

Complete Guide to **Slowpitch Softball**

- 
- *Pitching*
 - *Hitting*
 - *Fielding*
 - *Baserunning*

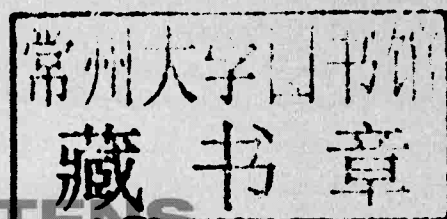
Special
book/DVD
package

DVD
VIDEO

Rainer Martens • Julie S. Martens

COMPLETE GUIDE *to* SLOWPITCH SOFTBALL

**RAINER MARTENS
JULIE S. MARTENS**



Human Kinetics

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Martens, Rainer, 1942-

Complete guide to slowpitch softball / Rainer Martens, Julie S. Martens.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-7360-9406-1 (soft cover)

ISBN-10: 0-7360-9406-7 (soft cover)

1. Slow pitch softball. I. Martens, Julie S., 1949- II. Title. III.

Title: Complete guide to slow pitch softball.

GV881.M36 2010

796.357'8--dc22

2010014230

ISBN-10: 0-7360-9406-7 (print)

ISBN-13: 978-0-7360-9406-1 (print)

Copyright © 2011 by Rainer Martens and Julie S. Martens

All rights reserved. Except for use in a review, the reproduction or utilization of this work in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying, and recording, and in any information storage and retrieval system, is forbidden without the written permission of the publisher.

The Web addresses cited in this text were current as of September 2010, unless otherwise noted.

Acquisitions Editor: Justin Klug; **Developmental Editor:** Julie Marx Goodreau; **Assistant Editors:** Elizabeth Evans, Casey A. Gentis; **Copyeditor:** Bob Replinger; **Indexer:** Katy Balcer; **Permission Manager:** Martha Gullo; **Graphic Designer:** Bob Reuther; **Graphic Artist:** Tara Welsch; **Cover Designer:** Keith Blomberg; **DVD Face Designer:** Susan Rothermel Allen; **DVD Producer:** Doug Fink; **Video Production Coordinator:** Amy Rose; **Photo Production Manager:** Jason Allen; **Art Manager:** Kelly Hendren; **Associate Art Manager:** Alan L. Wilborn; **Illustrators:** Alan L. Wilborn and TwoJay!; **Printer:** McNaughton & Gunn

We thank the Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Department in Sarasota, Florida, for assistance in providing the location for the photo shoot for this book.

Human Kinetics books are available at special discounts for bulk purchase. Special editions or book excerpts can also be created to specification. For details, contact the Special Sales Manager at Human Kinetics.

The contents of this DVD are licensed for private home use and traditional, face-to-face classroom instruction only. For public performance licensing, please contact a sales representative at www.HumanKinetics.com/SalesRepresentatives.

Printed in the United States of America 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

The paper in this book is certified under a sustainable forestry program.

Human Kinetics

Web site: www.HumanKinetics.com

United States: Human Kinetics
P.O. Box 5076
Champaign, IL 61825-5076
800-747-4457
e-mail: humank@hkusa.com

Canada: Human Kinetics
475 Devonshire Road Unit 100
Windsor, ON N8Y 2L5
800-465-7301 (in Canada only)
e-mail: info@hkcanada.com

Europe: Human Kinetics
107 Bradford Road
Stanningley
Leeds LS28 6AT, United Kingdom
+44 (0) 113 255 5665
e-mail: hk@hkeurope.com

Australia: Human Kinetics
57A Price Avenue
Lower Mitcham, South Australia 5062
08 8372 0999
e-mail: info@hkaustralia.com

New Zealand: Human Kinetics
P.O. Box 80
Torrens Park, South Australia 5062
0800 222 062
e-mail: info@hknewzealand.com

**COMPLETE
GUIDE
to
SLOWPITCH
SOFTBALL**

DVD CONTENTS

OFFENSE

Hitting Basics

- Location in the Batter's Box
- Squatters and Nomads
- Ready Position
- Hitting Mechanics
 - Load Phase
 - Swing Phase
 - Follow-Through Phase
- Timing

Advanced Hitting

- Power Hitting
- Near- and Opposite-Field Hitting
- Flailing at the Ball
- Swinging to the Ball

Baserunning

- Start at Home
- Start at Any Base
- Good Running Form
- Sliding
 - Bent-Leg Slide
 - Hook Slide
 - Sliding Practice Progression
- Running to First
- Coaching Third Base

DEFENSE

Pitching

Delivery Methods

Types of Pitches

Vertical Topspin

Vertical Backspin

Left Curve

Right Curve

Knuckleball

Defensive Setup

Covering the Bases

Pitcher-Initiated Double Plays

Infielder Skills

Fielding Ground Balls

Fielding on the Move

Diving, Bloopers,
and Pop-Ups

Types of Throws

Overhand Throw

Sidearm Throw

Dart Throw

Underhand Toss

Backhand Flip

Difficult Throws

Throwing on the Run

Throwing to a Running Fielder

Relaying Throws From the Outfield

Tagging Runners

Receiving Throws at First

Fielding Plays at First

Plays at Catcher

Second-to-First Double Plays

Rundowns

Outfielder Skills

Catching Fly Balls

Fielding Ground Balls

Overhand Throws

Defensive Strategies and Tactics

Relays and Cutoffs

Single, No One on Base

Double, No One on Base

Triple, No One on Base

Single, Runner on First Base

Double, Runner on First Base

Fly Out, Runner on First Base,
Less Than Two Outs

Single, Runners on First
and Second Base

Fly Out, Runners on First
and Second Base,
Less Than Two Outs

Single, Bases Loaded

Fly Out, Bases Loaded,
Less Than Two Outs

Less Common Double Plays

With Runner on First Base

With Runners in Other Locations

Two More Special Plays

Infield Hits With 11 Defensive Players

Outfield Hits With 11 Defensive Players

Total running time: 69 minutes

PREFACE

We're addicted to slowpitch* softball. If one must have addictions, this is a good one to have. We love the game so much that in our senior years we've organized our work lives to fit around our softball lives. The game has been good to us, and we want to be good to the game by writing the most comprehensive book available on the sport. We not only want to help you play and coach the game better but also want to infect you with the passion that we have for slowpitch softball. Being passionate about a recreational activity is cathartic, and playing slowpitch softball can add both years to your life and life to your years.

All players, regardless of skill level, share the objective of having fun. Why else would we play? But have you noticed the strong relationship between playing the game well and having fun? We didn't say winning and having fun, although you've probably learned that winning is more fun than losing. But personally playing the game well is intrinsically rewarding because it makes us feel competent, and we each have a basic need to feel competent. So we hope that this book will help you become a more competent player and therefore have more fun playing slowpitch softball.

If you're a recreational slowpitch softball player somewhere between the ages of 16 and 92, you'll find this book loaded with useful information to help you play better and enjoy the game more. If you're a competitive slowpitch softball player striving to improve your game, to come closer to your potential as a player, you'll find this book essential.

This book is both a basic and advanced analysis of how to play slowpitch softball. The technical skills (hitting, fielding, and so forth) that we cover are equally applicable to young and old, novice and elite, and women and men players. The tactics of the sport, however, differ for some versions of the sport. We have not covered elite adult slowpitch softball, a version of the game played by a small number of outstanding players who do much of their scoring by hitting home runs. We also do not cover the specifics of 16-inch slowpitch softball, although much of what we discuss in this book is applicable to the 16-inch game. What we have covered are the tactics of slowpitch softball played in recreational leagues during weeknights and in competitive tournaments on weekends by millions of players, what we think of as mainstream slowpitch softball.

If you coach this wonderful sport, your first step to coaching greatness is to buy a dozen copies of this book and hand them out to your players. (Isn't that shameful self-promotion!) And because you have the book in your hands, you'll especially want to read and reread part IV, "Coaching," to learn how you can be more effective in your role.

*Is it *slow pitch*, *slowpitch*, or *slow-pitch* softball? Usage is inconsistent in the skimpy literature available on the sport, and slowpitch organizations are inconsistent in their use of the term. Thus, the Human Kinetics editorial team decided to use *slowpitch* as one word when used as a noun or adjective, just as it does with *fastpitch* softball. We encourage others to use *slowpitch* as the preferred usage to standardize the reference to this sport.

We do not dwell on basic skills such as catching, fielding, and throwing, skills that you likely learned by playing baseball or fastpitch softball and that you perform the same way in slowpitch softball. Many books and videos are available if you need help with these fundamentals. Instead we focus on the skills unique to slowpitch softball. Although words and pictures are our tools for this book, video can demonstrate offensive and defensive skills more effectively. Thus you'll find the DVD packaged with this book to be a vital instructional supplement to the text. The technical skills covered on the DVD are highlighted with this icon in the margin.



In chapters 1 and 2 of part I you'll learn about the art and science of hitting. With better hitting you'll be running the bases a lot more, and we'll show you how to speed around them in chapter 3. You'll want to deploy your improved hitting and baserunning skills intelligently, so in chapter 4 you'll learn about the strategies and tactics of offensive play.

Common lore is that slowpitch softball is a hitter's game, and it is, but equally so—not more or less—it is a defensive game. It's the increased offense and defense that makes this game so much fun. So in part II we'll help you improve your defensive skills. Chapter 5 is an extensive look at slowpitch pitching, including a section on fielding the pitching position. In chapter 6 we examine infielder skills, and in chapter 7 we analyze outfielder skills. The final chapter in part II, chapter 8, describes defensive strategies and tactics to give your team the winning edge.

Part III of the book is about preparation, and it logically could have been part I. But we thought that you'd prefer to dig into offensive and defensive skills first and then look at preparing yourself to play. In chapter 9 you'll find essential information about the playing field and the equipment used in slowpitch softball. In chapters 10 and 11 we help you prepare to play better by training physically and mentally, and in chapter 12 we cover some basic sports medicine to help you prevent and treat those annoying minor injuries that occur when playing the game and provide you with guidelines about when you should seek medical care.

Part IV is for those courageous people who are willing to take on the role of coach, whether it's for a team of teenage girls or 75-year-old seniors. Coaching is challenging and, when done well, rewarding. In chapters 13 and 14 we provide guidelines about how to conduct effective practices and manage game-day activities.

This book is not like a novel; you don't need to read it from beginning to end in that order. We suggest that you read the introduction, jump around the 14 chapters based on your interests, and then use the supplemental DVD when we suggest doing so in the appropriate chapters.

Two more things: first a warning. The United States is blessed with nine major national slowpitch softball associations, all playing the game in the same general way but each having some minor rule variations. And then there are hundreds of local and regional organizations that usually adopt the rules of one of the national associations but then modify them for local preferences or conditions. So we will reference what we believe comes closest to being the consensus rule by national associations and then note major variations to those rules when we think that they significantly change the game. Because not everyone plays by the same set of rules, be sure to find out the applicable rules in the league or tournament in which you play.

Second: a request. We welcome your comments about this book and DVD package. Tell us what's missing or what we could cover better. And, of course, we are eager to hear what you think we got right. You can e-mail us at Juliem@hkusa.com or send your comments to Julie Martens, Slowpitch Softball, 2190 John Anderson Drive, Ormond Beach, FL 32176.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To the teams who taught me humility through their superior play, I now appreciate those lessons.

To my teammates throughout the years who let me share in their successes, thank you for the memories.

To my wife, Julie, who shares my passion for the game and has helped me so much as a player and coach, my heartfelt thanks.

—Rainer Martens

To my parents for their support through every aspect of my life.

To my high school and college coaches who helped me develop my sport skills and enabled me to experience the joys of competition.

To the Florida Legends, especially the Legendary Ladies, for being such good friends and for making my job of managing all the details that much easier.

To Rainer, who continues to teach me about the game of softball and challenges me to reach a little further for the things that aren't easy to achieve, thanks for being a great mentor and husband.

—Julie Martens

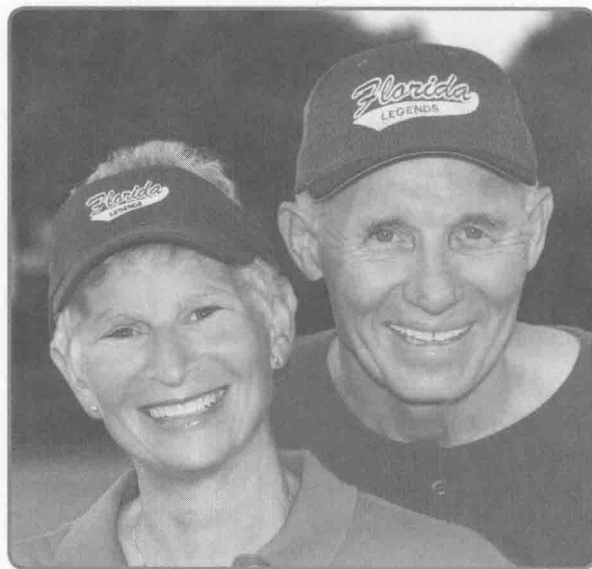
To the many people who helped us create this book and the companion DVD, our sincere thanks. Foremost, we would like to acknowledge our friends and teammates who are members of the Florida Legends senior softball team who participated in the video, served as models for the photos in this book, and provided logistical support. They are Patrick Bidelman and Bonnie Catalano, Bill Brotherton, Matt and Bev Callahan, Zeb and Susan Carter, Bob Conrad, Tom Dabbs, Dave and Nancy Decker, Derry Dedmon, Bob Koss, Jeff MacDonald, Vince Melograno, and Mike Pickett. We also wish to thank our younger models who played with such skill and grace: Ashley Bodi, Consuelo Flickinger, Bill Crieslar, Shawn Harville, David Phillips, Gabe Preece, and especially Jerry Hoffer, who recruited and performed with this group. We also wish to thank Hansel Faulkner, Cliff Stratton, Walt Taylor, Dave Foltz, Dick Kanyan, Al Mahar, and Joe McWhertor for serving as photo models.

We offer a big thank-you to Lou Giovanini, Patrick Bidelman, and Derry Dedmon for providing comments about the first draft of this manuscript. Thanks also to those staff members at Human Kinetics who contributed in many ways to the development of both the book and the DVD. We especially appreciate the guidance of Doug Fink in developing the companion DVD. And we owe a big debt of gratitude to Julie Marx Goodreau, our editor at Human Kinetics. Not only is Julie a superior editor, she's also a veteran slowpitch softball player whose knowledge of the game made this book much better.

And finally, we'd like to express our gratitude to the many players, spouses, umpires, and administrators who have made the game so enjoyable for us.

—Rainer and Julie Martens

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



We wrote this book together not only because we're married and because the game is a big part of our lives but also because we each have a unique perspective about the game that we wanted to share. Rainer is the player and coach; Julie is a former player, now manager, scorekeeper, and tactician. Together, we're students of the sport and are eager to share our knowledge about the game.

When you read a book about how to do something, you should rightfully know whether the authors are credible. So permit us to introduce ourselves to you.

Rainer's Background

Like many young boys, Rainer grew up playing sandlot baseball with the neighborhood gang and then played in organized youth leagues from 8 to 16 years of age. Many wax eloquently about the virtues of sandlot play and the vices of highly competitive, adult-organized youth sports, but Rainer loved them both. American Legion and college baseball followed, and at the end of his senior year he pondered his dream of becoming a professional baseball player. The Kansas City A's had offered him an opportunity to play minor league baseball. Meanwhile, the University of Montana had admitted him to graduate school and had an assistantship waiting for him. Having developed a chronic sore arm from training improperly and pitching way too much, and having considerable doubt that he had the ability to be successful professionally, he decided on graduate school. It was the right choice for him.

After Rainer completed his master's degree at the University of Montana, he returned to his hometown of Hutchinson, Kansas, in the summer of 1966 to manage a swimming pool before beginning his doctorate degree in the fall at the University of Illinois. Upon his arrival in Hutch, his former American Legion baseball coach, Bob Swanson, asked him to play on his slowpitch softball team. Until then Rainer hadn't heard of the game and, in fact, like many devout baseball and fastpitch softball players, thought that the game looked silly when he first saw it. But after playing only a few games he was hooked and played the game for the next 20 years.

Rainer quit playing at age 45 when his wife, Marilyn, needed continual care as she fought the insidious disease of diabetes. The small publishing company that he founded in 1974, Human Kinetics, began to prosper and took what remaining time he had available. Marilyn lost that fight in 1991.

Like many others, Rainer figured that he would never play again. He was now too old, but then the husband of an employee at Human Kinetics invited him to play in a 55-year-plus senior softball league in Champaign, Illinois. Rainer initially declined, believing that he was too busy and was traveling too frequently to be a good team member. But one day Rainer was asked again to play because the team was short one player. So he played. And like the on-the-wagon alcoholic who takes one drink, he was addicted again. He has been playing ever since.

Rainer, with his second wife, Julie, began spending winters in Florida, partly, or perhaps mostly, to play softball. Known as God's waiting room, Florida is where millions of seniors retire to be away from the cold. Consequently, the state has many outstanding senior softball players. Rainer was able to play in a local league twice a week and then played once a month in the Florida Half Century League, arguably the best competitive senior softball program in the country.

He played in his first national tournament in 1999 and won a 55-year-plus national championship in 2000 with a Daytona Beach team that Human Kinetics sponsored. In 2002 Rainer was asked by Lou Giovanini to join the 60-year-plus Florida Legends, a team that he hadn't heard of but should have. Since the 1990s the team had won more than 50 national championships, and in 2002 the team played in seven national tournaments, winning six of them and placing second in the other one. Playing with the Florida Legends taught Rainer much about how the game should be played. Seven years later he continues to play with the Florida Legends in the 65-year-plus age category and now coaches the team as well. In 2009 Rainer was inducted into the Senior Softball Hall of Fame.

Having played the game over many years is only part of Rainer's credentials to write this book. He also has been a student of the sport sciences. He spent 16 years as a sport psychology professor at the University of Illinois, during which time he worked with college and Olympic athletes. For 6 years he served as the sport psychologist for the U.S. ski team, working with the team through the 1984 Olympic Games in Sarajevo.

In 1973 Rainer hosted a sport psychology conference at the University of Illinois. After several publishers turned down his request to publish the papers presented at that conference, he and his wife, Marilyn, published them, which was the start of Human Kinetics. Today the publishing company is the largest publisher of sports books, journals, and coaching courses in the world. So Rainer spent much of his adult life not only learning about sport psychology but also reading manuscripts on sport biomechanics, sport physiology, sport nutrition, motor skill learning, and other sport sciences.

He's written 15 books over the years and hundreds of articles. Rainer's book *Successful Coaching* has sold over a million copies and is the best-selling coaching book ever published. But according to Rainer, the book that he's enjoyed writing most is this book because of his passion for the game.

Julie's Background

Like Rainer, Julie grew up playing sandlot baseball with the neighborhood gang, but then her youth experiences took a different turn. Organized youth baseball was only a dream for Julie because girls were not permitted to play alongside the boys. It didn't matter that the young tomboy was better than many of the boys; what mattered was that she was a girl and baseball leagues were for boys only. She continued to play alongside the boys at the vacant lot down the street and participated in all the weekly sports and games competitions in the local park and recreation program, winning her fair share of events. Then the summer before eighth grade, Julie and her best friend, Sharon Noodell, discovered a fastpitch girls softball team that was looking for players. Both girls jumped at the opportunity to play on the team. They began their softball careers with Sharon playing second base and Julie playing the outfield or infield if needed. This continued for several years until other teenage activities began conflicting with their weekly practice and twice weekly evening games.

With interscholastic girls sports programs in Omaha being limited only to tennis, Julie figured that she better learn to play if she wanted to experience the joys of higher-level competition. She took many lessons and spent her afternoons at the local tennis center playing against anyone willing to step out on the court with her. She began entering age-group tournaments and won a number of them around the state, and she competed in both singles and doubles competition for her high school tennis team.

Julie went on to Purdue University and majored in physical education. In those pre-Title IX days, sports competition was limited to club-level play between universities, but Julie's urge to participate in competitive sports was still very much alive. During her 4 years at Purdue she had the opportunity to play basketball, field hockey, fastpitch softball, and tennis against other universities in the Midwest.

Following graduation from Purdue, Julie went on to graduate school at the University of Washington, where she set aside competitive sports because of studies. She then came to the University of Illinois to study sport psychology under the tutelage of Professor Rainer Martens, who later became husband Rainer Martens. While at Illinois Julie taught lifetime sports classes to undergraduates and continued to play a variety of sports, including tennis and racquetball, the latter of which she coached at the collegiate club level. During her time at Illinois she was introduced to slowpitch softball, a game that would become a major part of her life.

After completing her doctorate at the University of Illinois, Julie went to work for Human Kinetics, becoming the first full-time employee of the young publishing company. Besides working, she enjoyed playing on a women's slowpitch team for several years. She then decided that playing coed softball was more fun for her, and she played for the Human Kinetics team for many years.

But then a new chapter in slowpitch softball began for her—only not as a player, but as a supportive wife and fan. For the last several years Julie has been the team manager, scorekeeper, and statistician for the Florida Legends Senior Softball team and loves traveling with Rainer to tournaments around the country and talking softball with him. They also both enjoy biking, walking, traveling, and photography. *Complete Guide to Slowpitch Softball* is the first book that she has coauthored.

CONTENTS

DVD Contents	vi
Preface	viii
Acknowledgments	xi
About the Authors	xii
Introduction	1

PART I OFFENSE 9

CHAPTER 1	
Hitting Basics	11

CHAPTER 2	
Advanced Hitting	31

CHAPTER 3	
Baserunning	51

CHAPTER 4	
Offensive Strategies and Tactics	75

PART II DEFENSE 85

CHAPTER 5	
Pitching	87

CHAPTER 6	
Infielder Skills	123

CHAPTER 7	
Outfielder Skills	157

CHAPTER 8	
Defensive Strategies and Tactics	175

PART III PREPARATION 205

CHAPTER 9

Field and Equipment **207**

CHAPTER 10

Physical Preparation **225**

CHAPTER 11

Mental Preparation **239**

CHAPTER 12

Softball First Aid. **259**

PART IV COACHING 271

CHAPTER 13

Conducting Practices **273**

CHAPTER 14

Game-Day Coaching **287**

APPENDIX A Additional Resources **301**

APPENDIX B Contact Information for National and
International Slowpitch Softball Associations **303**

Index **305**

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to slowpitch softball, an exciting team sport played by 13 million people in the United States and 2 million in other countries. Why is slowpitch softball the most popular participant team sport in the United States? To answer that question, we first look at how slowpitch softball differs from baseball and fastpitch softball and follow that with a brief look at the origin of the sport. Then we'll share with you many reasons for the popularity of this sport. We end the introduction with a section on terminology to help you understand the remainder of the book.

UNIQUENESS OF SLOWPITCH SOFTBALL

Obviously, slowpitch differs from fastpitch softball in that the ball is pitched s-l-o-w-l-y, making it easy for the batter to hit the ball. The consequence is a remarkable transformation between the two sports. Pitchers dominate fastpitch softball. The consequence is little hitting and thus little fielding. Batters dominate slowpitch softball, and the consequence is lots of hitting, lots of baserunning, lots of defensive play, and most of all lots of fun. Here's a brief description of additional differences between the two games:

- **Number of players.** Slowpitch teams have 10 defensive players rather than 9. Usually the 10th player is an additional outfielder. Some senior leagues have 11 defensive players on a team, and the 11th player is usually positioned behind second base. In many leagues, teams can bat more than 10 players, which allows coaches to let every player on the team bat.
- **Pitching and the strike zone.** The ball must be pitched underhand with an arc. Most leagues require the ball to reach a minimum height of 6 feet (1.8 m) and a maximum height of 12 feet (3.7 m). Strikes are called in one of two ways: (1) by the pitch passing through a strike zone as in baseball, or (2) by the ball hitting the plate or a mat that is placed behind it. You'll learn about both of these methods of determining a strike in chapter 1.
- **Balls and strikes.** Many leagues and tournaments begin with a 1 ball, 1 strike count on the batter. In many tournaments, however, the game is played with the conventional 4 ball, 3 strike count. Usually, the batter is out when hitting a foul ball on the third strike.
- **Baserunning.** As we'll cover in chapter 3, because the pitch is thrown slowly batters cannot bunt. In most leagues, base runners can advance only when the ball is hit, so there is no base stealing. Some local leagues

do allow runners to advance after the pitch hits the ground, although that variation of the sport is not common.

- **Safety base.** Many leagues and tournaments use a double, or safety, base at first to reduce the chances of collision. The safety base is an extra first base placed immediately adjacent to the regular one but outside the foul line and usually colored orange or red. When a play occurs at first base the runner must touch the safety base and the fielder must touch the regular first base.
- **Scoring plate.** In some recreational leagues and tournaments and in all senior slowpitch softball, a separate scoring plate is used, which is located 8 feet (2.4 m) away from the regular home plate as shown on page 52 in chapter 3. To avoid collisions, the runner from third must run to the scoring plate, not the regular home plate. To learn more about this play at home, see page 52 in chapter 3.
- **Coed game.** A popular form of slowpitch softball is played by men and women together. Although the usual 10 defensive players are used, up to 12 players can bat, alternating between women and men. Most leagues require an equal split of male and female infielders and outfielders, and a male pitcher and female catcher (or vice versa). Some leagues even require that men and women alternate positions in the infield and outfield so that two men or two women aren't playing adjacent positions. Most coed leagues allow more female than male players; for example, a team could play with 7 women and 5 men.

HISTORY OF SLOWPITCH SOFTBALL

Whether you're new to slowpitch softball or a veteran, we thought that you would appreciate a brief account of the evolution of the sport. Here's the story.

Origins of the Sport

On Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 1887, Harvard and Yale alumni met at a Chicago boat club to hear the score of the annual football game between the two schools. When it was announced that Yale won 17-8, someone picked up a boxing glove that was lying around and threw it at a Harvard alumnus. After a few more tosses, someone grabbed a pole and hit the glove. Observing the action, George Hancock yelled, "Let's play ball!" He took the boxing glove laces and tied the glove into a ball. Someone broke off a broom handle, and they marked off a diamond in the boathouse. Voilà—softball was born.

The game may have died the day of its birth, but George was smitten with the game, and so within a week he created a 16-inch (41 cm) ball and a narrow, rubber-tipped bat. He developed a set of rules and called the game indoor baseball. In 1888 the game began to be played outdoors as well as indoors and became known as indoor-outdoor.

The game's popularity spread across Chicago and the Midwest like the raging Great Chicago Fire of 1871. As the game grew in popularity, Hancock published the first set of rules in 1889.