

PLAY FIVE-ON-FIVE TO PREPARE FOR 2020

Now that the off-season is upon us, many seniors are beginning to prepare for the 2020 campaign by getting back into the gym and finding a batting cage. Players may also want to drop those extra pounds they added from last season, all in preparation for next year.

Another superb way to get ready for next season is to participate in five on five softball. It's both a fun and beneficial way to ready your body and sharpen your skills. Like most sports, there's no better way of getting in shape for your sport than by playing it. This softball variation has been around for many years and is played in many parts of the U.S.

For those of us who may not have heard of five on five where a team is formed with only (5) players, let's explore some of its features. The five on five format entails having three 5-player teams, two on the field and one in the dugout. We play (5) innings here in the northwest and find that most suitable for time constraints as there is a top, middle and bottom to each inning. Teams move from outfield to the infield to batting after the current hitting team is retired, and the rotation continues in that manner.

Teams typically consist of (5) to (7) players with (5) being the minimum and (7) being the ideal maximum that provides for the optimal benefit. However, playing only (5) players can lead to a lot of base running without a break and maybe finding yourself on base when it's your turn to bat. The amount of time you have for play will determine whether your games can be longer than (5) innings.

The five on five softball format fulfills several purposes, for example:

- You can run full-up tournaments with teams competing for championships and trophies,
- form local leagues where the numbers are not enough to build (15) player rosters,
- use as a preparation for next season where players hit, field, and run the bases under game like conditions to get into shape.

The third bullet from the above bulleted list is the one we use in the Pacific Northwest, playing @ RAC (*Regional Athletic Center*) in Lacey, WA. In this nuance of the game, teams play with the objective of affording players to work on their individual skills.

The winning or losing games as a team is secondary to preparing the individual player for next year. As a result, players are free to practice things he or she may not have opportunity to do during the regular season. Pull hitters can practice hitting backside, players can play multiple defensive positions, or even take a turn at pitching.

Team field assignments to start play:

Game 1:

- Team(A) batting,
- Team(B) infield, fills the infield positions and provides the pitcher,
- Team(C) Outfield, provides the four outfielders and a catcher.

Game 2:

- Team(A) batting,
- Team(C) infield, fills the infield positions and provides the pitcher,
- Team(B) Outfield, provides the four outfielders and a catcher.

Each team receives the standard three outs or five runs max during their at-bat. The last inning can be an OPEN inning but this is optional. After the team hitting is retired, the outfield team moves into the infield, the infield team moves to the dugout to hit. The team that just finished hitting moves to the outfield and so on until the game has concluded.

In game 2 of the double header, note that the outfield and infield teams from game 1 will reverse their infield/outfield assignments. This is done so that you don't have the same team pitching to you for both games (see diagram). Some leagues like to mix the teams by odd and even innings. This is more complex and confusion on the field can be the result.

All players get to hit even if they are not playing a defensive position. Depending on the number of players on a team, a player can get as many as (12) or more plate appearances during a double header. A five on five 5-inning game takes about the same time as a regular (2) team game that plays a full 7-innings; about an hour and fifteen minutes on average.

Advantages of five on five:

- Teams only need (5) players to participate and is the minimum,
- players get many more at bats under this format,
- players will play (2) defensive positions during each inning and can play anywhere.
- players work on their game without concerning themselves with the team's outcome as there'll be plenty time for that with the season starts.

Rules: We use SSUSA rules but you can deviate to fit local needs.

Happy hitting,

Art Eversole

Game 1	Hitting	Infield	Outfield
Inning	Team	<i>(1B, 2B, 3B, SS, P)</i>	<i>(LF, LC, RCF, RF, C)</i>
1	Team (A)	Team (B)	Team (C)
2	Team (B)	Team (C)	Team (A)
3	Team (C)	Team (A)	Team (B)
4	Team (A)	Team (B)	Team (C)
5	Team (B)	Team (C)	Team (A)
Game 2	Hitting	Infield	Outfield
Inning	Team	<i>(1B, 2B, 3B, SS, P)</i>	<i>(LF, LC, RCF, RF, C)</i>
1	Team (A)	Team (C)	Team (B)
2	Team (C)	Team (B)	Team (A)
3	Team (B)	Team (A)	Team (C)
4	Team (A)	Team (C)	Team (B)
5	Team (C)	Team (B)	Team (A)