

# Introduction to Wheelchair Softball

International Softball Federation



# Introduction to Wheelchair Softball

## History

Though the first person to play wheelchair softball has not been documented the sport itself has over 30 years of history. The first team was formed in Sioux Falls, South Dakota—the Sioux Wheelers in 1970, then in 1976 the National Wheelchair Softball Association (NWSA) formed as the governing body for the sport in the United States. The sport has grown by leaps and bounds with hundreds of teams throughout the United States and programs forming around the world.



Sacramento Field Dedication—National Wheelchair Association

## Objectives

ISF continues to break ground in the development of the sport world-wide. Along with ISF's equipment program development includes seeking new methods and disciplines to the sport of softball. It affords greater opportunity for people of all ages, genders and abilities to participate. Our goal would be to further develop Wheelchair softball for its consideration for inclusion into the Paralympics Games.

## Rules and Regulations

For International Competition: NWSA regulations with International Standards

- Wheelchair softball should be played under the rule book set forth by the International Softball Federation. (under current standards the NWSA uses the ASA rules a member federation of the ISF)

## Equipment

- It is recommended that a 16" ball be utilized.
- All participant must be in a manual wheelchair with foot platforms

# Introduction to Wheelchair Softball

## Field

- Smooth Surface – no grass or soft dirt
- Indoor Arena could be used (Gym, Warehouse, parking lot)

### ▪ Dimensions:

▪ minimum 150ft - maximum 220ft (foul lines 150ft and 180-220 ft to straight center)

▪ Base Paths - The official diamond shall have 50ft between all bases and 70ft, 8.5 inches from home to 2nd.

▪ Bases are made up of a 4ft circle (semi-circle for 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>) painted white. NOTE: at 1st base only, the base is extended into foul territory. The extension shall be 24 inches deep and 24 inches wide beginning at the 50 ft mark, painted white. This extension may be used by the base runner only as an extended tag area for 1st base.

▪ Player is considered touching the base when one or more of the wheels are in the circle

▪ Pitching Rubber—should extended perpendicularly 1ft on either side of the diagonal from home to 2nd base and shall be located 28ft from home base



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## Offense

▪ The base runner must be seated in their wheelchair and may tag or make contact with the base with either one or more wheels, or may tag the base with their hand. If a runner is knocked out of his/her chair, he/she may proceed to the previous or next base by any means other than hopping walking or running and make contact with the base with any part of his/her body. A base runner may not place lower extremity (waist down) on the ground or someone else's chair to stop his/her chair. If he/she does, the play is dead and will result in a delay dead ball situation.



Major league wheelchair softball tournament Twins—National Wheelchair Association

## Introduction To Wheelchair Softball

- The hitter cannot have a lower extremity in contact with the ground when hitting. If he/she does, the ball is dead and the batter is out, and all base runners return to the last base achieved before the illegal at-bat.

- ISF Rule 4 Section 6 Extra Player is not legal in wheelchair softball.

### Defense

- No fielder may advance toward or play the ball with any lower extremity in contact with the ground. The fielder must return to their chair and then advance to the ball. A fielder cannot leave their chair to gain any competitive advantage. Violations results in a minimum of one base advancement, normally two.



American Divas —National Wheelchair Association

- A restraining line should be marked 12 feet from the bases and parallel to the baselines, which run from 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> and from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup>. All four infields must have at least one wheel on or behind the line until the ball leaves the pitcher's hand. Violations result in the hitter being awarded a walk.

- A semi-circle restraining line should be marked on the outfield 100 feet from home and extend to each foul line. All outfielders other than the short fielder must remain behind the line until the pitcher releases the ball during the pitch.

- All teams are required to have a quadriplegic on their team in active play. This means that when the team is on defense, they must have a quad playing one of those positions. Failure to have a quad take the field will require the team to play a fielder short (i.e., 9 rather than 10 players). When the team is hitting there must be a quad in the batting lineup and bat in the same position throughout the game. Failure to have a quad hit in that position will be an automatic out.

## Introduction To Wheelchair Softball

■ A team must have the required 10 players, including one or more quads, to start the game.

■ The teams are balanced by the following point system: Quad (any) = 1 point

Class I = 1 point Class II = 2 points Class III = 3 points

A. At no time in a game shall a team have players participating with a total value of points greater than 22.

B. The coach, in placing his/her team's roster in the official score book before each game, shall place a roman numeral prominently and in a common line between the player's disability classification.

C. The official scorer shall be responsible for seeing that personnel on the field for either team at any given time, does not exceed the above balance rule. This will only have to be checked at the beginning of the game and at the time of substitutions. No checking of the total value point will be necessary if I substitutes for a I, II, or II: or if a II substitutes for a II or III. It will only be necessary if a III substitutes for a II or a I, or if a II substitutes for a I.

■ The player classified as a quad may alter their bat to improve the grip. The altered bat must be approved by the head umpire for safety concerns (no sharp or pointed edges, etc.).

■ The player classified as a quad may wear a glove on either or both hands regardless of position (including pitcher).

■ The “Chop hit” is allowed.

■ Quads can bunt, but must inform the umpire before first at bat of quad status during any given game.



California Park, Chicago Illinois —National Wheelchair Association

# Introduction To Wheelchair Softball

## Resources

■ National Wheelchair Softball Association - <http://www.wheelchairsoftball.org>

■ United Spinal Association - <http://www.unitedspinal.org/>

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=1672991089067093038>

■ [www.newdisability.com](http://www.newdisability.com)

