



2025 UMPIRE MANUAL

Welcome to THE Spring Games 2025! For those of you that have been here previously, welcome back and for our new officials, we look forward to working with you. THE Spring Games is the Largest College Softball Event in the World with over 250+ college teams from all levels participating over a 5-week period.

All Umpires are required to be registered with NCAA Softball on the Central Hub through Ref Quest, consent to the background check, and take and score an 80% on the NCAA Softball test to work THE Spring Games. There will be test review sessions via Zoom (dates to follow after the test release date – there will be day and evening sessions – all times will be Eastern Time) offered to all THE Spring Games umpires.

All Umpires working Division I games are required to be proficient in the three-person system; have passed the exam with a 90% or higher, and have proven experience officiating Division I games.

All other games will be assigned on the two-person system. Umpires working Division II, Division III, NAIA, and JUCO games are required to be proficient in the two-person system. JV games will be assigned with a trainer/trainee match to encourage the development of future umpires in our sport.

Whether you are new to THE Spring Games or have been here for years, we have put together this comprehensive manual and expect you to be familiar with everything in it BEFORE coming to work the event. This manual is designed to give you all the information that you will need to have a successful and memorable experience with us. We appreciate you being a part of this year's event and we look forward to seeing you in action.

Please take a moment to join our [Umpires Facebook Group](#) as you will find a ton of information and event specifics on this page.

THE Spring Games 2025 Umpire Manual

Content	Page
The Spring Games Expectations	2-3
Umpire Director/Umpire Coordinator	3
Umpire Expectations	3-5
NCAA Rule Changes 2024/2025 and 2025	6-8
Event Specific Rules	8
Bat Testing	9
Game Balls	9
Media	9
Site Supervisors/Administrators (OSA)	10
Facility Information	11-13
Payment Schedule/Your obligations	13

THE Spring Games Expectations

Time management is an important piece of THE Spring Games day-to-day activities. To keep the event on track, we ask that you pay close attention to some rules specific to THE Spring Games. These rules can be found in the Event Specific Rules section of this manual. It is important to note that although time management is a priority during the event, so too is the preparation of the fields to THE Spring Games standards. Umpires are NOT TO DIRECT FIELD CREWS on dragging or watering the field, just as the Field Crew is not to direct you on balls and strikes. The field crews have all been trained by our staff and know what needs to be done.

Umpires at THE Spring Games are expected to be proficient in the rules governing the game. We understand these are some of the first games of the season and, like many of our teams, this might be your first time on dirt this season. That said, diligent study and preparation should help you be mentally prepared for the games. Make sure you have looked over the Major Rules Changes for 2024 and 2025 section of this manual. You are expected to have your current NCAA rule book with you and ready to reference it, if necessary.

Umpires who choose to work three-person crew games may do so provided:

- a) The umpires have worked three-person prior to this experience.

- b) The umpire working the three-person crew realizes THE Spring Games is not paying them for doing a three-person game.
- c) The umpire has received prior approval by email umpires@thespringgames.com, not going through their site UIC.

THE Spring Games will **not** be using the four-umpire system during their event unless assigned by THE Spring Games or NCAA representatives.

Director of Umpire's

Bob Borak is THE Spring Games umpire assignor; his email address is bborak@thespringgames.com

Umpire Coordinator

Lynne Nemeth is THE Spring Games umpire coordinator, her email address is umpires@thespringgames.com

Facebook: THE Spring Games Umpires

Umpire GroupMe: https://groupme.com/join_group/103444903/5BF9lddX

Weather Notifications: Text **"TSGWeather" to 84483**

Umpire Expectations

THE Spring Games is the largest softball event with NCAA teams playing games that count towards their overall record and tournament placement. These games are not scrimmage games. All umpires are expected to always follow the NCAA rule book and CCA Manual. Some items that we want to highlight are:

- It will be **mandatory** for each umpire to have a timing device. With the 20 second pitch clock, it is not possible to use a stopwatch. If you are using a stopwatch, you are taking your eyes off other responsibilities.
- **Tobacco** - The use of tobacco products by umpires at the site of competition (e.g., umpires' locker room, playing field, other areas of the stadium) is prohibited.
- **Alcohol** - Alcoholic beverages of any type are not permitted in the umpire locker room. After an umpire has completed the days assignment(s) (including serving as an alternate), drinking alcoholic beverages is allowed. However, a few guidelines should be adhered to:
 - Never drink at the stadium or field.
 - Never drink in any public place at the hotel if teams are staying there.
 - Adhere to a two-drink limit.
 - Never under any circumstances, drive an automobile after having consumed alcohol

○ **Standard Uniform:**

All umpires must wear the same color shirt, but individual umpires may wear a short or long sleeve shirt. Individual umpires may choose not to wear a jacket, wear a jacket with full sleeves, or wear a jacket with short sleeves. If a jacket is worn it must be zipped 3/4 of the way up and if the lightweight jacket is tucked in, it must be worn in a way that you cannot see the umpire's belt.

- A plain navy blue fitted cap.
- A blue short-sleeve pullover shirt (with a collar, contrasting button placket and dark navy/white insert on the sides beginning under the arms), or a midnight navy short-sleeve pullover shirt (with a collar, contrasting button placket and blue/white insert on the sides beginning under the arms).
- Navy undershirt.
- Dark grey pants.
- Navy blue ball bag.
- Black belt with silver buckle.
- Black shoes.
- All-black socks.
- A midnight navy umpire jacket with blue accents on the shoulders and back (short or long sleeves).



- The pants must be **non-pleated dark gray (charcoal)** pants,
- Black belt, no patent leather,
- **Socks may not be running socks**, your legs are not supposed to show when moving around,
- Shoes are to be **all black** and **no patent leather**.

○ **On Site Administrator (OSA):**

The site supervisor is your OSA. The site supervisor/administrator is the person umpires should contact as they are THE Spring Games employee, not the park supervisor. Those names are listed on page 9 of this handbook and on the welcome page of arbiter sports. If a coach is ejected, they will make sure that the coach follows the proper protocol. If a spectator/fan needs to be spoken to, get the On-Site Administrator, they will address the spectator/fan and take the appropriate actions. As umpires, you take care of the “stuff” within the field fence lines and let the OSA deal with the “stuff” outside of the play field fence.

- **Arrival at Field:**

It is expected that each umpire will be at the complex at least one hour before their scheduled game each day. When you arrive, please check in with your crew and the UIC at that complex for that day. Umpire-in Chief (UIC)'s at each complex with their phone number will be communicated each day through an arbiter sports email.

- **Entering/Departing the playing field:**

The crew is expected to enter the playing field together. Hang up your water bottle and then go check the bats as a crew. Wait for your crew to go to the other team's side. We should not be seeing an umpire without their crew next to them. The crew is expected to exit the playing field by the winning team's side and as a crew. There are no exceptions to this!

- **Dugouts:**

The dugouts are for the teams only. No umpires should be in a dugout at any time during a contest, unless you are walking through the dugout to get to the field. If your water bottle needs to be refilled, give it to one of the team personnel and ask them to fill it for you.

- **Departing from the complex:**

Before you depart from the complex, it is expected that each umpire check with the UIC at the complex for that day before they leave the field. If the UIC is on the field, they will give you a thumbs up which means have a great rest of your day or they might give you the stop sign which means give them a second to get a break in the game they are working because they need to talk to you regarding a play or a possible change in schedule.

- **Checking arbiter:**

Each official is required to check arbiter each morning and each night. Make sure you have the ability to do this prior to your arrival at THE Spring Games. There is a mobile app that you can download to your phone.

Rule Changes for 2024 and 2025

There were significant changes for the 2024 season and changes for 2025, resulting in some changes to the 2024 rule changes. Below are the 2024 and 2025

2024 and 2025 Softball Rules Changes

The following rules changes were approved by the NCAA Softball Rules Committee and the Playing Rules Oversight Panel. All rules' changes are effective with the 2024 season.

Rule	Rules Change and Rational
Bases – First Base 2.7	To allow the use of a double base at first base. <u>Rationale:</u> This is currently an experimental rule. To potentially prevent collisions at first base while better protecting the runner and fielder. Also, to encourage batter-runners to utilize the runner's lane when running through first base. In general, the defense is restricted to using the white portion and the batter-runner is restricted to the colored portion. The double base at first base is required for USA Softball and permitted for high school competition and NCAA baseball.
Fences 2.15.2.1	For all new construction, to require the fence distance to be 200 feet in left and right fields. <u>Rationale:</u> This is currently a recommendation. To acknowledge the continued offensive production in NCAA softball and create a more equitable experience
Bats – Knob/Handle 3.3.1.7.2	To eliminate the requirement that bats have a ¼-inch knob protrusion. This will allow for the use of a manufactured bat with a tapered/flare/cone handle, a bat with additional layers of tape adjacent to the traditional knob or a bat with a tapering cone as long as it is completely covered by grip. <u>Rationale:</u> To allow for additional bat design options, including those that may limit the pressure on the hand.
Assistant Coach 4.1, 6.5, 6.6 and 13	To prohibit assistant coaches, who are not in a coach's box or serving as the acting head coach, from communicating with an umpire(s). This includes coming out of the dugout or bullpen area to appeal, question, argue or discuss any play on the field. The effect would be immediate ejection of the violator(s). <u>Rationale:</u> To emphasize that all communication from the team areas to an umpire(s) should be through the head coach, and to improve pace of play since there will be less stoppage to communicate with multiple coaches. Further, there has been an increase in assistant coaches being sent to argue calls with umpires.
Electronic Equipment 5.9.8	To allow the use of an exclusively one-way electronic communication device from the dugout to the field for the purpose of relaying the pitch or play call. <u>Rationale:</u> To improve the pace and flow of the game and maintain the integrity of a team's signs.
Video Review	To revise video review to:

5.9.9 and Appendix G	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Include runners leaving the base prior to the touch on a fly ball (tagging up), runners missing a base and runners leaving early on a pitch. NOTE: Runners leaving early on a pitch is only allowed by a coach's challenge and may not be initiated by an umpire. 2. Include all called/potential home runs. 3. Include catch vs. no catch in any situation. 4. Restrict hit batter (by pitch) reviews to: whether the ball hit the batter, whether the ball is entirely in the batter's box, whether the batter made an attempt to get out of the way of the pitch when required, and/or intentionally tried to get hit by the pitch. 5. Allow the review of any listed reviewable item(s) if the action on the field results in a dead ball. <p><u>Rationale:</u> To expand the use video review to include other situations that could directly determine the outcome of a game.</p>
Postgame Review of Suspensions 5.9.10 and 13	<p>To allow a postgame review of only those ejections that include a suspension. The request to review, including video of the incident, must be filed within 48 hours of the completion of the game and be submitted by the conference office or conference coordinator of umpires. A committee consisting of the NCAA Softball Secretary-Rules Editor, NCAA National Coordinator of Softball Umpires and one NCAA Softball Regional Advisor, who is not affiliated with the team or conference, will consider the review and render a decision.</p> <p><u>Rationale:</u> To provide institutions and conferences with an avenue to ensure suspensions are appropriate and fair based on the rules.</p>

2025 Softball Rules Changes

The following rules changes were approved by the NCAA Softball Rules Committee and the Playing Rules Oversight Panel. All rules' changes are effective with the 2024 season.

*Note – These rules changes will not be reflected in the hardcopy rules book until the 2026/2027 version. These rule changes also supersede the rule changes above and what is in the 2024/2025 rule book.

Rule	Rules Change and Rational
2.34, 10.18 and 11.2.1 Time Between Pitches Violation	<p>To change the penalty for a time-between-pitches violation by the pitcher or catcher to an illegal pitch.</p> <p><u>Rationale:</u> To improve the image of the game and not negatively impact the offense if the pitcher still delivers a pitch after a timing violation has been called and the batter hits it. If a pitcher does not start the pitch within 20 seconds, it is a violation of a pitching rule and should be ruled like all other pitching violations – an illegal pitch. This is a delayed dead ball and the offensive coach may take the result of the play or the penalty for the violation</p>

	(a ball awarded to the batter). There is no change to a violation by the batter – a strike will be assessed.
Video Review – Leaving Early Appendix G	<p>To amend leaving early on a pitch video review challenges to if 1) called by an umpire on the field, or 2) a runner successfully advances a base on the play. Exceptions: Leaving early may not be challenged in the following situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home run; • Hit by pitch; • Ground rule double; • Foul ball; • Lead off; or • When the runner is forced to advance due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o A blocked ball base award; o A walk; or o Catcher obstruction. <p><u>Rationale:</u> To improve the intended rationale behind allowing a review for leaving early, which should be limited to when a runner advances a base in which they are not forced or has potentially gained an advantage by leaving early. Some of the challenges during the 2024 season for leaving early were not in line with intended reasons for this rule change when it was approved last year (e.g., challenging leaving early on home runs). This modification will address unintended consequences with the rules change from last year and improve the image of the game.</p>
Video Review – Umpire Review Appendix G	<p>To allow umpires to initiate a video review without requiring a coach's challenge at any point in the game when a play is not properly covered by an umpire (i.e., uncovered or doubled covered with a different signal from each umpire).</p> <p><u>Rationale:</u> To allow umpires the opportunity to get the call right at any point in the game and to improve the image of the game. Currently, video review protocol does not allow umpires to review situations when a play is not properly covered (uncovered or double covered with different calls) by an umpire until the sixth inning. This has led to coaches being required to use a video review challenge if umpires are unable to properly cover a play.</p>

Event Specific Rules

- For all games, other than a JV team playing another JV team, there are **no time limits and the tie breaker will begin in the 8th inning.**
- If a camera for the live streaming gets hit, we will allow up to 3 minutes between innings for the video crew to adjust the camera.
- JV teams playing another JV team have a time limit of 1 hr.45 minutes, finish the batter.

Bat Testing

THE Spring Games staff member or the NCAA representative on site will perform the BCT on the bats. BCT testing must be done before a team can play a game. The umpire crew shall reconcile the total number of bats noted on the NCAA Approved Softball Bat List with the stickered bats lined up, outside the dugout and then inspect each bat for suitability for play. During the pregame inspection, if a bat is determined not to have the correct sticker or a bat is deemed unsuitable for play, the bat shall be removed, the team's bat list appropriately amended, and the bat secured by the on-site administrator. Should a non-approved bat be detected at any other time, the consequences are detailed within the playing rules based on the time the violation is reported to the umpire. In all cases, the plate umpire shall file a Noncompliant/Inappropriate Bat Form and the affected team bat will be returned at the end of competition. Please submit a copy of that report to umpires@thespringgames.com. Each team may use one bat list for the entire tournament.

Game Balls

THE Spring Games will provide the umpires with two game ready balls at the start of each game. Each team should provide the umpires with a game ball at the start of the game, giving the umpire four game ready balls. **At the conclusion of the game, the umpires are to bring two game balls back to the umpire staging area** and return any remaining balls equally between the two teams. Please do NOT leave the balls on the field.

Media

Only official team photographers are permitted to be on the fields (no spectators or parents); team photographers should remain behind the bases in foul territory. THE Spring Games are being live streamed. Umpires and can get more information about the live stream on our website at www.THESpringGames.com. There will be a pre-tournament discount and you will be able to do a monthly subscription, so you can review your games.

Site Supervisor/Administrator

There will be a Site Supervisor at each complex and this person will act as the on-site administrator per NCAA rules. If you have questions regarding anything outside of umpires the Site Supervisor is the person you should contact.

Field	Site Supervisor	Phone Number
Legends Way	Bob Borak	352-988-8159
	Renee Smith	713-516-5284
Hancock Park	Keith Young	352-988-8175
	Emily Smith	
	Tonya Bobo	
Sleepy Hollow	Avis Vaughn	727-385-0810
Fortune Road	Dianne Baker	217-710-3037
	Bob Kleebe	321-439-7073
Auburndale/Bartow	Terry Harris	816-317-5900
Diamond Plex	Zane Harris	

Umpires Contacts:

THE Spring Games is really working hard to try to reorganize the duties of the management teams with TSG. In doing so, for 2025 we have brought two new people onto our management teams. Lynne Nemeth will be responsible for all the umpires' schedules and accuracy of arbiter at each park. Keith Poirer will be responsible for making sure that all NCAA rules, and mechanics are being always followed by all TSG umpires. He will also be responsible to make sure that the message you are getting is consistent from complex to complex. If you are hearing two different things, please let Keith know. If umpires are having an issue, they first need contact Lynne or Keith to see if we can identify the problem and come up with a solution. Only after contacting and exploring solutions with either Lynne or Keith should an umpire explore moving higher up the chain of command in TSG organization.

Name	Phone Number	Email
Lynne Nemeth	607-259-2062	umpires@thespringgames.com
Keith Poirer	608-358-6197	Softballump@gmail.com

Facility Information

Refreshments (drinks and snacks) are provided complimentary to you at each location. Please be respectful and courteous, someone else still needs to eat after you. Clean up after yourself. The area should be as clean or cleaner than when you arrived. Umpires should bring some kind of water bottle or water jug to THE Spring Games that will keep their water cool for the duration of the game.

Legends Way Ballfields:

2350 Legends Way, Clermont, FL 34711

Parking: When pulling into the complex, turn right at the second parking entrance and go down and park opposite the brown metal building with the green roof.

Entrance: There is an entrance for Players, Coaches, Staff and Officials ONLY beside the building with signage and tent.

Umpire Room: There is an Umpire room in the brown building to the right just as you enter the complex.

Bathrooms: Bathrooms are in the middle of the facility facing field 4 on the lower level of the two-story building. Portable potties are also set up just outside the “back” entrance and next to field 5.

Hancock Park:

3301 Hancock Rd., Clermont, FL 34711

Parking: When pulling into the complex off Hancock Road, Umpire parking is on the right under the trees.

Entrance: Entrance for everyone to the complex is just beyond the umpire area. Do not attempt to enter the complex at the opening by the water tower as it is fenced off.

Umpire Staging Area: There is no Umpire room at this complex. We will have tents set up for changing and for privacy. Please do not set up your equipment in these two areas, please leave them open for changing.

Bathrooms: Bathrooms are located on the right as you enter the complex. Portable potties are also set up near the umpire area and behind the right field fence between field 2 and field 5.

Sleepy Hollow:

2775 Hollow Lane, Leesburg, FL 34748

Parking: When pulling into the complex, please let the gate staff know that you are the officials for the games. Umpire parking for DI games will be in the back of the facility by the maintenance shed.

Umpire Room: The Umpire room is in the first building on your left as you enter the complex. This room will have signage for Umpires only. These are normally Men's and Women's bathrooms but will be closed to the public and we will have tents and drinks for you just outside the doors.

Fortune Road:

2500 Fortune Rd., Kissimmee, FL 34744

Parking: When pulling into the complex head to the right (west) side of the complex and go all the way to the opposite side of the entrance to the south side of the park.

Entrance: Right next to the parking area. The site supervisor should be there to greet you.

Umpire Staging Area: Upstairs in the center building. Go upstairs, pass the receptionist's desk and the dressing room is on the left.

Bathrooms: located right outside the dressing room

Auburndale Softball Complex:

99 Florida Citrus Blvd., Jan Phyl Village, Auburndale, FL 33880

Parking: Upon arrival to the complex head down the dirt path to the south side. You will park here near fields 4 and 5

Entrance: Located in your parking area

Umpire Staging Area: The center building gets locked every night but has no private rooms aside from bathrooms. You can change upstairs and leave your belongings.

Bathrooms: There are bathrooms in the center building of the complex both upstairs and downstairs

Diamond Plex:

999 Avenue H NE, Winter Haven, FL 33881

Parking: Across from the fields on the south side of the complex there is a large general parking lot. You will park here.

Entrance: The south side of the venue has one entrance to get in and out.

Umpire Staging Area: The center building has an upstairs general area as well as 7 offices for you to lock up your belongings. Since this is a public parking area used by many different groups, ALL umpires must use the staging area to change for games. NO EXCEPTIONS!

Bathrooms: There are two bathrooms in the upstairs area of the center building.

Bartow Sports Complex:

1105 South County Road 555, Bartow, FL 33830

Parking: Pull straight in and go through the double gates that are located between the two quads.

Entrance: It will be at the North end batting cages by the main parking lot.

Umpire Staging Area: In the football field concession stand.

Bathrooms: Next to the football field concession stand and in the middle of the quad.

Payment Schedule

THE Spring Games will be paying officials through arbiter using arbiter pay. Officials should be verifying the accuracy of their games in arbiter at **least two days** before the end of the pay period **and at the end of the pay period**. If there is a discrepancy, please email umpires@thespringgames.com immediately. In that email, include the game date, the location, time of the game, the UIC for that complex on that date and why the game was worked or not worked.

Pay dates for 2025 will be as follows:

Pay Period	Pay Date
Thu Feb 6th - Fri Feb 14th	2/18/2025
Sat Feb 15th - Fri Mar 14th	3/18/2025
Sat Mar 15th - Fri Mar 28th	4/1/2025

