

APPROVED SOFTBALL RULES CHANGES FOR 2010 and 2011

The following major rules changes were recently approved by the Softball Rules Committee at their recent annual meeting. The proposals were also reviewed and approved by the Playing Rules Oversight Panel and will be incorporated into the rules book for the 2010 and 2011 seasons. The new language is underlined within the appropriate rule reference.

1. **2.10 Fences.** It is highly recommended that the playing field be completely enclosed by a permanent home run fence in a smooth arc of not more than 235 feet from home plate and sideline fences ~~at least 6 feet high~~. If a permanent home run fence, it is highly recommended to be a minimum of 6 feet high and a minimum of 190 in left and right fields and 200 in center field. If a temporary home run fence, it is highly recommended to be a minimum of 4 feet high and a minimum of 210 in left and right fields and 230 in center field. If a temporary fence is used, it must be secured so as not to collapse on and displace the foul pole. For an unfenced field, an out-of-bounds line shall be used to define dead-ball areas.

***Rationale:** Add wording that the home run fence should be in an arc to match the diagram and to give guidelines for fence distances for fences at a minimum of 6 feet high at the previously suggested distance but a shorter option for fences with a deeper outfield.*

2. **2.11 Foul Pole.** The foul pole must be a ~~metal, plastic, or wooden~~ pole that extends vertically upward from the foul line at the point it intersects the home run fence. The pole and/or the line shall be visible connecting the ground to the top of the pole. The pole should extend at least 10 feet from the ground and shall be immediately adjacent to or attached to the outside of the home run fence. In addition, it is recommended that the color of the foul pole should contrast with the background so it will stand out, preferably white, yellow or optic orange.

***Rationale:** No reason to require what the pole is made of; the pole should be at the home run fence to avoid controversy regarding a ball hooking at the fence line but well in front of the foul pole. It should also be outside the fence to allow a ball that hits it to have cleared the home run fence.*

3. **Rule 3 Introduction** (third paragraph). The committee reserves the right to intercede in order to maintain that integrity and to ensure a player's performance is more a product of her individual skill than of her equipment. ~~In addition,~~ To that end, the NCAA began conducting post-competition bat compliance testing in 2007 in an effort to gain valuable laboratory information to supplement its field study and the anecdotal information gained during play. Since that time, that program has been transformed from a narrow focus of information gathering and research orientation to a broader program that also includes pre-competition data collection and associated consequences for noncompliance with the applicable standards.

new 3.1 Equipment (renumber subsequent sections) **3.1.1.** All equipment used in intercollegiate competition should be of a nature commonly available to the general public through retailers. Institutions are responsible for ensuring that the equipment used in competition meets the prescribed industry standards of safety and legality. Coaches are responsible for ensuring that their players are legally equipped and properly attired to reflect a positive image of the game. Uniforms, accessories and equipment (including batting gloves that must be worn, carried in the hands or put out of sight in pockets) must be worn properly and as designed. *Exception:* Sunglasses may be worn as desired. Defective equipment must be repaired or replaced immediately.

EFFECT—The umpire shall not allow the equipment in the game and warn the violator(s) to correct the condition. If the violator(s) does not immediately comply, the violator(s) shall be ejected in addition to the removal of the equipment.

Rationale: Text taken from fifth paragraph of Rule 3 Introduction and made new Rule 3.1 Equipment that includes an EFFECT and provides a penalty for noncompliance.

old 3.2.1 Bats-Game. The official bat shall meet the following standards:

.1 Shall be of one piece, multipiece permanently assembled, or two piece interchangeable barrel construction.

~~Shall be made of one piece hardwood, or formed from a block of wood....~~

Rationale: Delete the entire section on wood bats and clarify the bat can be one or multipieced that matches the ASA and NFHS.

.2 Shall be metal, plastic, graphite, carbon, magnesium, fiberglass, ceramic, titanium or any other composite material.

~~.3 May be laminated but must not contain only wood or adhesive and have a clear finish (if finished).~~

[Current 3.2.1.8] Shall not have exposed rivets, pins, rough or sharp edges or any form of exterior fastener that would present a hazard. Bats shall be free of rattles, dents, burrs and cracks and not be altered from their certification specifications. In regard to dents, if the bat ring goes over the bat, it should be considered a legal bat in terms of diameter.

Rationale: Add “rattles” to the things that disqualify bats, since they are often a sign of near failure or tampering. Also added “dents” here even though it was previously in .14 in reference to dents on the barrel because bats with large dents on the taper should also be disqualified. This eliminates the need for 3.2.1.14.

.4 [Current 3.2.1.13] Shall be marked OFFICIAL SOFTBALL by the manufacturer. If the words OFFICIAL SOFTBALL cannot be read because of wear and tear on the bat, the bat should be declared legal if it is legal in all other aspects.

.5 [Current 3.2.1.15] Bats shall bear the permanent ASA 2004 certification seal and not be listed on the non-approved bat list on the NCAA (NCAA.org) or ASA (softball.org) Web sites indicating noncompliance with the bat performance standard per the appropriate ASTM testing protocol.

.6 [Current 3.2.1.5] Shall not be more than 34 inches (87.0 cm) long nor exceed 38 ounces (1,100.0 g) in weight.

.7 [Current 3.2.1.6] Shall not be more than 2¼ inches (6.0cm) in diameter at its largest part. A tolerance of 1/32 inch (0.90mm) is permitted to allow for expansion ~~on the round bat.~~

~~AR 3.2.1.6 7 If the bat ring goes over the bat, it should be considered a legal bat in terms of diameter.~~

.8 Shall consist of five functional parts: knob, handle, taper, barrel and end cap. Exception: One piece bats may not have an end cap.

.8.1 [Currently 3.2.1.7] There must be a direct line from the center of the knob to the center of the ~~large end~~ end cap.

.8.2 [Current 3.2.1.12] Shall have a safety knob of a minimum of ¼ inch protruding at a 90 degree angle from the handle. It may be molded, lathed, welded or permanently fastened. A “flare” or “cone” grip attached to the bat will be considered altered. The knob may be taped or marked for identification as long as there is no violation of this section.

.8.3 [Current 3.2.1.9 and 10] The handle is the area between the knob and taper which is covered by the grip. It must be cylindrical-tubular (round or oblong) and may not be wood if the barrel is metal.—It shall have a safety grip of cork, tape (not smooth, plastic tape) or composition material (commercially manufactured bat grip). The safety grip shall not be less than 10 inches (25.0cm) long and shall not extend more than 15 inches (40.0cm) from the

~~small end of the bat knob.~~ Resin, pine tar or spray substances placed on the safety grip to enhance the grip are permissible on the grip only. It may not exceed two layers. If taped, it must be a continuous spiral but need not be a solid layer.

.8.4 The taper is the transition area which connects the narrower handle to the wider barrel portion of the bat. Its length and material can vary and the taper has the fewest rule specifications.

.8.5 [Current 3.2.1.4] The barrel is the intended contact area for the pitch and shall be round and smooth. If the barrel end has a knurled finish, the maximum surface roughness shall not be more than 250 micro-inches if measured by a philmometer or 4/1,000 if measured by a spectrograph.

.8.6 [Current 3.2.1.11] ~~If made from a product other than wood and not made of one piece construction with the barrel end closed, it shall have~~ The end cap is a rubber, vinyl, plastic or other approved material insert firmly secured and permanently affixed so that it cannot be removed by anyone other than the manufacturer, without damaging or destroying it. A bat made of one piece construction may not have an end cap.

~~EFFECT (3.2.1.1 to 3.2.1.15-8)~~—If the batter enters the batter's box with an illegal or non-approved bat, the bat shall be removed from the game (i.e., not returned to the dugout), the batter shall be declared out, and base runners shall not advance.

If the batter enters the batter's box with an altered bat, the penalty for an illegal bat shall be imposed in addition to the batter being ejected from the game.

Exception: In both cases, advance is legal on a noncontacted pitch or ball four.

Any bat discovered through NCAA bat compliance testing to exceed the ASA bat performance standard shall be excluded from use and the player/team may be subject to penalties imposed by the NCAA (i.e., not the umpire).

Rationale: Creates common terminology for distinct bat sections and provides notification to the membership of possible consequences for bats that exceed the bat performance standard.

- 4. new 3.6.3.1 Electronic Equipment.** A designated area should accommodate both the home team's and the visitor's cameras but in the event that separate locations are necessary, the two areas shall be comparable.

Rationale: The opportunity for placement of video equipment must be fair for both institutions.

- 5. 3.7.1 Gloves/Mitts.** (third paragraph) The pitcher's glove ~~may~~ and its lacing shall be tan, brown, grey, white, or black, or any combination of those colors. The manufacturer's logo is not considered a glove color. ~~Glove lacing may be any color other than that of the ball.~~

Rationale: Every year there are questions about the manufacturer's logos and lacing on gloves. The rule was interpreted this way a few years back but since it is not in the book, the questions keep coming.

- 6. new 3.10.4 Insignias and Numbers.** Commemorative or any other special insignia/patches may be worn on the uniform as long as all teammates' uniforms are identical and embedded numbers are no larger than one inch.

All uniform jerseys must have a whole number between 0 and 99 inclusive on the back. The number(s) shall be of a contrasting color and shall be at least 6 inches high. It is recommended that new jerseys have an identical 3- to 4-inch-high number(s) of a contrasting color on the front of the jersey. Players on the same team shall not wear the same number.

A.R.3.10.4.1 Zero (0) and 00 are considered the same number.

Rationale: Matches the interpretation from PROP regarding patches and eliminates individual player differences while still allowing the NCAA, conference or institution to issue patches to the entire team.

7. **6.5.6. Positions of the Defensive Team.** Between half innings and during pitching changes, warm-ups shall be limited to:
.1 Pitching from the pitcher's circle to home plate for no more than five continuous pitches or four pitches and one throw to first base or any combination that is limited to five throws from the pitcher in a continuous manner.
Rationale: To speed the game up as teams are abusing the time frame between innings.
(**Editor's Note:** Current EFFECT for Rules 6.5.5 and 6.5.6 is now Rule 6.5.5 only.)
8. **6.112.2 Charged Offensive Conference.** When ~~the catcher~~ a defensive player requests time to speak to ~~the pitcher~~ one or more defensive players, base runners may not abandon the vicinity of their bases without it being a charged offensive conference.
Rationale: Rule is too restrictive; defensive conferences are traditionally very brief but the game is delayed when base runners leave their bases to see the coach. The rule should not limit who can speak to whom.
9. **6.11.2.2 Charged Offensive Conference.** *Note 1:* If either team is charged with a conference, base runners are no longer restricted to the area near their bases.
Note 2: If baserunners leave the vicinity of their bases, it is a charged offensive conference and if the team has already used its charged conference in the inning, the head coach is ejected.
Rationale: Clarifies 2008 change.
10. **6.13 Eight-Run Rule.** A regulation eight-run rule game shall be declared by the plate umpire if one team is ahead by eight or more runs after five or more equal innings. Complete innings must be played unless the home team reaches the eight-run lead while at bat. Whenever the visiting team reaches the limit in the fifth or ~~sixth~~ any inning thereafter, the home team must have its opportunity to bat in the bottom half of the inning.
6.13.1 Any hit that results in an eight-run lead by the home team (after 4-1/2 innings) is treated as a game-ending hit. (See Rule 14.6)
Note: The eight-run rule may not be set aside by competing teams, league, conference or tournament rule. *Exception:* For NCAA tournament play only, the respective NCAA divisional softball committees may elect to remove the eight run rule for games played between the final two teams of the championship ~~game~~, provided it is formally declared before the start of the tournament.
Rationale: Allows for use of the rule anytime after the fifth inning and the exception is expanded to include the final two teams rather than just the championship game.
11. **6.16.4.1 and .2 Called Game** (and Rule 6.19.1.2 to match).
6.16.4.1 In the event that team air travel conflicts with continued play in any game, a forfeit shall not be declared as long as a drop-dead time is communicated not later than the pregame meeting. The head coaches are required to agree on the mandatory drop-dead time and communicate it to the umpires and tournament personnel if applicable.
6.16.4.2 The game could be a "Called Game" (See Rule 6.16), a "Halted Game" (See Rule 6.17), or "No Game" (See Rule 6.18).
Rationale: Rule 6.16.4.1 is similar to Rule 6.19 but should be here. There has been trouble finding it because it is not a forfeit under the forfeit heading. The responsibility rests with the coaches to determine the time, not the umpires.
12. **9.3 Obstruction.** Obstruction applies to live ball play only.
Rationale: Rulebook is not clear but implies obstruction is a live ball violation.

13. **New 9.4.2.2 Fielder's Obstruction** (renumber subsequent sections). A fielder in the act of fielding a batted ball or about to receive a thrown ball shall not intentionally alter her motion to obstruct the batter-runner or base runner. EFFECT (9.4.2.1 to new 9.4.2.3).
Rationale: A fielder who is fielding a ball and sticks a foot out to trip a runner, or backs up to collide with a runner or alters her path to the ball to contact the runner who has already adjusted her path to avoid the fielder should be penalized.
14. **9.4.2.3 Fielder Obstruction EFFECT.** Delayed dead ball is signaled. The umpire shall issue a warning to the offending individual and notify her coach. Subsequent violation by the same individual shall result in a one-base award to the obstructed runner and each other runner forced to advance. The awards shall be to the base beyond the base she would have reached had obstruction not occurred unless the runners safely advances farther on their own, in which case no award is given.
Rationale: This effect needs to be separated from Rule 9.4.2.4 that specifies the award is to the base beyond the base where obstruction occurred, not the base she would have reached.
15. **10.2.1.1 Taking the Signal from the Catcher.** Both feet must be on the ground in contact with the pitcher's plate and ~~at least half of~~ a portion of the pivot foot must be on or above the top surface of the pitcher's plate...
Rationale: Some pitcher's feet are too large to have half of the foot on the pitcher's plate. Also it is hard for the umpire to discern "half." All we really need is some contact with the pitcher's plate.
16. **10.20 Covering Pitcher's Plate/Pitcher's Lane.** A team representative or player shall not intentionally cover the pitcher's plate nor erase a line of the pitcher's lane.
EFFECT—For a first violation in a game, a ball shall be awarded to the batter. Subsequent violation by the same team shall result in the violator(s) being ejected.
~~.1 A player shall not intentionally cover the pitcher's plate nor erase the pitcher's lane.~~
EFFECT—A ball shall be awarded to the batter.
~~.2 A coach shall not intentionally cover the pitcher's plate nor erase the pitcher's lane.~~
EFFECT—The umpire shall issue a warning to the offending coach. Subsequent violation by the same individual shall result in ejection.
Rationale: Combines who the violators are and sets a single, escalating effect.
17. **13.9.3 Verbal Misconduct New.** Argue balls and strikes. EFFECT—A team warning shall be issued for the first offense in a game. Subsequent violations shall result in ejection of the violator.
Rationale: Most umpires expect this wording to be in the book since it is the rule in baseball and other softball codes. Arguing balls and strikes is not acceptable.
18. **14.2.25 Run Batted In.** Credit given to a batter...a ground out,~~a double play,~~a fielder's choice, ...
Rationale: The defense is more than happy to trade two outs for a run. This means the batter did not earn the RBI.
19. **15.3.2 Plate Umpire** (renumber subsequent sections). The plate umpire shall...
2. Have the authority to ensure the pace of the game is acceptable and take action to address a situation that could create an unnecessary delay or interrupt the flow of the game. This includes consideration to grant a timeout request by the offense or defense.
Rationale: Puts in print the authority to manage the pace of the game.