



Special Olympics
Massachusetts

TO: Softball teams and programs
FROM: Matt Ruxton
CC: Bob Johnson, Terry Keilty, Helen King, Chris Witt, Wayne McFarland
RE: Wooden Bats
DATE: May 25, 2011

Starting in 2011 Special Olympics Massachusetts softball will become a wooden bat only program. This change is in an effort to provide a safer environment for our athletes.

Over the past few seasons SOMA has become very concerned with the use of illegal bats at our tournaments. In the beginning of the season we provide every team with the website that lists all the approved bats for tournament play. Each year this list gets shorter and shorter as bats, especially composite bats, are deemed unsafe and added to the list. At our tournaments, our umpires conduct bat inspection and they have been dismissing many composite bats and bats not on the approved list. However, each year, bats that are not on the approved list seem to sneak in.

The newer bats and composite bats, due to the way the bat is manufactured, they are extremely light and very strong. When the batter makes contact, the ball comes off the bat at a higher rate of speed and force compared to a wooden bat. The speeds of the balls coming off the bat are at the point of being dangerous for our athletes and unified partners.

In conjunction with USSSA, our partners in running our softball tournaments, to eliminate the use of any banned bat and to create a safer environment for our athletes and partners, SOMA has decided to make our softball program a wooden bat only program. This issue was discussed amongst the SOMA Sports Advisory Committee (a group which is made up of coaches, athletes, partners and volunteers) and selected local programs that have multiple softball teams. The recommendation had the full support of all parties.

For the 2011 softball season USSSA has agreed to purchase two wooden bats per team for teams that were registered in 2010. After the initial bat buy teams will be responsible for purchasing their own wooden bats. Teams will be able to purchase bats through USSSA for a discounted rate. Going forward, starting in 2012, USSSA will provide wooden bats at all SOMA softball tournaments so teams will not have to bring bats.