

USSSA 2011 and 2012 Baseball Bat Performance Standards

USSSA has had a stated 1.15 BPF Small Barrel ($2\frac{1}{4}$ " barrels) and Big Barrel ($2\frac{5}{8}$ " and $2\frac{3}{4}$ " barrel bats) baseball bat performance standard in its rule book for 6 years for its sanctioned programs up to and including its 14U program. The 1.15 BPF standard also is utilized for the Approval and the Licensing mark for Small Barrel bats used by at least 5 other Youth Baseball Associations. Additionally, USSSA has used a 1.20 BPF standard in its softball programs for 15 years.

The BPF standard was developed by NYU Physics Professor, Dr. Richard A. Brandt, over 15 years ago. The BPF standard is based on fundamental laws of physics that allow Dr. Brandt's testing lab to measure the relative performance of bats to be used in USSSA play. Based on its on field experience with the BPF standard, USSSA believes that the 1.15 BPF standard for 14U and younger Big Barrel and Small Barrel baseball play provides an excellent performance level for the game. The response of USSSA customers to its sanctioned baseball play in its 14U and younger programs played under the 1.15 BPF standard has been one of clear and enthusiastic approval. In deed, the USSSA baseball program has in recent years grown at an average annual rate that exceeds 20%.

As such, it is the belief of USSSA that the 1.15 BPF standard remains the best starting point for any new standard to be applied to baseball bats to address the concerns that have arisen as to the improvement of performance in composite (and even aluminum bats) with use or upon illegal alterations being made to a bat. USSSA does not believe that the fundamental issue is the material from which a bat is made. Rather, the USSSA view is that it is question of performance measurement that will disallow bats that can be easily altered or which can simply become too good use. In addition, USSSA believes that such performance standards must be coupled with a system for punishing for those who are found with altered or illegal equipment. In consideration of these beliefs, USSSA has made the following decisions with respect to 2011 and 2012 baseball bat standards.

15 and Over High School Age Groups

While USSSA believes that the material oriented 2011 ban and the ultimate move to a wood like performance standard is not in the best interests of the game, USSSA will continue its policy for 15 and over of following the NHFS rules. Because so many of our 15 and over players are focused on being a part of their High School teams, it is the view of USSSA that its customers are best served by playing with the same bats that they will be using in High School play. Thus, if a bat is legal under the NHFS rules, it is legal for USSSA sanctioned play. If not legal for NHFS play, it is not legal for USSSA play.

14 and Under Age Groups Big Barrel Bats

The continued popularity of for 14U and younger USSSA sanctioned baseball has led USSSA to believe that the 1.15 BPF standard should be continued, but with improvement to address use and alteration issues.

For 2011, there will be no change to the performance standard for bats allowed in USSSA play in these age groups. $2\frac{3}{4}$ ", $2\frac{5}{8}$ " and $2\frac{1}{4}$ " bats will all continue to be allowed in 14U and younger USSSA sanctioned play. Manufacturers, however, will be required to alert USSSA if they are aware, or have reason to be concerned that, any of their bat models—carbon fiber or other material bats-- would significantly exceed the 1.15 BPF standard with normal use. In such a case, USSSA would then list such bats as ones which are not allowed in USSSA play. In general, all bats of USSSA Licensed manufacturers will be allowed in USSSA play, unless they are otherwise identified by USSSA as not being allowed. Bats from manufacturers that are not licensed with USSSA will not be allowed in USSSA sanctioned play without regard to BPF testing.

For 2012, Dr. Brandt in coordination with the Bat Manufacturers will create a more rigorous 1.15 BPF test that will not allow bats that improve past the 1.15 BPF level with use or most alteration without clearly showing visible physical damage. Both 2³/₄" and 2⁵/₈" bats will continue to be allowed in 14U and younger USSSA sanctioned play. Such bats will carry a new USSSA 1.15 Mark that will be easily identified without the requirement of a close inspection. This test will be similar to that currently used by the 5 associations that require 1.15 BPF testing for Small Barrel bats and which is now being used by USSSA in its Small Barrel bat testing. Beginning in 2012, only such Big Barrel bats with the new USSSA 1.15 BPF mark will be allowed in USSSA play. All other Big Barrel bats will no longer be allowed in USSSA play as of January 1, 2012. It is expected that such 2012 bats will be made available for purchase by October of 2011.

14 and Under Age Groups Small Barrel Bats

For 2011, USSSA licensed manufacturers will be required to alert USSSA if they are aware or concerned that one of their Small Barrel bat models would significantly exceed the 1.15 BPF standard with normal use. Upon receipt of such an alert, USSSA will then list such a bat model as one which is not allowed in USSSA play. No other changes are contemplated for 2011 Small Barrel bats in USSSA sanctioned play.

For 2012, Small Barrel bats will be required to carry the new USSSA 1.15 Mark that will be easily identified without the requirement of a close inspection by USSSA officials. No decision has been reached on whether older small Barrel bats will be allowed in 2012. USSSA will be monitoring the situation. If too many of the current Small Barrel bats are found to not pass the 1.15 BPF test, USSA could remove all older Small Barrel bat models from play beginning in 2012. At present USSSA has no reason, however, to believe that this will be the case.

Coach Pitch Bats

As clarified during the 2010 season, USSSA does not allow bats marked as (or designed or even marketed as) coach pitch, practice, etc. to be used in any USSSA sanctioned play that utilizes regulation baseballs. While in general this remains the rule, at the request of the manufacturers beginning immediately USSSA will allow such bats if they have passed the 1.15 BPF testing and have the appropriate USSSA 1.15 BPF mark on the bat.

Punishment for Using Altered or Illegal Bats

Prior to the 2011 baseball season, stiff punishment provisions (which may include lifetime bans from USSSA sanctioned activities) for the use of altered or illegal bats in USSSA sanctioned baseball programs will be clarified. Such penalties will apply to the user and owner of any offending bat, as well as any parent or coach of a player using such a bat. The USSSA licensed bat manufacturers have agreed to work with USSSA in identifying baseball bats that have been altered and then brought into a facility that is hosting a USSSA sanctioned event. In addition, USSSA continues to work with Dr. Brandt to develop a portable-at-the-field-testing device to identify illegal bats that could be used to identify and remove illegal bats from play during sanctioned USSSA events.

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Questions or Comments: USSSABB2010@yahoo.com.

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