

National Association of (Amateur) Base Ball Players – 1859



The Rules of 1859

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Adopted at the Base Ball National Convention held March 16, 1859 in New York City, NY

Section 1. The ball must weigh not less than five-and-three fourths, nor more than six ounces avoirdupois. It must measure not less than ten nor more than nine-and-three fourths, nor more than ten inches in circumference. It must be composed of India rubber and yarn, and covered with leather.

Section 2. The bat must be round and must not exceed two and a half inches in diameter in the thickest part. It must be made of wood, and may be of any length to suit the striker.

Section 3 The bases must be four in number, placed at equal distances from each other, and securely fastened upon the four corners of a square, whose sides are respectively thirty yards. They must be so constructed as to be distinctly seen by the umpire, and must cover a space equal to one square foot of surface. The first, second, and third bases shall be canvas bags, painted white, and filled with sand or sawdust; the home base and pitcher's point to be each marked with a flat circular iron plate, painted or enameled white.

Section 4. The base from which the ball is struck shall be designated the Home Base, and must be directly opposite the second base; the first base must always be that upon the right hand, and the third base that upon the left hand side of the striker, when occupying the position at the home base.

Section 5. The pitcher's position shall be designated by a line four yards in length, drawn at right angles to a line from home to the second base, having its centre upon that line, at a fixed iron plate placed at a point fifteen yards distant from the home base.

Section 6. The ball must be pitched, not jerked nor thrown, to the bat; and shall be delivered as near as possible over the centre of the home base. Whenever the pitcher shall draw back his hand with the apparent purpose to deliver the ball to the bat or shall with the ball in hand, pass beyond such line and from such position deliver the ball to a base, such acts shall be declared baulks.

Section 7. When a baulk is made by the pitcher, every player running the bases is entitled to one base, without being put out.

Section 8. If the ball, from a stroke of the bat, is caught behind the range of home and the first base or home and the third base, without having touched the ground, or first touches the ground behind those bases, it shall be termed foul, and must be so declared by the umpire, unasked. If the ball first touches the ground, or is caught without having touched the ground, either upon or in front of the range of those bases, it shall be considered fair.

Section 9. A player making the home base, shall be entitled to score one run.

Section 10. If three balls are struck at and missed, and the last one is not caught, either flying or upon the first bound, it shall be considered fair, and the striker must attempt to make his run.

Section 11. The striker is out if a foul ball is caught, either before touching the ground or upon the first bound;

Section 12. Or, if three balls are struck at and missed, and the last is caught either before touching the ground or upon the first bound;

Section 13. Or, if a fair ball is struck, and the ball is caught, without having touched the ground:

Section 14. Or, if a fair ball is struck, and the ball is held by an adversary on the first base, before the striker touches that base;

Section 15. Or, if at any time he is touched by the ball while in play in the hands of an adversary, without some part of his person being on a base.

Section 16. No ace nor base can be made upon a foul ball, nor when a fair ball has been caught without having touched the ground; and the ball shall, in the former instance, be considered dead and not in play, until it shall first have been settled in the hands of the pitcher; in either case the players running the bases shall return to them.

Section 17. The players must stand on a line drawn through the centre of the home base, not exceeding in length three feet from either side thereof and parallel with the line occupied by the pitcher. Players must strike in regular rotation; and after the first inning is played, the turn commences with the player who stands on the list next to the one who lost the third hand.

Section 18. Players must make their bases in order of striking; and when a fair ball is struck, and not caught flying, the first base must be vacated, as also the second and third bases, if they are occupied at the same time. Players may be put out at any base, under these circumstances, in the same manner as the striker when running to the first base.

Section 19. Players running the bases must, as far as possible, keep upon the direct line between the bases; and should any player run three feet out of this line, for purpose of avoiding the ball in the hands of an adversary, he shall be declared out.

Section 20. Any player who shall intentionally prevent an adversary from catching or fielding the ball, shall be declared out.

Section 21. If the player is prevented making a base by the intentional obstruction of an adversary, he shall be entitled to that base, and not be put out.

Section 22. If an adversary stops the ball with his hat or cap, or takes it from the hands of a party not engaged in the game, no player can be put out unless the ball shall first have been settled in the hands of the pitcher.

Section 23. If a ball, from the stroke of the bat, is held under any other circumstances than as enumerated in section 22, and without having touched the ground, or if a foul ball without having touched the ground more than once, the striker is out.

Section 24. If two hands are already out, no player, running home at the time a ball is struck, can make an ace, if the striker is put out.

Section 25. An inning must be concluded at the time the third hand is put out.

Section 26. The game shall consist of nine innings to each side, when, should the number of runs be equal, the innings shall be continued until a majority of runs, upon an equal number of innings, shall be declared, which shall conclude the game.

Section 27. In playing all matches, nine players from each club shall constitute a full field, and they must have been regular members of the club which they represent, and of no other club, for thirty days prior to the match. No change or substitution shall be made after the game has been commenced, unless for a reason of illness or injury. Position of players and choice of innings shall be determined by captains, previously appointed for that purpose by the respective clubs.

Section 28. The umpire shall take care that the regulations respecting the ball, bats, bases, and the pitcher's and striker's positions are strictly observed. He shall keep a record of the game in a book prepared for the purpose; he shall be the judge of fair and unfair play, and shall determine all disputes and differences which may occur during the game; he shall take especial care to declare all foul balls and baulks immediately upon their occurrence, unasked, and in a distinct and audible manner.

Section 29. In all matches, the umpire shall be selected by the captains of the respective sides, and shall perform all the duties enumerated in Section 28, except recording the game, which shall be done by two scorers, one of whom shall be appointed by each of the contending clubs.

Section 30. No person engaged in a match, either as umpire, scorer, or player, shall be directly or indirectly, interested in any bet upon the game. Neither umpire, scorer, nor player shall be changed during a match, unless with the consent both parties, except as provided in Section 27, and then the umpire may dismiss any transgressor.

Section 31. The umpire in match shall determine when play shall be suspended; and if game cannot be concluded, it shall be decided by the last even innings, provided five innings have been played, and the party having the greatest number of runs shall be declared the winner.

Section 32. Clubs may adopt such rules respecting balls knocked beyond or outside of the bounds of the field, as the circumstances of the ground may demand, and these rules shall govern all matches played upon the ground, provided that they are distinctly made known to every player and umpire previous to the commencement of the game.

Section 33. No person shall be permitted to approach or to speak with the umpire, scorers or players, or in any manner to interrupt or interfere during the progress of the game, unless by special request of the umpire.

Section 34. No person shall be permitted to act as umpire or scorer in any match, unless he shall be a member of a Base Ball Club, governed by these rules.

Section 35. Whenever a match shall have been determined upon between two clubs, play shall be called at the exact hour appointed; and should either party fail to produce their players within fifteen minutes thereafter, the party so failing shall admit a defeat.

Section 36. No person who shall be in arrears to any club, or who shall at any time receive compensation for his services as a player, shall be competent to play in a match unless.

Section 37. Should a striker stand at the bat without striking at good balls repeatedly pitched to him, for the purpose of delaying the game, or of giving advantage to a player, the umpire, after warning him, shall call one strike, and if he persists in such action, two, and three strikes. When three strikes called, he shall be subject to the same rules as if he had struck at the three balls.

Section 38. Every match hereafter made shall be decided by a single game, unless otherwise mutually agreed upon by the consenting clubs.