



2018 and 2019 NCAA Softball Official Rules Interpretations, Clarifications and Situations

Vickie Van Kleeck, Secretary-Rules Editor

Last Updated 11/28/18

| <u>Rule</u> | <u>Date</u> | <u>Interpretation/Clarification/Situation</u> |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| 12.4.2 A.R. 12-37 A.R. 12-35 | 11/28/18 | Revised Interpretation: A pitcher may not violate a pitching procedure to dupe runner(s) into leaving the base early. This act violates the spirit and intent of Rule 12.14.2 and makes a travesty of the game. A team that violates a rule should not be able to gain an advantage when the infraction for the violation is imposed. |

UPDATED CASE BOOK PLAYS BASED ON THESE INTERPRETATIONS:

A.R. 12-37. The runner on first base leaves before the release of the pitch because the pitcher holds onto the ball and does not release it until a second rotation of the arm past the hip. The pitch is a strike and the runner is safe at second. Is the runner still considered to have left early after being duped by the illegal pitch?

RULING: Both infractions result in a delayed dead ball. However, this violation of Rule 10.6.1 by the defense to cause a runner to leave early makes a travesty of the game. It also violates the Code of Conduct which states that “Coaches and players are to comply wholeheartedly with the spirit and intent of the rules. The deliberate teaching of players to violate the rules is indefensible.” It also violates Rule 15.2.14, “The umpire shall not impose an effect on a team for any infraction of a rule when imposing the effect would be an advantage to the offending team.” NO PITCH is declared, the runner is placed back on first base, and the pitcher and her head coach are given a behavioral warning, as in Rule 13.1.2.

Also, the intent of Note 2, which follows the effect for Rule 12.14.2, is to simplify the second option of a multiple violation play to only the leaving early effect. The phrase “with no regard for any action that follows the pitcher’s windup” does not apply here. (Rule 12.14.2)

A.R. 12-35. May a runner who mistimes leaving the base on a pitch, reset herself and as long as she is back in contact with the base at the time the pitch is released, not be in violation of this rule?

RULING: No, the rule says the runner may not leave the base until the pitcher releases the pitch to the batter so once she breaks contact with the base, even if she tries to reestablish contact before release, she would be in violation and the umpire will have signaled delayed dead ball, provided the pitcher has not delayed her release in order to dupe the runner into leaving early. (Rule 12.14.2)



2020 and 2021 Major Rules Changes for Softball

The following rules changes were approved by the NCAA Softball Rules Committee and the Playing Rules Oversight Panel. They will be incorporated into the rules book for the 2020 and 2021 seasons.

| <u>Rule</u> | <u>Rule Change and Rationale</u> |
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| 2.16.3 | <p>Prohibit attachments (e.g., screening, flags, pennants, etc.) from being added to the foul side of the pole.</p> <p>Rationale: The foul pole may have screening on the fair side of the pole to enhance visibility of a ball leaving the field of play near the foul pole. Attachments to the foul side of the pole present issues for umpires if they are blowing and the ball hits them in flight while leaving the field.</p> |
| 3.10.8 | <p>Require visible undergarments contrast with the color of the ball.</p> <p>Rationale: To acknowledge the difficulty in seeing a batted or thrown ball that is coming off a yellow background. This difficulty was recognized with the 2016 rules change that required the bat barrel shell color(s) contrast with the color of the ball and the same consideration should be made for visible undergarment colors.</p> |
| 5.2 | <p>Require softball barrel compression testing (BCT) be conducted according to accepted protocols at a minimum prior to the start of each tournament, series, doubleheader, or single midweek game during the regular season. Implementation – January 1, 2021 for Division I and January 1, 2022 for Divisions II and III. Note – This requires institutions to purchase a BCT machine, which costs \$875. This is not an annual expense.</p> <p>Rationale: Softball BCT has proven to be an effective tool in protecting the integrity of the game, maintaining the delicate balance of offense and defense, ensuring a player’s performance is a result of the player’s skill more than of her equipment, regulating the defender’s available reaction time, and addressing the concerns regarding bat tampering. Requiring BCT to be conducted prior to play during the regular season will protect the integrity of competition and ensure bats being used remain compliant with established performance standards. NCAA baseball approved this requirement in 2017 for implementation beginning with the 2020 season for DI and 2021 season for DII and DIII.</p> |
| 5.11 and 13.6.2 | <p>Reclassify the use of equipment to make noise from the “equipment misuse” section of the rules book to the “artificial noisemakers” section of the rules book.</p> <p>Rationale: To more appropriately classify the use of equipment to make noise to the “artificial noisemakers” section of the rules book. This includes banging on a bench/bucket with equipment, shoes, hands, banging bats and balls in the dugout, etc.</p> |

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| <p>5.11 EFFECT</p> | <p>The use of artificial noisemakers, musical instruments, air horns and electronic amplifiers by student-athletes and team personnel is prohibited in team areas. EFFECT – When brought to the attention of the umpire by the opposing coach, The umpire shall issue a team warning...</p> <p>Rationale: Eliminate the requirement for the opposing coach to bring the illegal use of artificial noisemakers, musical instruments, air horns and electronic amplifiers to the attention of the umpire. Requiring the opposing coach to bring this rule violation to the attention of the umpire creates a potential hostile interaction between coaches and doesn't allow the umpires to take action/enforce the rule on their own.</p> |
| <p>6.5.3 EFFECT</p> | <p>The offensive team must keep all personnel, except the base coaches, batter, base-runner(s) and on-deck batter, in the dugout, bullpen or dead-ball area while the ball is live. EFFECT – The umpire shall warn the violator <u>and issue a team warning.</u> If the violator does not immediately comply, the umpire should eject him or her. <u>The next violation of this rule by anyone on the warned team will result in an ejection of the head coach.</u></p> <p>Rationale: To give umpires recourse once a warning has been issued when there are multiple violations of this rule by different personnel. Currently, the umpires would continue to warn the violator(s) without any penalty for repeat offenses.</p> |
| <p>10.1.1 and 10.2.1</p> | <p>10.1.1 – The pitcher is considered to be in the pitching position when she has her hands apart, <u>her pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate, both feet on the ground within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate, the hips in line with first and third bases,</u> she steps forward, puts both feet on the pitcher's plate, and the catcher is in position to receive the pitch.</p> <p>10.2.1.1 – Both feet must be on the ground in contact with the pitcher's plate. Any part of each foot in contact with the ground or pitcher's plate must be completely within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate. <u>The stride foot may be on or behind the pitcher's plate as far back as desired. Once the pitcher initially sets the toe of her stride foot, she may not step back any farther to increase the distance behind the pitcher's plate.</u></p> <p>Rationale: To allow the pitcher to begin with her stride (non-pivot) foot behind the pitcher's plate as far back as desired. It is very difficult for an umpire to see if a pitcher's stride foot is actually in contact with the pitcher's plate, and there is no advantage to establishing the stride foot behind the pitcher's plate as long as the pitcher is not allowed to step farther back during the start of the pitch. This change will provide pitchers with greater balance</p> |

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| | and take into account their variances in sizes and strengths without creating any type of unfair advantage. |
| 10.2.2 | <p>While in the pitching position and taking the signal, the pitcher shall pause for a noticeable stop of at least two seconds to must take or simulate taking appear to take a signal. The signal need not come from the catcher. <i>Note: The rule does not preclude the pitcher from taking an earlier signal from someone who indicates the desired pitch and/or location nor the pitcher from referring to an arm band prior to complying with Rule 10.2.2.</i></p> <p>Rationale: To require the pitcher to take a signal while on the pitcher’s plate. Requiring the pitcher to take the signal from the pitcher’s plate has two advantages: 1) It will ensure pitchers pause on the plate while receiving the signal, and 2) It will prevent pitchers from “walking through” the pitch. Quick pitching has become an issue because signals are being taken from behind the pitcher’s plate and the pitcher is stepping on the pitcher’s plate and pitching without pausing.</p> |
| 13.13 EFFECT | <p>EFFECT – If an ejected or suspended student-athlete, coach or other nonplaying personnel violates the conditions of the ejection/suspension and it is discovered during the contest, the game will be forfeited (see Rule 6.20.1.9). <u>If an ejected or suspended student-athlete or other nonplaying personnel violates the conditions of the ejection/suspension and it is discovered once the contest has ended, the suspension (1) for the student-athlete/nonplaying personnel is two games and (2) for the head coach is four games. If an ejected or suspended head coach violates the conditions of the ejection/suspension and it is discovered once the contest has ended, the suspension for the head coach is four games.</u></p> <p>Rationale: To clarify that a forfeit will be the penalty for violations discovered during the contest. Any violation of the conditions of the ejected or suspended personnel rules that is discovered after the contest ends will result in additional game suspensions. Applying additional game suspensions will serve as a deterrent for participating while ejected or suspended.</p> |
| Experimental Rule | <p>Allow conferences to experiment with video review during conference games (when two conference teams play each other in a conference game), including the conference tournament, in a limited number of situations. The crew chief may initiate a review of designated plays at his/her discretion beginning with the 6th inning, and each head coach has two challenges to initiate a review for the entirety of the game. Conferences electing to experiment must collect specific data and provide that information to the rules committee for review during its June 2020 annual meeting.</p> <p>Rationale: In recent years, enhanced technology in multiple sports has led to the implementation of video review to assist with getting the call right. Softball is a sport that has not delved into video review but is a sport that has</p> |

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| | <p>been a benefactor of increased coverage, fan interest and technological advances. The Southeastern Conference experimented with video review during the 2019 SEC Softball Tournament and provided feedback to the committee. Based on this feedback, the committee updated the components of the experiment, including restricting umpire-initiated reviews until the 6th inning, allowing an additional play to be reviewed, and allowing the review to take place on-site by the crew chief or by an off-field official at a centralized location.</p> |
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APRIL 2017 ERAs
(Essential Rules Awareness)

- **Drop dead time** must be decided at the pregame meeting and only applies to **air travel (Rule 16.6.4)**.

- **Correcting the Count:** if the umpire does not have the correct number of balls and strikes on a batter, he/she has until the batter has completed her turn at bat to correct the count.

If there is a checked swing or full swing that is not ruled a strike, you have until the next pitch to appeal that. Once a pitch has been thrown that cannot be changed **(A.R. 11.2.5 & A.R. 15.3.5)**.

- **Home run ruled foul** cannot be ruled fair even if additional information is made available.
Note: A batted ball declared foul cannot be changed to fair regardless of additional information that might be made available to the calling umpire (11.5 Foul Ball).

- Pitchers can use powder resin, but **not rock resin (Rule 10.13 Substance on the Ball and A.R. 10.13.2^3)**. Rock resin leaves a residue on the ball.

- **Experimental Rules Clarification:**
A team can use one of their six allowed conferences to avoid violating the 90-second time limit between innings.



ERAs (Essential Rules Awareness)

ERAs is a new monthly column featured on Arbiter Central Hub “Home Plate”
It will cover rules that seem to need more clarification and reminders

Rule 8.5.1.2 **Projected Substitutions and re-entries are not allowed.**

When putting in a pinch hitter, you cannot tell the umpire **now** that the original hitter will go into run if pinch hitter gets on base. You must do that after she reaches base.

At start of an inning, you cannot report multiple pinch hitters. Report one at a time. **A substitute must immediately participate in the game.**

Rule 13.8.4 **Questioning the strike zone and any call on the field based purely on umpire’s judgment.**

A **team warning** is issued for **either** one of these for the first offense. The next time **either** occurs again, the VIOLATOR will be ejected. This is a behavioral ejection.

Just so we understand there will be only ONE warning for either questioning balls and strikes and/or questioning safe/out judgment calls. You don’t get one warning for each category.

Rule 5.9 **Scouting Information and Electronic Equipment Use**

A new rules interpretation was published on February 23, 2016 that said coaches cannot wear or bring any type of **smart watch** onto the field during a game.

Rule 2.2 **Brick, wood or cement backstops have to be padded dugout to dugout. Dugouts do not need to be padded.**



Next Approved Bat List is due out MARCH 14TH



MEMORANDUM

July 31, 2019

VIA EMAIL

TO: NCAA Divisions I, II and III Softball Conference Commissioners, Directors of Athletics and Head Coaches.

FROM: Edith Gallagher, Chair
NCAA Softball Rules Committee

Vickie Van Kleeck, Secretary-Rules Editor
NCAA Softball Rules Committee.

SUBJECT: Softball Rules Changes and Experimental Rule Approved.

The NCAA Softball Rules Committee and Playing Rules Oversight Panel approved nine major rules changes for the 2020 and 2021 seasons. One of the major rules changes includes requiring regular season barrel compression testing beginning January 1, 2021 for Division I and January 1, 2022 for Divisions II and III. All of the rules changes may be viewed [here](#).

In addition, the committee and panel approved an experimental rule to be used during conference games (when two conference teams play each other in a conference game), including the conference tournament, during the 2020 season. By December 31, any conference wanting to experiment with video review must submit their request in writing to the NCAA Softball Rules Committee through Vickie Van Kleeck, ncaasbsre@gmail.com, and Ashlee Follis, afollis@ncaa.org. Any Division I, II or III conference may request approval. Any conference granted permission to experiment is required to collect data and submit it to the rules committee by June 3, 2020.

More information outlining the experimental rule and process to follow is below.

If you have questions on any of the new rules changes or the experimental rule, please contact Vickie Van Kleeck at ncaasbsre@gmail.com or 540-813-4655.

EG/VVK:af

Enclosure

cc: Ms. Carol Bruggeman
Ms. Joanna Lane
Division I Conference Softball Administrators
NCAA Softball Rules Committee
NCAA Registered Softball Umpires
Selected NCAA Staff Members

National Collegiate Athletic Association

Creating a pathway to opportunity for college athletes

The NCAA is an equal opportunity employer that values inclusive excellence in the workplace.

Enclosure – 2020 Experimental Rule

The following experimental rule has been approved for the 2020 season. By December 31, any conference wishing to use the experimental rule must submit the request in writing to the NCAA Softball Rules Committee through Vickie Van Kleeck, softball secretary-rules editor, at ncaasbsre@gmail.com and Ashlee Follis, NCAA, at afollis@ncaa.org.

Any Division I, II or III conference may request approval. Any conference that has been granted permission to use the experimental rule will be required to collect data (as outlined by the rules committee below) and submit it to the rules committee by June 3, 2020, to the email addresses above.

The experimental rule may only be used in conference games (when two conference teams play each other in a conference game), including the conference tournament. The experimental rule may not be used in non-conference games or tournaments hosted by a school using the experimental rule.

In conference games (when two conference teams play each other in a conference game), including the conference tournament, the crew chief may initiate a review of designated plays at his/her discretion beginning with the 6th inning in any game. Additionally, each head coach has two challenges to initiate a review for the entirety of the game, which must be indicated before the next pitch, before the pitcher and all infielders have clearly vacated their normal fielding position and left fair territory, or before the umpires have left the field of play. The following are the plays that shall be subject to review via initiation by the crew chief or via a head coach's challenge:

1. Deciding if a batted ball called fair is fair or foul.
2. Deciding if a batted ball called a ground rule double or home run is fair or foul.
3. Deciding if a batted ball called foul that could result in a ground rule double or home run is fair or foul.
4. Spectator interference.
5. Deciding scoring plays at home plate inclusive of collisions (illegal and/or malicious slides), obstruction by a defensive player or timing plays.
6. Force/Tag Play Calls: Plays involving all runners acquiring the base before the defensive player's attempt to put the runner out at any base.
7. Hit-by-Pitch Calls: Those plays for which there is a possibility that a pitched ball touches a batter or her clothing, which shall incorporate a review on whether the batter is inside or outside the batter's box if it is determined upon review that the ball hit the batter or her clothing.
8. Placement of Runners: An umpire's placement of all runners (per the rules/case book) after any blocked ball call.
9. With runners on base, a no catch can be changed to a catch only if it results in a third out. With no runners on base, a no catch can be changed to a catch at any time.

The following criteria shall be used by conferences using video review:

1. All equipment should be tested by appropriate personnel before each game.
2. A ruling on the field will only be changed if there is indisputable video evidence to reverse the call. Absent that evidence, the original ruling on the field will stand.
3. A review must be verbally or visually indicated before the next pitch, before the pitcher and all infielders have clearly vacated their normal fielding position and left fair territory, or the umpires leave the field of play.
4. The video review may be conducted on-site by the crew chief or by an off-field official at a centralized video review location.
5. If video review is conducted on-site by the crew chief, the video review area shall not require an umpire to walk through spectators or dugouts to view the coverage. At least one umpire must remain on the field.
6. During the video review, the defensive team shall maintain their position on the field and may warm-up if desired. Offensive base runners and the on-deck hitter shall maintain their position. Other personnel shall remain in the dugout. Any defensive or offensive conferences will be charged as during any other part of the game.
7. Once the review is completed, the crew chief will communicate the ruling to both head coaches and the official scorer using the following criteria. This should also be communicated to the broadcasting booth, if applicable, via the umpire who has a microphone.
 - a. Ruling on the field is confirmed;
 - b. Ruling on the field is reversed; or
 - c. Ruling stands due to no indisputable evidence to reverse it.
8. If the reversing of a call results in the need for decisions on the placement of base runners, the crew chief shall use his/her best judgment and/or the appropriate rule to determine where to place the runners as if the call had been made correctly
9. The final decision may not be argued by either coach. A coach who argues the final decision shall be immediately ejected.

Data Collection

If this experimental rule is used, the following data must be collected and reported to the NCAA Softball Rules Committee:

1. Number of reviews in each game and the situation reviewed in each instance;
2. Whether the review was coach or umpire initiated;
3. For each review, whether the call on the field was upheld or overturned;
4. For each review, the length of the review; and
5. The length of each game (from first pitch to last out) and length of regular season TV games (from first pitch to last out) for comparison purposes.



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Vickie Van Kleeck, Secretary-Rules Editor

Last Updated 1/15/2020

| <u>Rule</u> | <u>Date</u> | <u>Interpretation/Clarification/Situation</u> |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| 10.2.1.2 | 10/21/2019 | <p>10.2.1.2 The stride foot may be on or behind the pitcher's plate as far back as desired. Once the pitcher initially sets the toe of her stride foot, she may not step back any farther to increase the distance behind the pitcher's plate.</p> <p>Clarification: The stride foot may be on or behind the pitcher's plate as far back as desired. Once the pitcher takes the proper pitching position required for taking the signal and initially sets the toe of her stride foot, she may not move that foot in any direction (backward, forward, sideways or off the ground). The proper pitching position as defined in Rule 10.2.1, including the position of the stride foot, must be established before taking the signal. Once the pitcher has established her stride foot, simple dropping or rocking onto her heel is not a violation. The first movement of the stride foot is the forward step when the pitching motion starts.</p> |
| 10.2.2 | 1/15/2020 10/21/2019 | <p>10.2.2 While in the pitching position and taking the signal, the pitcher must take or appear to take a signal. The signal need not come from the catcher.</p> <p>Clarification 1: Taking the signal from behind the pitcher's plate from her signal arm band or the catcher is illegal since the pitcher is not in the pitching position. The result is an illegal pitch.</p> <p>Clarification 2: A coach may give visual or verbal signal while the pitcher is not in the pitching position, however, when the pitcher assumes the pitching position she must look at her signal arm band or the catcher to take or appear to take the signal. The pitcher may not simply step into the pitching position, put her hands together and start the pitching motion. There must be timing consistent with taking the signal from an arm band or catcher. Failing to do so will result in an illegal pitch.</p> <p>Clarification 3: <i>Taking a defensive signal from a coach or catcher prior to stepping on the pitcher's plate is allowed. However, the pitcher may not look at the signal arm band until she is in the pitching position.</i></p> |



2018 and 2019 NCAA Softball Official Rules Interpretations, Clarifications and Situations

Vickie Van Kleeck, Secretary-Rules Editor

Last Updated 4/30/2019

| <u>Rule</u> | <u>Date</u> | <u>Interpretation/Clarification/Situation</u> |
|---------------------------|--------------------|---|
| 6.5.3 | 4/30/19 | <p>The offensive team: 6.5.3 Must keep all personnel, except the base coaches, batter, base runner(s) and on-deck batter, in the dugout, bullpen or dead-ball area while the ball is live. EFFECT: The umpire shall warn the violator(s), and if the violator(s) does not immediately comply, the umpire should eject him or her. (Administrative ejection; see Rule 13.2.1)</p> <p>Interpretation: After receiving a warning for being out of the dugout, bullpen or dead-ball area on a live ball, the next violation of this rule by anyone of the warned team will result in the ejection of the head coach.</p> |
| 9.5.3.7 and 9.5.3.8 | 4/30/19 | <p>9.5.3.7 A fielder shall not at any time obstruct a runner rounding a base. 9.5.3.8 A fielder shall not at any time obstruct a runner returning to or leading off a base.</p> <p>A warning for obstruction on rounding, returning or leading off a base will be issued when the defensive player is not making a play on this runner and is merely in a position that obstructs the runner. If the defensive player is making a play on the runner, she will be charged with obstruction, but not given a warning. Example: The runner at first base leads off and is returning to the base. The first baseman, in an attempt to get her out, obstructs the runner coming into first base. The defensive player is charged with obstruction, the runner is safe at first, but there is no warning for “rounding or returning obstruction” since a play was being made on the runner.</p> |



2020 and 2021 NCAA Softball Official Rules Interpretations, Clarifications and Situations

Vickie Van Kleeck, Secretary-Rules Editor

Last Updated September 11, 2019

| <u>Rule</u> | <u>Date</u> | <u>Interpretation/Clarification/Situation</u> |
|--------------------|--------------------|--|
| 3.10.8 | 9/11/19 | Undergarments: Visible undergarments must contrast the color of the ball. Yellow or gold undergarments are not permitted. |
| 10.1 | 9/11/19 | Pitching Position: The stride foot may be on or behind the pitcher's plate as far back as desired. Once the pitcher initially sets the toe of her stride foot, she may not step back any farther to increase the distance behind the pitcher's plate. The stride foot must be established before taking the signal. Dropping the heel during delivery of the pitch does not constitute stepping back. |
| 10.2 | 9/11/19 | Taking the Signal: The pitcher must take a signal while in the pitching position. Taking a signal from behind the pitcher's plate (e.g., looking at the signal arm band) is illegal since the pitcher is not in the pitching position. The result is an illegal pitch. |