



About Softball: Softball is a bat-and-ball sport played between two teams of 10 to 14 players. Every team aims in scoring as many runs possible, against the opponents by striking the ball with a specific bat. It is a direct descendant of baseball although there are some key differences: softballs are larger than baseballs, and the pitches are thrown underhand rather than overhand. The game is played on a smaller diamond than in baseball and despite the game's name, the standard softball is not soft; in fact, it is harder than a baseball.

Established at Special Olympics: 1983

Differences of Special Olympics Softball: Special Olympics Softball has some modifications to the rules of the International Softball Federation. All batters and runners must wear a helmet with a chin strap at all times. The catcher also wears a helmet with a mask and a chest protector. At first base, a safety orange bag is attached. There are also two home plates used. The runner will tag the outside plate, where the catcher receives throws at the original home plate. All outs at home are force outs for safety reasons. Pitching distances will range for each pitcher, rather than just one distance.

By The Numbers:

- In 2011, 62,680 Special Olympics Athletes competed in Softball events
- In 2011, 63 Special Olympics Programs hosted Softball competitions.
- Since 2005, Athlete participation in Softball has increased by over 65%!
- In Softball, there are nine players on the field at one time

Events for Competition:

- Base Race
- Bat for Distance
- Individual Skills Competition
- Team Skills Softball
- T-Ball Competition
- Coach Pitch Team Competition
- Slow Pitch Team Competition
- Unified Sports Slow Pitch Team Competition

Associations/Federations/Supporters: International Softball Federation (ISF)

Divisioning at Special Olympics: Athletes in every sport and event are grouped by age, gender, and ability – giving everyone a reasonable chance to win. At Special Olympics there are no World Records because each athlete, whether in the fastest or the slowest division is valued and recognized equally. In every division, all athletes receive an award, from gold, silver, and bronze medals, to fourth through eighth place ribbons. This idea of equal ability groupings is the foundation for competition in Special Olympics and can be witnessed at all events, whether it's athletics, aquatics, table tennis, football, skiing, or gymnastics. All athletes are given an equal chance to participate, perform, and be recognized for doing their best by their teammates, family, friends, and fans."