

Softball

February 5th, 2024
Pre-season Webinar

Special Olympics
Pennsylvania



Today's Agenda



- Welcome/Introductions
- Reminders
- Athlete Performance Training
- Sectional & State Events
- Sports Director & Rule Updates
- Training
- Questions



THANK YOU

Reminders

Special Olympics
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Spring Season Updates

- Coaches should begin training at least 10 weeks prior to the state culminating event.
 - 10 weeks from Summer Games: March 29
- Athletes must be trained according to the minimum standards acceptable, for at least eight (8) weeks in the appropriate sport and must have several opportunities to compete during that period.
 - Athlete Attendance will be tracked in the Attendance Tracker
 - Early Season practice, Team workouts indoors, Athlete Performance Training activities, virtual training, fitness training, team walk/run, etc.



Attendance Trackers

- **Coach will receive attendance tracker when they submit Site Registration Form**
- **Site Attendance Tracker has 3 tabs: Directions, Attendance, Eligibility**
 - **Tab 1: Directions: How to complete the form**
 - **Tab 2 Attendance:**
 - Lists all participants that have signed up
 - Includes phone & Email
 - Attendance should be tracked after each practice
 - Interest in attending Sectionals & State Games will be used to advance for competitions
 - Data will be used to collect training numbers and ultimately future allocations

• **SAMPLE TRACKER**

Attendance Trackers



- ▶ **Tab 3: Eligible – NEW this will only list ineligible individuals - if participant is on this list, they cannot participate and should not be attending practice**
 - Athletes: Must have current medical
 - Volunteer: General Orientation, **Concussion** Protocol, Protective Behaviors, 18 and over current background check
 - Highlighted **RED** out of date
 - Highlighted **YELLOW** will expire prior to state competition
 - Updated weekly by SOPA
 - **IMPORTANT: Spring deadline March 29, 2024**
- **Tab 4: Competition – sport specific**
 - ▶ **REQUIRED** - track athletes events and times throughout the season, event registration info will be pulled from here

Athlete & Volunteer Eligibility



Athlete Requirements: Medical on file WITH signature + expiration dates

- **Regions:** Athlete Registration Form & Health History under Certifications
 - **Valid for 3 years.**
 - Save attachments under "Attachments" within a person's profile vs. anywhere else in the profile.

Class A Volunteer Requirements: Trainings + Background Check on file

- **Regions**
 - Background Results under Background Checks, **Valid for 5 years.**
 - General Orientation under Training, **Valid for life.**
 - Protective Behaviors, under Training, **Valid for 3 years.**
 - Concussion Training, under Training, **Valid for 3 years.**



Unified Partners Eligibility

Unified Partners do not need an athlete medicals.

- All Partners – Must have a VSys database record
- Ages 16 and up – must have General Orientation and Protective Behaviors Training
- Ages 18 and up - Must have General Orientation, Protective Behaviors and a Background check.

UCS: PIAA Medical



A Unified Champion School athlete may participate in a local program with their PIAA Medical. The participant must request a copy of the medical from their school.

The PIAA physical exam must be inputted into Vsys as an "athlete medical" and the medical form must be uploaded as an attachment.

UPDATE: The PIAA physical exam form is good for one year from the Dr's Signature date. If the date is 1/25/24 the exam expires on 1/25/25.

Volunteer Q & A



What is the minimum age for a Head Coach? **18**

What is the minimum age for a Class A? **16**

What is the minimum age for a Class B Assistant Coach? **14**

Can I be an assistant coach at 14?

Training yes; Events No

1-day events - 16

Overnight events - 18

What is the youngest age of a Unified Partner? **8**

What age do you need a Young athlete chaperone for?

Overnight events for 8 & 9 year olds



Volunteer Position Requirements

Class B

Volunteer Classifications	VSys, Trainings & Clearances→	Completed Volunteer Application → VSys Record	Background Clearance to include PA Disclosure Statement	Protective Behaviors	General Orientation	Concussion Training	Sport Certification
	Position & Age (If applicable) ↓						(Note: 14 & over may attend Training Schools)
Class B	Medical Volunteer - Student	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Class B	General/Local Program/Team Volunteer - Volunteer are outside the 1:4 ratio with no chaperoning responsibilities 15 yrs. old and younger	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Class B	One Day Volunteer	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Class B	Bus Driver - Non-registered volunteer	No	No	No	No	No	No
Class B	Equestrian Horse Handler 14 and older – one day events	Yes	No	No	No	No	No

Last updated: July 2022



Volunteer Position Requirements

SPECIAL OLYMPICS PENNSYLVANIA VOLUNTEER POSITION REQUIREMENTS							
Volunteer Classifications	VSys, Trainings & Clearances→	Completed Volunteer Application → VSys Record	Background Clearance to include PA Disclosure Statement	Protective Behaviors	General Orientation	Concussion Training	Sport Certification
	Position & Age (If applicable) ↓						(Note: 14 and over may attend Training Schools)
Class A	HOD - 18 yrs. old or older	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Class A	Head Coach - 18 yrs. old or older	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Class A	Assistant Coach -	Yes	Yes for 18 and over	Yes for 16 and over	Yes for 16 and over	Yes for 16 and over	No
	16 to 17 yrs. old – one day events						
	18 yrs. old or older – overnight events						
Class A	Athlete as Coach -	Yes	Yes for 18 and over	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
	16 to 17 yrs. old – one day events						
	18 yrs. old or older – overnight events						
Class A	Unified Partner - 8 yrs. old or older	Yes	Yes for 18 and over	Yes for 16 and over	Yes for 16 and over	Yes for 16 and over	No
Class A	1:1- Chaperone Capacity Only	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No but recommended	No
	Volunteer/Athlete are above the 1:4 ratio						
Class A	Group Home Chaperone - Chaperone capacity only	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No but recommended	No
	Volunteer/Athlete are above the 1:4 ratio						
Class A	Equestrian Side Walker - 18 yrs. old or older	Yes	Yes for 18 and over	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Class A	Equestrian Horse Handler	Yes	Yes for 18 and over	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
	14 to 17 yrs. old – one day events						
	18 yrs. old or older – overnight events						
Class A	Health and Fitness Coordinator - 18 yrs. old or older	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Class A	Healthy Athlete Clinical Director	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Class A	Delegation Volunteer - Volunteer are outside the 1:4 ratio with no chaperoning responsibilities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes for 16 and over	No but recommended	No
Class A	Young Athlete Chaperone - Overnight chaperone for athletes ages 8 and 9 yrs. old	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Class A	Medical Volunteer - Professional	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No

Spring Calendars & Responsibilities



- [Eastern Spring calendar](#)
- [Central Spring Calendar](#)
- [West Spring Calendar](#)
- Season start date:
 - Summer Games sports must begin training by March 29 (*and athletes complete 8 weeks of training prior to Summer Games*)
 - Indoor training counts as training! Teams that can't access outdoor facilities early in the season should plan to begin indoor training by these dates.



Google Registration

- Mark interest in participating in Local/Invitational, Sectional and State competition in columns J, K, L respectively on the Attendance Tracker – **COMPLETE THIS ASAP into the season**

Google Registration:

- On the Coaches and Athletes tab, you will assign each role to their respective sport. That individual will then appear on the corresponding sport tab.
- On the Sport tab, you will add athletes' events and times.
- **Important:** Time entries should appear in the format **MM.SS.00**
 - ❖ Example: **12.14.05** = 12 minutes 14 seconds and 5 hundredths of a second.
 - ❖ Example: 00.15.08 = 15 seconds and 8 hundredths of a second

Google Registration Snapshot



Athlete Tab

Name	Profile code	Gender	Age	Ath Med Exp.	ROLE	Alternate - Y/N	1:1 Name	Sport	Updates to Athlete Information	Dietary Restrictions
									▼	
									▼	
									▼	
									▼	

Sport Specific Tab

Athletes										
Name	Profile code	Gender	Age	Ath Med Exp.	ROLE	Alternate - Y/N	1:1 Name	Team Name		
#N/A										

SOPA Website - Sports Offered Page



Links to all the sport pages

- [Sports Offered](#)
- [Seasonal Sign-up](#)

Sport specific resources:

- Warm-Up/Cool Down resources
- PDF & recording of this webinar
- Link to Sport Rules/SOI Resources
- Scoresheets
- Best Practices

Athletics	>
Basketball	>
Equestrian	>
Golf	>
Gymnastics	>
Softball	>
Swimming (Aquatics)	>
Tennis	>

Brand and Uniform Guidelines



- New Resource that include SO brand and uniform guidelines
- Includes mock-ups of sport specific uniforms

SOPA Brand and Uniform Guidelines



Brand and Uniform Guidelines



Uniforms:

- All players on a team shall wear uniforms alike in color, trim and style.
- Exception: Players and coaches may, for religious reasons, be permitted to wear specific head covering and apparel that does not conform to standard uniform requirements without penalty.

Caps

- Caps, visors, and headbands are optional for players but can be mixed. If more than one type is worn, they all must be of the same color and each of the same type must be of the same color and style.
- Plastic or hard visors are not allowed.

Pants/Sliding Pants

- All player pants shall be either long or all short in style.
- Players may wear a uniform solid color pair of sliding pants

Brand and Uniform Guidelines



It is not mandatory that all players wear sliding pants, but if more than one player wears them, they must be alike in color and style except temporary, Snap-on or Velcro sliding pads. No players may wear ragged, frayed or slit legs on exposed sliding pants.

Numbers

- An Arabic number of contrasting color at least 6 inches high must be worn on the back of all uniform shirts.
- No player on the same team may wear identical numbers, (numbers 1 and 01 are examples of identical numbers.)
- Only whole numbers 01-99 shall be used.
- Players without numbers will not be permitted to play.

Names

Individual names may be worn above the numbers on the back of all uniform shirts.

Medication Reminders - All events

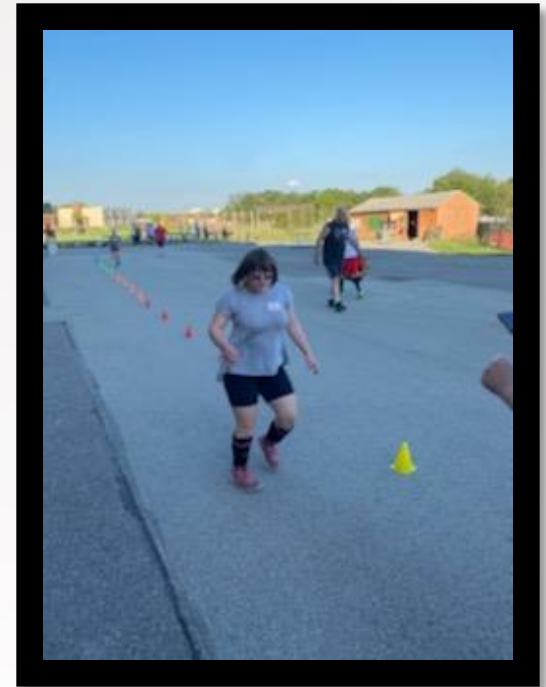


- **FORMS:** Medication Assistance Best Practices, Consent Form and Tracker - forms are located on SOPA website: <https://specialolympicspa.org/get-involved/resource-library>
- Coaches should be sharing this information with athletes, parents/guardians prior to all full day or overnight events. SOPA will no longer be emailing this information to all participants.
- Please ensure your athletes are completing the Medication Assistance Consent Form and your Class A volunteers traveling with the delegation are completing the Medication Assistance Tracker.
- Please reach out to chammell@specialolympicspa.org directly with any questions or concerns on the process.

Athlete Performance Training (APT)



- APT is an in-season fitness program.
- Health education and fitness evaluations are embedded into sports practice for 8-weeks.
- Athlete Performance Training happens on the field of play.
- Any sport, any size team should implement.
- **Physical fitness is a key part of the Special Olympics mission. Physical activity, adequate nutrition and hydration enhance athletes' sports performance and improve health and overall quality of life.**



Athlete Performance Training Outcomes



- APT works!
- Since the start of APT in Fall 2023 over **22%** have seen an improvement in their fitness assessment,
- **14.5%** of athletes who participated in APT have seen an improvement in their weight.
- Of those athletes who have participated and whose blood pressure was taken, over **16%** saw an improvement in their results by the end of the season.

Athlete Performance Training



Interested Coaches

- Learn More by visiting the [APT webpage](#)
- Participation qualifies coaches for Bronze level certification

How to sign-up

- **Contact Charla Stein, cstein@specialolympicspa.org**
- Watch a short video, take the quiz and then complete the registration form

Benefits of APT

- FREE to programs/teams
- Turn-key, easy to execute
- HQ will provide coaches and athletes with materials
- Provide health, fitness and wellness education to athletes and coaches

2024 Sectional & State Events

Special Olympics
Pennsylvania





Qualifiers

- Basketball (3x3, 5v5, individual skills)
- Golf (all levels including individual skills)
- Tennis (all levels including individual skills)
- **Softball (team and individual skills)**
 - Athletes/Unified Partners are required to attend Sectional to participate in State Games.

2026 USA Games



- 2026 Special Olympics USA Games
 - June 20-26
 - University of Minnesota – Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN
 - 2024 SOPA State Games will be qualifiers for USA Games, SOPA will not be allocated specific slots until late 2024
 - Coach applications will be available July 1



SPECIAL OLYMPICS
USA GAMES
MINNESOTA 2026

2024 SONA Softball Championship



SPECIAL OLYMPICS
NORTH AMERICA
SOFTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP



- To be held in Pittsburgh!!!
 - September 6-8
 - 20 teams from across the USA, SOPA will be allotted around 4 teams
 - Summer Games will likely be a qualifying event for this opportunity
- Interest form – all head coaches please complete: <https://forms.gle/g1TsZ94cawYTem2F6>
 - ▶ Those selected to advance must continue to train during the summer months in lead up to the event.



Allocations

- Spring Allocations will be posted on the SOPA Website, State Games tab
 - [SOPA State Games Paperwork Webpage](#)
- As always, please remember that you can request additional allocations through the LOI process.
- Previous Lunch & Learn about the allocation process. This riveting presentation can be found here: [Allocation L&L](#)

Spring Sectionals



- West: Carnegie Mellon University
 - Saturday April 20th
- Central: Saint Francis University
 - Sunday, April 28th
 - Athletics will be held at Central Cambria HS
- East: Kutztown University
 - Saturday May 4th



[2024 Competition Calendar: Important Dates](#)

Summer Games: June 6 - 8th



- Penn State University
- Important Dates:
 - Reg Info: Will be out by **4/12**
 - LOI: Due **5/2**
 - Final Allocations: **5/3**
 - VSys Rosters: Due **5/7**
 - Google links sent: **5/9**
 - Registration: Due **5/16**
 - Scratch/Activation: Due **5/30**
- **Arrival 6/8, 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.**
- **Departure 6/10 3 – 6 p.m.**



Softball Rule Updates

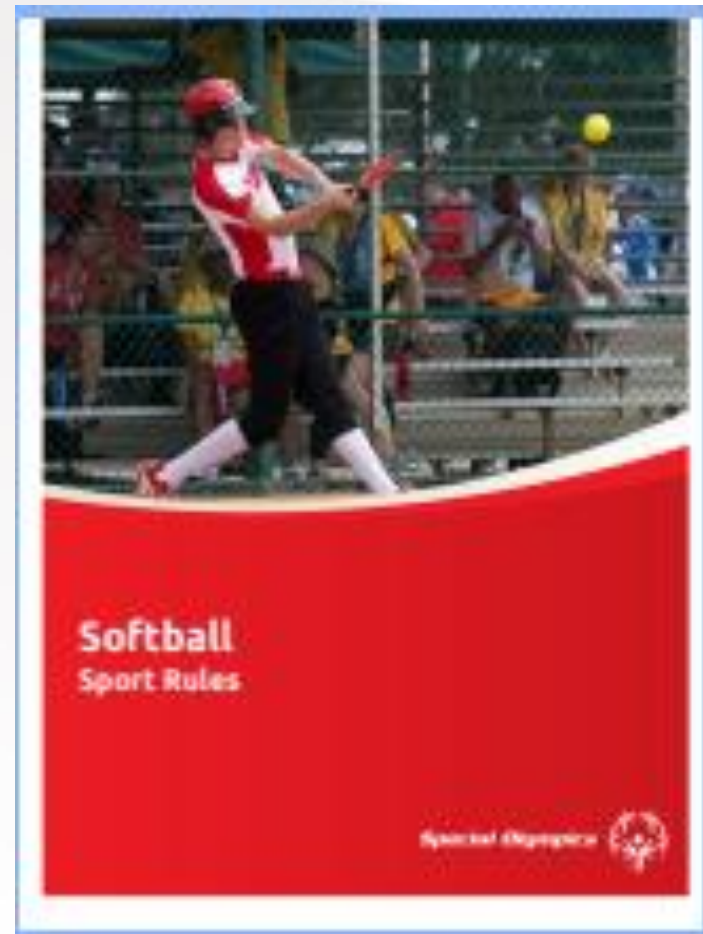
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New Rule Book!



specialolympics.org/resources/sports-essentials/sport-rules/Sports-Essentials-Softball-Rules-2022.



Outdoor Weather



Every time you see lightening or hear thunder



practice and take shelter for 30 minutes!

Remember every time you see lightening or
hear thunder!



Softball - SMT



Special Olympics Pennsylvania **Sport Management Teams** are comprised of key regional leadership volunteers who represent each of SOPA's sponsored sports. These individuals represent a variety of levels within their respective sports, both inside and outside of Special Olympics. Request or recommend someone for a Sport Management Team

- [Sport Management Interest Form](#)

Softball - New Player Assessment



Softball - Player Competency Rating Form

Player Role - Athlete or Unified Partner:

For Unified teams, please circle the Unified partner's initials in the squares below

Program/Team Name:

Team Composition (circle):

Male, Female or Coed/Mixed Gender

Team Type (circle):

Traditional or Unified

Pitchers and Catchers:

Please only enter data in the fields below for those persons that play these positions

Please note sections below that will ask a series of sport-specific competency questions for each player on the team. The objective is for the evaluator to provide a point value rating for each of the players on the team based upon the listed competency. For some competencies, a player may not exactly meet the competency and/or be rated in between two competencies; therefore, please indicate the competency rating that would most closely be aligned to the player. Please enter the player's initials in the boxes below the point value that most closely matches their skill competency. For the three Levels shown across the top, these correspond to the Team Level information that was previously provided. All information will be input into SmartSheets to produce an overall team report.

Team Level (previously provided)	Level 1 - Novice		Level 2 - Intermediate	Level 3 - Advanced	
Player Competency Point Values	1	2	3	4	5
Fielding	Occasionally makes basic fielding plays on balls hit to them; slow reaction to balls hit away from them; rarely tracks hit balls	Cleanly fields some balls hit to them; attempts to field balls hit in their direction; slow to track hit balls	Regularly fields balls hit to them and occasionally fields/plays balls hit away from them; understand the principle of "backing up" other players, but is inconsistent in doing so; able to track hit balls	Can field balls consistently and will occasionally field balls requiring quick reflexes and more rapid tracking; capable of backing up other players regularly	Routinely makes fielding plays, including those that are more difficult and require quick reflexes and tracking; instinctively backs up other fielders



Starting Line Up!

Ten players:

- pitcher (F1), catcher (F2), first baseman (F3), second baseman (F4), third baseman (F5), shortstop (F6), left fielder (F7), left center fielder (F8), right fielder (F9) and right center fielder (F10).

With Extra Player (EP).

- Eleven players: same as slow pitch plus an EP who bats in the line-up.

Unified Sports - Starting Line Up!



Ten players

- Five athletes and five partners with the following positioning requirements:
 - Two athletes and two partners in both the infield and the outfield,
 - One athlete and one partner as pitcher or catcher.

Unified with Extra Players (EP)

- Twelve players – six athletes and six partners: same as Unified plus two EP's who bat in the line-up.

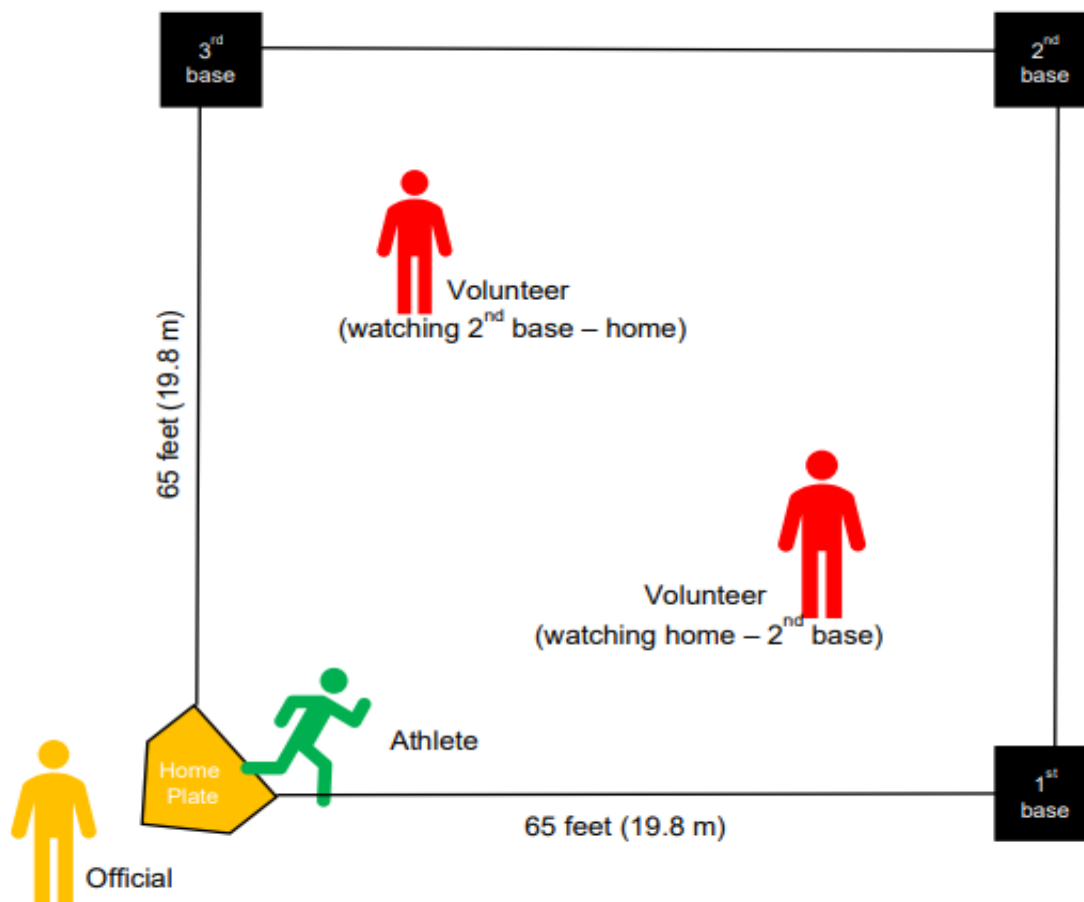


Individual Skills

An addendum was added to the rules with diagrams on where the officials, athletes, and volunteers need to be located to ensure the success of the skill.



ADDENDUM A – SOFTBALL INDIVIDUAL SKILL BASE RUNNING

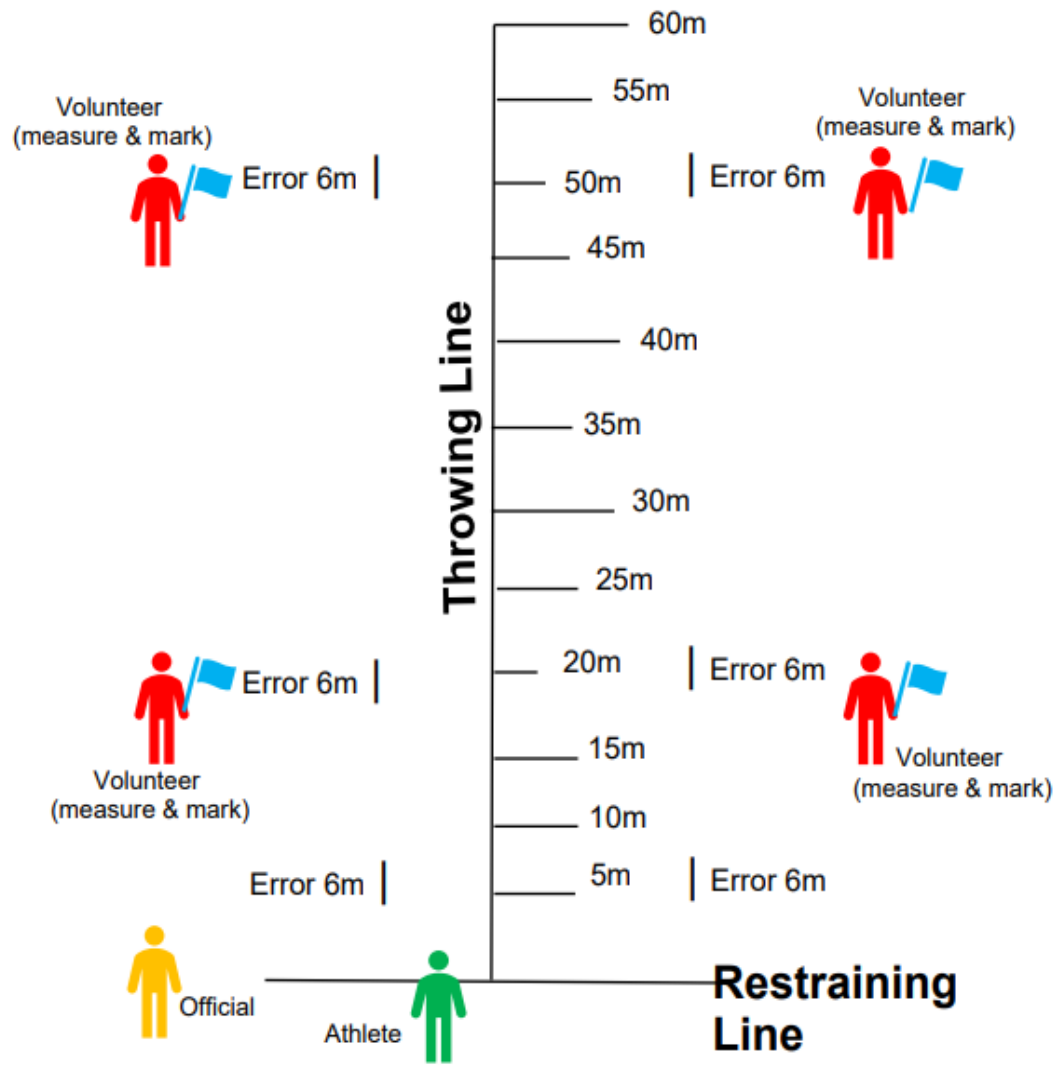




Updated Rules

Individual Skills – Throwing

Description: The player being tested stands behind the restraining line, back far enough to take one or more steps in preparation for throwing. The player has two trials to throw the softball as far and as straight as possible down the throwing line, without stepping over the restraining line. **Four assistants stand on opposite sides of the throwing line, at the 50m and 20m mark, near the 6m error mark. The nearest assistant will indicate,** using a cone or marking stake, the spot where each ball first touches the ground.



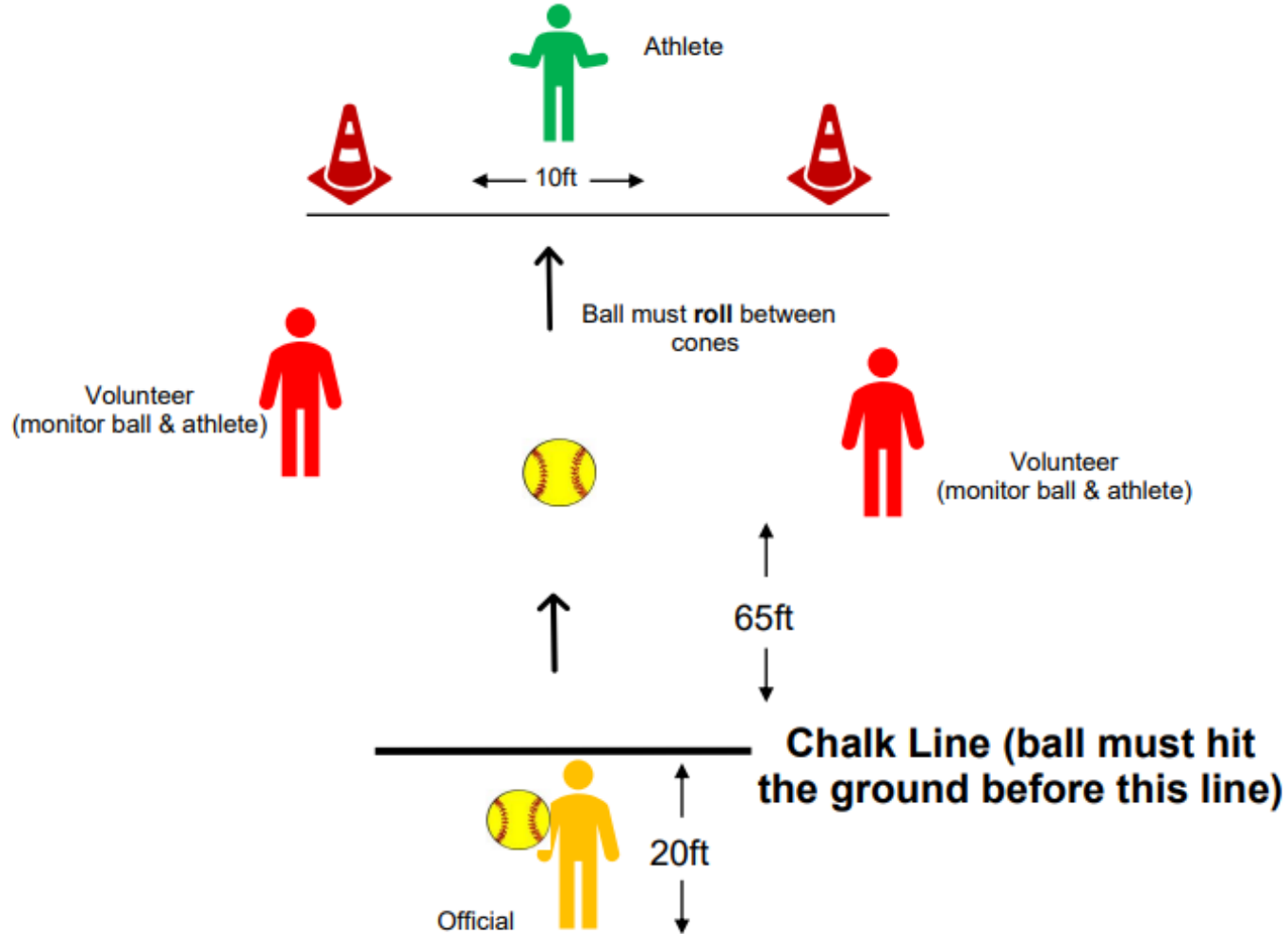


Updated Rules

Individual Skills – Catching

Description: Two cones are placed 10 feet apart and 85 feet away from the official. A line is drawn 20 feet away from the official (65 feet from the cones). The athlete will stand between and behind the two cones.

ADDENDUM C – SOFTBALL INDIVIDUAL SKILLS FIELDING





ADDENDUM D – SOFTBALL INDIVIDUAL SKILLS HITTING



Training

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Be Prepared for the Season!

- Get everyone eligible
- Understand and be aware of Air Quality levels
- Keep a pulse on illness/disease outbreaks within your community, remind athletes not to attend training if they are sick and to practice healthy habits and good hygiene.
- Know your facilities Emergency Action Plan and Evacuation route
- Updated yourself on sport rules and work with assistant coaches on a seasonal plan – identify who will manage each task during practice. Recruit additional assistance if needed.

Air Quality



If air quality levels are in an Unhealthy Zone (151) or above, no outdoor activities should occur (social or active); as indicated within the documents these activities should be rescheduled or moved indoors.



You can monitor Air Quality levels at <https://www.airnow.gov/> enter your location and the current status will be provided.



You can use this [Air Quality Guide](#) document as an overall reference.

Athlete as Coach



Do you have an athlete who would like to be a coach?

- Link to [Athlete as a Coach Webinar](#)

[Athlete as Coach Request form](#) to be completed by athletes who wish to apply to be trained as a coach

[Athlete as Coach FAQ](#)

Questions contact: Jordan Schubert, jschubert@specialolympicspa.org

Coaching Requirements



- **As of January 2021, Coach requirements for **training and competition:****
- **Team Sports:**
 - Must have at least one (1) certified coach per team
- **Individual Sport (and Skills):**
 - Must have at least one (1) certified coach per 25 athletes



Get Certified!



SUMMER SPORTS

Athletics, Basketball, Golf, Gymnastics, Equestrian, Softball, Swimming, and Tennis

- Coach trainings will be held regionally based on need
- **If you need coaches trained let your Regional Sports Director know ASAP**
- Trainings are currently being scheduled for February/March, check the SOPA Website and SOPA Coaches Facebook page for announcements – these will also be shared in the Weekly Team Leader email
- **Training School registration will now be done within survey format, no longer within the Vsys portal**
- Registration will close Wednesday at 11:59pm prior to Saturday or Sunday training. You MUST register to attend.

Continuing Education Update



- **Protective Behavior and Concussion Training** has been removed from the list of approved courses for Continuing Education and from the Continuing Education Request form.
 - Effective February 1, 2023, these two courses will not be accepted for continuing education
- There are plenty of Continuing Education options available on the [SOPA website](#).

Job Description and Levels of Responsibility



HEAD COACH:

- Certified in the sport
- Supervises all coaches and athletes
- Responsible for equipment, transportation, and lodging
- Develops **practice plans** and assigns duties to Assistant Coaches
- Check athlete medical and volunteer Class A
- Completes all required paperwork (competition, training numbers)

ASSISTANT COACH:

- Assist head coach/help supervise athletes (1:4)
- Performs duties assigned by head coach
- Assist in evaluating training
- Arrives on time for practice/stays throughout practice
- Assists with uniforms, collection of medicals and taking attendance

Full position descriptions for both head and assistant coaches can be found here: **SOPA Website on the Resources/Training** | <https://specialolympicspa.org/resources>

Coaching Progression



Certified Coach

- Class A volunteer with at least 1 sport certification

Bronze

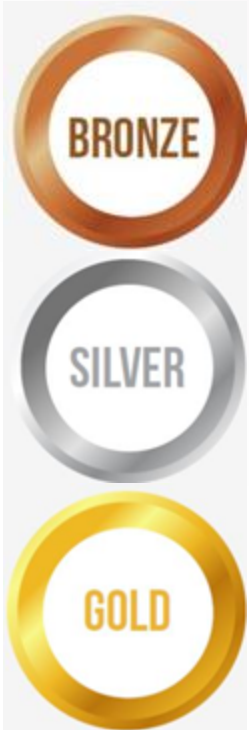
- Adds: Athlete Performance Training activation, personal best performance goals, **Coaching Special Olympics Athletes** course

Silver

- Adds: Athlete goal setting, training minimum of 10 weeks, **Principles of Coaching** course, **Coaching Unified Sports**

Gold

- Adds: advanced sport skills course, training at least twice a week for minimum of 10 weeks, develop year-round training/wellness plan for athletes



Improving Communication



Closed Facebook Group for Coaches:

- 100% Optional
- Direct connection to coaches
- Share Competition Information/Reminders
- Share Training/Coaching Tips
- Encourage sharing of best practices between coaches
- Q&A
- [Coach Page](#)



☺ Which SOPA local program to you coach for?

☺ What sport/sports do you coach?

**THANK YOU
COACHES!!!**

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