

The Customs of Brown Stockings hosts' events - 2021

The St. Louis Brown Stockings Vintage Base Ball Club play by a set of rules based on some of the existing rules of 1860 base ball.

Given the recent discussions sparked by a Vintage Base Ball Association Rules and Customs Committee Appeal, I would like to spell out the customs by which the Brown Stockings play at the club's home field or at events hosted by the Brown Stockings.

1. Defensive play positioning. First, second, and third base fielders are asked to play two steps from their bag, in any direction. Outfield scouts try to play straight away. The Rover may be positioned at any point on the field in fair or foul territory. The Catcher may play as far as ten feet behind home plate. The Pitcher delivers pitches from 45-feet away in a six foot square box. The Pitcher must release ball with both feet in the pitcher's box.
2. Lead-offs. There are two step lead-offs. Runners may leave their bases only when the ball crosses home plate or is hit by the Striker.
3. Stealing. There is no stealing. Runners may only advance after the ball has been hit.
4. Advancing. Runners may advance by fly-ball outs provided they tag up first. Runners may advance on one-bound outs recorded in fair territory and on any two-or-more-bound ball in fair territory. Runners may not advance on any foul balls. Runners are required to return to the base they occupied prior to any foul ball that is struck. If Fielders return the foul ball through the Pitcher to the Runner's base before the Runner returns, the Runner will be called out. No tag is necessary to record the out.
5. Sliding. There is no sliding. If a player accidentally slips and falls and still safely reaches a base, the Umpire will not consider that a "slide."

The Customs of Brown Stockings hosts' events - 2021

6. Tally Bell. The Brown Stockings do use a tally bell to record aces. Runners must ask the tally keeper permission to ring the tally bell to successfully record their ace, but this is a Brown Stockings tradition. Not ringing the bell will not take the ace away.
7. Batting order. We do use vintage batting order, which means we will start the inning based on the last out and not the last batter. Sometimes the batter may be the last out, but other times, a runner will be out on the bases that is not the last batter. Whoever makes the last out, then the next batter will be up at the beginning of the teams next at bat.
8. Bunting. Squared around bunting is prohibited. Strikers may chop at the ball with a full swing in an effort to advance. The Fair-Foul Swing may be allowed, but the Umpire may prohibit its use prior to the match starting if the Umpire deems the tactic to have potential safety hazards for Fans.
9. Fans. We do allow fans to sit down the line on either side. In the event that a fan does get the ball on the fly or on one bound and the ball is given to the fielder without touching the ground, the batter will be called out. In the event that this becomes an issue with fans going after the ball intentionally, we will abolish this rule for the rest of the match.
10. Obstacles. In the event the ball hits any type of obstacle (tree, rock, fence, pole, backboard, etc.), we will continue to play until the ball lands on the ground, either fair or foul. Where the ball lands will determine if the play is fair or foul. You may still get the striker out on a bound after it hits the obstacle provided the ball has not touched the ground or has only touched the ground on one bound.
11. Pinch Runners. Pinch Runners are only allowed after the striker has reached first base. We believe if the ballist can strike the ball and play the game, then he can at least make it to first base before a courtesy runner may replace him. The ballist making the last out will be the base runner. In case of needing a courtesy runner while batting, please notify the team

The Customs of Brown Stockings hosts' events - 2021

ahead of time as the striker will need to have a courtesy runner. We understand that sometimes to field a team, a courtesy runner may be allowed while a batter is striking in order for the team to make it through the game.

12. Striking. When striking the ball, keep in mind, you may not overrun first base.

Tony "Lightning" Wicker of the St. Louis Brown Stockings Base Ball Club