



**WEST DES MOINES
GIRLS SOFTBALL**

2017
Parent & Coaches Manual:
Policies, Procedures and Rules

www.wdmssoftball.org

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WDMGS Board of Directors

The WDMGS Board of Directors consists of volunteers who all hold specific a specific responsibility or multiple responsibilities that contribute to the success of our league.

There is an executive committee that includes the President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary for the board. Other members hold roles to manage our finances, equipment, building & grounds, uniforms, umpires, website, manage sponsorships, coordinate opening day, etc...

Please contact any WDMGS board member if you are interested in becoming a volunteer. Meetings are the first Thursday of each month.

WDMGS Annual Calendar

December-February	Registration for Recreation (Rec) League (Pre-K through 10 th grade)
March	Coaches meeting (coaches contact team after this meeting) Coaches to hold player/parent meeting: Bitty, Petite & Juniors Holiday Park – Clean-up day (all families are invited to participate)
April	Holiday Park - Alternate park clean-up day Rec League play begins Opening Day parade and ceremonies
May	Rec League - games all month; game nights are Mon, Tue, and Thur WDM Tournament (Tournament Teams only to participate)
June	Rec League – games wrap up in early June Tournament team tryouts
August	WDMGS Fall tournament
August-July	Tournament team season (follows USSSA schedule)

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this manual is to provide the coach and the assistant coach the administrative tools to operate within the structure of West Des Moines Girls Softball.

This association has adopted the official softball rules as adapted by United States Specialty Sports Association (USSSA). A copy of these rules is available through that association via their website. Certain changes in these rules have been implemented by the WDMGS Board of Directors and are listed in this manual. During all league games, these local ground and playing rules take precedence over the official rules of softball, should a conflict occur.

It is definitely to the advantage of the coach and the team to know and understand these rules. Any confusion or questions pertaining to the rules are best clarified at the coach's meeting or prior to the start of the season.

WDMGS strives to achieve sportsmanship at all levels of play and will not tolerate unsportsmanlike-like conduct from any coach, player, parent, or spectator.

WEST DES MOINES GIRLS SOFTBALL MISSION STATEMENT

West Des Moines Girls Softball (WDMGS) is a volunteer, tax exempt, charitable organization established for the purpose of providing young women of all abilities with fundamental learning experiences in the game of softball. In all WDMGS activities, good sportsmanship, teamwork and the physical development, safety and emotional welfare of the young women shall remain paramount.

TEAM MEETINGS

Coaches are highly encouraged to have a team meeting with parents and participants. This manual should act as a source of information for the meeting. Coaches should cover the following subjects at a minimum and contact your league representative if you have any questions:

1. Team practice schedule – ask for parent volunteers/assistant coach
2. Share your contact information & establish how you'll communicate
3. Parade and opening day schedule
4. Holiday Park - field clean-up date
5. Uniforms - team shirts and dress code (softball pants, no shorts)
6. Personal helmet / face mask and chin strap rule
7. Treat tickets at concession stand
8. Brief overview of rules for the specific level
9. Picture information and scheduled date
10. Team scorekeeper (Juniors, Intermediates and Seniors only)
11. Softball Clinics (as available)
12. Recruit a team parent (help in dugout – facemasks//catcher's equipment/helmets, coordinate treats, etc.)

TEAM PRACTICE SESSIONS

To maintain the spirit of a recreational league, coaches are advised that they may practice the team only 3 days per week prior to the first game of the season. This does not mean you may schedule 4 or more practices and tell your players they may attend 3 they choose to - this means 3 scheduled practices per team per week maximum. After the first game, coaches will be restricted to 2 practice sessions max per week. The maximum time a team may practice on any one (1) day will be 1 and 1/2 hours for Bitty Ball and Petite's and 2 hours for Juniors and older. Practice games shall be considered a practice session.

Teams may have fields scheduled at Holiday Park by signing up on our online system, Appointly. Coaches may use your Google (gmail) and/or Facebook account to log in. (<http://WDMGS.appointly.com>)

If you have any issues with scheduling, please contact your league representative or a board member.

Coaches are allowed to practice at various locations. School areas are available, but it should be noted that areas with soccer goals should be reserved for soccer players. In return, soccer teams have been instructed that areas with backstops are to be cleared for softball players.

Coaches are being asked to help us develop and maintain an atmosphere of cooperation with area school athletic programs and at the same time provide a recreational experience for the players.

Coaches who have players that are involved with area high school programs are asked to use the following rules:

- A. High School games take priority over all WDMGS activities.
- B. High School practice takes priority over league practice.

At no time will this Board condone or cooperate with an attempt to punish a player for this dual participation by not allowing her to play. If the player cannot be at practice or a game, borrowed players may be used in accordance with the rules.

OPENING DAY PARADE OF TEAMS

This long-standing tradition marks the beginning of our season. There will be a parade beginning on a Saturday morning to kick off the season. Teams are encouraged to decorate trucks, cars, or make a float. Line up begins at 30 minutes before the parade start time.

Upon arrival at Holiday Park, coaches will be asked to gather their team for placement on Kimball Field for Opening Day Ceremonies. Immediately following Opening Day Ceremonies, league games will begin. Please refer to league schedule for game times.

LEAGUE REPRESENTATIVES

Representatives for each league shall be appointed by the Board. League Directors will be instructed by the Board members of their official duties. We encourage parents and coaches to contact League Directors on any problems.

1. League Representatives are the communication lines from the Board to the coaches and from the coaches to the Board. In the event of a complaint, League Representatives will collect the complaint in writing from the complainant and submit it to the Board. The League Representatives shall be responsible for all communication from the Board to the coaches.
2. Shall be responsible for working with the concession stand manager and team parents in their league for setting up working schedules for each team.
3. Questions concerning league policy and game scheduling should be directed to the League Director. Questions concerning practice times or any other team activity should be directed to the team coach or to the team parent.

TEAM EQUIPMENT

WDMGS will issue team equipment (including practice balls) and each head coach is responsible for all of this issued equipment and the head coach at his/her expense will replace any shortage of the original equipment issued by WDMGS.

West Des Moines Girls Softball spends money each year replacing and upgrading equipment. It is requested that all coaches stress the importance of taking proper care of equipment to all participants. If equipment has become damaged or broken during normal use it shall be reported to the equipment manager immediately.

Equipment bags should be checked and returned to the equipment manager immediately after the conclusion of the league season.

Tournament team coaches will be issued equipment for the duration of the tournament season. The head coach is responsible for returning this equipment in a timely manner immediately after the completion of the season to equipment manager.

LEAGUE COMMUNICATIONS

Coaches are reminded that most problems within the league can be mitigated by proactively communicating expectations. The Board has taken adequate steps to ensure communications with the coaches and participants. It is the responsibility of the coaches to help improve communications with players and parents and with the Board. Additionally, league representatives should be used as a relay of communications to the Board Members.

TEAM ROSTERS

1. All leagues roster maximum will be twelve (12) players. (Board to approve exceptions.)
2. At no time may a team exceed its roster maximum. If a team is equal in number to the other teams in its league, but below its maximum, the Board may assign a player from the late registrants list.

Game Rules

TOURNAMENT AND OUT-OF-LEAGUE GAMES

1. Tournaments - At the discretion of the Board, tournaments may be held involving Association players. Tournament rules, playing field, etc., are governed by the Board.
2. Out-of-League Games - If deemed necessary by the Board, teams outside our league may play our teams if there are not enough teams registered in our Association. All games must be sanctioned by the Board. (This is in regard to regular season play, not tournaments or practice games.) All teams will use the "Official Softball Rules" of the Iowa Girl's High School Athletic Union or USSSA, whichever applies. Exception to rules are listed below.

Spirit of Our League

The focus of our WDMGS league rules is to develop a safe and progressive opportunity for young girls to learn and experience the game of softball. It is important to keep in mind that WDMGS fosters growth in young girls by promoting a vast array of skills and knowledge of the game. The rules laid out below will support the coaches and their teams in accomplishing this task.

SAFETY RULES FOR ALL LEAGUES

1. All defensive players will wear a fielding mask.
2. ***Parent/Players are responsible for providing batting helmets with face guards and chinstraps. The WDMGS league will not be providing any helmets in the equipment bags. Batting helmets with face guards/chinstraps are required to be worn by any girl batting, on deck, or on base. If a girl steps into the batters box without snapping her chinstrap she will be called out. Face guard helmets are always required when batting against the pitching machines, either in the batting cages or on the field. Tournament teams will be required to follow league batting helmet rules.*** Safety bases will be used for all leagues.
3. Every player who stands behind home plate to catch when a batter is present in the batter's box **MUST** wear an approved catcher's mask, chest protector, and shin guards, regardless if it is practice, scrimmage or a game.
4. Players who throw their bat may be called out by the umpire. If the bat strikes another person or interferes with the fielding play, the batter will be called "OUT". This will be a judgment call by the umpire and not subject to protest or appeal.
5. Umpires behind the plate **MUST WEAR A MASK**. The chest protector and shin guards are optional. All scheduled umpires shall umpire from behind home plate, not the pitcher's mound.
6. Any player warming up a pitcher must be wearing a catchers mask or a batting helmet with a facemask.

7. Safety issues in league play should be reported to a Board Member in writing, or may be submitted via our website.

MINIMUM PLAYING TIME RULE

All players must play a minimum of half the game. See individual league rules. The official scorekeeper will notify umpire of substitution time. Re-entry is permitted provided the re-entry is consistent with the minimum time rule stated above.

EXCEPTIONS:

1. Illness or emergency leave.
2. Absence from practice without excuse.
3. Benched by Coach.

Any and all exceptions must be written in the scorebook at the time the exception is made. Any Coach may challenge an exception made by another Coach. This challenge must be in writing and presented to the Board within 7 days from the date of the challenged game. The Board will act on the validity or non-validity of all challenged games under this rule.

FIELDING THE TEAM

If one team is not able to field a complete team at game time, the following procedure is available.

1. The team that is short may borrow up to 3 players if possible, from one league lower, except in the case of the Petite League. Petite League teams may borrow only from Bitty or Petite League teams. The borrowed players must play in the outfield, bat last and not pitch or catch in their regular position. Coaches must identify borrowed players to the opposing team coach and official scorekeepers. There can be no conflict with a scheduled game of the borrowed player's regular team. If after borrowing 3 players the team borrowing is still not complete, or becomes incomplete, no additional players may be borrowed. ***If a team's regular player shows up, the borrowed player may continue to play and the regular player may enter the game, at the bottom of the line-up, at the start of the next half inning.*** Coaches are also discouraged to repeatedly borrow the same player(s).
2. A team may play with seven players. The team with fewer than nine players will be charged with an "out" each time a vacancy occurs in the batting order. If a team has fewer than seven players, including borrowed players, available to play at its scheduled time, the game will be forfeited.
3. Designated hitters will not be used.

RESCHEDULING OF GAMES

The WDMGS Board of Directors will determine if the fields are playable. League Director, coaches, and umpires will be notified if games are called off. All games to be rescheduled must be done by the designated Board Member.

PACE OF PLAY

Time is always important to a ball game. Therefore, it will be the plate umpire's duty to keep the time between innings to a minimum. Not more than five (5) warm-up pitches should be thrown. The catcher should put on her shin guards when the second out occurs. Players should run on and off the field. Balls must be returned promptly on the benches when the umpire calls, "Balls In!"

BITTY BALL: Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten

PETITE LEAGUE: 1st and 2nd Graders

1. All games will be 1 hour with no new inning starting after 55 minutes.
2. **Bitty:** Bases will be 40 feet apart.
Petite: Bases will be 60 feet apart.
3. The pitcher's plate will be 35 feet from home plate for Petite and 25 feet from home plate for Bitty.
4. An 11" ball will be used.
5. Scoring will not be kept other than for batting positions. Runs will not be recorded.
6. All players will bat each inning. Bases will NOT be cleared after 3 outs. Coaches will inform the opposing coach when the last batter comes to bat.
7. No walks are allowed.
8. No bunting.
9. **Bitty:** After three strikes, a Hitting Tee will be used until the ball is put in play.
Petite: Batters will receive 5 pitches to put the ball in play. Batter must hit the ball or fail to foul or put the ball in play in 5 pitches.
10. ***If a player is thrown out or the ball is caught in the air after a hit then the player must proceed to the dugout and not remain on base.***
11. Stealing of bases will not be allowed. Batter cannot run on a dropped third strike.
12. The ball is dead when controlled by an infielder. Runners may go no more than to the base they are approaching when the defense has a dead ball. An advancing player is eligible to be put out. There will be no advancement on overthrows of first and third base and players are encouraged to make a throw.
13. **Bitty Ball:** The inning is over after the last batter has hit the ball and it is controlled by an infielder.
Petite: The inning is over after the last batter reaches safely, or is out. There is no "throw home".
14. **Bitty Ball/Petite League:** An adult will pitch to his/her own team and should not touch the ball or make any attempt to field it. If the ball touches the adult, players should continue to play the live ball. The player who is playing the pitcher position will stand to the side or behind the adult pitching to field the ball. The adult should pitch from or as close as possible to the pitcher's mound, depending on the batter.
15. A player rotation system should be used for assigning player to a fielding position. A recommended rotation system form can be found on the WDMGS website. This same form should be used for each game to rotate each player down one slot in the batting order.
16. **Bitty:** All players will take fielding positions. No more than five players will play inside the baselines before the ball is hit.
Petite: All players will take fielding positions. No more than 5 players will play inside the base

lines before the ball is hit.

Bitty/Petite: No one will play in the area between home plate and the pitchers mound until the ball is pitched.

17. A catcher's helmet and equipment will be worn while playing the catcher position.
18. No infield fly rule.
19. Two coaches from the defensive team may be in the field to give instructions to the players.
20. Only official softball bats may be used. No T-ball or Little League (baseball) bats will be allowed.

All situations not covered by League Rules will automatically revert to USSSA rules.

JUNIOR LEAGUE: 3RD and 4TH Graders

1. A game can be UP TO 6 innings. No inning starting after 1 hour. The inning will be considered begun immediately after the third out of the previous half-inning. If tied, 1 inning of international tiebreaker will be played. The last batter from the previous inning will start on 2nd base. THREE innings will constitute a complete game (2 1/2 if the home team is ahead). Games rained out or called before 3 complete innings may constitute a complete game at the board's discretion.
2. Pitching distance will be 35 feet.
3. All games played with an 11-inch softball.
4. 5 runs may be scored per at bat. No 10 run rule.
5. Each team will end its turn at bat when it has **scored 5 runs** or when it has 3 outs, whichever occurs first.
6. A batter may not walk. Once four balls have been called by the umpire, the batter's coach will enter the game to pitch to that batter. ***The coach must pitch from the pitcher's rubber.*** The strike count will be assumed unless there are no strikes on the batter, then a one-strike count will be assumed. The umpire will continue to call strikes. The coach will pitch a max of 5 pitches to the batter until that batter either hits the ball or strikes out. If the 5th pitch is fouled, the at-bat will continue. ***There is no stealing, bunting or base given when hit by a pitch when the coach is pitching.***
7. No dropped third strike.
8. **Batted Ball:** On a batted ball, base runners may advance at will with no base limitations, regardless of overthrows.
9. **STEALING BASES:** Runners may steal one base per pitch. Runners on third base may NOT steal home and are liable to be put out if they come off the base.
10. All players will play a minimum of half of the game using free substitution. All players present will bat. Late arrivals will be added to bottom of lineup.
11. Fielding: There will be a maximum number of TEN players (4 outfielders) allowed in the game.

- 12. Pitchers may pitch only two innings in a 4-inning game. If a game extends beyond 4 innings, any pitcher may re-enter the game.**
13. No infield fly rule.
14. Any borrowed players will bat last. If a regular player arrives after the start of a game, they should take the place of the borrowed player. Borrowed players cannot pitch.
15. International Tie Breaker: The player, who had the last completed at bat, assumes a position on 2nd base. A courtesy runner may be used for the pitcher or catcher.
16. For league tournament, seeding will be by league finish. Highest seed will be home team. In case of tie, the following applies for seeding:
 (1) The team with fewest runs allowed is seeded first.
 (2) If still tied, then coin toss decides top seeding

All situations not covered by League Rules will automatically revert to USSA rules.

INTERMEDIATE LEAGUE: 5th and 6th Graders

SENIOR LEAGUE: 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th Graders

1. Play shall be 7 innings. No inning will start after 1 hour 10 minutes. The inning will be considered begun immediately after the third out of the previous half inning. If tied, 1 inning of international tiebreaker will be played. Games rained out or called before 5 complete innings may constitute a complete game at the board's discretion.
2. Intermediate: Pitching distance will be 40 feet.
Senior: Pitching distance will be 43 feet.
3. 5 runs may be scored per at bat.
10 run rule after 5 innings. 15 run rule after 3 innings of play.
4. Each team will end its turn at bat when it has **scored 5 runs** or when it has 3 outs, whichever occurs first.
5. Intermediate: dropped third strike rule will not apply.
Senior: dropped third strike rules will apply.
6. All players will play a minimum of half of the game using free substitution. All players present will bat. Late arrivals will be added to bottom of lineup.
7. Fielding Intermediate: There will be a maximum number of TEN players (4 outfielders) allowed in the game.
Fielding Senior: There will be a maximum number of NINE players (3 outfielders) allowed in the game.
8. Any borrowed players will bat last. If a regular player arrives after the start of a game, they should take the place of the borrowed player. Borrowed players cannot pitch.
9. International Tie Breaker: The player, who had the last completed at bat, assumes a position on 2nd base. A courtesy runner may be used for the pitcher or catcher.

10. Intermediate: For league tournament, seeding will be by league finish. Highest seed will be home team.

All situations not covered by League rules will automatically revert to USSSA rules.

PROTESTS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED.

ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY

WDMGS has adopted a zero-tolerance policy with regard to the negative treatment of our umpires. Negative treatment includes verbal and/or physical intimidation or confrontation of any kind directed at umpires by coaches, parents, fans, or players. Judgment calls may not be challenged or questioned. Procedures for disciplinary action are currently in place and will be enforced. WDMGS makes a real effort to promote sportsmanship and to lead by example for our young people. Please take a moment after each game to thank our umpires for their hard work and dedication to the game.

ABSOLUTELY NO HARASSMENT OF UMPIRES WILL BE TOLERATED!

EJECTION PROCEDURE

Coaches, players and fans are subject to ejection from the park by umpires, park management staff or WDMGS board members for failing to follow the rules and procedures in this manual or for violating provisions in the WDMGS Code of Conduct. Anyone ejected for any reason will be required to immediately leave the Holiday Park softball complex. This includes the parking lot areas surrounding the park and playing fields. We ask that our coaches and other league officials assist us in enforcing this procedure.

A player, coach or fan that has been ejected will be required to sit out the teams next scheduled game and not allowed in the softball complex while serving the suspension.

All ejections should be immediately reported to the Park Manager on duty so they may record the name of the person ejected and the circumstances. The WDMGS board of directors will determine further actions if necessary.

RAIN OUTS AND WEATHER DELAYS

Weather conditions – extreme temperatures can have a rapid impact on the health and safety of players during a game. For this reason, the game time temperature must be 45 degrees or above to start a game.

The decision to call a game (terminate the game for that time period) for any reason will be made by the Park Manager or Board of Directors in consultation with the Umpire. The procedures for communicating rainouts and weather delays are outlined in the prior section.

It is the responsibility of the head coach to notify the players of the rescheduled time and date. If a game has been canceled due to poor field conditions, teams may not practice on that field that day.

LIGHTNING POLICY

If lightning strikes are registering on the WDMGS lightening detectors located in the concession stand within a 6-mile radius of Holiday Park softball complex all games will be immediately suspended. Players and parents will be asked to vacate all playing fields, dugouts and bleachers. Games will be delayed for 20 minutes until inclement weather has passed and lightning strikes do not register from the time the game was suspended. If Lightning strikes continue past the 20-minute delay, then all games will be officially cancelled and rescheduled at the next available date for completion.

SUSPENDED GAME RESTARTS

If a suspended game has not completed required innings or allotted game time, the game will resume at the point it was suspended with the recorded score, number of outs, pitch count, base runners and official time remaining on the clock. Head coaches must agree on recorded scorebooks at the time of suspended game.

If a suspended game has completed four innings of play, it will be deemed a completed game. No game will be rescheduled and the final score will be recorded at the time of suspension. All game cancellations will be noted on the WDMGS weather hot line 830-1151.

GAME RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The home team coach is responsible for obtaining and returning the scoreboard control box (applies to Junior, Intermediate and Seniors) prior to game time. These items may be obtained at the concession stand main door. The home team coach is responsible for providing the official score keeper for the game.
2. The winning coach is responsible for turning in the score sheet (applies to Juniors, Intermediates and Seniors) to the concession stand after the game. Standings will be updated on the league website www.wdmsoftball.org.
3. The umpire is responsible for the game balls. He/She will obtain game balls from the concession stand and upon conclusion of the game will return them to the same location.
4. All teams are responsible for cleaning out the dugouts after the game. In the event that there is a game to follow, clean up and quick movement from the area should be observed.
5. In the event that you are the last game of the day, the home team coach will be responsible for returning the score boxes to the concession stand main door.
6. Prior to the start of the game the Umpire-In-Chief may call a coaches' meeting to explain playing and ground rules.

ROLES

UMPIRE-IN-CHIEF

The Umpire-In-Chief shall be appointed by the board to select, instruct and oversee the umpires of the Association.

1. The umpire's decision is final. Protests will not be allowed.
2. The Umpire-In-Chief will be liaison to the board.
3. The Umpire-In-Chief will arrange training of home plate umpires.
4. The Umpire-In-Chief will ensure that he or his designated representative is available at each day's games.
5. The Umpire-In-Chief will advise the Board on suggestions for changes, additions, or corrections of playing rules.
6. The Umpire-In-Chief shall be bound by the Board's decisions and shall see that each umpire is acting in accordance with these decisions.
7. The Umpire-In-Chief will post the umpire's schedule in the concession stand office.

8. The Umpire-In-Chief will familiarize him/herself with all league rules. He/She will make sure that all umpires have an understanding of any unique rules for various leagues. He/She will make sure that such rules are consistently enforced and interpreted.
9. The Umpire-In-Chief shall distribute copies of our special playing rules to all paid umpires.

UMPIRES

1. The plate umpires will be appointed by the Umpire-In-Chief.
2. Umpires shall report any and all infractions to the Umpire-In-Chief.
3. Umpires shall declare a forfeit if a team does not show within a period of ten minutes after time to begin play of the game.
4. Use of obscenities by a player or a coach will result in the IMMEDIATE ejection from the game and WDMGS complex. WDMGS zero tolerance policy will be enforced.
5. Umpires shall know that any players wearing jewelry are ineligible to play until the jewelry is removed.
6. The safety of the players will always prevail. The umpire has the authority to stop the game at any time he/she feels necessary.
7. The umpires will model appropriate sportsman like behaviors and attitudes.

COACHES

1. All coaches must pass a background check to be considered for coaching duties. Must be 19 years of age or older and approved by the Board. The Board may make exceptions to the minimum age.
2. Coaches may appoint a chaperone to be in the dugout with the girls throughout each game of the season.
3. Shall **not** use tobacco products while on the playing field or in the dugout.
4. Shall see that all by-laws and Game Rules are followed by each person connected with his or her team and report and situation not covered by these regulations to the Umpire-In-Chief to be arbitrated or brought before the Board for resolution.
5. Home team coach shall appoint a qualified person as official scorekeeper for each game.
6. Coaches should meet with players to answer any questions they may have and acquaint them with regulations of the Association.
7. Shall practice good sportsmanship at all times, including, but not limited to, teaching the players that certain conduct, even though it might result in winning, is not acceptable if it results in poor sportsmanship and causes bad feeling or injury to players, parents, spectators, umpires, or coaches. The Coach will emphasize that the only purpose for any amateur athletic program is fun for all participants.
8. **Home team coaches** are responsible for reporting scores to the league rep after each game. Coordinate with your team rep to ensure scores are reported. ALSO, home team coaches who host the last game of an evening are responsible for returning score box after the final game to the concession stand main door.

9. All coaches and teams shall be responsible for keeping a clean dugout. Please ensure your team picks up **all litter** in the area of the dugout after each game.

10. Shall select an assistant coach after team roster is set.

ASSISTANT COACH

All coaches must pass a background check and sign a WDMGS Code of Conduct form to be considered for coaching duties. Assistant Coaches shall be bound by the same regulations as the Head Coach and shall act accordingly during the absence of the coach.

OFFICIAL SCOREKEEPER

The official scorekeeper shall be responsible for the official score of the game, the official start time of the game with the plate umpire, and shall indicate substitution time.