individual violating the above shall be subject to the suspension procedure in **Article 305** of this Code.
 12. **Artificial Noise-makers.** The use of artificial noise-makers during championship play is prohibited.
- O. **Tie Breaker Rule.** A region may, by majority vote, establish procedures for a tiebreaker in qualifiers and regional tournaments. In all Junior Olympic Girls' Fast Pitch National Qualifiers and National Championship Finals; Men's Masters Fast Pitch National Championship Finals; and Men's Seniors Fast Pitch National Championship Finals the tiebreaker shall be in effect.
- P. **Time Limit Rule.** A region may, by majority vote, establish procedures for a time limit in qualifiers and regional tournaments. In all Junior Olympic Girls' Fast National Championship Finals; the time limit rule shall be in effect. When the time limit rule is in effect, time begins with the first warmup pitch. If the game is still tied after the time limit has expired, the tie breaker rule shall be in effect at the start of the next inning.
01. In Junior Olympic 10-Under Class A and 10-Under Class B Fast Pitch pool play and elimination, **the time limit will be one hour and twenty minutes and finish the inning. Then play one additional inning, or half inning if the home team is ahead.**

EXCEPTION: In the USA Softball Girls' 10-Under Class A Fast Pitch National Championship Finals the Championship and "if" game will be a two (2) hour time limit.

02. In all Junior Olympic 12-Under, 14-Under, 16-Under and 18-Under Class A and Class B Fast Pitch pool play and elimination play, **the time limit will be one hour and twenty minutes and finish the inning. Then play one additional inning, or half inning if the home team is ahead.** If the game is still tied after the time limit has expired, the tie breaker shall be in effect at the start of the next inning.

EXCEPTION: There shall be no time limit on elimination play beginning with the winner's bracket final.

04. In Junior Olympic Gold Fast Pitch pool play; **the time limit will be one hour and twenty minutes and finish the inning. Then play one additional inning, or half inning if the home team is ahead.** If the game is still tied after the time limit has expired, the tiebreaker shall be in effect at the start of the next inning.
05. In all Junior Olympic Slow Pitch; no inning shall start after 1 hour and 10 minutes. If the game is still tied after the time limit has expired, the tiebreaker shall be in effect at the start of the next inning.

- Q. **Tournament Completion Options.** At any time during or prior to the tournament with the unanimous agreement of the Tournament Director, USA Softball Representative and the tournament Umpire-in-Chief, the following procedures may be followed to complete a tournament because of circumstances beyond the control of the tournament hosts.

01. A National Championship Finals may be extended.
02. A National Championship Finals may be completed by, but not limited to, using the following options:
 - a. Drop pool play games and play elimination games only.
 - b. Set a game time limit of one hour or five innings.
 - c. Convert the tournament to a single elimination.

- R. **Umpires.** Three (3) umpires per game shall be used for all games at National Championship Finals in Adult Fast Pitch, Men's Class A Slow Pitch, Men's Class B Slow Pitch, **Men's Class C Slow Pitch**, Men's 16" Slow Pitch, Men's Modified Pitch and Girls' USA Softball 12-Under, 14-Under, 16-Under, 18-Under, and 16-Under Gold and 18-Under Gold Fast Pitch. All other National Championship Finals will utilize a minimum of two (2) umpires per game. In all divisions where there are pool play games, a minimum of two (2) umpires per game will be utilized.

EXCEPTION: In **Men's Open Fast Pitch**, Men's Master's 50-Over Fast Pitch and Men's Senior 60-Over Fast Pitch a minimum of two (2) umpires per game will be used.

Article 311 CHAMPIONSHIP DRAW.

- A. **Types of Championship Brackets.** There are 4 types of approved brackets for USA Softball championship play that are authorized for use in all regional tournaments, national qualifiers, and National Championship Finals. All game times and field assignments should be listed on the official bracket prior to the tournament draw. The different types of brackets are:

EXCEPTION: Gold National Qualifying tournaments must use the double elimination bracket.

EXCEPTION: The Executive Director can approve an alternative bracket to be used in championship play upon request.

01. **Pool Play Bracket.** The pool play bracket is to be used prior to the seeded double elimination bracket for purpose of drawing onto the seeded bracket in the following championships:

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| a. | Junior Olympic Boy's | 18-Under Fast Pitch. |
| b. | Junior Olympic Boy's | 16-Under Fast Pitch. |
| c. | Junior Olympic Boy's | 14-Under Fast Pitch. |
| d. | Junior Olympic Boy's | 12-Under Fast Pitch. |
| e. | Junior Olympic Boy's | 10-Under Fast Pitch. |
| f. | Junior Olympic Girls' | 8-Under Fast Pitch. |
| g. | Junior Olympic Girls' | 10-Under Class A Fast Pitch. |
| h. | Junior Olympic Girls' | 12-Under Class A Fast Pitch. |
| i. | Junior Olympic Girls' | 14-Under Class A Fast Pitch. |
| j. | Junior Olympic Girls' | 16-Under Class A Fast Pitch. |
| k. | Junior Olympic Girls' | 18-Under Class A Fast Pitch. |
| l. | Junior Olympic Girls' | 10-Under Class B Fast Pitch. |
| m. | Junior Olympic Girls' | 12-Under Class B Fast Pitch. |
| n. | Junior Olympic Girls' | 14-Under Class B Fast Pitch. |
| o. | Junior Olympic Girls' | 16-Under Class B Fast Pitch. |
| p. | Junior Olympic Girls' | 18-Under Class B Fast Pitch. |
| q. | Junior Olympic Girls' | 10-Under Class C Fast Pitch. |
| r. | Junior Olympic Girls' | 12-Under Class C Fast Pitch. |
| s. | Junior Olympic Girls' | 14-Under Class C Fast Pitch. |
| t. | Junior Olympic Girls' | 10-Under Slow Pitch. |
| u. | Junior Olympic Girls' | 12-Under Slow Pitch. |
| v. | Junior Olympic Girls' | 14-Under Slow Pitch. |
| w. | Junior Olympic Girls' | 16-Under Slow Pitch. |
| x. | Junior Olympic Girls' | 18-Under Slow Pitch. |

NOTE: Junior Olympic Girls' Slow Pitch, if there are less than 85 teams, qualifying pool play shall be conducted; if there are 85 or more teams, there shall be no qualifying Pool play.

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| u. | Men's Masters | 35-Over Slow Pitch. |
| v. | Men's Masters | 40-Over Slow Pitch. |
| w. | Men's Masters | 45-Over Slow Pitch. |
| x. | Men's Seniors | Slow Pitch. |
| y. | Junior Olympic Girls' | 16-Under GOLD Fast Pitch. |
| z. | Junior Olympic Girls' | 18-Under GOLD Fast Pitch. |

NOTE: Junior Olympic Girls' Fast Pitch 16-Under Gold and 18-Under Gold, this championship will use pool play prior to double elimination bracket and play 3 pool play games, The pool play bracket is to be used prior to the seeded double elimination bracket for the purpose of drawing into the seeded bracket.

NOTE: In all championships listed above, teams must participate in pool play to be eligible for the seeded double elimination bracket.

02. **Seeded Double Elimination Bracket.** The seeded double elimination

bracket is to be used in all national championships where pool play games have been used to determine seeding into a double elimination bracket.

03. **Double Elimination Bracket.** This bracket will be used in all remaining tournaments that do not use the pool play, seeded double elimination or 3 game guarantee brackets. This bracket is also used to draw the Junior Olympic Girls' Gold Fast Pitch prior to pool play and the pool play bracket is determined by the double elimination draw.
04. **3 Game Guarantee Bracket.** In lieu of pool play, seeded double elimination or double elimination brackets, the respective Tournament Directors shall utilize an USA SOFTBALL official approved three (3) game guaranteed format for the following:
 - a. Men's Major Fast Pitch.
 - b. Men's 23-Under Fast Pitch.
 - c. Men's Masters 40-Over Fast Pitch.
 - d. Men's Masters 50-Over Fast Pitch.
 - e. Men's Seniors 60-Over Fast Pitch.
 - f. Men's Class D Slow Pitch.
 - g. Men's Class E / Rec Slow Pitch.
 - h. Women's Masters 35-Over Slow Pitch.
 - i. Women's Class C Slow Pitch.
 - j. Women's Class D Slow Pitch.
 - k. Co-ed Class C Slow Pitch
 - l. Co-ed Class D Slow Pitch
 - m. Co-ed Class E / Rec Slow Pitch.

05. **Two (2) Tiered Bracket. Men's Open Fast Pitch – all teams are placed into a double elimination (Gold) bracket. After a team has a win-loss record of 0-2 or 1-2, that team is placed in to a new double elimination (Silver) bracket. Both bracket winners will be awarded as National Champions**

B. Bracket Draw Procedures.

01. **Pool Play Bracket.**
 - a. **Four Team Pools.** Teams shall be divided into four team pools. The host local association shall add one to three teams as is necessary to complete four team pools, (e.g. three teams when 37 entries, two teams when 38 entries, and one team when 39 entries).
 - b. **Pool Play Procedures.** In pools of four teams, each team shall draw to determine which other team they play in the first game. The winners of each of the first games in a pool shall play each other with the winner being declared the Number 1 seed in the pool and the loser being declared the Number 2 seed. The losers of each of the first games in a pool shall play each other with the winner being declared the Number 3 seed in the pool and the loser being declared the Number 4 seed.
 - c. **Three Team Pools.** In pools of three teams, the teams shall play each other team in the pool once each. Ties in three team pools shall be settled by:
 01. If a tie still exists, teams shall be ranked according to the fewest runs allowed per game played.

- 02. If a tie still exists, teams shall be ranked according to most runs scored per game played.
- 03. If a tie still exists, there shall be a coin toss.
- d. **Open Pool Positions.** Any open spot in a pool shall be considered as a forfeit in computing pool play standings.
- e. **Bracket Protection.**
 - 01. When qualifying pool play is used in Junior Olympic Fast Pitch, Junior Olympic Slow Pitch, and Men's Seniors Slow Pitch Championships, teams qualifying from the same local association shall be protected, where possible, from playing each other in qualifying pool play. When the number of teams entered in the tournament from a local association is greater than the number of pools, the final alignment in pool play shall be determined by the USA Softball Representative.
 - 02. When qualifying pool play is used in Junior Olympic Fast Pitch where teams qualify from the entire United States, teams qualifying from the same region shall be protected, where possible, from playing each other in qualifying pool play. When the number of teams entered in the tournament from a region is greater than the number of pools, the final alignment in pool play shall be determined by the USA Softball Representative.
- f. **Order of Draw.**
 - 01. In drawing championships where teams qualify from the entire United States, the region with the most teams shall draw first, the region with the second most teams shall draw second, etc. In case of ties between regions, the lowest region number shall draw first. When more than one team within a region must draw, positions to draw shall be based on alphabetical order according to the team name listed on the roster. Fill-in teams shall draw after all qualified teams from their respective region have drawn. Each fill-in team draw position shall be based on alphabetical order according to the team name listed on the roster.
 - NOTE:** When the number of teams entered in the tournament from a region is greater than the number of sections on the bracket, then follow the procedures below and draw the championship by association.
 - 02. In drawing championships where teams qualify from territories, the association with the most teams will draw first, the association with the second most teams shall draw second, etc. In case of ties between associations, the tie will be determined alphabetically. When more than one team within an association must draw, positions to draw shall be determined based on alphabetical order according to the team name listed on the roster.
- 02. **Seeded Double Elimination Bracket. (Used in Championships with Pool Play.)**
 - a. **Bracket Used.** The USA Softball Official Seeded Double Elimination Bracket shall be used.

- b. **Draw Timeline.** The double elimination bracket draw shall be done at the completion of the team's pool play games, or after all the teams complete pool play as determined by the USA Softball Representative, except for Junior Olympic 16-Under Gold and 18-Under Gold National Championship Finals, with each team drawing their position onto the double elimination seeded bracket.
 - c. **Draw Procedures.**
 - 01. Teams will represent the Region where they are registered.
 - 02. Teams in the same qualifying pool who have played each other shall be protected from playing each other in the first round of the double elimination bracket, where possible.
 - 03. In Seniors Division National Championship Finals, teams shall draw for their position in qualifying pool play and shall be placed onto the official seeded double elimination bracket based on the results of the qualifying pool play.
03. **Double Elimination Bracket. (Used in Championships without Pool Play.)**
- a. **Draw Procedures:**
 - 01. In National Championship Finals where no teams have qualified through regional tournament play, the local association with the most teams shall draw first, the local association with the second most teams shall draw second, etc.
 - 02. Any team qualifying for a National Championship Final from a national qualifier shall draw from the region in which they qualified.
 - b. **Bracket Protection.** The USA Softball Official Double Elimination Bracket shall be used. Teams qualifying from the same region shall be protected, where possible, from playing each other in the first two rounds of the winner's bracket. When the number of teams entered in the tournament from a region is greater than the number of sections on the bracket, the final alignment shall be determined by the USA Softball Representative.
 - 01. Teams will represent the Region where they are registered.
 - 02. Any of the top two (2) teams from the previous year's Gold National Championship will be placed into the double elimination bracket in opposite quads if they qualify.
 - 03. If the Junior Olympic Gold National Championship Finals is televised in Oklahoma City, OK, the field will be split into two 32 team brackets with the winner of each bracket playing in the final game. The winner of the final game will be declared the official winner of the tournament.
 - c. **Territorial Tournaments.** The association with the most teams will draw first, the association with the second most teams shall draw second, etc. In case of ties between associations, the tie will be determined alphabetically. When more than one team within and association must draw, positions to draw shall be determined based on alphabetical order according to the team name listed on the roster.

d. **Seeding (Adults) Previous Year's Finish and Host Teams.**

01. **Seeded Teams.** Only teams that shall be seeded are the previous year's defending champions, second place teams and the current year's host teams.

EXCEPTION: The Men's Class A Slow Pitch National Championship teams will be seeded by the Super Series events with the assistance of the National Player Classification Board.

EXCEPTION: The Men's Modified Pitch and the Men's Major Fast Pitch National Championship will be seeded by the USA Softball Executive Director.

02. **Multiple Seeds and Host(s) Teams.** In all classes, the defending champion, second place and host teams shall draw for opposite brackets and shall play the first day and the first round of the tournament with times being assigned by the tournament committee for the best gate.

04. **Three (3) Game Guarantee Bracket.**

a. **Bracket Protection.** The USA Softball Official 3 Game Guarantee Bracket shall be used. Teams qualifying from the same region shall be protected, where possible, from playing each other in the first two rounds of the winner's bracket. When the number of teams entered in the tournament from a region is greater than the number of sections on the bracket, the final alignment shall be determined by the USA Softball Representative.

01. Teams will represent the Region where they are registered.

b. **Territorial Tournaments.** The association with the most teams will draw first, the association with the second most teams shall draw second, etc. In case of ties between associations, the tie will be determined alphabetically. When more than one team within an association must draw, positions to draw shall be determined based on alphabetical order according to the team name listed on the roster.

c. **Seeding (Adults) Previous Year's Finish and Host Teams.**

01. **Seeded Teams.** Only teams that shall be seeded are the previous year's defending champions, second place teams and the current year's host teams.

02. **Multiple Seeds and Host(s) Teams.** In all classes, the defending champion, second place and host teams shall draw for opposite brackets and shall play the first day and the first round of the tournament with times being assigned by the tournament committee for the best gate.

05. Two (2) Tiered Bracket for Men's Open Fast Pitch.

a. Bracket Protection. The USA Softball Official Double Elimination Bracket for both GOLD and SILVER shall be used. Teams qualifying from the same region shall be protected, where possible, from playing each other in the first two rounds of the winner's bracket. When the number of teams entered in the tournament from a region is greater than the number of sections on the bracket, the final alignment shall be determined by the USA Softball Representative.

01. Teams will represent the Region where they are Registered

b. Territorial Tournaments. The association with the most teams will draw first, the association with the second most teams shall draw second, etc. In case of ties between associations, the tie will be determined alphabetically. When more than one team within an association must draw, positions to draw shall be determined based on alphabetical order according to the team name listed on the roster.

c. Seeding (Adults) Previous Year's Finish and Host Teams.

01. Seeded Teams. Only teams that shall be seeded are the previous year's defending champions, second place teams in both the GOLD and SILVER brackets and the current year's host teams.

02. Multiple Seeds and Hosts(s) Teams. In all classes, the defending champion, second place and host teams shall draw for opposite brackets and shall play the first day and the first round of the tournament with times being assigned by the tournament committee for the best gate.

C. National Championship Final Draw Timelines. Each team properly entered in a National Championship Final must be notified of the time and location of the draw. The draw can be held up to seven (7) days prior to the start of the tournament so teams can be notified of their start time. Teams from local associations, where possible, shall be protected from playing each other for the first two rounds if at all possible.

01. The seeded double elimination bracket draw shall be done at the completion of the team's pool play games.

02. The following championships may be drawn not more than twenty (20) days prior to the start of the tournament:

- a. Men's Major Fast Pitch.
- b. Men's Open Fast Pitch.

- c. Men's Masters 40-Over Fast Pitch.
- d. Men's Masters 50-Over Fast Pitch.
- e. Men's Seniors 60-Over Fast Pitch.
- f. Men's Nine (9) Man Modified.
- g. Men's Ten (10) Man Modified.

Article 312 NATIONAL QUALIFIER TOURNAMENTS.

A. **National Qualifier Tournaments.** These tournaments are to be coordinated through the regional directors. Junior Olympic National Qualifier Tournaments must be scheduled to be completed at least twelve (12) days prior to the first game of their prospective Junior Olympic National Championship Final.

B. **Eligible Teams.** The tournaments shall be open to all member teams; however, a limit on the number of entries may be necessary because of the number of fields available for play.

NOTE: A Junior Olympic Class B team may participate in a Class A National Qualifier. Participation in a higher classification could affect the team's classification.

NOTE: 16-Under Class A teams may participate in any 16-Under Gold National Qualifying event and 18-Under Class A teams may participate in any 18-Under Gold National Qualifying event and then have the ability to return to the Class A level provided the team did not earn a berth at the Gold level.

C. **Rosters.** Teams must compete in accordance with **Article 302** of this Code. Once a team has qualified for a National Championship Final through participation in a National Qualifier that team shall not be permitted to change their roster.

NOTE: A team may forfeit their berth and adjust their roster as provided in **Article 301, Eligibility,** and **Article 302, Rosters** of this Code and re-enter championship play in the same or higher classification. This will include Junior Olympic GOLD teams.

D. **Pick-Up Players.** Pick-up players are not allowed in National Qualifiers.

E. **Location.** Dates and sites must be received at the National Office by January 1 or the tournament shall be awarded in order of rank to the region that registered the most teams in that division and classification of play during the preceding year. Regions awarded an additional National Qualifier must accept or decline the tournament within 10 days or the tournament shall be awarded to the next region in order.

F. **Allocation of the Junior Olympic National Qualifiers by division of play.**

- 01. Junior Olympic Girls'
Class A 18-Under Fast Pitch: One tournament in each region.
- 02. Junior Olympic Girls'
Class A 16-Under Fast Pitch: One tournament in each region.
- 03. Junior Olympic Girls'
Class A 14-Under Fast Pitch: One tournament in each region.
- 04. Junior Olympic Girls'
Class A 12-Under Fast Pitch: One tournament in each region.

05. Junior Olympic Girls'
Class A 10-Under Fast Pitch: One tournament in each region.

- G. **Adult Slow Pitch.** Adult Slow Pitch National Qualifiers may be held in Adult Slow Pitch. The association hosting the tournament must use their local association berths. Teams that accept the berths must abide by the rules set forth by their local association to advance in championship play.
- H. **Bracket.** The official association bracket is to be used in all Junior Olympic national qualifiers.
- I. **Time Limit.** No time limit rule less than one hour and thirty minutes for fast pitch and one hour and fifteen minutes for slow pitch shall be allowed in Junior Olympic national qualifiers.
- J. **Tournament Host.** Although a formal contract shall not be negotiated between the tournament host and the USA Softball, it is expected that all national qualifying tournaments shall be conducted within the rules and procedures of the USA Softball and in a manner that shall protect the integrity and reputation of the USA Softball.
- K. **Assessment Fee.** An assessment fee of \$15.00 per team shall be sent to the National Office no later than 10 days after the tournament is completed.
- L. **Notification and Entry.** A listing of Junior Olympic Girls' Class A Fast Pitch National Qualifiers must be published to the USA Softball Junior Olympic membership by January 1. National Qualifier hosts are permitted to receive entries anytime after January 15, provided that compliance with **Article 308 (B)**, **National Qualifiers** of this Code has been met. Entries shall be accepted on a first come, first served basis. A minimum of twenty four (24) teams per age group must be offered in order to conduct a National Qualifier in Girls Class A Fast Pitch.
- M. **Previously Qualified.** Junior Olympic Teams which have previously qualified for a National Championship Final may compete in other National Qualifiers. If a previously qualified team wins another berth from a National Qualifier, the highest finishing team without a berth will qualify.
- N. **Withdrawal.** A team must notify the national qualifier tournament director within two days of receiving a berth to a National Championship Finals if the team is required to withdraw from the national qualifier in accordance with this Code. The tournament director shall refund the team's entry fee if notice is received within two days and the bracket has not yet been drawn.
- O. **Unused Berths.** In the event that Regions are unable to fill National Qualifier berths, the berths will be redistributed within their respective territory.

Article 313 REGIONAL TOURNAMENTS.

- A. **Assessment Fee.** An assessment fee of \$15.00 per team shall be paid to USA Softball.
- B. **Awarded.** Regional tournament bids shall be awarded by a majority vote of the National council members, local Junior Olympic Commissioners, local player representatives, and local umpires-in chief of the respective region.
- C. **Bids.**
 - 01. Regional bids are to be coordinated through the regional director.
 - 02. In the event that no satisfactory bid is received for a regional tournament, the regional director shall award the regional tournament to the local association

who will agree to conduct it.

- D. **Entry Fee.** An entry fee may be charged in regional tournaments.
- E. **Regional Draw.** Regional tournament draws may be drawn by regional commissioners at designated meetings or may be drawn in accordance with National Championship Final draws under **Article 311 (A) (03)** of this Code. Regional commissioners with simple majority vote have option on which procedure to adopt.
- F. **Umpire Assignments.**
 - 01. All regional tournaments require a minimum of two umpires per game.
 - 02. Assignment of umpires to regional championships is the responsibility of the host commissioner. It is recommended the host commissioner invite umpires from outside the host association.
 - 03. During regional tournament play, an umpire from an association may not work (when possible) behind the plate when a team from their association is playing, and it is suggested that they not work the bases.
- G. **Unused Berths.** In the event that Regions are unable to fill regional qualifier berths, the berths will be redistributed within their respective territory.

Article 314 USA SOFTBALL GOLD QUALIFYING TOURNAMENTS (Junior Olympic 16-Under and 18-Under Gold Only). The USA Softball shall conduct two National Gold Qualifying Tournaments and may hold up to four (4) in each territory.

- A. **Eligible Teams.**
 - 01. **Registrations.** All USA Softball registered Girls' 16-Under Gold and 18-Under Gold Fast Pitch Teams with in their respective age groups.
 - 02. **Previously Qualified.** Teams previously qualified for the National Championship Finals are eligible to compete in any NGQT.
- B. **Assessment Fees.** A \$15.00 per team assessment fee to be paid to USA Softball.
- C. **Site.** The site of these tournaments shall be determined by a vote of the council members within their respective territories.
- D. **Territory Administrator.** Each Territory will appoint a Junior Olympic Commissioner from one of their Regions to track entrants and communicate with other Territories if a Qualifier is open to all other Territories.
- E. **Notification.** Each appointee shall notify the Director of Championships of their appointment by February 1 each year.
- F. **GOLD Qualifying Tournament Procedures.**
 - 01. **National GOLD Qualifying Tournaments.** Each territory shall host National Gold Qualifying Tournaments (NGQT's) with an allotment of berths based on previous year's participation in the Gold program.
 - a. Berths within a territory will be equally distributed. Only Regions within a territory that have Gold teams will be allowed to host NGQT's. By mutual agreement, regions within a territory will set the dates for their NGQT's.

- b. If no agreement can be reached, the region with the most Gold participation will set their date first followed the region with the next highest participation.
- c. If a region declines to host an NGQT, the opportunity to host an NGQT will be passed on to the next qualifying region within the territory. This process will continue until dates for all NGQT's have been established.

Exception: 16-Under and 18-Under Gold Territory Qualifiers may be held during the week if agreed upon by the regional JO Commissioners in their territory.

- 02. **Sites / Number of Teams.** All territories are to host National Gold Qualifying Tournaments (NGQT) at sites that can accommodate all Gold teams registered prior to the tournament entry deadline.
- 03. **Tournament Bracket.** In accordance with **Article 311 (A) (03)** of the USA Softball Code, the official USA Softball bracket (double elimination bracket) is to be utilized for all NGQT's.
- 04. **Tournament Entry Procedures.** NGQT's may accept entries at any time after the event is listed on the USA Softball website.
 - a. Any teams wishing to enter a NGQT must submit to the respective tournament directors the following.
 - 1. USA Softball Official Tournament Entry Form.
 - 2. Tournament Entry Fee (Check or Money Order). Receipt of the check and roster does not guarantee a team a spot in the tournament.
- 05. **USA Softball Website Posting.** Each NGQT director will submit to the National Office for posting on the USA Softball website the list of all teams participating in their tournament (Inclusive of Team Name, as it appears on their USA Softball Official Tournament Entry Form, Manager's Name including Street Address, City, State, Zip Code and Telephone Numbers), within 24 hours after the conclusion of the tournament.
 - a. Each NGQT director will follow Procedural Manual Article 105 D 14 for using www.tournamentUSAsoftball.com.
 - b. Each NGQT director will submit an official order of finish, and tournament bracket within 24 hours after conclusion of the tournament to the National Office and to the National Tournament Director Host.
 - c. Each NGQT director will scan/email the original rosters, and official tournament entry forms (completed) to the National Office and National Tournament Director.
 - d. Failure to submit paperwork on time will result in assessment fees to be raised from \$15 per team to \$50 per team to be paid to USA Softball.
- 06. **Master List of Qualified Teams.** The National Office will maintain a master list of all Gold teams who have qualified and accepted berth(s) for the National Championship Finals. Maintaining this list will require each NGQT director to submit each Monday, starting the first week in June, a list of teams that qualified the previous weekend (Inclusive of Team Name, as it appears on their USA Softball Official Tournament Entry Form, Manager's Name including Street Address, City, State, Zip Code and Telephone Numbers).

07. **Notification of Unfilled Berths.** USA Softball Regional Directors and or USA Softball Regional Junior Olympic Commissioners are to notify the National Office immediately upon discovery, that a regional Gold berth or NGQT will not be used. In the event regional berths are unfilled the following process will be used:
 - a. Returned regional berths will be added to the territory tournament berths from which the region is assigned. The extra berths will be added evenly between the two territory tournaments with the first NGQT getting the odd berth.
 - b. If one TQT has already transpired, all returned regional berths will go to the second NGQT.
 - c. If both NGQT's have been completed when the regional berth is returned, the order of finish for the NGQT with the largest field of teams will be used to offer a berth to the highest finishing team that has not yet qualified.
 - d. In the event both NGQT's had the same number of teams, the first NGQT will be used to determine the team to which the berth will be offered.
 - e. In the event more than one regional berth is returned and the NGQT s have been completed the NGQT not used to fill the first returned berth will be used to assign the second. The process will continue to be followed until all returned regional berths have been filled.
 - f. In the event all NGQT lists have been exhausted without finding an eligible team, **Article 310 (F)** of the USA Softball Code will be used to determine fill-in teams.

08. **NGQT Entry Fees.** NGQT directors are asked to review the tournament fees in light of the double elimination only format and adjust accordingly.

09. **Awarding of Berths.** Weather permitting; teams must participate in order to receive a berth.
 - a. If a tournament has fewer entries than the number of berths, then the number of berths will be reduced for that tournament.
 - b. The number of berths that can be awarded shall always be at least 1 less than the number of teams who have entered the NGQT.
 - c. Berths shall be based on the number allowed by code for each territory and by the number of teams participating in the NGQT: 3 or less teams = 1 berth, 4-8 teams = 2 berths, 9-12 teams = 3 berths, more than 12 teams = 4 berths.
 - d. Territories will retain the option to offer less berths at their NGQT's but cannot offer more berths than the code allows,
 - e. Unused berths will revert back to the National Office for distribution based on **Article 315 Letter F (07)**.

Article 315 NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS. The following teams are eligible for National Championship Final competition as follows:

A. **Special Provisions.**

01. **Armed Forces.** The Armed Forces shall have either one representative team from each of the armed services (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines) or only one representative team if an inter-service championship is held.
02. **Geographical Hardships.** Certain National Championship Final berths have been granted by the Council because of geographical hardships and

are outlined in this Article.

- 03. **Hawaii.** If Hawaii does not participate in the regional, it shall have one berth in certain National Championship Finals as indicated in this **Article**.
- 04. **Puerto Rico.** Puerto Rico is eligible to qualify one team in each National Championship Final Tournament.
- 05. **Combined Local / Regional Berths.** A region or any local association may combine berths and conduct a joint championship where the commissioners within the respective regions determine it is in the best interest of their regions or local associations.
- 06. **Direct to National Championship Finals.** In the following Divisions and Classifications, any team playing in the local championship tournaments (if scheduled) may advance to the National Championship Final:

a. Fast Pitch

01.	Men's	Major	Fast Pitch
02.	Men's	Open	Fast Pitch
03.	Men's	23-Under	Fast Pitch
04.	Men's	Masters 40-Over	Fast Pitch
05.	Men's	Masters 50-Over	Fast Pitch
06.	Men's	Seniors 60-Over	Fast Pitch

b. Modified Pitch

01.	Men's	(09) Man	Modified Pitch
02.	Men's	(10) Man	Modified Pitch

c. Slow Pitch

01.	Men's	Class A	Slow Pitch
02.	Men's	Industrial	Slow Pitch
03.	Men's	Major 16-Inch	Slow Pitch
04.	Men's	Class A 16-Inch	Slow Pitch
05.	Men's	Master's 35-Over	Slow Pitch
06.	Men's	Master's 40-Over	Slow Pitch
07.	Men's	Master's 45-Over	Slow Pitch
08.	Men's	Seniors 50-Over Major	Slow Pitch
09.	Men's	Seniors 50-Over AAA	Slow Pitch
10.	Men's	Seniors 50-Over AA	Slow Pitch
11.	Men's	Seniors 55-Over Major	Slow Pitch
12.	Men's	Seniors 55-Over AAA	Slow Pitch
13.	Men's	Seniors 55-Over AA	Slow Pitch
14.	Men's	Seniors 60-Over Major	Slow Pitch
15.	Men's	Seniors 60-Over AAA	Slow Pitch
16.	Men's	Seniors 60-Over AA	Slow Pitch
17.	Men's	Seniors 65-Over Major	Slow Pitch
18.	Men's	Seniors 65-Over AAA	Slow Pitch
19.	Men's	Seniors 65-Over AA	Slow Pitch
20.	Men's	Seniors 70-Over AAA	Slow Pitch
21.	Men's	Seniors 70-Over AA	Slow Pitch
22.	Men's	Seniors 75-Over AAA	Slow Pitch
23.	Men's	Seniors 75-Over AA	Slow Pitch

24.	Women's	Open	Slow Pitch
25.	Women's	Masters 35-Over	Slow Pitch
26.	Co-ed	Open	Slow Pitch
27.	Co-ed	Class C	Slow Pitch
28.	Co-ed	Class D	Slow Pitch

d. Junior Olympic

01.	Junior Olympic	Boy's	Fast Pitch
02.	Junior Olympic	Boy's	Slow Pitch
03.	Junior Olympic	Girls'	Slow Pitch

B. **Men's Class A and Women's Open.** USA Softball will conduct one (1) National Championship Final each for Men's Class A and Women's Open Slow Pitch. These National Championship Finals shall have dates established and approved by the Executive Director.

C. **Men's Class B Slow Pitch.** USA Softball will conduct one (1) National Championship Final. This National Championship Final shall have dates established and approved by the Executive Director. The top 10% finishers at the previous season's Men's Class C Slow Pitch Nationals will be awarded an unpaid berth.

D. **Men's Class C Slow Pitch.** The USA Softball will conduct one (1) National Championship Final. The tournament will be held in Oklahoma City on Labor Day weekend.

01. **Qualifying.** Teams will qualify for this National Championship Final through National Qualifiers.

02. **Berth Allocation.** Sixty-four (64) teams will qualify, berths will be distributed by the Slow Pitch Tournament Committee.

03. **Berths Awarded.** The top 10% finishers at the previous season's Men's Class D Slow Pitch Nationals will be awarded an unpaid berth.

E. **Women's Class C Slow Pitch, Women's Class D Slow Pitch, Co-ed Open, Co-ed Class C and Co-ed Class D.** USA Softball will conduct one (1) National Championship Final in each division and classification. The format and an optimal date at a destination city will be determined by the Tournament Programs and Awards Committee. Qualification and advancement from each local association will be determined by the respective local association commissioner.

F. **USA Softball East / West National Championship Finals.** USA Softball will conduct two (2) National Championship Tournaments in following divisions and classifications:

01. **Men's Senior Slow Pitch.**

02. **Men's Open Fast Pitch**

03. **Girls 10-Under Class A**

One championship will be played in each of the two (2) sections in accordance with **Article 204, Sections** of this Code.

Qualifying. Teams will qualify for these National Championship Finals through their local associations. Local Associations shall establish a process by which teams may earn a berth into these National Championships. Local associations and regions may combine berths to qualify teams for these tournaments in

accordance with **Article 316 (A)(05)** of this Code. Teams may play in the tournament of their choice.

G. **USA Softball Eastern / Southern / Northern / Western National Championship Finals.** The USA Softball will conduct four (4) National Championships in following divisions and classifications:

01. Men’s Class D Slow Pitch. The top 10% finishers at the previous season's Men's Class E/Rec territory slow pitch nationals will be awarded an unpaid berth to Men's Class D territory slow pitch nationals.

EXCEPTION: Additional Territory National Championships may be held with approval of the council members of the affected territory.

02. Men’s Class E/Rec Slow Pitch

EXCEPTION: Additional Territory National Championships may be held with approval of the council members of the affected territory.

One championship will be played in each of the four (4) territories in accordance with **Article 203, Territories** of the USA Softball Code.

a. **Qualifying.** Teams will qualify for these National Championship Finals through their local associations. Local Associations shall establish a process by which teams may earn a berth into these National Championships. Local associations and regions may combine berths to qualify teams for these tournaments in accordance with **Article 316 (A)(05)** of this Code. Teams may play in the tournament of their choice.

03. Junior Olympic Slow Pitch

H. **Girls’ Class A USA Softball Fast Pitch National Championship Finals. 18, 16, 14, 12-Under**

Host Teams	2
Hall of Fame	8
National Qualifiers	20
East National Qualifier	2
Central National Qualifier	2
West National Qualifier	2
Regional Berths – Four Teams from Each Region	40
Territorial National Championship Finals	0-16

Returning Teams from the previous year’s
 Returning Teams from previous year's USA Softball Class A National
 Championship Finals - Top 10%. **2-28**

Association Berths based on previous year’s Girls’ Fast Pitch registrations: Associations registering teams receives one (1) berth, for associations above 499 teams, those associations will receive an additional berth for each increment of 500 team registrations. As an example, an association that registers 2900 teams would receive 5 total berths. The best way to determine the berths is to take total registered teams and divide by 500 – the number of berths is the whole number – no rounding up.

Associations berths	:	(70)
Approximate Additional Berths for each increment of 500 teams:		(106)
Total Berths Based on Registrations		176
Geographical Hardships	Alaska	1
	Hawaii	1

Maximum Possible Number of Teams (Approximate) 256-296

I. **Girls' Class A USA Softball Fast Pitch Territorial Championship Finals.**

18, 16, 14, 12-Under

The USA Softball shall conduct one Territorial Championship Finals Tournament in each age classification of Junior Olympic Girls' Class A Fast Pitch in each of the following territories, In accordance with **Article 203, Territories** of this Code.

01. **Eligible Teams.** All teams within an USA Softball Territorial Championship Finals Territory that have not qualified for an USA Softball Junior Olympic Girls' Class A Fast Pitch National Championship are eligible to qualify for the USA Softball Territorial Championship Finals Tournament through their local association. Teams may play in the National Championship of their choice.

NOTE: Ineligible. Any team that has qualified for an USA Softball Junior Olympic Girls' Fast Pitch National Championship is not eligible to participate in an USA Softball Territorial Championship Finals Tournament.

02. **Format.** Each USA Softball Girls' Fast Pitch Territorial Tournament shall be structured so that each team is scheduled to play a minimum of four (4) games – two games of pool play and a seeded double elimination bracket.

03. **Opening Ceremonies.** Each National Tournament shall have a pre-tournament luncheon/draw for the managers and opening ceremonies.

04. **Berths.** The first and second place team in each National Tournament shall receive a berth to the Junior Olympic Girls' USA Softball National Championship Finals in the team's current or succeeding year's age classification provided the team has five (5) participating players from the previous year's roster on the current year's roster and physically present at the current championship tournament site prior to the start of their first game.

J. **Girls' Class B USA Softball Fast Pitch Territorial Championship Finals.**

18, 16, 14, 12, 10-Under

The USA Softball shall conduct one Territorial Championship Finals Tournament in each age classification of Junior Olympic Girls' Class B Fast Pitch in each of the following territories, in accordance with **Article 203, Territories** of this Code.

01. **Eligible Teams.** All teams within a USA Softball Territorial Championship Finals Territory are age eligible to qualify for their USA Softball Territory National Championship Finals Tournament through their local associations. Teams may play in the National Championship of their choice.

02. **Format.** Each USA Softball Girls' Fast Pitch National Tournament shall be

structured so that each team is scheduled to play a minimum of four (4) games – two games of pool play and a seeded double elimination bracket.

03. **Opening Ceremonies.** Each National Tournament shall have a pre-tournament draw luncheon for the managers and opening ceremonies.

K. **Girls' Class GOLD USA Softball Fast Pitch National Championship Finals.**

18-Under

The berths will be allocated as follows:

Returning teams 2 (18-Under Gold Champion and Runner-up).	2
Returning teams 2 (16-Under Gold Champion and Runner Up)	2
Returning teams must enter the championship prior to May 31.	

Territorial Berths based on previous Year's Gold Participation in Territorial Play:

Territory with the highest participation	16	
Territory with the second highest participation	16	
Territory with the third highest participation	12	
Territory with the fourth highest participation	12	
National Office	4	60

Maximum Possible Number of Teams 64

Any unused berths will be returned to the National Office for immediate distribution to the current years tournaments with the largest number of Gold teams participating.

NOTE: Berths allocated to the National Office are to be used for distribution to the current years tournaments with the largest number of participating teams.

L. **Girls' Class Gold USA Softball Fast Pitch National Championship Finals.**

16-Under

The berths will be allocated as follows:

Returning teams 2 (16-Under Gold Champion and Runner-up).	2
Returning teams must enter the championship prior to May 31.	

Regional Berths 10

Territorial Berths based on previous Year's Gold Participation in Territorial Play:

Territory with the highest participation	12
Territory with the second highest participation	12
Territory with the third highest participation	6
Territory with the fourth highest participation	6

Maximum Possible Number of Teams 48

Any unused berths will be returned to the National Office for immediate distribution to the current years tournaments with the largest number of Gold teams participating.

- M. **Girls Class C Fast Pitch Regional Championship Finals.** USA Softball shall conduct one Regional Championship Final in ages 10U, 12U and 14U of Junior Olympic Girls' Class C Fast Pitch in each of the following Regions, in accordance with Article 202, Regions of this Code
01. **Eligible Teams.** All teams within a Regional Championship Finals Region are age eligible to qualify for their Regional Championship finals through their local association. Teams may play in the Championship of their choice.
 02. **Format.** Each Girls' Class C Fast Pitch Regional Championship Finals shall be structured so that each team is scheduled to play a minimum of four (4) games - two pool games and a double elimination bracket.
 03. Each Regional Championship Finals shall have a pre-tournament draw luncheon for managers and opening ceremonies.
 04. **Eligible Players** - A Class C team must be comprised of players that come from the same league and have not participated at the Class A level with any other team in any organization.
- N. **Girls' 8-Under Regional Championship Finals.** USA Softball shall conduct one Regional Championship Finals Tournament in 8-Under of Junior Olympic Girls' in each of the following Regions, in accordance with Article 202, Regions of this Code.
01. **Eligible Teams.** All teams within a Regional Championship Finals region are age eligible to qualify for their Regional Championship Finals through their local associations. Teams may play in the Championship of their choice.
 02. **Format.** Each Girls' 8-Under Regional Championship Finals shall be structured so that each team is scheduled to play a minimum of four (4) games - two games of pool play and a seeded double elimination bracket.
 03. **Opening Ceremonies.** Each Regional Championship Finals shall have a pre-tournament draw luncheon for the managers and opening ceremonies.
 04. **Rules.** Each region will determine the playing rules and qualification procedures for this classification.

Article 316 NATIONAL INVITATIONAL TOURNAMENTS. National Invitational Tournaments shall be conducted as follows:

- A. **Bids.** Bids for conducting national invitational tournaments must be submitted to the National Office by October 1, and approved by the local association USA Softball commissioner.
- B. **Schedule.** National invitational tournaments cannot be scheduled within the same week where it would conflict with the Championship Play of this Association in the same classification and division of play.
- C. **Sanction Fee.** The sanction fee for national invitational tournaments is \$200.00 and must accompany the bid. Checks are to be made payable to USA Softball.
- D. **Assessment Fee.** The bid must include a minimum \$25.00 assessment fee per team, payable to the National Office. Any additional entry fee must be specified in the bid.
- E. **Rules and Regulations.** Although a formal contract shall not be negotiated between the tournament host and the USA Softball, it is expected that all national invitational tournaments shall be conducted within the rules and procedures of the USA Softball and in a manner that shall protect the integrity and reputation of the USA Softball.
- F. **Signage and Display.** All National Invitational tournaments must clearly display on all of the tournament literature that the tournament is a national invitational

tournament. All references to National Championship Finals are strictly forbidden. Any violation of this section shall make the tournament director(s) liable to the Amateur Softball Association or its local association for any damage caused by the improper promotion of the tournament.

- G. **Tournament Report.** A tournament report must be sent to the National Office no later than 30 days following the completion of the tournament. Failure to comply could result in withholding future tournament sanctions (Tournament Report Forms are provided by the National Office).
- H. **Bid Review.** All bids for national invitational tournaments shall be reviewed by the Tournament Program and Awards Committee and will forward a recommendation to the Council for their consideration.
- I. **Qualifying Team Eligibility.** Teams who enter championship play and qualify to advance to the next level of championship play are not eligible to participate in any USA Softball national invitational tournament until the team is eliminated from further championship play.

Article 317 Levels of Non-Championship Play.

- A. **Levels of Non-Championship Play.** USA Softball recognizes the following levels of non-championship play:
 - 01. Local league (city or county)
 - 02. Invitational
- B. **Non-Championship Local League.** USA Softball, as national governing body for softball in the United States understands that local city or county leagues may adopt and use USA Softball's official playing rules. The use of any or all of USA Softball's playing rules is strictly a local matter and the rules may be altered as league officials deem necessary to conduct their own league play. USA Softball expressly disclaims any and all liability associated with the use of its official playing rules or any modification of its official playing rules. One of the primary purposes of USA Softball's official playing rules, including its equipment standards, is to promote competitive balance and to preserve the integrity of the sport of amateur softball. USA Softball's official playing rules, or any modification thereof, should not be considered a guarantee that participants, spectators or others will be safe or free from injury or harm. As stated in the preamble to the USA Softball Code, there are many risks and dangers incidental to the game of softball and USA Softball disclaims any and all liability associated with the game of softball or the use of its rules or Code. USA Softball does not review, sanction or approve of any modifications to its official playing rules. To the extent USA Softball's official playing rules are modified by local leagues; such modification may increase the potential or likelihood of injury, death or property loss, including the dangers associated with increased batted ball speeds. USA Softball shall not be responsible for any injury (including death) or property loss to any person in connection with any modification of USA Softball's official playing rules or the use of USA Softball's rules or any modified rules at any game or event.
- C. **Non-Championship Invitational Tournament Play.** Invitational tournaments may be conducted by the local association and sanctioned by USA Softball provided the following conditions are met:
 - 01. **Teams.** Only teams USA Softball-registered are eligible to participate.
 - 02. **Umpires.** Registered USA Softball umpires must be used.
 - 03. **Sanction and Sanction Fee.** Only the local association in whose territory the tournament is conducted may sanction a tournament and shall

be entitled to charge a sanction fee.

- D. **Use of USA Softball Official Playing Rules.** USA Softball's official playing rules are designed to be used at USA Softball championship events and implemented by USA Softball officials and volunteers. USA Softball shall not be responsible for any injury (including death) or property loss to any person in connection with the use and implementation of USA Softball's official playing rules at any event, whether or not the event is recognized or sanctioned by USA Softball.

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